

## Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of South Area Committee to be held on 27 January 2022

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### **Subject:**

**Libraries Update report**

### **Summary statement:**

This report provides an update on Bradford Libraries Service since the previous report to this Committee about Libraries, in March 2019. It summarises the new vision and model for the Service, adopted by Executive in March 2020, and how this is being implemented, with a particular focus on the Bradford South area.

### **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

This work contributes to the 'Community' theme of the Council's equalities objectives, taking 'Action to support the creation of a place where everyone feels that they belong, are understood, feel safe and are able to fully participate in and contribute to the economic, social and civic life of the District.' By developing access to more services in libraries, local people will benefit from this more local support.

It also contributes to the 'Service Design' theme of the Council's equalities objectives, 'Ensuring that our services are designed in an accessible and an inclusive way including co-production with local people and organisations.' The creation of local Working Groups and forthcoming local engagement and consultation will contribute to this.

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Jason Longhurst  
Director of Place

### **Portfolio:**

**Cllr Sarah Ferriby**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**  
**Healthy People and Places**

## 1. SUMMARY

- The model and funding position for Bradford's Libraries Service has changed significantly since the previous report on this subject to the South Area Committee in March 2019. A positive new Vision and Model for the service was agreed by Executive in March 2020, following extensive local public consultation. This saw a reduction in the savings requirement for the service, based on libraries offering a wider range of services to meet local priorities. Implementation of the new model has been delayed by the pandemic but is underway, with Wibsey Library in the Bradford South area being one of the pilot libraries. The model is also being aligned to the Council's developing 'Localities' approach.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- In March 2019, the South Area Committee received a report about the Libraries Service, which set out the challenges and service response to delivering the 2019/20 savings and how this would impact on libraries in Bradford South. It reported on the savings and changes that had been made in recent years to the Service, whilst retaining all 29 libraries across the District, many of them now run by volunteers. A public consultation and engagement process was planned for the following Summer period as part of a review of the Service ahead of the delivery of a savings target in 2020/21 of £1.05M.
- Public engagement and consultation did follow during 2019, leading to further restructuring and savings to the Libraries Service in late 2019. However, the savings target for 2020/21 was significantly scaled back to £350k following a funding contribution of £700k from Public Health, and resulted in the creation of a new Vision and Model for the Libraries Service, adopted by the Council's Executive in March 2020, just before the first national lockdown.
- The agreed new Vision for the Service was "To develop a 21st century library service that continues to provide a core (main) library service, that is flexible and enables us to enhance the quality of life of people and communities, is inclusive and vibrant, supports wider district priorities, enables all users to learn, engage and remain connected to their communities, and is outcomes focused at a local level'.
- A set of design principles was also agreed, setting out that libraries should be:
  - Inclusive; offering a free safe space and a place to meet for all.
  - At the heart of the community reflecting local need, supporting improved outcomes.
  - Retaining a core library function in line with statutory requirements
  - Connecting with other services enabling access to information, advice and signposting to ensure we make every contact count.
  - Creative and mindful of wider cultural ambitions
  - Adopting a Partnership approach to working, which brings together a range of partner organisations, local groups and education institutions – working better together for greater results.

- This positive new vision, and a commitment to keep all 29 libraries open, was cemented with £700k funding contribution from Public Health, in recognition of the significant contribution that libraries already make to public health and wellbeing, which we will build on for the future, particularly around 4 key determinants of wellbeing:
  - School readiness
  - Skills and employment
  - Reducing social isolation
  - Reducing the impacts of poverty

The £350k balance from the original £1.05M savings target for 2020/21 was met from Reserves.

- As well as the core library offer that all libraries will continue to deliver, a 'tailored' offer will be developed for each library based on the individual needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. Two Council run libraries, Keighley and Wibsey, and one Community managed library, Allerton, have been selected as pilots for introducing the new Model and developing a tailored offer. The learning from these three pilots will be used to inform the roll out of the new model across the rest of the Service.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- The delivery of the new model has been severely impacted by the pandemic over the past 18 months, as well as the new staffing structure which significantly reduced staffing capacity, and delays to the appointment of a new Head of Libraries following the departure of the previous Head of Museums and Libraries.
- Nevertheless, much progress has been made in forging closer partnership working relationships with other services including Health & Wellbeing, Adult Social Care, Skills for Work, and Children's services, as well as local voluntary and community sector organisations. As a result, Skills for Work are now running regular basic skills courses in libraries, Wellbeing Advisors are poised to start using libraries as a base for providing pop up advice sessions, and libraries will soon be used as demonstrator sites for assistive technology, all contributing to key Council priorities.
- Plans have been drawn up for delivering a richer offer around the 4 Wellbeing priorities outlined above, and the new Model is being delivered via a range of projects including:
  - The introduction of a Business and IP (Intellectual Property) Centre at City Library, supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses, to be followed by smaller BIPC outlets in Shipley and Keighley Libraries over the coming year
  - A bid to Arts Council England for funding to support small-scale alterations to libraries to create more flexible spaces that can be used by a wide range of internal and external partners to deliver advice sessions, pop up services and community meeting spaces.
  - Training for library staff, including training in Health Literacy and Assistive Technology (as part of embedding Community Led Support)
  - A successful bid to LGA to be a pilot for exploring more integrated working between Libraries and Children's Services / Family Hubs

- In addition, the opportunity to align the delivery of the new libraries model with the Council's approach to Localities working has been recognised. As a connected network of safe, free and trusted spaces in local communities, they offer an ideal location for people to meet and for locality based teams to convene around. An LGA Peer Review of the Libraries Service in early 2021 endorsed the new model for the Service and encouraged the Council to see libraries as the 'front door' for many public and voluntary services and as a key player in the Localities agenda, given the wide range of partnerships libraries work with and the community spaces they provide.

#### **4. WIBSEY LIBRARY PILOT PROJECT**

- A Working Group has been formed to support the work to deliver the new model and develop a tailored offer for Wibsey Library, as one of our pilot libraries. The Working Group consists of representatives from Council services, local voluntary and community organisations, local staff and users, and local Ward Councillors. The Councillor representative is Cllr David Green.
- Analysis of the local area demographic profile has been completed, along with analysis of the current library offer to identify any gaps in delivery to meet local needs. These have been shared and discussed with the Working Group and a development plan for the library is being created.
- Concerns were raised by the Group about the condition of the current library building, and as a result building surveys and quotes have been obtained from the Council's Estates department to repair the existing floor and explore options for use of the small rooms at the rear of the building, in order to increase public and partner access to meeting space. The timescale for repairing the floor will impact on the implementation of changes at Wibsey Library.
- Wibsey Library staff have been among the first to undertake Public Health Level 1 health literacy training, and will also access Assistive Technology awareness training and demonstrations as soon as this is available.
- Joint working and promotion with Children's Services colleagues of the early years' offer for Wibsey and the surrounding area is actively planned, and a new Rhyme Time session at the library has been introduced.
- Library opening hours are being considered, with changes to allow one early morning opening to be piloted, at staff's suggestion.
- The next stage will be a comprehensive engagement exercise with local residents, library users and local organisations to find out more about how they would like the library to be tailored, as well as marketing to increase library use in Wibsey.

#### **5. UPDATE ON OTHER LIBRARIES IN THE SOUTH AREA**

- The Council runs two libraries in the Bradford South area, at Wibsey and Wyke, and supports three community managed libraries at Great Horton, Holmewood and Queensbury.

- Across the whole Library Service, the focus of the last 18 months has necessarily been on responding to the pandemic in line with changing Government guidance, ensuring staff and customers remain safe and adapting the service accordingly. By September 2021, the Service was able to report to DCMS that all Council libraries were operating a full service, and all except 4 community managed libraries had reopened. The Service has adapted well, introducing a new 'Order & Collect' service that started in July 2020, and seeing a significant increase in online delivery and participation. The highly popular Summer Reading Challenge took place both physically and digitally in 2020, and in 2021 saw a fourfold increase in participation from the previous year.
- Great Horton library holds regular book club meetings and is currently in the process of offering regular story times. In September 2021, the library's opening hours increased to 6 per week. The library is also involved with the work of several partners who operate services from Great Horton Village Hall, these include: Youth Services, Youth Association, St John's Red Letter Project, Breaking Boundaries BMDC, Social Prescribers and Friends of Brackenhill Park amongst others. These groups work closely with the Ward Officer and Local Ward Councillors in the form of the Great Horton Partnership which meets on a regular basis at the Village Hall when possible.
- Holmewood Library is part of the TFD Centre which is undergoing extensive redevelopment. The library will be moving into a different part of the building as part of this, still on the ground floor and directly accessible with its own entrance. The plans for the library are currently being finalised, and work is expected to commence around the end of January. The plans include an outdoor space which will also be refurbished to make a garden area usable for children's activities and a reading area. The volunteer group that previously ran the Library has disbanded, so recruitment of a new group to run the library will be required during the coming year.
- Queensbury Library offered some innovative services during lockdown including a 'Ready Read' book pack service (themed packs of books) for customers to collect from the library and 'The Walking Library', serving those who were unable to attend a library due to health concerns or because they were isolating. This unique service is still in operation to date and offers the opportunity for customers who feel alone and isolated to phone the special number provided and have a chat plus order reading material to be delivered to their doorstep. Current opening hours are 10 per week, and the library offers a monthly Story Time event.
- Wyke Library, based on the Appleton Academy site, continues to thrive and offers a range of regular activities and events. Issues over access through the school site to the library during the pandemic have now been resolved, although ad hoc closures during the winter due to staff sickness and bad weather are possible.

## **6. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- A capital fund of £200k has been set aside to support the introduction of the new model for Bradford Libraries. It has been agreed that £150k will support

adaptations at our 3 pilot libraries, whilst the remaining £50k will be used as match funding to leverage Arts Council funding, if the bid is successful. If the bid is not successful, then further capital funding will be required for roll out of the model to other libraries across the District.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

There are no significant risks arising out of the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

## **8. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

Under section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 it is the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. This report addresses that duty.

## **9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **9.1 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

- A briefing meeting with Wibsey ward councillors took place early on in the development of a Working Group for the Wibsey Library pilot project. It was agreed that Cllr Green would represent ward councillors on the group.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Committee Members are recommended to comment on and note the report.

## **11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- Report and Minutes of Executive meeting 24 March 2020, see item 115 on The Future of Bradford District Library Service:  
<https://bradford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=7327&Ver=4>
- Report and Minutes of Bradford South Area Committee 19 March 2019, see item 60 on Bradford Libraries:  
<https://bradford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6875&Ver=4>