

Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee to be held on 7 December 2023

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Subject:

Update on the work of libraries in Bradford South during 2023.

Summary statement:

This report provides an update on Bradford Libraries Service since the previous report on Libraries to this Committee in December 2022. It summarises overall developments in the Service, as well as a more detailed update on libraries in the South area.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

Bradford Libraries contribute 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.' This principle is demonstrated in our work with Community Managed Libraries and with a wide range of internal and external partners.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Healthy People & Places

1. SUMMARY

This report provides a brief overview of developments across Bradford Libraries over the past 12 months which impacted on South Area libraries, and an update on each of the libraries in the Bradford South area. A more detailed update on Bradford Libraries service as a whole is due to be presented to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee for Regeneration & Environment on 5 December 2023 and can be found on the Council's website.

2. SERVICE WIDE DEVELOPMENTS

Libraries as Warm Spaces

During Winter 2022/3 (October – March), all Council libraries (and many Community Managed Libraries) registered as '[Warm Spaces](#)' offering a warm and welcoming place to gather for free, with a hot drink and the opportunity for a chat and to take part in activities including reading, jigsaws, games etc. Funding to offer hot drinks, more easy seating and board games was provided as part of the Household Support Fund. Across all Council libraries there were 33,448 recorded uses of the Warm Spaces offer, with 1528 at Wibsey Library and 556 at Wyke Library. Wibsey Library staff made the following comments about the offer at the library:

“At Wibsey the Warm Hub is very popular with everyone especially families and elderly people. It has enabled them to come out to a safe warm place, where they can chat to other people and feel included and valued. A family group said that the children never want to leave the library now and the little boy had actually started to read more and enjoy it after losing interest in reading. All users felt it was a very welcoming space where they could read the newspapers, meet other people, do a jigsaw or just be in amongst other people. Staff were able to identify a vulnerable elderly man and get him help with Social Services.”

Management remodelling

In Spring 2023, a revised management structure was implemented following staff and union consultation and engagement. The new structure is based on the five constituency areas of the district, aligning management of libraries with other area-based teams. This change added capacity to an overstretched operational management team, moving from three Team Leaders to five Area Managers, each responsible for a smaller number of Council libraries alongside community managed libraries in their area. The Area Manager for South Bradford is Sharon Devi reporting to the City Libraries Manager, Mandy Webb. Mandy and Sharon attend Area Partnership meetings and are supporting the priorities in the South Area Locality Plan where possible.

Opening hours review

During August – September 2023, public consultation was carried out on proposals to change library opening hours with a view to reducing the number of evening sessions. Data analysis had revealed that evening sessions were underused in libraries across the district, and that Bradford Libraries was offering a generous amount of evening opening compared to library services elsewhere. Since a restructure in 2019, the service was struggling with capacity to meet these opening hours, resulting in a high number of ad hoc temporary library closures. 76% of respondents to the survey agreed with the proposals, and the changes are set to be

implemented from 4th December 2023. For both Wibsey and Wyke libraries this means they will reduce from offering two late evenings per week to one (Thursday) and will open 9.00 – 5.00 on other days.

Self-service upgrade

December 2023 will also see the installation of new self-service kiosks across all Council libraries, including Wibsey and Wyke. As well as offering improved functionality including on-screen promotions, the kiosks will offer the ability to pay charges using chip and pin technology. The Service has bid for external funding to provide wifi enabled printing which, if successful, will integrate with self-service payment at the kiosks. This is expected to be a popular service judging by feedback received from a public consultation on IT in libraries, carried out earlier this year.

3. WIBSEY LIBRARY (Council managed)

As reported last year, Wibsey Library was closed for an extended period between February and late September 2022 due to the need to resolve building issues and undertake a full refurbishment. The library reopened on 26th September 2022, and performance figures for the 2022/3 financial year are reflective of this closure. The table below provides an overview Key Performance Indicators for the library, showing comparisons between the last financial year, the previous financial year, and pre-pandemic levels. The final columns show the percentage recovery in 2022/3 compared to 2019/20. The recovery figure has been calculated by doubling the half year figures from October 2022 – March 2023. Figures in bold show where the library performed better than average.

| WIBSEY LIBRARY | 2019/20 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 Actual (full year) | % recovery (full year) | % recovery (all libs) |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Library visits | 30,123 | 9,339 | 13,261 (26,522) | 88% | 73% |
| Library loans | 57,866 | 8168 | 16,623 (33,246) | 57% | 64% |
| PC sessions | 5,769 | 537 | 657 (1,314) | 22% | 35% |
| New members | 451 | 234 | 451 (902) | 100% | 112% |
| Childrens activity attendees | 450 | 39 | 741 (1482) | 330% | 115% |
| Adults activity attendees | 1,345 | 340 | 537 (1074) | 80% | 131% |

It is pleasing to see that visits to the library recovered to near pre-pandemic levels and exceed the average for all libraries across the district. Efforts have gone into reinstating and enhancing the offer for children and families as part of the development plan for the library, and this is reflected in the large increase in engagement in children's activities.

Regular activities at the library include weekly Storytime & Craft, Rhymetime, Knit & Natter, Chess Club and Employment Support Hub (in partnership with Skills

House); fortnightly Afternoon Tea Party; and monthly Reconnecting Veterans and Book Group meetings. Special events over the past year included a Summer Workshop with the National Science & Media Museum, Summer Reading Challenge events, Teddy Bears Picnic, Kings Coronation activities and a display for Eid. The library has also planned additional events for Baby Week, Christmas activities and events with Impact Gamers.

3. **WYKE LIBRARY (Council managed)**

Wyke Library consistently performs extremely well, above the district average for nearly all indicators, and is a testament to the hard work and enthusiasm of the library team there, who were nominated for Team of the Year award.

| WYKE LIBRARY | 2019/20 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | % recovery | % recovery (all libraries) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Library visits | 22,225 | 9,441 | 18,188 | 82% | 73% |
| Library loans | 27,225 | 14,276 | 17,686 | 65% | 64% |
| PC sessions | 3,313 | 597 | 1,301 | 39% | 35% |
| New members | 351 | 267 | 536 | 153% | 112% |
| Children's activity attendees | 1,388 | 944 | 2,067 | 149% | 115% |
| Adult's activity attendees | 1,028 | 599 | 871 | 85% | 131% |

Regular activities include weekly Learn My Way (basic IT training) sessions, Rhymetimes, Baby Friendship Group, Knit and Natter and Storytimes, and monthly Book Group. The library has contacted Chas@St Vincent's to ask if they could offer Universal Credit support sessions. Special events over the past year include Christmas Craft Fair (raising £3000 for Lord Mayor's Appeal), Family Movie Night and Pyjama giveaway (over 50 donated sets provided), school class visits, Summer Reading Challenge events, Teddy Bears Picnic, Harry Potter Book Night, breastfeeding support sessions and baby massage, Early Help Team visits, Yorkshire Day event, Reading Pictures: Seeing Stories event, Roald Dahl day fundraiser, Eid display, Coronation Tea Party. More events and partnerships are under development.

Wyke Library benefited from being included in the *Libraries as Locality Hubs* Arts Council England's *Libraries Improvement Funded* project, which is making adaptations to 10 libraries across the district. This has seen the installation of a much-needed small office and kitchenette which is used by partners for confidential help sessions, to support making refreshments for activities and events, and as a space for staff to take breaks.

4. **GREAT HORTON LIBRARY (Community managed)**

The table below provides an overview Key Performance Indicators for the library. Unfortunately, there are gaps in the data where statistics were not provided.

| GREAT HORTON LIBRARY | 2019/20 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | % recovery | % recovery (all libraries) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Library visits | - | 651 | 1,853 | - | 73% |
| Library loans | 3,039 | 1,355 | 1,551 | 51% | 64% |
| PC sessions | 1,196 | 16 | 30 | 3% | 35% |
| New members | 147 | 20 | 40 | 27% | 112% |
| Children's activity attendees | - | 99 | 85 | - | 115% |
| Adult's activity attendees | - | - | 305 | - | 131% |

Many community managed libraries suffered a loss of volunteer hours as a result of the pandemic, and have been slowly rebuilding since then. Great Horton Library had to reduce its opening hours from 25 hours previously down to 10 hours, opening on just 3 days per week. However, since 6th November 2023 the library has been able to significantly extend opening hours again to 22 hours per week spread over 5 days including Saturdays. This is a huge step forward for the library and should see an impact on its recovery next year.

Regular events include weekly 'Stay and Play' Rhymetime and Storytime and monthly Sensory Play and Oral Hygiene sessions with the Early Years Alliance and Bradford Under 5's Association, as well as Great Horton Library Book Worm. The library is in discussion with a local primary school to hold a weekly Childrens Book Club on Saturdays.

Great Horton Village Hall works closely with a wide range of partners which offer their services to the library customers: Social Prescribers Ridge Medical Centre; Great Horton Youth Association; Bradford Council Youth Services; Yorkshire Wildlife Trust; Bradford Council Neighbourhood Wardens; Bins Collection Team.

5. **HOLME WOOD LIBRARY (Community managed)**

| HOLME WOOD LIBRARY | 2019/20 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | % recovery | % recovery (all libraries) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Library visits | - | - | 274 | - | 73% |
| Library loans | 1,327 | 10 | 180 | 14% | 64% |
| PC sessions | - | - | - | - | 35% |
| New members | 58 | 0 | 21 | 36% | 112% |
| Children's activity attendees | - | 0 | 71 | - | 115% |
| Adult's activity attendees | - | - | 25 | - | 131% |

The new library space was launched as part of the refurbished TFD Centre in December 2022, with a variety of events across the Centre. It is a small but light, bright, modern and flexible space with children's and adult's reading areas, public PCs, toilets and kitchenette. It benefits from a courtyard garden area that was also refurbished. Unfortunately, it has proved difficult to recruit volunteers to run the library, the group that previously fulfilled that role has fallen away and there are currently just 2 library volunteers. The library opens 12 hours per week across 3 weekdays.

Rhyme time, Storytime and Crafts sessions are held weekly, and Early Help South Family Hub hold weekly drop-in sessions, supporting the community with various issues. The library space is also used by other partners and agencies, and discussion continues between library staff and the Neighbourhoods Team about ways to increase use of the library. The Area Libraries Manager is also arranging meetings with local schools to encourage them to make regular class visits to the library.

6. QUEENSBURY LIBRARY (Community managed)

| QUEENSBURY LIBRARY | 2019/20 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | % recovery | % recovery (all libraries) |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------|----------------------------|
| Library visits | - | 1,059 | 1,731 | - | 73% |
| Library loans | 3,420 | 1,409 | 1,226 | 36% | 64% |
| PC sessions | - | - | - | - | 35% |
| New members | 52 | 42 | 54 | 104% | 112% |
| Children's activity attendees | 220 | 0 | 153 | 70% | 115% |
| Adult's activity attendees | - | - | 38 | - | 131% |

The library is open 10 days per week across 4 days including Saturday. It is making a good recovery since pandemic restrictions lifted, and has linked up with a local care home, where volunteers take books for the residence to choose, these are then issued on the Library Management System.

7. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

There are no specific financial or resource issues to highlight for libraries in Bradford South. For the Library Service as a whole there remains a c£400k pressure from unachievable savings and rising costs, which is being dealt with as part of the Council's current financial review.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

No significant risks have been identified.

9. LEGAL APPRAISAL

No legal risks have been identified.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 AREA COMMITTEE LOCALITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Library managers have been involved in the development of the South Area Locality Action Plan and are committed to libraries contributing to the priorities of the local area as appropriate. There is great scope for libraries to contribute in the South Area, for example:

- Wibsey Library acting as a hub in the South Area for the community

- Library activities to reduce loneliness and isolation
- Early Years support and activities
- Libraries connecting people to other organisations and services locally

11. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to note the progress that has been made since the previous report to this Committee and ways in which local libraries can contribute to the priorities in the Local Area Plan.

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Previous report to this Committee in December 2022: [Bradford Council - Agenda for Bradford South Area Committee on Thursday, 1st December, 2022, 6.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) see item 35.