

## BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

Report of the Executive  
Director - Communities

### RE-MODELLING CUSTOMER SERVICES (including Libraries) – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for an initial 6 week period of community engagement in relation to the future delivery model for public libraries and customer service. The purpose of the community engagement will be to explore with members of the public and other stakeholders the factors which are important in developing a sustainable model that meets customer expectations, fulfils our statutory responsibilities and supports the delivery of the Customer Services Strategy.

#### 2. Recommendations

##### 2.1 That the Council agrees:

- **A 6 week period of community engagement to inform the development of a new operating model for Customer Services Operations (including Libraries) in order to build a modern, dynamic and sustainable public library and customer service operation for the borough, which meets the statutory requirements.**

#### 3. Introduction

- 3.1 Customer Services Operations is part of Business Unit 7, Customer Services and was formed under Future Council in 2015 to deliver the frontline customer service functions for the Council. The Service Area is responsible for the delivery of the statutory Public Library Service, the statutory Registration Service, face to face customer service appointments on behalf of Finance and Berneslai Homes, and the Council switchboard and Contact Centre telephone access for Berneslai Homes and a range of Council Services for the Place Directorate, including a 24/7 365 day emergency telephone service for Berneslai Homes (repairs) and Highways. The frontline staff in libraries deliver the public library service and face to face customer service enquiries and support.
- 3.2 The Council's Customer Services Strategy was approved in 2015 and the Future Council 2020 Outcomes include the target of '70% of contacts are completed online via self-service'. Customer Services has already seen a significant year on year reduction in the number of face to face appointments as the ability for customers to access the council increases and more customers are able to self-serve. This is noticeable in relation to appointments conducted on behalf of Financial Services and Berneslai Homes is also seeking to migrate more of its

tenant transactions online. This therefore has an impact on the requirements for face to face customer services delivered through the public libraries in the future.

- 3.3 The Council must meet its statutory responsibilities under the Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964 (Section7), to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it. The future operating model must be fit for purpose, sustainable and meet the future needs of the residents of Barnsley, within the context of the Council's Medium Term financial position. The model also needs to deliver a modern and dynamic service which is adaptable to the changing environment, and has the capacity to be proactive and responsive to new opportunities
- 3.4 The public library service is currently delivered across 15 libraries, with 10 managed by Customer Services, 4 managed by Place Directorate and 1 library delivered by Priory Campus under a MOU. Council staffing across all sites is stretched and there is limited capacity to deliver the full range of support and promotional activities expected from a modern public library service. The current structure is not sustainable and is not fit for purpose in delivering all the services and activities expected of a modern public library service.
- 3.5 Due to Customer Services including the statutory public library service, there is a need to engage with members of the public and key stakeholders in developing a new model for the whole service, alongside information from a local needs assessment and equalities impact assessment. Once the model is developed there would be a period of statutory public consultation on the model and the strategy for the Service.

#### **4. Proposal and justification**

- 4.1 The proposal is to conduct a 6 week period of community engagement activity around the future delivery model for the face to face service in relation to the public library service. The engagement activity is intended to explore how customers currently use libraries, what will be important to them in the future, what they value now and how their needs are changing. The engagement activity will also seek their views on potential methods for changing the delivery model. The engagement activity will also seek the views of non-users around how the Service can widen its appeal and encourage additional usage. An engagement plan has been developed to support a thorough and comprehensive programme of engagement.
- 4.2 The engagement activity will include the use of questionnaires, drop ins, forum events especially with equalities groups and young people, engagement with staff, Elected Members and other key stakeholders. We will also engage with Area Councils and Ward Alliances and seek to engage with specific communities that host the Libraries to explore opportunities to redesign the Service.
- 4.3 The engagement activity will cover both library and customer service functions, to ensure a robust and transparent process is followed which both meets the council's duty and mitigates against the risk of Judicial Review.
- 4.4 By undertaking a period of public engagement the council is demonstrating its four core values of:
  - Team - by inviting the local community to co-produce the new model,

- Honest - by explaining the need for change and the factors affecting the current delivery model
- Proud - as the Service has a long history of high customer satisfaction and the council is committed to continuously improve the offer for local communities
- Excellent - as we need a model which is fit for purpose, sustainable and delivers an excellent service for the residents of Barnsley

## **5. Consideration of alternative approaches**

- 5.1 This is the initial phase of the re-modelling exercise and the engagement activity is intended to inform the development of the model. Therefore there are no alternative approaches and a further report will be presented to Cabinet on the findings of the engagement and the proposed future operating model. These proposals would then be subject to public consultation before any final report and decision by Cabinet.

## **6. Implications for local people / service users**

- 6.1 The purpose of the engagement activity is to provide the opportunity for members of the public and stakeholders to share information on their needs, consider alternative options for the future delivery model and contribute to the future design and strategy. This will allow the Council to identify the potential impact and implications from a changed model.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 The cost of the engagement activity will be contained within the budgets for the Service Area and the Customer Services Implementation Project.

## **8. Employee implications**

- 8.1 There are no employee implications as a result of this report.

## **9 Communications implications**

- 9.1 In order to engage as widely as possible a communications strategy will be required to promote the engagement activity and encourage the participation of customers, non-users, partners and stakeholders. The engagement events will be publicised through the local media, on the council's website, via social media, in all libraries and in a range of council and community buildings.
- 9.2 The new Town Centre Library and Community Hub will not only host the new modern library, but will offer a range of high spec IT facilities, multifunctional meeting spaces and a rooftop terrace ideal for social events, meetings, performance and exhibitions. This building will form the cornerstone of the Library and Customer Service offer for our customers.
- 9.3 To reassure members of the public that the re-modelling of Customer Services is a separate matter to the Better Barnsley project and will not negatively impact the construction of the new Central Library, previously approved by Cabinet. Equally, the capital costs of the new library are funded via the Town Centre

redevelopment Capital funding stream and not within the revenue budget that Customer Services will need to operate within.

## **10. Consultations**

Julia Bell, Director of Human Resources, Performance and Communications.  
Faith Ridgwick, Equality and Inclusion Officer  
Mark Bell, Strategic Finance Manager  
Frances Foster, Director of Finance Assets and IS  
Andrew Frosdick, Director, Legal & Governance  
Garry Kirk, Service Director, Legal Services  
Ian Turner, Service Director, Governance & Member Support  
Wendy Lowder, Interim Executive Director, Communities  
Tom Smith, Head of Employment and Skills  
Paul Hussey, Interim Service Director, Stronger, Safer & healthier Communities  
Ann O'Flynn, Service Director, Customer Services  
Diana Terris, Chief Executive  
Matt Gladstone, Executive Director Place  
Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director, People  
Julia Burrows, Director of Public Health  
Trade Unions

## **11. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework**

- 11.1 The services delivered by Customer Services primarily support the council's priority for 'Strong and resilient communities'. However, the work of the public library service contributes to a much wider agenda around raising educational attainment through language development, reading and learning, supporting people into employment through free access to ICT and Wi-Fi and assistance in Job Clubs and volunteering opportunities, and improving health and well-being both through access to information and self-help materials, reducing social isolation and loneliness through groups and activities and supporting community cohesion.

## **12. Promoting equality, diversity, and social inclusion**

- 12.1 Discussions have taken place with the Equality and Inclusion Officer and an initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been compiled. The EIA has identified the potential for some protected characteristics groups to be affected by a changing delivery model and therefore the immediate action is to undertake the engagement activity to explore any concerns and issues further. The community engagement will actively seek the views of representatives of the different equalities forums and throughout the re-modelling process the EIA will be updated as new information becomes available.

A comprehensive local needs assessment is being compiled which will inform the development of the new model and a revised EIA in terms of potential community impacts.

## **13. Tackling the Impact of Poverty**

- 13.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment has identified that individuals and families on low income could be potentially adversely affected depending on the preferred

new delivery model. Therefore the community engagement will ascertain the impact potential changes could have on this group and take this into account when developing the new model and any mitigating actions.

#### **14. Tackling health inequalities**

14.1 Public libraries support health and well-being of both individuals and communities and this area forms one of the National Offers for libraries. There is the potential for a new delivery model to impact on a community's health, for example if access to community facilities, groups or personal contact is reduced, but equally there are opportunities for this to be enhanced or increased through new partnerships and activities. The engagement activity will therefore consider this impact and any mitigating actions and a health impact assessment will also be conducted.

#### **15. Reduction of crime and disorder**

15.1 Public libraries contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder by organising events and activities for all ages including children and young people. They are also safe, neutral community spaces which are valued within communities. The aim of a new delivery model is to increase the capacity of the service and its partners to offer a wider range of activities within communities which will continue to promote positive activities and therefore contribute to the reduction of anti social behaviour within a community.

#### **16. Risk management issues**

16.1 In re-modelling Customer Services there is the potential for significant change to the delivery of the statutory public library service. A rigorous and robust process must be followed in terms of community engagement and public consultation to avoid challenge through Judicial Review.

16.2 Equally the new delivery model must meet the council's statutory duty under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act, and the Secretary of State can intervene and order an Inquiry and transfer powers if the council is found in breach of that duty.

16.3 By implementing the recommendation, an excellent process of transparent and meaningful community engagement will be achieved, to inform a new model based on the evidence gathered. .

16.4 If the recommended option is not approved, Cabinet should be aware of the risk of a future Judicial Review, reputational damage to the council, adverse publicity and lengthy and financially damaging legal action.

16.5 There will be a number of new risks to consider as a result of commencing community engagement including the capacity of the Service to complete the work in a timely manner, the capacity of support Services to provide adequate resource when required and the risk of adverse publicity and increased concern and potential protest from residents in local Wards. These risks will be mitigated by careful planning, the development of an open and honest communications strategy and by devoting time to build relationships and trust with all stakeholders. The engagement phase is a genuine opportunity to listen to

stakeholders, address their concerns and integrate their requirements into a future strategy and model.

- 16.6 There is a risk of perception from the public that we are building a new central library to enable the closure of the district libraries. Whilst we can't eliminate this risk we must be clear that the new central library will be the cornerstone of our library and customer service provision. The new building is funded through the Better Barnsley project as part of the total development of the Town Centre, and as such has no impact on the Customer Services base budget.

**17. Health, safety, and emergency resilience issues**

- 17.1 A stress risk assessment conducted by the Service concluded that a new delivery model was required to reduce the impact of the current structure on staff, and enhance the capacity of the Service to deliver the full range of activities to meet the council's priorities, deliver the National Offers for Libraries and continue to deliver a consistent and excellent Service to meet the statutory duty of a 'comprehensive and efficient' service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

**18. Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights**

There are no implications in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights.

**19. Conservation of biodiversity**

There are no implications for the conservation of biodiversity.

**20. Glossary**

EIA Equalities Impact Assessment


**21. List of appendices**

Appendix 1 - Equalities Impact Assessment 25 July 2016  
Appendix 2 – Library Service Redesign Community Engagement Strategy

**22. Background papers**

N/A

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Financial Implications /  
Consultation .....  
(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer)