

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LIBRARIES REVIEW OPTIONS

Context

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 states, that all authorities have a statutory responsibility to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons.” Local authorities have a duty to allow free access for all who wish to use it, but their obligation to lend extends only to those who live, work or study full-time in their area.

In recent years we’ve seen more people visiting libraries, but less books being borrowed. There’s more demand for digital and online services, for internet access and for flexible opening hours. Due to the changing demands, advancing technology and reducing budgets it’s really important that our library service evolves to meet these changing needs. In future we need to support a wide range of council strategies- Digital First, Barnsley Health and Care Together, Public Health Strategy, Jobs Plan & Customer Service Strategy – and to support our libraries to deliver ‘Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021’ and encourage a ‘Libraries First’ approach.

The Library Service forms part of a broader customer services offer comprising of the contact centre, the web development team including digital champions & the service development team. From this cluster of services a financial saving of £872k was proposed to be achieved by 2019/20 from which it was anticipated that £165k would be derived from the Libraries Review.

Financial Context of the Libraries

The cost for Customer Services for Libraries is currently £1.65m, with an additional cost for the Assets Business Unit of £771k per annum.

The costs below are based on the 2017 population figures from the recently refreshed Local Needs Assessment and Active Borrowers* usage

**Active Borrower- anyone who has borrowed or renewed a book or item in the last 12 months.*

Customer Services Costs

£1.65m / 241,218 (Barnsley residents) = Cost per Barnsley resident of £6.84 per annum.

£1.65m / 16,336 (Active Borrowers) = Cost per Active Borrower of £101 per annum.

Customer Services and Assets Costs

£2,421m / 241,218 (Barnsley Residents) = Cost per Barnsley resident of £10.04 per annum.

£2,421m / 16,336, (Active Borrowers) = Cost per Active Borrowers of £148.20 per annum.

NOTE- the above figures do not include the budget for Libraries managed by Adult Skills and Community Learning in relation to staffing, supplies, services and transport.

Approach to the Libraries Review

The Service has completed the following activities to date:

- two periods of engagement activity
- analysed performance data
- produced a local needs assessment
- produced an equalities impact assessment.

As an extension of conversations we had in 2016 a number of surveys were designed to capture the views of members of the public and library staff to help shape the future of Barnsley's library service. These surveys were open between October 2017 and March 2018 and promoted via the BMBC website and in libraries themselves.

In conjunction with the surveys we also held events with community groups and partners in each library area to design the future libraries model.

Furthermore we also monitored comments made on Twitter and Facebook using the hashtag #LetsTalkLibraries.

Current Position

Taking the outputs from the activities above we have produced an option paper for each library within which a recommended option is proposed. In bringing the recommended option forward we have:

- Considered the preferred options following the community engagement - it was clear from the engagement that at this point in time (whilst we were not publicly stating that closure may be a possibility) there was little appetite for fully community managed libraries.
- Recognised that members of the public value their local library and the staff delivering the Service and that those who use the Service are very satisfied with it.
- Considered how we might best achieve the KLOE saving of £165,000 – the traditional use of libraries is declining, and the performance data leads us to believe that the current opening hours can be reduced in order to achieve the KLOE saving of £165,000 whilst maintaining a reasonable level of opening hours and continued access to the service and / or buildings across the borough.

Proposed Model

A tiered model is proposed, based on size of libraries and current performance levels to develop a consistent offer across the borough. The table below shows the tiers each community library would be allocated to, with the Library@theLightbox being the town's flagship library. The tiers primarily relate to the number of staffed opening hours, but implicit in this is the opportunity for a wider range of activities to be delivered from the larger and busier buildings. To ensure consistency across each tier, this results in additional staff hours for one library as currently they have less resource than similar libraries.

Within these options we are able to create a hybrid offer where library/community groups can access the building on closed days on a trusted key holder basis to use the building

for meetings and activities, thus extending access to a community building. Conversations will take place with any groups affected by changes to opening hours. There is also the opportunity to develop a volunteer role for opening up the library for group meetings.

As part of the public consultation the Service has proposed new staffed opening hours based on performance, visits, use by groups and impact on current or potential activity, but local communities and library users will be invited as part of the consultation to co-design the best solution in regard to the hours.

Four libraries (*marked ** below*) are managed by Adult Skills & Community Learning (ASCL) (Place Directorate) and based on the performance evidence these libraries have been allocated to the appropriate tier. However, the staff in these libraries are not funded by the council but through ESFA under contract. This requires ASCL to deliver a reception function and therefore no additional resourcing is required by the library service which enables the current hours to be maintained. Whilst this currently offers a differentiated service to the tiered model proposed, should the EFSA funding be unavailable in the future then a further review would be required to identify resources aligned to the appropriate tier based on performance and community need.

Priory Library (marked * below) is delivered by Priory Campus under a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) and whilst currently this is run at no cost to the library service, to continue this provision in the future will require a rental contribution for the space utilised.

Summary of preferred options

Library	Proposal	Current Hours	Proposed BMBC funded hours	EFSA funded hours	Saving
Central	Reduce opening hours – supported by Open+ self-service technology	49.5	47		£105,351
Tier 1			37		
Cudworth**	No change	44.5		44.5	0
Goldthorpe	Reduce opening hours	42.5	37		£28,018
Hoyland	Reduce opening hours	45	37		£28,797
Mapplewell & Staincross	Reduce opening hours	45	37		-£4,993
Penistone**	No change	40.5		40.5	0
Royston	Reduce opening hours	45	37		£3,139
Wombwell	Reduce opening hours	42.5	37		£19,070
Tier 2			24		
Darfield	Reduce opening hours	31	24		£9,681
Dodworth	Reduce opening hours	31	24		£8,471
Grimethorpe**	No change	39.5		39.5	0
Priory	No change	32.5	32.5*		-£5,500
Roundhouse**	Reduce opening hours	41.5		39.5	0
Thurnscoe	Reduce opening hours	31.5	24		£6,155
Worsbrough	Reduce opening hours	31	24		£9,681

Totals (excl. Silverdale)		592.5	360.5	164	£207,870
Overall Totals			524.5 (-11.5%)		
Closure					
Silverdale	Discontinue book collection	9	0		0

Challenges

- Performance in our libraries has generally declined over the last 5 years, with less use of the traditional book borrowing service, but a greater interest in activities, groups and using the library as a community meeting place. All libraries offer a range of activities and are used by a variety of different council services, external partners and community groups.

Key performance for the whole Service illustrates the decline in traditional library activity. The % increase in computer use is predominantly due to a previous decision to reduce the number of PCs available during this period. The visit figures include the total number of visits to shared buildings, so are not wholly related to library activity. The increase in visits also reflects the changing nature of the libraries hosting a range of community activities.

	2013	2017	% Change
Visits	746,464	823,244	+10.3%
Active Borrowers	26,510	16,366	-38.2%
Issues	581,820	426,993	-26.6%
ICT Hours Used	78,960	63,176	-20.0%
% ICT Take Up	22.9%	34.0%	+11.1%

- Previous restructures have resulted in the loss of middle tier and specialist roles which has left the Service with reduced capacity and skills for development activity to deliver new services and behaviour changes. This also resulted in a stress risk assessment from managers and the Service suffers from increased staff turnover due to the lack of opportunity for progression through grades.
- Whilst there is a low base of active borrowers/users across our libraries, there is the potential for a strong public reaction to any perceived negative change.
- The Library@theLightbox project is on the same timeline as the Libraries Review and presents another potential conflict in terms of the message and the false perception that the new library is drawing resources from the community libraries.
- We have provided more opportunities for members of the public to actively participate in this Review and contribute ideas through the engagement activity, but the response rate has been low and not statistically valid.
- The service has a financial KLOE saving of £165,000 to be met by April 2019.

Opportunities

- The proposals enable all communities with a full library offer currently to retain their local library.
- Self-service technology planned for Library@theLightbox will enable an increased number of access hours to be provided, including Sundays and evenings throughout the week.
- Libraries in areas within the Principal Towns Project will be included in feasibility studies to be undertaken to review the use of total assets within the community. This may or may not deliver a plan for further co-location and integration with strategic partners.
- The proposals enable the Service to meet the KLOE saving of £165,000 and re-invest in a new structure which will seek to address some of the issues relating to the stress risk assessment, opportunities for progression and engagement roles to improve the service offer in line with the new Library Strategy and Digital First and take advantage of alternative grant funding to develop the offer.
- There is an opportunity to develop clear service standards and branding, in line with the Glassworks, across all libraries to refresh the offer, create one brand and stimulate interest.

Risks

- Whilst the evidence points to a reduction in the library opening hours in libraries managed by Adult Skills & Community Learning (Place Directorate) the proposal is for no change. The rationale for this is that staff in those Libraries are not funded by the council but through ESFA under contract. This offers a differentiated service to the tiered model proposed for the 10 libraries managed by Customer Services. The public and staff perception of this may not be well understood.
- There is a risk that this proposal will be viewed as 'salami slicing' and it is not an indication that a similar approach would be viable in the future should further budget reductions be required.
- There is a need to effectively restructure the Service in order to address the current decline in usage, and without re-investment of any savings beyond the identified KLOE the Service will continue to decline.
- There is a very tight timeline for restructuring and there is a potential risk that this may not be concluded for 1/4/19.
- Without capital investment in the estate the environment will not be conducive to a modern and attractive offer, limit our ability to implement a consistent brand across all libraries and decrease the likelihood of re-energising interest in libraries.
- There is a risk that the improved offer at Library@theLightbox may reduce usage further in the community libraries.

Next steps

Subject to Cabinet approval a 3 month period of formal public consultation on these options will commence in June 2018.

Following analysis of the results a further report will be brought back to Cabinet for a final decision.

The consultation will also cover a new Libraries Strategy, which will outline the strategic focus to create a more modern, dynamic and adaptable service that better meets the needs of the community in the future.