

Rep:0022R Appendix



**Best Value Review Libraries Museum and Archive
Services**

Panel's Findings
June 2003

Executive Summary

The panel were greatly impressed by the thoroughness and professionalism displayed by the Review team and in particular the Library, Museums and Archive management team in their conduct of the review. Over a two day period the panel were able to scrutinise the evidence supporting the self assessment and receive a range of feedback which positively supported the overall vision identified by the service.

The panel endorsed the key recommendations of the review in particular:

- **The use of flagship developments tied to a rationalisation of service;**
 - **Changes to staff structures;**
 - **Roles and culture to better match capacity to known and anticipated demand;**
 - **Improved performance management and marketing to widen the user base;**
 - **Targeting services to outcomes more effectively**
- and
- **A programme of investment.**

The proposals are challenging and ambitious and constitute a necessary step change in the service. With the support of the Council's leadership and the expertise of a highly competent management team the panel feels that these ambitions can be fulfilled transforming Brent Libraries Museum and Archive into a beacon service for the borough.

Section Two

Introduction

A Best Value Panel was established to examine Brent's Library, Museum and Archive Services. The Panel consisted of the following members:

- Independent Convenor – Andy Hardy
- Director of Arts & Libraries, Norfolk County Council – Terry Turner (Independent Expert)
- Elected Member – Cllr. Lesley Jones
- Head Teacher, Mitchell Brook Primary School – Soheila Matheson
- Finance Officer – Minaxi Barot
- Policy and Performance Officer – Bridget Duley

The Panel met over two days on Tuesday 25th March 2003 at Brent Town Hall and Wednesday 26th March 2003 at Willesden Library Centre. The service prepared a very thorough self assessment supported by 27 appendices containing supporting evidence of their findings which clearly demonstrate that the service has been thoroughly tested against the 4 C's. A frame of reference for the panel was prepared by the Policy and Performance Officer which is attached to this report (Appendix 1) together with the self assessment report (Appendix 2) and the supporting evidence, (Appendices 3 to 30).

The panel spent the first day hearing a presentation from the Services management team followed by interviews with managers where a number of preset questions were answered. The second day was spent interviewing a whole range of users and staff, the Director of EAL and the Lead Member for Education.

Section Three

Findings

	Findings	
Policy and Strategy	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Leadership	Highly committed managers, aware of the issues/strengths/weaknesses, aware of who best practice authorities are and why, supporting and recognising staff.	Politically libraries have not been a high enough priority in Brent to attract the necessary funding to keep pace with other London Boroughs. Recently funding increased due to statutory library standards. View on role of libraries, museum and archive not widely shared. This review will be used as a tool for starting this process.
Clear and challenging aims and objectives	New visions and objectives developed as part of the review; Reflect national drivers, corporate objectives and community needs.	
Honest and thorough self assessment	Self assessment highlighted strengths and weaknesses; Best Value process used as an opportunity to develop and improve the service; Good evidence provided – shows that management information is genuinely used to develop the service.	
Strategic focus on what matters	Targeting services to meet strategic objectives – large increases in stock fund, recently appointed 2 key staff	

	Findings	
	to address issues around children and young people. Recognition that if resources are spread too thin, very little will be achieved.	
Challenging and ambitious plans	One flagship, two or three centres of excellence, local specialisms; Proven approach in other authorities;	Reliant on a series of actions which at this stage are uncertain; Need to plan for various options – status quo, status quo with improvements, through to radical redeployment of resources (step change).
Based on present and future needs and expectations of stakeholders	<p><i>Museum and Archive:</i> Actively profiles usage (including ethnicity) and targets those not using the service; Regular user questionnaires – to assess quality and improvements Museum Community Advocates scheme – highlighted as example of good practice in the report prepared by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport called <i>Centres for social change: museums, galleries and archives for all</i>; Exhibitions planned with community representatives Regularly attend Area Consultative Forum Meetings</p> <p><i>Libraries:</i> Bi-annual user survey & Bi-annual children's user survey Formal complaints system & suggestion Forms Evaluation forms after events GIS mapping – who is using different libraries</p>	<p><i>Museum and Archive:</i> Review highlighted that not pro-active in terms of non-users needs. This is reflected in action plan;</p> <p><i>Libraries:</i> Friends groups – review highlighted that could be used more effectively</p>

	Findings	
	54% staff from ethnic minorities and most live in Brent	
Staff involvement	Staff involved in developing policy; Staff aware of how they contribute to Corporate Objectives; Ealing Road Library – staff heavily involved in the refurbishment.	
Performance Management/ Processes	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Performance against key PIs		Performance within lower quartile
Well managed service	Staff aware of future challenges/threats, loyal and committed; Use of performance information to make changes and drive improvements.	
Culture of continuous improvement	Regular changes to improve the service –	
Aware of Best Performers	Members of many organisations – Assoc. of Chief Librarians, West London Chief Librarians' Group, London Library Development Agency, Benchmarking Club, informal networks; Looked at CIPFA stats, mystery shopping exercises Looked at provision in other boroughs and adopted some of their good practice.	
Performance Management Systems	Monthly management team meetings review performance information; Plans to review achievement against Service	Use of performance information generally not systematic & not regularly examined to enable managers and others to focus on what matters;

	Findings	
	Operational Plans quarterly instead of annually	recognised as a weakness and reflected in Action Plan
Targets	Targets set in EAL Development Plan, Service Operational Plans and the Annual Library Plan (although this will no longer be a statutory requirement); Emphasis till now is meeting the public library standards – 19 standards, Brent meets 9 already and nearly meets a further 5.	Opening hours is the most challenging target and is a priority – extra funding sought to reflect this priority.
Efficient and effective	Some initiatives are assessed for their effectiveness – Summer Reading Scheme, Children's Libraries Initiative (increased number of children joining the library), impact of increased opening hours.	Not all initiatives have quantifiable outcomes.
Income generation	Balance between generating income and the costs involved with providing the service.	
Customer Care	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Customer satisfaction	Regularly seek customers views Survey results show year on year high levels of satisfaction & no complaints;	
Customer care culture	Service just awarded a Charter Mark. Slowly changing the culture – seminars, customer standards, training, ensuring customer care activities included in job descriptions as part of the restructure, customer care an item on team meeting agendas, spot checks.	Customer care across the service varies greatly; Proposing to start monitoring customer care standards, potentially each library monitoring another library.
Customer consultation	Regularly consult users and non-users of the service; Changes as a result of consultation – Food Exhibition in the museum, refurbishment and student provision in	Customers interviewed felt that consultation results were not feed back; Not necessarily reaching many 'hard to reach' groups,

	Findings	
	Ealing Road Library, booking system for summer activities, computers in the museum and archive, improvements to reading room, improved signage.	including young people;
Access	<p><i>Archive:</i> Aiming to be able to access records on-line; Currently can photocopy originals, print off scanned images, photograph originals, burn cds, print off the microfilm reader.</p> <p><i>Museum</i> Some exhibitions designed so feel can feel the exhibits, signed talks;</p> <p><i>Libraries:</i> Opening hours extended by 17.5% in 2002; Automatic doors fitted to entrances to comply with DDA; A variety of stock is available in a range of languages and ImaginAsian reader development project set up promoting fiction by Asian authors launched in 2001.</p>	<p>Providing promotional material in other languages not well developed;</p> <p><i>Museum</i> Plan to relocate due to inappropriate location; Signers available to customers but not marketed.</p> <p><i>Libraries:</i> Extending opening hours in the evenings and at weekends is seen as a top priority by users; Key issue for libraries is that users are having problems finding the books and information they are seeking. To overcome this problem increased the stock fund, introduced co-ordinated purchasing across the service, undertaking a thorough clean-up of the catalogue over summer with an annual stock check thereafter; Customer suggested signage above the aisles similar to supermarket aisles; Poor facilities – result of low levels of funding. Recently increased budget to upgrade to public library standards; Improved access for disabled people, but numbers of people with disabilities using the computer stations is very low. Need to promote these facilities.</p>
Marketing and promotion	Examples of good practice include banner advertising new opening hours in Harlesden Library, museum key	Services are not always proactively marketed; Customer Relationship Management database will

	Findings	
	services to schools booklet, museum mail-outs to schools targeting teachers known to participate, attending ACFs and other consultation meetings, press releases, advertising within Environmental Services calendar, leaflets.	assist with the library services direct marketing; Need for a comprehensive marketing strategy; Potential for display areas to be more relevant, themed and tidy. Potential for more direct marketing and targeting – customers interviewed felt they did not know what services are offered;
Partnerships and Resources	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Relationship between Archive, Museum and Libraries	Used to be same service – always worked closely together; Joint training, joint initiatives.	Move to Willesden Green will foster closer working
Joint vision	Management have developed a clear vision for the future.	Plan for the future is not yet a shared vision with Members and Partners though recent progress made through corporate strategy and the need to meet the national library standards. This recent development needs to be encouraged; Need to offer options.
Links with regeneration		Need to develop links with the LSP and the regeneration initiatives developing Wembley, South Kilburn etc.
Links with One Stop Shop	All libraries have a free phone to the Council's Call Centre.	Need to develop Libraries role as First Stop Shop. Identified as part of Customer Services Best Value Review. Need to establish procedures, guidelines and staff training.
Links with education	Some projects are developed in partnership with	Services are not always proactively marketed to

	Findings	
	schools; Relationship with adult education examined as part of Brent's Lifelong Learning Best Value Review. Plans to improve integration of service provision. Already provide some joint services.	schools; Could take better advantage of being situated within EAL.
Stock recovery system		There is no stock recovery system. Not perceived as a priority.
Organisation and Human Resources	Strengths	Areas for improvement
Changing role of libraries	Staff training; Staff seminars (last 10 years) – recent topics include customer care standards, relocation of museum, best value; Team briefings & individual one on ones.	Restructure planned;
Organisational culture	Newly awarded Charter Mark.	New job descriptions as part of the restructure – will reflect requirements in terms of customer care and first stop shop role; Customer care to be an item on all agendas; Proposing to start monitoring standards; Mystery shopping to be carried out.
Skills	All librarians trained in ICT, some trained in net navigator, user support, advanced information and enquiry skills.	Low levels of professional librarians, curators and archivists – introduced study schemes which enable people to gain professional qualifications while working; Lack of management capacity to take forward proposed changes; Need to look to EAL or corporate centre for more support.

	Findings	
Recruitment and retention		Difficulties recruiting experienced and qualified staff. Low levels of pay compared to the rest of the council.
Staff morale	Staff satisfied with their managers; Staff accustomed to change; Staff feel involved in developing the services;	

Section Four

Recommendations

Summary

The panel found the self assessment to be a thorough and comprehensive piece of work and the management team are fully aware of what's going on nationally. The team are also aware of their weaknesses and are trying to address them, they have a clear and convincing vision based on best practice elsewhere.

This vision is based on four key elements:

- Review of service points to create better access
- Creation of two or three Centres of Excellence
- Co-location of Museum within Willesden Library centre & Archive within new Wembley Civic Centre library.
- Modernisation

Panel recommendations

The panel recommends a step change in the service to bring it into line with what is happening across the country and in London where other Boroughs are undertaking major reviews and modernisation programmes for their buildings.

- 1 The self assessment team have developed a logical and relevant action plan and simply need to develop specifics and separate out Library actions from Museum and Archive actions. **This plan forms the basis of the panels recommended actions and should be fully supported.** The plan is set out below.
- 2 Any rationalisation of the service structure should be tied to investment and not seen as savings-driven
- 3 Performance management and marketing capacity should be strengthened as essential building blocks of service improvement, despite the pressure to prioritise front-line services
- 4 Development of a marketing strategy which should address who needs to be reached and why as well as promoting services
- 5 The Panel were concerned at the capacity of the management to carry out this challenging change programme. Although clearly excellent professionals, help would be needed either from within the department or corporately to support key functions such as HR and project management
- 6 Development of the role of the Friends Groups to enable these groups to be more representative of users and therefore more effective in the development of services
- 7 The relationship with the One Stop Shop remains unclear and this should be addressed with the aim of creating a role for libraries as first stop access points for Council services as quickly as possible

Options

The panel feel that the Council has limited options. If the opportunity for the Step change in service recommended by this review is not taken, it is likely that the service will fall into decline, the Museum and Archive will remain underused due to their poor location and their resulting low profile and revenue will continue to be wasted on maintaining old library buildings with the aim of keeping them open. Brent Library services will continue to fall behind services provided in other Boroughs where services are being improved and expanded. Examples in London include Camden (building a new library on Kilburn High Road and a multi-million pound refurbishment of Swiss cottage Library); Newham: (New facilities at Stratford and Forest Gate); Tower Hamlets (five new 'Idea Stores'); Sutton (refurb of all libraries culminating in £1.5 million makeover of Central Library); Barnet and Ealing are also planning improvements to their Library services.

Advantages of Step Change

A step change could deliver the following improvements to services in the Borough:

- Development of three Centres of Excellence at Wembley (as part of new Civic Centre), Willesden Green and Harlesden
- Examination of locations of remaining libraries to provide five or six 'satellites', working in partnership with other service providers where possible in strategic locations eg Kilburn, North Wembley, Barham/Alperton, Kingsbury, etc
- Major improvements to Willesden Green (which has not been refurbished since opening in 1989).
- Improved staffing at strategic levels providing high quality, innovative services
- Increased facilities such as first stop shops, public toilets, study spaces, possibility of homework clubs in all libraries
- Possibility of community libraries – small collections and PC links to library system in community venues such as Bridge Park, Children's Centres with dedicated, peripatetic staff to maintain them
- Ability to meet Public Library Standards on opening hours, number of visitors, etc
- Brent Council seen as providers of 'excellent' library service with modernised, state of the art library buildings providing a wide range of services and facilities
- Brent library service being seen as partner of choice attracting increased external funding

Section Five

Service Action Plan – prepared prior to review

Recommendation	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Resourcing
Key recommendations				
1. Service points				
a	Progress re-location of the Grange Museum to Willesden Green Library Centre	AS	Feb 04	HLF funding bid plus match funding from sale
b	Progress development of proposals for state of the art library & <u>archive</u> as part of Wembley re-development	KT / ML	Mar 03 and ongoing	
c	Revise current library area arrangement to ensure more direct management at local level	ML	April 04	Within Library Service budget
d	Review number and location of service points to rationalise delivery through a smaller number of centres of excellence and quality locations in accessible sites	ML/ AS	Dec 03	
e	Produce consultation plan for service point locations	ML/AS	Apr 04	
2. Staffing				
a	Revise Library Service staffing structure to incorporate dedicated posts for lifelong learning and children's services	ML	Sept 03	To be costed

b	Create post with responsibility for quality assurance, management information, benchmarking etc	ML	April 04	To be costed
c	Ensure new structure addresses pay issues		April 04	
d	Ensure new structure addresses imbalances in the deployment of staff across the borough's libraries	ML	April 04	To be costed
e	Ensure new structure reflects need to increase number of professional staff	MI	April 04	To be costed
Subsidiary Recommendation				
3a	Ensure that every opportunity is taken to communicate with members about the service eg Members Bulletin etc	KT	Ongoing	
b	Hold regular briefing meetings with Lead Member	KT / JC		
4a	Develop comprehensive and integrated marketing strategy	Divisional Management Team / Communications Officer	Dec 03	£
5a	Consultation programme on design of re-located museum	AS	Apr 03 and ongoing	
b	Target museum & archive collecting to meet identified historical & cultural gaps	AS	Ongoing	
c	Implement action to ensure borough wide planning and strategy for stock quality, including measures to improve stock	ML	Ongoing	

	management, review of reference and information services, making optimum use of ICT for accessibility, information, security, monitoring			
6a	Domestic re-display project with John Kelly Boys	AS	July 03	
b	Review and relaunch library services to young people to include Teen Reading/creative writing clubs/music clubs	ML	Sept 03	
c	Create discrete teen areas in three libraries, involving young people in planning & design	ML	Mar 04	
7a	Encourage Asian organisations to deposit records	AS	Apr 03 and ongoing	
b	Develop programme to involve residents in museum, archive and heritage issues including broadening membership of Community Advocates scheme	AS	Sept 03	
c	Work with existing and future Friends groups to develop charter and to improve customer focus		Mar 04	
8a	Ensure implementation of corporate customer service standards	ML / AS	Ongoing	
b	Publish Customer Charter	ML	Underway	
c	Continue ongoing programme of customer care training	ML	Underway	
d	Extend NVQ training in customer service	ML	Under review	
e	Develop guidelines on physical presentation		Underway	

	and display to ensure attractive and comfortable environment for customers	ML		
9a	Revise monthly management information and publish		Ongoing	
b	Conduct annual mystery shopper exercise		Ongoing	
c	Revise local performance measures & targets		July 03	
d	Implement quarterly monitoring of service points		Dec 03	
e	Implement annual Quality inspection of one service point or area of service		Mar 04	
10a	Introduce EAL team briefing	EAL DMT	Nov 03	
b	Ensure new structure allows time for staff to attend briefing meetings	ML	Nov 03	
c	Continue programme of staff conferences to address policy issues	ML	Ongoing	
11a	Raise as exploratory topic with WELIC, through ALCL, and with new Director of LLDA	ML	Dec 03	
12a	Continue process of identifying libraries as first stop access points for Council services	ML	Sept 03	
b	Create dedicated post with responsibility for lifelong learning	ML	Done	

Section Six

Appendices – Provided by Libraries Museum and Archive Services Best Value Team

1	Panels frame of reference	18	Comparison of Best Value performance indicators
2	Self assessment report	19	Benchmarking questionnaire
3	Baseline report	20	Best practice visits
4	Library Service draft service operational plan 2003/4	21	Report on Best Value reviews for other authorities
5	Museum & Archive draft service operational plan 2003/4	22	Report on Best Value Review Audit Commission inspection reports for other authorities
6	Citizen's Panel survey, autumn 2002	23	Financial analysis
7	Library user and non-user focus group report	24	Competitive service delivery: utilisation of current partnerships & initiatives and the development of future opportunities
8	Brent councillors focus group report	25	Assessment of competition options
9	Survey of Friends' and user groups	26	Mystery visits report
10	Key stakeholder consultation	27	Challenge Day: outline of services
11	Brent Residents' Survey 2002	28	Challenge Day report
12	CIPFA Plus Children's Survey 2002	29	Investors in People assessment report for Education, Arts & Libraries, March 2001
13	Children's Consultative Forum Activity Day, April 2002	30	Annual Library Plan 2002: evaluation report
14	Ealing Rd Library refurbishment: survey of young people, November 2002		
15	Museum Education Service survey of schools		
16	Brent Staff Survey, May 2002		
17	Staff Seminar feedback		

