



Executive
15 November 2010

**Report from the Director of
Environment and Neighbourhoods**

Wards Affected:
ALL

Libraries Transformation Project

Appendix 3 is not for publication

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Libraries Transformation Project is a One Council project to improve the quality of library provision in Brent, while contributing to the Council's need to meet efficiency targets in response to reductions in funding. The number of library buildings in the borough will be reduced, enabling resources to be concentrated on the best located libraries. An enhanced core library offer for residents will be established that provides value for money and reflects the needs of all customers. Online and digital services will be expanded to widen access and comparable services will be provided to those who are unable to visit a library. Libraries will be co-located with council services and local agencies to provide community hubs with cultural activity. In order to do this the project will deliver:

- Modern, multi functional, library buildings
- A realignment of resources to achieve both improvements and efficiencies
- A clear definition of what residents can expect from their library service, wherever they live, based on an assessment of user needs
- A review of digital provision and online services in libraries
- Staff training to equip a multi skilled workforce
- Savings to the Council in the region of £1 million

1.2 This report recommends a public consultation on the future of Brent's library service.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the proposals of the Libraries Transformation Project at 3.3
- 2.2 That Members approve public consultation on the proposals
- 2.3 That Members agree the submission of a further report to the Executive in April 2011, setting out the consultation results and final recommendations on the future of the library service.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Brent's Library Service today:

Brent Libraries provides a public library service from twelve library buildings across Brent and a home visit service for people who are unable to visit a library. The service also deposits outreach collections in adult homes, nurseries and community centres. Services on offer to customers include:

- Books, e-books, CDs, DVDs and downloads for loan in a range of formats and languages including all the latest bestsellers
- Information services including access to council services through Brent Contact points
- 24 hour online access to library catalogue, account management and information sources
- Free public internet and Wi-Fi in every library
- An ICT learning centre at Willesden Green
- Skills for Life and ESOL support classes
- School visit programmes and homework clubs
- A year round programme of events and activities, including cultural celebrations, reading promotions, Summer Reading Scheme, reading groups, Family Learning sessions, ICT for older people, health advice sessions,
- Study space
- Art exhibitions, displays and workshops

The service currently costs just under £6 million per year in revenue budget: £3,000,000 of that budget consists of staffing costs whilst only £550,000 is spent on books: 9% of the total budget. *Appendix 2* sets out a table of cost per library visit at each library building

Brent has 12 library buildings, some within short walking distance of each other. Half are badly located and in need of substantial updating. Town centre library refurbishments at Kingsbury and Harlesden have been extremely popular with residents and have seen usage rise by over 50%. The shared service approach with council partners in multi functional library buildings, such as shared premises with OSS and BACES enables improvement and increases usage. Efficiencies are being achieved through use of technology and shared services/procurement with other London boroughs.

Summary of drivers for change

- Economic situation and impending public sector spending cuts
- 12 library buildings not sustainable: need to concentrate resources on successful ones
- Only 9% of budget spent on books
- Argument proved that location and quality of buildings affect usage
- Limited capital available to improve library buildings
- Logic of libraries linking to emerging localities
- Huge opportunities for landmark facilities at Civic Centre and Willesden Green
- Shared service approach already successful (Kingsbury, Harlesden)
- Opportunities to share services with neighbouring boroughs

3.2 Library Strategy 2008-2012

Brent Council's Library Strategy 2008-2012 was adopted by the Executive in January 2008. Officers had initially recommended that the borough would be better served by fewer but better resourced libraries and that some libraries should be closed to achieve this. However, Members were not willing to reduce the number of libraries and, instead, agreed to provide additional revenue to keep twelve library buildings open. Progress against the objectives of the current Library Strategy has been very good. *Appendix 1* shows a list of achievements to date. However, there are a number of new issues and opportunities that have arisen since the strategy was agreed that meant a revision of the strategy was appropriate. These include

- The council's improvement and efficiency programme which aims to improve significantly the way we deliver services to our residents and the need to make efficiency savings of at least £90m across the Council.
- The new organisational vision for Brent Council, including the proposed five localities, where libraries have a major role to play as gateways to council services and community hubs.
- Brent's new Civic Centre will include a new 'central' library for the borough; the Library Strategy recognised that a review of libraries would be needed once the site and size of the new library had been agreed.
- Plans are being developed for Willesden Green Library Centre as a cultural hub and council service centre for the south of the borough.
- It is possible that a third pool for the borough will be built in Kingsbury, providing an opportunity for co-locating a library.
- The London Libraries Change Programme, linked to the Capital Ambition funded cultural improvement programme, has highlighted a number of opportunities for shared services and potential efficiencies across London.

3.3 Proposals

The new strategy will address the following:

1. Rationalisation of resources by closing six library buildings that are poorly located and have low usage: Barham Park, Cricklewood, Neasden, Tokyngton, Kensal Rise and Preston.
2. A commitment to ensuring that residents have high quality library facilities in accessible locations.
3. A review of staffing and development of a staff training programme to ensure that staff are equipped to meet customer needs.
4. The development of a clear offer to residents of what they can expect from their library service, regardless of where they live, in terms of the loan of books and other items, downloads, e-books and online services, accessibility and community engagement.
5. A review of back office processes and development of proposals to share functions with other London boroughs.
6. The development of a strategy to ensure that, where libraries are proposed for closure, residents are offered alternatives to regular activities where possible. The strategy will also address the issue of partner organisations who deliver services in libraries scheduled for closure.
7. The development of a clear approach to voluntary organisations who wish to present a robust business case for running library services in vacant buildings (subject to agreement of building owners and at no cost to the Council).

3.4 Consultation

The public consultation will run from November 29th 2010 until March 4th 2011. There will be a series of public meetings to specifically address the Libraries Transformation project and it will also be presented the Area Consultative Forums. There will be an online survey available throughout the period. Consultation with libraries staff will run concurrently.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The project is likely to deliver revenue savings to Brent Council in the region of £1million.
- 4.2 Capital receipts will be dependant on disposal of redundant buildings, some of which have restrictive covenants. The table below sets out latest market value of the five buildings, which is subject to change.

Library	Revenue cost (2009/10)	Building market value	Issues to consider
Neasden	238,000	0	Leased until 2022
Barham Park	179,740	313,890	Trust
Tokyngton	189,990	694,848	
Kensal Rise	186,100	772,034	Covenant
Preston	176,000	640,524	
Cricklewood	183,700	724,765	Covenant

- 4.3 Five of these buildings are in need of substantial repair and the estimated costs over the next 20 years are as follows, according to the latest asset management surveys:

Neasden	192,000
Barham Park	90,000
Tokyngton	160,000
Kensal Rise	488,000
Preston	93,000
Cricklewood	151,000
Total	1,174,000

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Library authorities have a statutory duty under section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964, to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. The Public Library Service Standards effectively articulate the nature of the “comprehensive and efficient”

service required of the Council and make clear its responsibilities under the Act. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has extensive default powers under section 10 of the Act, exercisable where there has been a complaint or where she has reason to believe that a library authority may be failing to carry out its duties.

- 5.2 It is crucial that the Council consults the public since their views need to feed into decisions on the future shape of library services in the borough. Staff will also be consulted as any plans will affect them too. It may be necessary to carry out statutory consultation with unions and others and further advice can be provided on this. In conducting the staff consultation, it will be made clear what the possible implications will be for staff. Any implications will be reported to Members enabling them to make a fully informed final decision.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out and will be included in the final report to Executive once consultation has taken place.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 A reduction in the number of library sites will necessitate a review of staffing across the service, which will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Managing Change policy. Staff and trade unions will be fully consulted.

Background Papers

Library Strategy 2008-2012

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Achievements against the Library Strategy 2008-2012

Appendix 2 - Cost per visit comparison

Appendix 3 Not for Publication

Contact Officers

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Appendix 1

Progress against Library Strategy 2008-2012

Library Strategy Recommendation Jan 2008	Progress
Increase libraries revenue budget by £300,000 from 2008/09.	Additional revenue achieved from April 2008
Capital investment in modernisation of libraries, starting with Kingsbury Library, Harlesden Library, Neasden Library and the Town Hall Library.	Kingsbury Library Plus opened April 2008 Neasden Library Plus opened 2009 Harlesden Library Plus opened March 2010 Plan for new Civic Centre include a library that will replace the current Town Hall Library. All Brent libraries will have self service technology by 2011 Willesden Green Library - plans for cultural/customer service centre being developed.
Increased partnership and shared services	Shared services/buildings developed with BACES (two sites), OSS (three sites) and Children's Centres (1 site) Brent key partners in London Libraries Change Programme
Cessation of Mobile Library service from April 2008	Achieved 2008
Review of Home Visit Service	Alternative options being considered, including option to share delivery with other boroughs.
Improve opening hours from Autumn 2008 following public consultation	Opening hours standardised and increased by 12 hours since September 2008
Review of structures and working practices by 2008 to ensure a responsive, fully equipped service for the 21 st Century.	Restructure agreed and implemented in 2009 with savings of £250k.
Introduce marketing programme with dedicated marketing officer post by April 2008.	It has not been possible to identify budget for a dedicated marketing post. A marketing programme is in place with support from Central Communications.

Appendix 2

Libraries performance v cost 2009/10

Library	Visits per year	Cost per visit (£)
Willesden Green	499,070	0.90
Ealing Road	261,000	1.20
Harlesden	200,000 (est)	1.60
Kingsbury	205,000	1.80
Town Hall	166,955	2.50
Neasden	117,604	2.30
Kilburn	103,027	2.40
Preston	95,591	2.40
Barham Park	62,507	2.90
Cricklewood	48,786	3.70
Tokington	46,990	3.90
Kensal Rise	45,755	4.00