



Executive
8th October 2007

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

Wards Affected:
ALL

Draft Library Strategy 2008 – 2012

Forward Plan Ref: E&C -07/08- 014

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 To update Members on the current position of the public library service in Brent
- 1.2 To provide a draft Library Strategy (Appendix A) for consultation with residents to shape the future provision of the public library service in Brent

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the recommendations of the draft Library Strategy 2008-2012 as listed in paragraph 3.5.2 below
- 2.2 That Members approve public consultation on the draft Library Strategy
- 2.3 That Members agree the submission of a further report to the Executive setting out the consultation results and final recommendations on the future of the library service including progress on shared services.
- 2.4 That Members note progress on the move of Kingsbury Library in Stag Lane to new premises at 522-524 Kingsbury Road NW9 9HE (former One Stop Shop) as a combined library/customer contact point in early 2008.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Brent's current library service

The library service in Brent currently employs around 140 full time equivalent staff providing frontline customer service from twelve library buildings around the borough as well as specialist support services for children and young people, lifelong learning, reader development etc. There are also a mobile library service, a Home Visit service for housebound people, and outreach collections (e.g. in adult homes). The net revenue budget for libraries in 2006/7 was £5.4 million. Libraries (including the mobile library) are currently open for a total of 550 hours per week including Saturdays and some Sunday opening. In 2006/7, libraries received 1,830,862 visits and loaned 1,186,348 items (books, CDs, DVDs, videos etc). 99.3 % of Brent residents live within a mile of their nearest library building.

Libraries provide the following:

- Books, CDs, videos and DVDs for loan in a range of formats and languages
- Information services including Brent Council self service points
- 24/7 online access to library catalogue, loan renewals and online information sources
- Free public internet/email access in every library
- ICT learning centres
- Literacy and numeracy materials and projects
- School class visit programmes and homework support
- Events and activities, e.g. Black History programme, Summer Reading Scheme, reading groups, Family Learning sessions, Silver Surfers (ICT for older people)
- Advice surgeries
- Study spaces
- Art exhibitions, displays and workshops
- Meeting rooms for hire and venues for training/adult education courses

3.3 Performance of Brent Libraries

Brent Libraries currently meets only four out of the ten Public Library Service Standards set out by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that public libraries are meeting national requirements on accessibility, opening hours, visits, stock, customer satisfaction etc. Performance against these standards is also measured through the Culture Block of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Library performance currently contributes the majority of indicators within the Culture Block and any decline in performance against these indicators is likely to contribute negatively towards the overall Council CPA rating.

3.3.1 Residents' satisfaction with their library service has increased from 56% in 2003/4 to 67% in the MORI survey in November 2006. However, other indicators such as the total number of visits to libraries and the number of items issued have declined between 2005/6 and 2006/7 (by 3% and 2.7% respectively), although the CPA indicator on visits is still in the middle threshold. This overall decline (mirrored nationally) is continuing in the first quarter of 2007/8 although individual libraries in Brent are bucking this trend. In addition, there are significant concerns over the performance on the

number of active borrowers. This is the number of Brent residents who actively use their library card to borrow an item at least once a year and the indicator is clearly linked to both the stock available for loan and the public perception of what is available in Brent's libraries. In 2006-7, only 18.2% of residents borrowed an item compared to 20.8% of residents in 2005/6. This indicator has now moved to the lower threshold in CPA terms and figures are not showing signs of recovery yet for the first quarter of 2007/8.

3.3.2 There is variable performance across the borough's libraries in terms of visits and issues (see appendix A). There is clear evidence (both internally and externally) that physical improvements to library buildings, improved marketing and consistent and relevant expenditure on stock deliver sustained continuous improvement in performance. For example, Willesden Green Library was substantially refurbished in March 2006 and in 2006/7 visits increased by 43% compared to 2005/6 and by 19% compared to 2004/5. Visits to Willesden Green have continued to improve in the first quarter of 2007 – by 8% compared to the same quarter in 2006/7.

3.3.4 As well as the library buildings, the library service operates a number of other services including the mobile library service. This service stops across Brent for a total of 22 hours per week (on weekly, fortnightly or monthly rotas) and accounts for 3.4% of the total loans. The mobile vehicle is now very elderly (F registration) and will not pass the new national Vehicle Emission Regulations which come into force in 2008/9. In addition to the mobile library, around 400 residents are in receipt of the Home Visit Service which delivers library materials to those individuals who are unable to leave their homes through illness, disability or other factors.

3.3.5 Library opening hours vary from 29 hours per week at Tokyngton to 65 hours per week at Willesden Green and are unevenly spread across the days of the week. There is no consistent spread of hours between libraries of similar sizes. This inconsistency can make opening hours difficult for customers to understand: do not necessarily meet local needs or recognise peak usage periods.

3.4 **The need for change**

3.4.1 In November 2003, the findings and action plan of the Best Value Review of Libraries, Museum and Archive were approved by the Executive. The Best Value Review Panel recommended a step change to bring library services into line with elsewhere in London and nationally, highlighting the poor quality of the library buildings as a key factor. The need for better asset management of library buildings was also highlighted in the Audit Commission Inspection of cultural services in 2004 and again in their update on recommendations in 2007.

3.4.2 Across the country, public library services are developing their buildings, staffing and service delivery to meet the needs of 21st century customers whilst maintaining books, reading and learning as central to service delivery. Libraries are moving away from large, staffed reception desks to online 24hour enquiry services, self-service for loans and returns and staff available throughout the library to support customers. This approach is being piloted in Brent in Willesden Green and in Kingsbury. Library staff will require

development to equip them to deal with new ways of working and the new services on offer and working practices will need to be reviewed.

3.5 **Draft Library Strategy 2008-2012 (Appendix A)**

Officers have now produced a draft Library Strategy (Appendix A) for Members' consideration. The strategy covers the following areas:

- Background to the strategy
- Strategic influences and developments (external and internal)
- The current service delivery
- Performance (including benchmarking with other local authorities)
- Analysis of existing consultation results and research
- Key findings and vision for the future of the service
- Priorities and recommendations

3.5.2 In order to achieve the vision, the draft Library Strategy makes the following recommendations:

- **An increase in the revenue budget for libraries of £300,000 from 2008/9 onwards to meet the current deficit and to maintain current spending on stock, opening hours etc**
- **Capital investment in a long term modernisation programme (continuing on from improvements at Ealing Road and Willesden Green libraries) beginning with the following libraries:**

a) *Kingsbury Link* (£400,000 capital funding already identified 2007/8). Members have already approved the development of a new joint library/customer service centre to replace the existing library on Stag Lane and the One Stop Shop Service, on the site of the One Stop Shop in Kingsbury Road, to be opened in early 2008. There will be a temporary closure of the library for a maximum period of three weeks whilst the library transfers to the new location.

b) *Harlesden Library & Learning Centre*. £250,000 match funding in 2008/9 towards a funding application of c£1.7 million submitted to the Big Lottery to develop a new joint library/learning centre with BACES on the site of the current Harlesden Library. This capital funding will be repaid by the potential capital receipt of the existing Harlesden BACES building when the new centre is completed in autumn 2009.

c) *Neasden Library*. £180,000 for Neasden Library in 2008/9 to relocate the library from the first floor to the ground floor of the current site. This sum includes 20% contingency and project management costs.

d) *Town Hall Library*. A new flagship library will be delivered as part of the Civic Centre project by 2011/12. Funding of capital and revenue costs will be dependant on a review of the location and number of libraries within the Wembley area once a Civic Centre site has been chosen

- **The library service to pursue increased partnership and shared services in all remaining library buildings to deliver value for money**
- **The cessation of the mobile library service from April 2008**
- **A review of the Home Visit service and the outreach deposit service to deliver improvements in service within existing resources**
- **A reconfiguration of library opening hours to better meet expressed community needs within existing resources**
- **A review of the management and frontline structures, staff training and current working practices to ensure a responsive and fully equipped library staff for the 21st century**
- **A programme to market and promote modernised library services to Brent residents**

3.6 Consultation and implementation

Officers recommend that the Draft Library Strategy requires consultation both with staff and customers, particularly with regard to the reconfiguration of current opening hours to ensure that these take into account customers' preferred patterns of usage. The results of the consultation should then be analysed and brought back to the Executive in January 2008 for consideration and approval.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 As part of the 2007/08 budget process, it was reported that the Library Service was estimated to make a deficit of £300k in 2006/07. £300,000 was therefore allocated as a one-off addition to the revenue budget to allow time for the draft library strategy to be developed and presented to the Executive for consideration. Delivery of the new strategy depends on this funding being available in future years. This will therefore add to the budget gap reported for 2008/09 in the Budget Process report to the Executive in July 2007.
- 4.2 Depending on the results of the consultation and further Executive Committee consideration, the withdrawal of the mobile library service will need to be implemented by 31st March 2008 in order to achieve a full year saving of £80,000 pa in the revenue budget. A revenue saving of £80,000 from deletion of the mobile library has been included in the 2008/09 budget up-date report on this agenda, subject to the outcome of the consultation. In addition, not replacing the mobile library vehicle will avoid £150,000 having to be found within the capital programme to fund a replacement mobile library.
- 4.3 The £400,000 capital investment in the Kingsbury Library was agreed as part of the Customer Contact strategy report to the Executive in February 2007. This funding is on an 'invest to save, basis, with repayments from savings from co-location of the One Stop Shop and library over the next 7 years.
- 4.4 The council's match funding for the Harlesden Library and Learning Centre (£250,000) will be from the capital receipt from disposal of the Harlesden BACES building. The balance of the capital receipt from the disposal will contribute to funding of the council's overall capital programme. The

expenditure on the Library and Learning Centre will be in advance of disposal of the BACES building. Bridging funding (pending disposal of the BACES building) will be met by prudential borrowing. The council expects to know the outcome of its funding bid by mid October 2007.

- 4.5 The cost of the relocation of Neasden Library from the first to the ground floor will be met from additional income and other funding sources within the Environment & Culture budget in 2007/08. This will be carried forward as an earmarked reserve to fund the relocation of the library in 2008/09.
- 4.6 The final business case for the Civic Centre, prior to the council going out to tender, will be reported to the Executive in February 2008. The report will include capital and revenue funding implications for the library service and set out ways in which those can be met, including section 106, receipts from disposals of existing library buildings, and transfer of revenue budgets from existing library buildings. Options will depend on location of the new civic centre.
- 4.7 Funding for planned maintenance of the libraries is included in the corporate asset management programme. Many of the libraries are in poor condition and have had limited investment pending completion of the review of the existing strategy. In addition, officers will be reviewing opportunities for external funding, development opportunities or joint services to ensure value for money.

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 important 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 should 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 should 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 decision in due course.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The draft Library Strategy analyses current usage by age, gender, disability and ethnicity and proposes to address the issue of all Brent residents who are currently not accessing their services. Results of previous consultations with both customers and non-users have shown a lack of awareness of what libraries can offer along with dissatisfaction with the opening hours, library

stock and the condition of the buildings/environment. The strategy makes recommendations to improve these factors.

- 6.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted on the Draft Library Strategy and is available on request. The assessment finds a potential adverse impact to customers of the mobile library service if the withdrawal of the service is approved after consultation but outlines how other services such as the Home Visit service and the outreach service will need to be reviewed to ensure that the needs of older people, children and those with disabilities are addressed.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 Modernising the way library services are delivered will require new ways of working, including shared buildings, different ways of engaging with customers and the introduction of new technology. The draft Library Strategy will require a review of staffing arrangements and new patterns of working may need to be negotiated as well as the undertaking of an intensive retraining programme. In addition, the withdrawal of the mobile library service would lead to the deletion of a small number of staff posts.

- 7.2 The library service will need to work closely with Property and Asset Management, the Planning Service and other external/internal partners to make a full asset assessment of each library building and to pursue appropriate opportunities to develop the buildings.

Background Papers

Appendix A Draft Library Strategy 2008-2012

Executive Committee report WP022R 2003 Library, Archive and Museum Best Value Review

Contact Officers

Sue Mckenzie Head of Libraries, Arts & Heritage x3144

Marianne Locke
Assistant Director of Arts & Learning

Richard Saunders
Director of Environment & Culture