

Title: Modernising Brent Libraries

What are the main issues? *what is the policy background?, how does it link to the councils corporate priorities?*

How do we bring Brent's libraries into the 21st Century?

A Best Value Review in 2003 identified a number of recommendations for the library service including a review of library buildings and the need for Brent's libraries to be updated in terms of staff and services to meet 21st century demands. The library service is currently delivered from 12 buildings and a mobile library. Most of these buildings are in need of basic repair and maintenance, several are poorly situated in terms of potential footfall, transport links etc and are inadequate to provide the levels and range of services that modern library services should. For example there is a severe shortage of study space across the borough. To update the buildings will require major investment in terms of modernisation and a consideration of where libraries should be best located to meet residents' needs. Library stock also requires investment to ensure it meets current requirements.

A draft Library Strategy is currently being prepared for the Executive's consideration to include the results of the buildings review and recommendations on the future delivery and improvement of services both in terms of buildings, staffing and stock.

The Corporate Strategy of 2002-6 identified increasing library opening hours and improving stock as a priority and an investment programme delivered significant increases in both areas.

Why are we looking at this area? Have there been recent legislation/policy changes? Are there any performance or budgetary issues?,

In 2004, the government introduced ten Public Library Service Standards for public libraries which are measured as a Best Value Performance Indicator and as part of the Culture Block of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These include standards around opening hours, the number of annual visits, the amount of stock, satisfaction rates etc. Brent currently meets only 4 of the 10 standards. Additionally for CPA, Brent Libraries does not meet the satisfaction target for residents or the levels of active borrowing of library items.

Brent library service currently has an overspend of c £350,000 in its revenue budget and although the library service is containing this overspend to £300K by making efficiencies where possible, there will continue to be an ongoing gap in revenue funding which can only be contained in future years by Members assessing some difficult options.

What should the review cover? Give brief outline of what members could focus on, which partners to engage with, how residents/public can be involved.

The review should cover the draft Library Strategy, the consultation to date and the context of the changing face of library services across the country including significant improvements being made across London and West London.

What could the review achieve?, influence policy change?, improvement to service delivery?, budget savings?, develop partnerships?.

The review would hopefully consider the draft Library Strategy proposals to achieve a significant improvement to library service delivery whilst at the same time considering the options around budget savings.