



Overview & Scrutiny Committee
9th July 2009

**Report from the Director of
Policy & Regeneration**

Wards Affected: ALL

Cricklewood Library Children's Centre project and Archive move

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Lesley Jones, has asked for a briefing note on the plans for Cricklewood Library.
- 1.2 A briefing has been prepared by Sue McKenzie, Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage and is attached at appendix 1. The committee should note the briefing paper and discuss whether it wishes to take forward any of the issues raised and revisit them later in the year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the briefing paper included at appendix 1.

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 None

4.0 Legal Implications

- 4.1 None

5.0 Diversity Implications

- 5.1 None

6.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

6.1 None

Background Papers

Contact Officers

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Appendix 1

Cricklewood Library

Briefing paper on Children's Centre project and Archive move June 2009

Sue Mckenzie: Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage

1. Introduction

This briefing paper sets out the background, key points and latest position of the project to introduce a shared service and improved library service at Cricklewood Library. The paper also outlines the related project to move Brent Archive to Willesden Green Library.

2. Background

Cricklewood Library

Opened in 1928, the freehold was granted to Willesden Borough Council by All Souls College Oxford and is subject to a covenant that states that the building should be used for library purposes only. Cricklewood is currently one of the lowest performing libraries in Brent. It also has a high proportion of use by children and families.

The Library Strategy 2008–2012 was agreed by members in January 2008 and sets out plans to modernise and improve usage of Brent's library service. The strategy recommends shared services with appropriate partners to deliver relevant services and improve the offer to residents.

In late 2008 the opportunity to introduce children's centre services into libraries arose. Cricklewood and Barham Park Libraries were deemed suitable and located in areas that were identified for Phase Three Children's Centres.

Brent Archive

Brent Archives houses the historical records of the borough and its predecessors and charts the history of Brent and its communities. Although it is a resource for the whole borough, Brent Archives is housed in Cricklewood Library, Brent's least accessible library. Usage is steady but low in comparison to other local authority archives.

The desire to move the archive to Willesden Green has existed for a number of years and it was featured in the 2008/9 service plan. The Museum and Archive Manager identified a one year saving within her existing budget to fund the move in 2009/10. A space was identified on the first floor of Willesden Green Library, close to the Brent Museum. An archive consultant was engaged to produce a logistical plan for the move and suggestions for service development. The archive closed in May 2009 and is scheduled to reopen in August 2009 at Willesden Green.

3. Proposals:

Cricklewood Library

The new, refurbished Cricklewood Library will utilise both floors of the building due to the introduction of a lift, thereby doubling public space. The building will be designed to accommodate the needs of all library users and distinctions will be made between quiet and noisy space. Careful consideration will be given to the movement of customers through the different areas.

The library will be fully self service, freeing up staff to interact with customers on a more personal level, similar to the models at Kingsbury and Neasden. As with other refurbished libraries, there will be a Brent Contact Point where customers can access a wide range of council services using online and self service technology.

There is no loss of 'library' space. On the contrary, this is an integrated service with flexible shared spaces. The opening up of the first floor will also allow for extra study space.

In addition to the loan of books, provision of free internet, study space and the range of library events and activities, the children's centre team intend to deliver a range of services that include:

- Activity groups for adults and children e.g. drop in play sessions, baby clinic and family learning (10-15 adults)
- Adult training including training on ICT
- A sessional crèche (not a nursery) for 0-5 year olds
- Childminder meetings and drop in play sessions
- Job Centre Plus advice sessions for groups and individuals
- Drop-in surgeries with different agencies and voluntary groups e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux (often one-to-one)
- Individual sessions with professionals and parents/children e.g. counselling
- Nutrition activities e.g. cook and eat

All of these services and many other similar activities are currently provided in Brent's libraries.

Brent Archives

Users of the new archives searchroom at Willesden Green Library Centre will benefit from the excellent public transport access and car parking facilities. The searchroom has been specially designed as a secure and purpose built space and is slightly larger than the searchroom at Cricklewood. The proximity to both the library and the Brent Museum gives an improved and convenient heritage offer to customers. It also enables more of the joint

projects between the cultural services that have been a key feature of Libraries, Arts and Heritage.

The move is also an opportunity to develop the services provided and the following are proposed:

- New books for the local history library
- The production of a series of guides to Brent's archives
- A new microfilm/fiche reader
- Development of online archive services, particularly related to family history.

4. Benefits

The benefits associated with the two related projects include:

- Increased usage of both facilities
- Increased access to Brent Archives
- Brent's heritage and cultural services in one location
- More efficient use space and lower energy consumption due to refurbishment
- £400,000 spent on the improvement of Cricklewood Library
- £50,000 spent on new books
- Self service facilities and enhanced ICT
- Relevant services for all ages and needs
- Increased access to wider council services in one location

5. Consultation

Because of the challenging timescales of the children's centre project, officers have had to act quickly to inform users and residents about the plans. The following consultations have already taken place:

- Libraries, Arts and Heritage (LAH) managers attended all Area Consultative Forums in Brent in November/December 2008 to talk about the archive move and the proposed library developments
- A meeting was held with ward councillors and the Chair of the Friends of Cricklewood Library in December 2008, where the proposals were discussed and supported.
- A public meeting was then held at the library in February 2009 and attended by library and archive users. At that meeting archive users were also consulted on preferred opening times at the new facility.
- The Head of LAH attended a meeting of the Friends of Cricklewood Library in May 2009 to present the proposals.
- Two further consultative meetings were held at the library in June 2009 where plans were shown to library users.

- Consultation on the development is a continuing process and residents/users have been asked to take part in design workshops so that they can have a say in how the building looks and the services delivered.

6. Current status of project and legal position

The Friends of Cricklewood Library have contacted All Souls College to challenge that use of the library in relation to the terms of the covenant. Subsequently All Souls' solicitors have written to Brent Council and we are awaiting legal advice on our position. The planning and consultation continues until we have that information and members will be notified.

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