

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Executive</b> 11 April 2011</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report from the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services</b></p>
<p>*</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Wards Affected: All</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Libraries Transformation Project</b></p>	

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In November 2010 the Executive agreed to a three month consultation of proposals contained within the Libraries Transformation Project. This report proposes a renewed Library Strategy, centred around a clearly defined library offer and driven by the Councils responsibilities and resources, the assessment of needs and consultation. It also addresses the potential implications for six buildings should the recommended strategy be agreed.

## 2.0 Recommendations

Members are recommended to agree:

- 2.1 A transformed library service to residents as set out at paragraph 4, which contains detailed service proposals for:
- Library Service Objectives
  - Services
  - Stock
  - Buildings
  - Online and digital services
  - Support for children, young people and families
  - Support for learners
  - Support for older people and people who find it difficult to access library services
  - Services for people with disabilities
  - Staff
  - Customer and Community Engagement

- Partners and partnership working
- The cultural offer

2.2 The continuation of the successful shared service approach and the further development of proposals to share functions with partners, including other London boroughs, as described in para 5.6 and Appendix 1.

2.3 That the following libraries be closed:

Barham Park  
Cricklewood  
Kensal Rise  
Neasden  
Preston  
Tokyngton

2.4 That Property and Asset Management undertake a detailed options appraisal on each of the six buildings being vacated by the Library Service with a further report to this Executive by the end of July 2011 and prior to any final decisions being made about possible disposals or changes of use

2.5 The Executive receives a report in one year's time reporting on the progress of implementing the Project.

### **3.0 Description of this report**

3.1 This complex report to members is divided into three parts:

- This report, which sets out the proposal for the future Library offer, the consultation and impact assessment processes and outcomes and the financial, legal and property implications of the recommendations
- Appendices, provided in paper form for members of the Committee, which set out more detailed analysis of the information
- A microsite, to be accessible via the Council's website at <http://www.brent.gov.uk/librariestransformation>, contains the information underpinning the evidence, including, for example, minutes of public meetings and demographic statistics. A list of this documentation, as identified at the time of finalising this report, is at Appendix Seven.

### **4.0 LIBRARIES TRANSFORMATION PROJECT: THE LIBRARY OFFER**

This report proposes a transformed library service, based on the previous successful strategy, available resources, needs assessments and consultation. A clear offer has been developed outlining what residents can expect from their library service.

The Library offer has been developed with input from a wide range of community and professional sources, and has been informed by the three months consultation from November 2010 to March 2011. In turn, this offer contains many elements which address issues raised during that consultation and through the Equalities Impact Assessment, so other parts of this report refer back to this section.

The Library offer will be backed up by an extensive communications and marketing campaign to ensure that it reaches all residents.

The core vision of the service was established in the 2008-10 Strategy and remains unchanged. Progress against this strategy is set out at Appendix Two. The vision set out there is:

**By 2012, Brent Libraries will have:**

- 21<sup>st</sup> century library buildings and services
- Opening hours that meet community needs
- More visits and issues every year
- More issues per head of population than any other London borough
- Services accessible in any language and in any format
- ICT services at the cutting edge of library technology
- Information and advice available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- The best programme of events and activities in London
- A reputation as the leading public library service in England for equalities and diversity

In considering whether the service delivered by the Library Transformation Project is comprehensive, officers have had regard to a wide range of information about the borough's population, the active borrowers, people who are not library users, participants in consultation, the result of research and needs assessment, opportunities offered by a range of different forms of distribution and access, the differing needs of people with a range of characteristics, and other related factors, all of which are addressed in different parts of the main report and appendices.

In considering whether the service is efficient officers have had regard to detailed information and analyses of the costs of the existing service, the resources available to the Council for delivering library services, the balance between costs of different parts of the service, particularly the proportion available for spend on stock, alternative means of distribution and access and opportunities (some already well established) for savings through joint procurement and alternative provision.

#### 4.1 **Services**

- Seven day opening in all libraries, with at least two late evenings
- Additional longer opening hours for students in selected libraries during exam periods
- A comprehensive range of books, E Books, audio and other media for loan or reference
- A service that can, within reason, obtain any title that a customer asks for.
- Free Wireless and Internet access for all library users available in all library spaces; with improved wireless speeds.
- A user friendly and accessible library website.
- Space for study and reading for pleasure
- An exciting calendar of author, poetry and cultural events. Opportunities to join reading groups.

- Short courses to promote recreational learning and skills for life including computer training. Opportunities for families to learn together.
- Advice and guidance on careers and training
- Parent and toddler groups, children's reading promotions, homework clubs, youth clubs, holiday activities
- A structured programme of class and outreach school visits to support the educational attainment of children and young people
- Improved range of children and young people's book stock available in greater numbers to support Children Young People (and their families) in literacy and learning development including revision and study guides.
- An enhanced outreach and home delivery service that brings our services to people who are unable to get to a library. The service also delivers monthly book collections to day centres, community groups and children's centres.
- An online reference library with encyclopaedias, general reference works, newspapers and homework help, available to all library users in the library or from a home pc.
- A comprehensive reference and community information enquiry service delivered by trained staff. Residents will be able to access online resources as well as well-stocked collections of reference books, newspapers and periodicals.
- Access to and training in the use of innovative technology, with an increased number of PCs (equipped with assistive technology)
- Further development of an online service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Marketing and promotion to enhance the accessibility and use of library services

## 4.2 **Stock**

- Continuous enhancement of the stock available in all our libraries
- We will promote access to our new E Books service and grow the e.book and audio offer to meet new reading trends. We will invest in a diverse range of e.books and audio downloads for customers to borrow. We will also invest in appropriate new media as it emerges.
- Stock will include fiction of all sorts, community languages, collections of cultural interest, ESOL, skills for life, up to date information books, e.books & audio books, large print & talking books. Consultation will take place with schools and colleges to ensure that stock reflects the curriculum.
- The stock policy will be revised using our new evidence based stock system to improve customer satisfaction and ensure that stock meets community need.
- There will be more customer involvement in the purchase of stock, in particular from community groups, valued customer panels and young people, building on the excellent work at Harlesden.
- In response to customer demand stock suggestion schemes will be visible in the libraries and online on our libraries catalogue page.
- We will continue to provide stock in alternative formats, such as large print and audio. Our stock in other languages will reflect the needs of our communities.
- Newspapers and periodicals for customers to browse in the library
- Our reservation process will be streamlined so that customers can get the books and other items they want quickly.

- We will continue our membership of the London Libraries Consortium through which stock purchases result in cooperative group discounts allowing us to purchase greater amounts of stock. Brent residents can borrow books from 14 London boroughs thus ensuring best value for money
- We will ensure via our stock policy that we continue to purchase stock from specialist stock suppliers in order to meet the stock needs of Brent's diverse communities and groups.
- We will provide books on prescription and work in partnership with Brent NHS, Brent Mind, clinics and doctors in order to support the health and well-being of Brent residents.
- Staff will be knowledgeable and confident in recommending book titles and recreational reads.

### 4.3 Buildings

We will work towards developing libraries that are modern and multi functional with a shared service approach. They will boast the following features:

- Safe and neutral places
- Dedicated and well-stocked children's areas to meet increased use, with adequate space for class visits, activities and study
- Separate teenage zones that are modern and attractive
- Improved, flexible study areas and quiet zones to meet increased demand
- Multi-functional community rooms suitable for meetings, courses and performances (available to hire at variable rates)
- Café facilities and a Library shop where appropriate

Six high quality library buildings in accessible locations, all open seven days per week:

**Ealing Road:** currently Brent's second busiest library, Ealing Road was last refurbished in 2003. It is open 7 days per week, has a busy IT suite that is in constant use

**Harlesden:** refurbished in 2010 following a successful Big Lottery application, Harlesden Library Plus provides library, adult education and council information services from one building. The library was designed by a community steering group who continue to play an active role in service delivery.

**Kilburn:** library is known for its thriving under fives Bookstart story rhyme time sessions, active adult reading group and selection of quality fiction, best sellers and author events. It has worked in partnership with local voluntary groups to develop its outdoor garden and it's actively engaged in community partnership projects. It is proposed to source capital funding to improve the library space

**Kingsbury:** relocated in 2008 to a high street location, Kingsbury Library Plus provides library and council information services. Since moving the library, visits and borrowing have increased by over 50%

**Town Hall/ Civic Centre:** popular library for local residents and council staff and is located near Asda supermarket, local schools and Children's Centre. It is well used

for reference and community information enquiries, its IT suite and its selection of best sellers, literary fiction and up to date information books. In 2013 this function will move to the new Civic Centre library nearby. A large state of the art library will be the showpiece of the new building.

**Willesden Green:** Brent's busiest library open 7 days per week is arranged over 2 floors within Willesden Green Library Centre. Its generous study area is well used by students, and its IT suite is very popular. The teen area is busy during after school hours but also well used for study and tutoring by excluded young people and their tutors. The children's library is a favourite space for under fives activities, regular class visits and holiday activities. A number of organisations share the premises including the gallery, Brent Museum and Archive and a council customer contact centre. Close partnership work is undertaken with the gallery and museum to deliver a vibrant cultural and learning programme.

The Council is currently investigating the possibility of redeveloping the Library Centre, to include an improved cultural offer to residents. If this should go ahead, a temporary replacement library service will be provided in the area.

Capital funding for improvements to buildings will be sourced from external grants, public/private financing and Brent Council capital programmes. In line with the One Council programme we will continue to pursue the shared service approach, both with council services, local organisations and neighbouring boroughs.

#### 4.4 Online and Digital services

Brent Libraries will be at the forefront of the revolution to ensure that services can be accessed on a 24/7 basis and are not limited to static library buildings. Library users will be able to access a virtual library from the comfort of their own homes. Virtual services will include being able to:

- Search the catalogue, access library accounts, reserve and renew items online from any computer or smart phone.
- Book a computer
- Receive overdue reminders by email or text
- Use our online reference resources for study and homework
- Access an online enquiry service
- Borrow e-books and audiobooks online (subject to constraints imposed by publishers and distributors)
- Join our email list for a monthly newsletter
- Take part in virtual reading groups
- Access virtual homework help
- We will aim to develop a library app for smart phones that will make our services more accessible, including directions and up to date information about library events, activities, and services.
- Online bookings for events and activities
- Events and talks will be recorded and filmed for YouTube and podcasts.

Access to technology will also include:

- Free access to bookable public Internet and MS Office services
- Access to and training in the use of innovative technology with an increased number of PCs
- Access to colour printing and scanning services
- Safe Internet surfing areas for children
- Free public wifi access with improved speeds and more plug sockets
- Access to assistive technology including hardware and software
- Access to fast, efficient self service technology
- Staff will also be able to easily access the technology to answer enquiries. In response to customer suggestions handheld devices will be purchased to ensure that enquiries are answered with accuracy and speed
- E.Learning packages
- An interactive, inspiring and accessible website

#### **4.5 Support for children, young people and families**

- Safe and neutral spaces
- Improved and increased number of study spaces
- Engage children and young people with a love of reading and resources to support educational attainment. This includes an improved range of children and young people's book stock available in larger quantities to support CYP (and their families) in literacy and learning development. We will improve our provision of revision, text books and study guides. For younger children an improved range of board books, dual language books, picture books, graded readers to support school reading schemes and literacy attainment, titles for fluent readers and graphic novels to encourage reluctant readers.
- The information books will support the National Curriculum covering key stages 1 – 4 and also include up to date and relevant study and revision guides in greater quantities.
- We will involve young people and schools in stock selection.
- Develop collections to support progression by young people into further education and into work and training. We will work in partnership with Connexions to ensure access to advice on training and further education is available.
- Promote and market e.books to support homework and study
- Outreach services to schools and children's centres will include learning support, story-telling, reader development workshops all delivered by trained staff, with an agreed timetable of visits and performance measures showing activity.
- An enhanced outreach offer, including a book loan scheme in partnership with youth centres, youth bus, children's centres and schools to target those groups of children who do not currently use library services.
- Bookstart story and rhyme times will be delivered weekly in all libraries
- Bookstart pack gifting sessions in all libraries on a monthly basis
- Bookstart Bear Club in all libraries which encourages parents / carers to read to their children, borrow books and gain certificates.
- We will work in partnership with Brent Adult and Community Education Services (BACES) and increase the range of exciting family learning courses focusing on literacy, learning and leisure in all our libraries.

- Chatterbooks Reading Groups will be run, after school on a monthly basis, by trained staff in all libraries and will focus on fun reader development activities.
- Teenage reading groups will build on the Summer Reading Challenge programme and be developed as after school clubs focusing on themed group reads, author events and manga and will be run by young people and trained staff together.
- Homework clubs in all libraries will have qualified teaching support and support learning development in children aged 8 – 11. Children will also benefit from reading support delivered by Volunteer Reading Help volunteers (available in some libraries)
- Virtual homework help for those unable to access a library easily.
- In collaboration with BACES we will support parents / carers whose children attend the homework clubs through the provision of learning courses.
- Support club for home schooled children and their parents / carers
- We will support children and young people who are excluded (with their tutors) by providing quiet zone areas for study and additional stock support upon request
- We will support young people during exam periods by opening for longer hours and sourcing other community venues (through partnerships) for additional study space.
- The Summer Reading Challenge will form part of our Outreach library offer to playschemes, disability play schemes, and through partnership working
- User friendly website developed to engage and involve children and young people in reading, study, leisure and information services, including a presence on BeBo or similar social networking sites
- Improved cutting edge teen facilities designed by young people

#### **4.6 Support for learners**

- E-Learning packages
- Open learning zones and learn direct centres in some libraries
- Attractive study spaces offering laptop provision
- Improved wifi facilities
- Access to e.books, improved study texts and learning collection materials
- Informal ESOL classes
- IT workshops and courses
- Partnership work with Brent Adult Community Education Service to ensure libraries are a place to access a range of informal learning and ICT classes
- Partnership working with voluntary groups to support learning

#### **4.7 Support for older people and residents who find it difficult to access library services**

- Our improved home visit service will be fully linked to all libraries so that customers have access to the full catalogue, including alternative media. Staff will bring to catalogue to customers via hand held devices.
- The home visit service will be marketed across the borough, and to organisations working with those people who find accessing services difficult. Strong links will be



fostered with social housing and sheltered housing schemes to create a well used home visit service

- Monthly outreach deposit collections will be delivered to day centres, community groups and children's centres where requested.
- Outreach reading events and activities will be offered to children's centres, care homes and day centres.
- Home Visit customers will also get the opportunity to be part of a valued customer service panel for the service and help drive service improvements as well as be involved in stock selection
- The Outreach Service will also work in partnership with Brent volunteering organisations in order to involve local residents in delivering services, such as the home visit service and to ensure we reach a wide selection of Brent residents.

#### **4.8 Services for people with disabilities**

- All staff will be trained in assistive technologies so that residents with disabilities have full access to library services. This service will be marketed through partnerships with support groups.
- Books in appropriate formats, such as Braille and talking books will be available for loan in all libraries, the home-visits service, the outreach services and online.
- All library buildings will be fully accessible for people with disabilities, with induction loops and adaptive technologies.
- Residents unable to get to a library will be able to make use of our home visit, outreach and online services.

#### **4.9 Staff**

The staffing restructure will result in increased responsibilities, improved skills and a more proactive role for staff. We anticipate improved customer care with staff fully equipped with the tools to deliver modern library services.

- A programme of intensive training will be undertaken so that staff are fully able to give advice on books, deliver excellent customer care, demonstrate expertise in finding information, knowledgeable in ITC and trained in the use of assistive technology.
- Staff will be trained to high standards to deliver quality services to children and young people including under fives sessions, class and school outreach visits and reading groups
- Staff will be able to deliver well planned and engaging learning workshops and reading groups for adults.
- Recruitment will reflect our continuing commitment to ensuring that staff reflect Brent's diversity.
- We will utilise the languages and cultures of staff to ensure that stock reflects the languages spoken in the borough and community need.
- Staff will be involved in stock selection and promotions as well as in recommending reads and marketing the library offer.

#### **4.10 Customer and community engagement**

- All our libraries have Valued Customer Panels that meet regularly so that local people can actively determine the nature of their library services. Anyone can join.
- We will work closely with community groups and forums such as Brent Youth Parliament
- Volunteers will play an important role supporting staff in delivering the service at different levels. There will be volunteering schemes for young people such as Summer Reading Challenge volunteers, who will support children in their reading challenge. We will also recruit volunteers in further and higher education and back to work schemes to gain work experience to access work. Similarly volunteer schemes will be developed to support delivery of home delivery services.
- Libraries will closely consult with the community through regular surveys, attendance at Area Community Forums, Local Partnership Boards and Integrated Partnership Boards
- Improved marketing and publicity commitment with a campaign of exciting promotions using a variety of media..
- Increased presence on social media sites such as facebook, twitter and the library book blog
- We will develop customer involvement in the design and delivery of library services, building on the successful work of the Black Identity Zone (BIZ) steering group at Harlesden.
- Increase subscriptions to the e.bulletin mailing list, as a means to target residents with information about library developments and events

#### **4.11 Partners & partnership working**

We will continue our successful shared services strategy and work with partners to provide a range of services from libraries, including:

- Learning provision through BACES
- Council information through the customer contact centres
- Learning centres through work with Schools, Colleges and adult education
- Support the work of the voluntary sector
- Working with cultural providers including local practitioners

#### **4.12 The cultural offer**

Working towards Brent's cultural vision for 2015 as outlined in the Cultural Strategy and the proposals in the draft Brent Arts and Festivals strategy we will broker and develop partnerships to ensure that cultural opportunities flourish and are showcased in our libraries. This supports our ambition of showcasing excellence in the various art forms whilst all the while using that excellence to stimulate more local work and inspire our budding writers (and audiences) towards that goal.

This includes plans to:

- Offer cultural events to create vibrant spaces; including developing exhibition spaces for artists and writers through partnerships with Brent Artists Resource, Brent Culture, Sport and Learning Forum and the Arts and Festivals teams
- Showcase and exhibiting art through public art schemes
- Marketing cultural opportunities at the Gallery at Willesden Green Library Centre

- Developing writers and readers through writers in residence schemes and support for writers' groups through provision of spaces, events and writing workshops.
- This offer will be extended to improving literacy and engaging children and young people
- Supporting the creative industries through workshops and advice delivered in partnership with business support groups and careers advice organisations
- Build on a calendar of cultural events
- Increase participation in the programmes on offer through proactive and viral marketing

## 5.0 The Libraries Transformation Project: Drivers for Change

5.1 There are several issues and drivers which inform the Libraries Transformation Project; taken together they shape the recommended offer. These are considered in detail at Appendix One, and are summarised as follows:

- *Statutory duties*: the Council has a legal responsibility to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to facilitate the borrowing of books. It has several other relevant legal responsibilities, including that of setting a balanced budget, and to assess the impact of its service proposals on communities who may be disproportionately disadvantaged.
- *Strategic influences*: the Council's own 2008-2010 Library Strategy recognised the need for change as new investment becomes more difficult while customer expectations grow. The One Council programme closely influences the service. The Project has also considered the broader pattern of provision in London, and the DCMS Future Libraries Programme. Officers have also surveyed the complex changes driven by new technologies and the new possibilities and challenges they create.
- *Needs assessment*: the Project has drawn on national and local research and the strategic thinking embodied in the investigation into Wirral Library proposals, as well as the comprehensive analysis embodied in the Equalities Impact Assessment (para 10 and Appendix Four).
- *Resources*: this report is contextualised by the very difficult financial settlement for the Council both in 2011/12 and future years, and the importance of setting a balanced budget.
- *Performance* The proposals also consider the current performance of the twelve libraries and how this has informed the new Library offer
- *Partnerships and shared services*: the Project has reviewed a range of existing partnerships and consortia as well as ongoing discussions about future joint working.
- *Buildings*: this report reviews the current library premises and in particular usage figures, costs and issues of location and access.

5.2 The drivers for change assess the background policy context, resources and research that have shaped the proposals. In addition, as spelt out through this report, there has been significant debate and analysis of the particular effects of the new shape to Library service and intense public interest in the proposal to close six libraries. In formulating the recommendations, officers have had close regard to:

- The consultation undertaken for three months to March 2011, which is the subject of paragraph 8 and Appendix Three.
- The Equalities Impact Assessment at paragraph 9 and Appendix Four, which explicitly addresses many of the issues raised in this consultation
- The opportunities presented for alternative uses of the six buildings proposed for closure, particularly for the provision of community-run libraries, discussed at paragraph 12 and Appendix Six.

## 6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 There are two specific legal matters which members need to be apprised of when making the decision regarding the future of the libraries service. These are in addition to general public law principles relating to decision making.

6.2 The first of those specific legal requirements is the council's duty in relation to libraries. This is set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 section 7 which provides;

*'It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'*

*The duty arises in relation to persons who are resident, work in or are in fulltime education in the borough. In fulfilling its duty the Council shall in particular have regard to the desirability of*

- i) *securing that facilities are available for borrowing books, records, films etc sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the needs of all, and the special requirements of adults and children*
- ii) *encourage adults and children to make full use of the service and provide advice*

6.3 A Local Inquiry into the Public Library Service Provided by Wirral MBC undertaken by the Secretary of State dated September 2009 concluded that in deciding how to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' the council must assess and take into account local needs. The Secretary of State set out the matters to be considered when undertaking that assessment, including the needs of various adults and of children and the need for a strategic plan. Although the 'Wirral report' does not have force of law, it indicates the circumstances in which the Secretary of State may intervene under his/her default powers set out in section 10 of the Act.

6.4 Members must have regard to the assessment of need incorporated in Appendix One in deciding whether they are satisfied that the proposals will provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service for the persons referred to above.

6.5 The second specific duty is in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

*'Meeting the general equality duty requires 'a deliberate approach and a conscious state of mind'. R (Brown) v Secretary of State for Work & Pensions [2008] EWHC 3158 (Admin).*

Members must know and understand the legal duties in relation to the public sector equality duty and consciously apply the law to the facts when considering and reaching decisions where equality issues arise.

6.6 The Equality Act 2010 introduces a new public sector equality duty which came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The duty placed upon the council is similar to that provided in earlier discrimination legislation but those persons in relation to whom the duty applies have been extended.

6.7 The new public sector duty is set out at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share that protected characteristic.

6.8 A 'protected characteristic' is defined in the Act as:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;(including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

The previous public sector equalities duties only covered race, disability and gender.

6.9 Having due regard to the need to 'advance equality of opportunity' between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not includes having due regard to the need to remove or minimize disadvantages suffered by them. Due regard must also be had to the need to take steps to meet the needs of such persons where those needs are different from persons who do not have that characteristic, and encourage those who have a protected characteristic to participate in public life.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons include steps to take account of the persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to 'fostering good relations' involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

6.10 Complying with the duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as that is allowed by the discrimination law.

6.11 In addition to the Act, the Council is required to comply with any statutory Code of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. New Codes of

Practice under the new Act have yet to be published. However, Codes of Practice issued under the previous legislation remain relevant and the Equality and Human Rights Commission has also published guidance on the new public sector equality duty. The advice set out to members in this report is consistent with the previous Codes and published guidance.

- 6.12 The equality duty arises where the Council is deciding how to exercise its duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service - since the provision of library services is a council function.
- 6.13 The council's duty under Section 149 of the Act is to have 'due regard' to the matters set out in relation to equalities when considering and making decisions on the provision of library services. Accordingly due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations must form an integral part of the decision making process. Members must consider the effect that implementing a particular policy will have in relation to equality before making a decision.
- 6.14 There is no prescribed manner in which the equality duty must be exercised. However, the council must have an adequate evidence base for its decision making. This can be achieved by means including engagement with the public and interest groups, and by gathering details and statistics on who uses the library service and how the service is used. The potential equality impact of the proposed changes to the library service has been assessed, and that assessment is found at Appendix Four and a summary of the position is set out in paragraph 9 of this report. A careful consideration of this assessment is one of the key ways in which members can show "due regard" to the relevant matters.
- 6.15 Although the information on equalities issues relating to libraries was gathered before the new duty came into force, officers anticipated the change in the legislation and accordingly the information is sufficient to enable compliance with the new duty.
- 6.16 Where it is apparent from the analysis of the information that the policy would have an adverse effect on equality then adjustments should be made to avoid that effect (mitigation). The steps proposed to be taken are set out in paragraph 9 of the report and in more detail at appendix Four.
- 6.17 Members should be aware that the duty is not to achieve the objectives or take the steps set out in s.149. Rather, the duty on public authorities is to bring these important objectives relating to discrimination into consideration when carrying out its public functions (which includes the functions relating to libraries). "Due regard" means the regard that is appropriate in all the particular circumstances in which the authority is carrying out its functions. There must be a proper regard for the goals set out in s.149. At the same time, Members must also pay regard to any countervailing factors, which it is proper and reasonable for them to consider. Budgetary pressures, economics and practical factors will often be important, which are brought together in Appendix One. The weight of these countervailing factors in the decision making process is a matter for members in the first instance

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The Director of Finance comments that the transformed library service, as described in section 4, would result in gross savings of approximately £1m per annum. However, after taking into account the additional costs of improving the library service, the net savings would equate to approximately £800k per year. This will be the case from 2012/13, when the full year savings will be realised. In 2011/12, there will be a part year effect as the changes are due to be introduced in September 2011.
- 7.2 The savings of £800k are based on the comparison of the costs of running the twelve existing libraries and the reduced costs resulting from the planned closure of the six libraries in the 2011/12 financial year. The majority of the savings arise from a reduction in the staffing and buildings costs. The other savings are a result of having reduced support service costs such as insurance, photocopying charges and IT network charges.
- 7.3 The revenue savings are net of additional costs of £182k per annum, which are required for improvements to the library service. These costs are as follows, £50k per annum required for improved IT, £66k per annum for improvements in self-service and £65k per annum for Sunday opening in retained libraries that do not currently open on Sundays.
- 7.4 The full analysis of the gross savings and offsetting costs are shown in the table below:

Assuming a closure date of 1/9/2011 these are as follows:

	2011/1 2	2012/1 3	2013/1 4	2014/1 5	2015/1 6
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Staff savings	-394.0	-758.4	-758.4	-758.4	-758.4
Property savings	-133.3	-177.7	-177.7	-177.7	-177.7
Other savings	-46.0	-61.3	-61.3	-61.3	-61.3
<b>Gross savings</b>	<b>-573.3</b>	<b>-997.4</b>	<b>-997.4</b>	<b>-997.4</b>	<b>-997.4</b>
Radio Frequency Identification Technology	66.0	66.0	66.0	66.0	66.0
Web improvements	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0
Seven-day opening	49.1	65.5	65.5	65.5	65.5
<b>Net savings</b>	<b>-408.1</b>	<b>-815.9</b>	<b>-815.9</b>	<b>-815.9</b>	<b>-815.9</b>

- 7.5 However, the net savings are based on the six libraries closing in Sept 2011 and any delay will lead to a reduction in the level of overall savings that will be delivered in the 2011/12 financial year. The impact of each month's delay will result in approximately £68k worth of savings which will be foregone per month.
- 7.6 It should also be noted that if the changes to the staff working hours are not agreed in time for Sept 2011, then this will result in part year costs of £34k, which will be offset against the savings of £408k in 2011/12, resulting in a reduced saving of £374k. In a full year, the costs equate to £67k and would need to be offset against the full year savings of £816k, resulting in a net saving of £749k.

- 7.7 It should be noted that the proposals are at a formative stage in that no decision on the Library Transformation Project has been taken by the Council. The Council set its budget at the meeting of full council on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2011. It is required by law to set its budget by 11th March 2011. The budget is a forecast of finances for the Council for the year 2011/12, and as such it identifies potential areas of spend and saving, as well as matters already decided. A savings figure was provided in the Environment and Neighbourhood Services budget relating to the libraries transformation proposal.
- 7.8 In the event that the Council decides not to proceed with the libraries proposal, the shortfall in savings will need to be offset by finding compensating savings in the Environment and Neighbourhood Services Department, resulting from any delay in closing the six libraries by Sept 2011 as described in paragraph 7.5. Similarly, the shortfall in savings by an inability to agree the changes in staffing hours as described in paragraph 7.6 will need to be offset by compensating savings by the Environment and Neighbourhood Services Department.
- 7.9 Appendix One reviews alternative methods of delivering the service and making these savings, and concludes that the recommendations and service as set out in paragraph 4 are the preferable alternative.

## **8.0 Consultation**

- 8.1 The Council undertook an extensive consultation on the proposals contained within the November 2010 Libraries Transformation report. A detailed report on the process, challenges and outcomes is at Appendix Three.
- 8.2 The three-month consultation period ran until March 4 2011. It was undertaken through:
- a questionnaire available on line and on paper
  - a series of public meetings attended by members and officers
  - an open day
  - attendance by members and officers at Area Consultative Forums
  - attendance by members and officers at service user forums
  - email correspondence including responding to a wide range of detailed enquiries
  - meetings with groups and individuals as requested, attended by members and officers
- 8.3 In addition a number of petitions have been submitted to the Executive meeting of 11 April 2011 for consideration.
- 8.4 The consultation also benefitted from extensive media coverage, ranging from weekly coverage in the local newspapers to reports in the national and overseas press. It seems unlikely that any resident with the slightest interest in libraries or local affairs will be unaware of the discussion around aspects of the Libraries Transformation Project.



8.5 It is therefore all the more important to recall that consultation does not constitute a referendum. There are serious challenges within the consultation feedback as to how representative it is of library users, of non-users, or the borough's population as a whole. Members should be aware of these shortcomings as they consider the weight they give to the outcomes of the three-month consultation alongside the other drivers for change, including the needs assessment, the available resources and the equalities impact assessment.

8.6 In particular:

- Only 23% of the Borough's population used a Brent library in the last year (borrowed at least one item during the year and/or accessed ICT services) which is in itself an important challenge for the new library offer. By contrast 87% of respondents to the questionnaire use a library regularly (at least once a month). It proved extremely difficult to engage with non-users and analyse their reasons for not using the libraries, which highlighted the importance of improved marketing of the services available
- respondents focused almost exclusively on the proposals to close six libraries. Thus Kensal Rise (34%) and Preston (24%) users account for 58% of all questionnaire responses, and 83% of all responses named one of the six. However, all six libraries taken together represent less than 25% of total library visits in 2009/10 (without adjusting usage to account for the temporary closure of Harlesden library)
- some elements of the questionnaire responses are contradictory. For instance, 61% of respondents disagreed with the broad proposal that libraries become community hubs with revised service delivery and funding principles, but 79% of respondents suggest that libraries could also be used as community meeting places and 44% that other public services could share library buildings.
- The population of respondents is significantly different from that of the population of active borrowers, and from that of the Borough as a whole, particularly in relation to ethnicity. 60% of respondents identified as white (45% white British), compared to 32% of active borrowers.
- where it was possible to have a more detailed conversation, for example at the Open Day, or analysing the Red Quadrant research undertaken in October 2010, there are differing opinions about the ambitions for the service, for example concerning the balance between PC availability, quiet space, stock and children's services

8.7 The main issues raised in the consultation, while mindful of these complexities, can be summarised as;

- *The stock is not good enough:* people argue for more classic fiction, more children's books, a greater proportion of non-fiction and reference, a higher percentage of the budget being spend on the stock, better staff training and better customer engagement
- *Online services and access to PCs:* there is significant demand for PC access, particularly to support study, alongside quiet space. Online services are less used and people are less familiar with the services available, but usage, for example for renewals and reservations, is growing rapidly.
- *we love our local library* encompasses responses around the community-centre role of libraries, access and transport, the way the budget is

structured, the way the book stock is managed and the arguments that the Council is Wembley-centric. The high usage of Willesden Green by non-local residents, however, shows that people do travel to a larger, better-equipped library

- *the consultation itself is flawed*: despite numerous enquiries and some marginal adjustments, officers are satisfied that the financial and user analyses are correct. The consultation, as described, has been extensive, with intense media interest. Some different proposals for structuring the services were made and are discussed in Appendix One as well as the general consultation report at Appendix Three.
- *Perceived impact on specific groups such as children, older people and people with disabilities* for example through cost and availability of public transport (These issues are addressed through the EIA at paragraph 9 and Appendix Four.)
- *Community hubs and diverse services*: as noted there are internally contradictory messages on this point, but the consultation broadly seems to reinforce the perceived value of joint access to services.
- *The need for marketing and raising the profile of library services*: although very little response came from non-users of the libraries, it is clear from the small sample that people do not know what services are available. It will be fundamental to the next steps of Transformation Project to create a clear marketing and communications plan for the library offer.

8.8 The views expressed during the consultation have been carefully considered and taken into account as appropriate in (a) the assessment of need in Appendix One; and (b) the recommendation to deliver a comprehensive and efficient service within the Libraries Transformation Project. The issues raised, together with many more detailed comments, have informed the new Library offer, and will help to shape the specific provision of services in the six library buildings and online.

## **9.0 Diversity and Equalities Implications**

9.1 The Libraries Transformation Project has been closely examined for its impact on communities across the borough. The full EIA and its supporting Annexes are at Appendix Four. Detailed demographic information was used to inform the analyses in this report, and is available on the microsite.

9.2 The EIA draws from a wide range of sources, including:

- the boroughs demographic information (recognising that it is now 10 years since the census), including studies of indices of deprivation
- usage data within libraries
- related surveys and research over the last two years
- the consultation, and in particular the issues raised that might affect specific communities
- other surveys and strategies, for example the Council's work to reduce transport related accidents which has successfully reduced injuries through targeted work with young people from BME communities.

9.3 A wide range of potential adverse impacts were identified for analysis and possible mitigation as a result of the assessment. The management of the information and

presentation of the analysis was made more complex by the clear overlap of impacts between different communities, even if the mitigation might be different. In undertaking the analysis, four impacts were particularly identified as potentially affecting several equalities strands. The first three annexes to the EIA look at the analysis of impact by equality strand, then look at the analysis of issues raised and then addresses proposed mitigation of those potential impacts. The four shared issues are:

- accessibility and affordability
- impact on educational standards
- impact on social cohesion
- impact on lifelong learning and associated employment figures.

- 9.4 Detailed mitigation has been considered for these potential adverse impacts. These are shown in detail in Annexe 4.3, and it is also important to note that these are reflected in the new Library offer, set out at paragraph 4 above. That offer has been expressly designed to address these points.
- 9.5 The EIA shows that the identified adverse impacts are mitigated by proposed actions, in particular through targeted activities, specific outreach services and stock management. The financial constraints on the Council do not permit even further mitigation, although the reinvestment within the Transformation Project has ensured a wide range of measures. Introducing further bus services is outside the Council's powers.
- 9.6 The EIA shows that there is a restricted number of library users, particularly in the Cricklewood area (where the PTAL rankings are the poorest), who will experience the worst impact in relation to access to libraries either because they cannot use public transport, cannot walk to nearby public transport or alternative libraries, or cannot afford transport. Across all equality strands where a potential adverse affect due to issues of access and affordability has been identified, a range of mitigation measures have been established including outreach services, online and digital services, home delivery and home visits, books by mail and monthly outreach deposit collections to specific centres. These mitigations, which are considered sufficient to address the impact, will be particularly tailored to those areas and communities most affected.
- 9.7 Officers have carefully considered the potential adverse impacts which may remain after all the mitigating measures are taken into account, and how these should be evaluated given the other drivers for change within the Library Transformation Project. In this context, the EIA has considered:
- numbers of users
  - known information about transport and access difficulties particular relating to age, ethnicity, gender and disability
  - the access of relevant sections of the community to free or subsidised transport
  - the other mitigations for difficulties of access and affordability
  - the costs of maintaining the current service and the potential impact on delivery of the broader Transformation project
  - the costs and difficulty of introducing public transport improvements
  - the acute financial challenge facing the authority

9.8 Officers therefore consider that the potential adverse impact on a small group of residents which is not completely mitigated by other steps is justified by the benefits of the Transformation Project and the tight financial restrictions on the Council.

## **10.0 Staffing Implications**

10.1 There are four areas of impact on staff within the Libraries Service:

- the reduction in numbers consequent on delivering the service from fewer buildings
- changes in contract terms and enhancements
- training and development to deliver the new library offer
- Reduction in HQ costs

### *10.2 Reduction in numbers*

If the Executive decides to implement the Library Transformation project, reducing the number of buildings by six, approximately 25.5 full time equivalent posts will be lost, representing 45 to 55 staff. (It is impossible to be precise about these numbers as staff work a different number of hours and the precise number of people will depend on the pattern of hours.)

This change was the subject of a 30 day consultation with affected staff, closing on 2 March. Management have reviewed the responses to that consultation and produced a detailed report circulated to staff in mid-March. Staff raised many detailed questions of clarification and personal issues. Two particular issues were:

- the start of the assessment and selection process prior to the decision, and
- the operation of the ring fence for certain roles

In both these cases management reviewed their position, but have not changed their approach. It is important to note that, although assessment of staff has been completed, no notices will be issued until the decision is finalised. The selection process is preparation for implementation, but no implementation (ie redundancy notices) can happen until after the decision.

### *10.3 Changes in contracts and enhancement*

The Libraries Transformation Project envisages seven day opening across the six libraries. This is dependent on rationalising the current arrangements. At the moment, there is a mixture of terms and conditions across the service, which is unfair and unwieldy. Management has therefore issued a consultation document to address these issues.

### *10.4 Training and Development for the new library offer*

The Library offer, as set out in para 4 above envisages increased responsibilities, and works towards improved customer care with staff fully equipped with the tools to deliver modern library services. As the project moves from consultation, through decision to implementation, the service will develop a programme of intensive training.

## 10.5 *Reduction in HQ costs*

Libraries headquarters staffing costs have reduced substantially in 2010/11 as part of the Council's Staffing and Structure Review. Three posts were deleted, one manager and two administrative posts. This reduced the budget by £144,000, over and above the staffing savings proposed in the Libraries Transformation Project.

## 11.0 **Implementation and Timetable**

- 11.1 The detailed implementation of these recommendations, particularly the recommendation to close six libraries, is a complex issue. It is, at the time of writing, impossible to determine an exact timetable for closure of library buildings as the decision making process itself contains several weeks' potential uncertainty. (Members may call-in this issue for scrutiny, and that committee may refer the matter back to the Executive, which would then consider the matter at its meeting of 23 May.)
- 11.2 In order to prepare for this large task, some preliminary work has been undertaken, most significantly the assessment of staff. How many staff the service needs will, as identified above, depend on the decision the Executive makes. If the decision is to close one or more libraries, there will be staff who are made redundant, though the significant pool of people who have volunteered for redundancy, reduces the number of compulsory redundancies. However, no actual implementation work has begun, or will begin until the decision is confirmed.
- 11.3 Different officers are also on different notice periods, reflecting their length of service. This factor, taken together with other organisational matters, means that a provisional timetable cannot be established. It is anticipated that it will take up to three months to close all the six library buildings identified in this report, although some will close sooner.
- 11.4 If the Executive decides to proceed with the recommendations, six buildings will no longer be required by the Environment & Neighbourhoods Department to deliver the Libraries service as described in the new Library offer. These have been subject to intense debate during the consultation, and a number of proposals made for their use. These have been considered in detail, which is covered in paragraph 11 and Appendix Six. In summary, none of these propositions represent a viable future use for the buildings within the context of the new offer and the requirement for no ongoing cost to the Council.
- 11.5 The buildings will therefore enter the Council's normal procedures for consideration of surplus property. This is outlined in paragraph 13 below, including a brief examination of the key legal and financial constraints on the specific buildings.

## 12.0 **Alternative proposals**

- 12.1 As set out in this report, the Libraries Transformation Project will deliver a service that is comprehensive and efficient, and fulfils the Council's duties. This judgement is based on a detailed assessment of need and analysis of the impact of the changes proposed, including closing 6 library buildings. Any organisations, groups or individuals who delivered a private or community library, whether or not they used buildings currently or previously used by the Council as libraries, would be doing so in

addition to the Council's provision and not as a contribution to the Council's fulfilment of its statutory duties.

- 12.2 The November 2010 report specifically stated that the Council was not closing its doors to proposals from the community to deliver libraries on alternative models. That report said that during the consultation process, the Council would undertake:

*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)*

Members were clear, in public consultation meetings and through correspondence, that they would consider proposals from the community, but that they needed to meet the Council's concerns around enabling a balanced budget, and not represent either ongoing costs or risks to the Council.

- 12.3 Cllr Powney, as Lead Member, and officers met with a number of groups and organisations, and provided a significant amount of detailed information about local libraries, including analyses of central costs (eg for ICT, insurance etc). It was agreed, and widely circulated, that the cut-off date for proposals was the same as the closing date of the consultation, namely 4 March 2011.

- 12.4 Overall nine proposals were received from the groups listed below. (These are available on the microsite.)

- Barham Library Friends
- Cricklewood Homeless Concern
- Kensal Rise Library Friends
- Library Systems & Services UK Ltd (LSSI)
- Mark Twain Literary Centre
- Save Preston Library Campaign
- Mr Yogesh Taylor
- User groups at libraries threatened with closure
- Mr Nishaan Vithlani

- 12.5 Appendix Six sets out the detailed approach to this process, and the appraisal given to each proposal. Before receiving these submissions, officers reviewed the complex financial, legal and risk issues surrounding this emerging process. Officers then prepared a detailed guidance note for appraising proposals, which is at Annexe 1 to the Appendix. In particular, it must be noted that this does not constitute a formal procurement exercise.

- 12.6 It was clear in appraising these proposals, as the reports in Annexe Two to the Appendix spell out, that none of them represent viable business cases. All of them rely on ongoing subsidy from the Council, none of them relieve the Council from all risk relating to buildings and assets, some of them would require formal procurement processes and very few of them come from groups who can show relevant expertise or longevity. Officers therefore do not recommend further engagement with any of these proposals.

- 12.7 Paragraph 13 sets out the position with regard to the six library buildings proposed for closure. It recommends that, within legal and financial constraints, these are subject to the normal commercial operations of the Council. Clearly, as these properties are considered for future use or disposal, any commercial proposition that meets the Council's financial objectives and is presented through the proper mechanisms (eg procurement or auction) will be considered.

### 13.0 Property Implications

- 13.1 The Council's property strategy is currently being reviewed. The strategy has always considered alternative uses to council buildings when the existing service no longer has a use. In the case of some of the libraries below alternative council uses will be considered but this is against the backdrop of budget reductions.

**Barham Park Library, Harrow Road** - An 1860s single storey property which is part of the mainly 2 storey Barham Park Building complex. The library is accessed through a shared entrance with a children's centre which was provided about 2 years ago. The property is owned by the Barham Park Trust of which the Council is trustee.

**Cricklewood Library, Olive Road**, - A 2 storey library constructed around 1900 located in a residential area. The property is constructed on land gifted by All Souls College and is subject to a statutory reverter provision the effect of which is that the Council is deemed to hold the site on a statutory trust for the benefit of All Souls.

**Kensal Rise Library** A 2 storey library constructed around 1900 located in a mixed commercial and residential area. The property is constructed on land gifted by All Souls College and subject to a statutory reverter provision the effect of which is that the Council is deemed to hold the site on a statutory trust for the benefit of All Souls

**Neasden Library, 277 Neasden Lane** - A 3 storey premises leased until 2022; the Council will need to mitigate its financial obligations through sub-letting. Interest has been expressed by a third party in taking a sub lease of the first floor. Property advice is that the building would be reasonably attractive to the market as it is in good condition.

**Preston Library, Carlton Avenue East** - A 1970s single story brick built library under a flat roof located on a site of 962 sqm. The site is considered suitable for a residential development of houses or flats.

The property might also be suitable for conversion to a children's nursery or as a religious building. There would be planning concerns that would need to address potential traffic generation from these type of users or alternatively sold for residential development.

**Tokington Library, Monks Park**, - A 1970s single story brick built library under a flat roof located on a site of 786 sqm although part of this provides an access to the adjacent newly constructed Monks Park Clinic. Part of the site is classified as public open space and on which has been constructed a parks store which is now disused. The site is suitable for a small scale residential infill development of 2-3 houses or a

small flatted development. It is recommended that this property is sold at auction or offered to RSLs.

## **Background Papers**

Brent Library Strategy 2008-12  
Library Service Plan 2010-12  
DCMS *Modernisation Review of Public Libraries* March 2011  
MLA *What People want from Libraries* December 2010  
Red Quadrant research in Brent Library Offer October 2010  
DCMS Inquiry into Wirral Libraries 2010  
Council's Online Survey 2007  
Sheila Peace *Accessibility, Local Services and Older People survey*  
PLUS surveys  
Alternative proposals from groups and organisations (as listed in para 11)  
Also see documentation listed in Appendix Seven and available on the Council's dedicated microsite

SUE HARPER  
Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services

## **Contact Officers**

Sarah Tanburn, Interim AD Neighbourhood Services ext 5001  
Sue McKenzie, Head of Libraries, Arts & Heritage, ext 3149

## **Appendices**

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Appendix 3:	Consultation
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Appendix 4:	Equalities Impact Assessment (the Council's INRA form)
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Annexe 4.4	Over 60 map
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