



To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Date: January 2020

Subject: Libraries Update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 This Briefing Note is intended to provide the Scrutiny Board with an update on the current position of the Coventry Libraries and Information Service. The note includes information related to the recent service changes and delivery of savings, as well as updating the Board on current key performance measures and recent developments.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
- 1) Note this briefing and identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member

3 Information/Background

Connecting Communities Programme

- 3.1 The Council introduced the Connecting Communities programme in 2015/2016. The programme was introduced in two phases with changes to Library Services introduced alongside changes to a number of other Council services. The main changes to Library Services included reductions in opening hours, reductions in the amount of money spent on library stock, a move to three library types (core, partnership and community-led) along with the de-commissioning of the mobile library.
- 3.2 Phase one of the changes resulted in budget reductions of £802k, phase two of the changes supported a further reduction of £503k, totalling £1,305k. In line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in November 2018 a third set of proposals focusing on increased self-service and other limited service reductions was consulted on with staff and service users which reduced budgets by a further £319k.

4 Current Position Regarding Each Library

- 4.1 Below is a summary of the current status of the 17 public libraries which currently operate in the City:

Community Libraries

- 4.2 Cheylesmore Library – completed transition to community control by Cheylesmore Community Centre in March 2018. The library is well integrated into the Community Centre and has a vibrant group of dedicated volunteers who support library users with access to library resources.
- 4.3 Earlsdon Library – completed transition to community leadership in September 2019. Earlsdon Carnegie Community Library now have a lease on the building and are currently working towards delivery of their business case through a proposal to utilise transition funding approved for them. Whilst opening hours were initially reduced as the move to community-leadership commenced more recently they have been expanded as the

capacity of volunteers has increased. Usage of the library has increased as the range of activities and events at the library have increased.

- 4.4 Finham Library – completed transition to community leadership in June 2019. Opening hours were initially reduced as the move to community-leadership commenced however more recently they have been expanded as the capacity of volunteers has increased. Finham Library Action Group who now have a lease for the building have ambitious plans for developing the library as a community hub with a proposal currently being evaluated for regulatory consent which will enable the public to have access to a wc and modest capacity for refreshments to be served.

Core Libraries

- 4.5 Bell Green Library – issues related to the Riley Square development have been resolved and plans are being developed for investment in the square which will be positive to the library. Adult Education provision is also available from the library. Over the past year some significant issues related to anti-social behaviour have been recorded which are being supported by the local Police.
- 4.6 Central Library – this is the library with the most extensive citywide provision (particularly related to IT), open 7 days per week, library shares space with Carers Trust and Adult Education. The introduction of periods of self-service has been completed successfully. Some issues of anti-social behaviour noted with a multi-agency response being developed.
- 4.7 Foleshill Library – continues to be well used particularly by BAME community.
- 4.8 Stoke Library – subject so some significant anti-social behaviour over recent months which have required support from local Police.
- 4.9 Tile Hill Library – library building includes Adult Education provision, continues to be well used.

Partnership Libraries

- 4.10 Aldermoor –issues with the development of partnership agreement with Stoke Aldermoor Community Association regarding the Life Centre provide difficult to overcome. The Council is sharing the space with the Inini Initiative a social enterprise working with BAME communities resulting in better well-being by raising awareness of mental illness such as depression, anxiety, stress and schizophrenia in women, men and children.
- 4.11 Allesley –potential partners have been in discussions but have not reached fruition – significant increased usage has been reported over the past two years. Officers continue to consider options for developing a Partnership Library model.
- 4.12 Caludon Castle – usage of the library remains modest and no plans have been developed so far for a potential partnership or community model.
- 4.13 Canley – usage of the library remains modest and the condition of the building is closely monitored. Work continues to develop a proposal for a Canley Library resource to be co-located with other services/provision.
- 4.14 Coundon – plans for a partnership model for this library have been hampered by the condition of the building. Several proposals have been investigated and officers continue to consider options for the site.
- 4.15 Hillfields – some increased usage observed after relocation to WATCH building, IT use in particular is positive.
- 4.16 Holbrooks – currently located in HCCA building – usage still modest.
- 4.17 Jubilee Crescent – located in the Jubilee Crescent Community Centre – new lease recently issued to CA – still working with various partnerships - levels of anti-social behaviour have increased and are increasingly of concern.

- 4.18 Willenhall – located in Hagard Centre with joint work on aspects of programme – levels of anti-social behaviour have been an issue in the past and continue to be monitored.

5 Volunteers

- 5.1 The three community-based organisations delivering Cheylesmore, Earlsdon and Finham libraries continue to have healthy numbers of volunteers supporting these libraries. The Library Service itself also has positive opportunities for local people to volunteer training over 113 with now around 62 volunteers supporting Council library settings. Recruitment of volunteers is now part of the day-to-day operation of the service. Volunteering in Libraries has been a stepping-stone for many into paid employment, including at least 3 who have gone on to be appointed to Library Service jobs.

6 Single Staffed Libraries

- 6.1 The Council consulted with staff regarding plans to introduce single-staffed libraries last year. Following representations from staff, Trades Unions and from others including the Scrutiny Board it was decided in consultation with the Cabinet Member not to pursue this in the form proposed. As future budget proposals are considered and options for the co-location of services are developed opportunities for creative staffing models will be explored.

7 Other 2019 Budget Reductions

- 7.1 Other proposals for reduced budgets were introduced as per the proposals discussed by the Board in November 2018. These included the introduction of a 'Library Express' model at Central Library, ending the provision of hard copy newspapers and magazines (except for the Coventry Telegraph) and the introduction of a privately-run café within Central Library and an externally funded Visa scheme. Work on the café and new meeting room has been completed and the café should be fully open in early 2020. The Visa scheme has been successful with an expansion of the capacity planned from February.

8 Library Performance Information

- 8.1 A snapshot of Coventry Libraries performance is provided in Appendix A. Visits and loans from Libraries remain positive. The use of ICT (both number of sessions and hours) shows an increase year on year. Changes to the opening hours of community-led libraries has started to result in improved performance.
- 8.2 A recent Cipfa survey identified Central Library in Coventry as having the second most visitors in the West Midlands (after the Hive, Worcester) and the third highest number of loan issues (after the Hive, Worcester and Rugby Library).

9 Other recent developments

Development of the Cultural Offer

- 9.1 Get It Loud in Libraries – Central Library continues to host live music events in association with the Arts Council supported by Get It Loud in Libraries. Recent events include the band Yak performing in November as well as an event with the Charlatans frontman Tim Burgess in conversation in support of his new lyric book. The first event of the New Year will be a performance by the band John on 8th February 20.
- 9.2 The Council is in advanced discussions with the Arts Council and City of Culture around a bid of national significance to support the digital agenda in Coventry Libraries. Potential partners include the BBC and British Film Institute. A secondary bid is also being developed with the Arts Council exploring reading in the City. The project aims to achieve 1 million reads in 2021 by engaging people in Coventry in a wide range of reading activities.
- 9.3 In addition, the service works with various partners on potential future projects. Current work includes collaboration with the two Universities and plans for Libraries from each institution to deliver a range of activity including a readathon, reminiscence boxes, a human

library and festival of reading for reading groups. The Library service is building a new partnership with the Shakespeare birthplace trust to deliver a new Early Years programme of activity in libraries.

- 9.4 The Library Service is also in discussions with Coventry University regarding the potential move of the Fab Lab into Central Library. This move would bring together digital creativity sessions with digital fabrication opportunities and so create a central location offering opportunities of play, creation and learning as well as providing stimulus for local entrepreneurship.

9.5 Health and Wellbeing Agenda

- a. Libraries continue to play an important role in promoting good health and mental wellbeing. One recent initiative which the service is very proud of is the Creative Kindness partnership with Grapevine. Led by volunteers, the group meets at Central Library and provides valuable support for isolated people. The following video really showcases the outcomes from the partnership [watch via FB](#) .
- b. Reading Well for Children launches in February 2020. The Library Service will be widely promoting this collection which supports the mental health and wellbeing of children.

Libraries of Sanctuary

- 9.6 Coventry Library Service is well placed to become recognised as a 'Library of Sanctuary'. Work is progressing with the National Libraries of Sanctuary movement to achieve this certification.

10 Future Service Development

- 10.1 Coventry libraries provide an important element of the services available to Coventry's local communities and as such future service development will be considered as part of place based working initiatives.

Name	Peter Barnett
Job Title:	Head of Service – Libraries and Migration
Contact Details	02476 972680

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