

April 2015

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Libraries

Report from Scrutiny Review

Members of the review group

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CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE	5
POLICY BACKGROUND	7
HARROW CONTEXT	14
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	16
CONCLUSION	33
APPENDICES	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National research, as well as Harrow's recent public consultation on libraries, has demonstrated that people continue to value public libraries. Libraries continue to be trusted spaces where people from across the borough can share the pleasures of reading, information, knowledge, culture and a sense of community.

However we are also acutely aware of the many challenges that modern libraries face – including reduced public expenditure in a climate of financial austerity, advances in technology which affect the way people connect with information and culture, and changes in the borough's demography which means that libraries must meet the needs of different and evolving communities.

The council, in partnership with Carillion (its library service contractor), is working with Harrow's communities to redefine what libraries look like in the borough and what services they provide.

Through the course of this review, we gathered evidence from a range of sources, through desktop research and drawing on the recent consultation with Harrow residents on Harrow libraries. We also heard from and questioned council officers from both Ealing and Harrow Councils, as well as from Carillion, the contractor for library services for both of the boroughs. We held a joint committee meeting with colleagues from Ealing Council to scrutinise performance on the contract with Carillion and held two further challenge panel sessions to examine more Harrow-specific issues. We were able to draw on the invaluable insight from a number of library users and young people who sat on the review and helped both in gathering evidence and framing our final recommendations.

The review's key findings and recommendations are themed under the following headings:

- Libraries performance
- Stock fund
- Reviewing opening times
- Strategic direction for Harrow libraries – including the programme of refurbishment, libraries as social hubs, library closures, and vision
- Alternative models of library provision
- Marketing and user engagement

We view Harrow's library strategy as an evolving and living document and therefore hope that suggestions from the scrutiny review can be used to help in delivering the strategy for Harrow's residents. Our report also includes a number of case studies from other local authorities which may provide some insight into innovative approaches elsewhere in the country.

Libraries need to evolve to be fit for purpose in the 21st century. Harrow's vision for libraries needs to look further into the future in redefining what will make Harrow's libraries resilient, sustainable and fit for the 21st century. We hope that the observations from this scrutiny review will offer some useful insight into delivering such a library service.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In our report, we recommend that:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Carillion should improve some of their performance measures to better measure future trends (e.g. demand for e-books) and collect data to capture all usage of libraries, for example more data around active membership should be analysed to better ascertain in what ways are people active in libraries, and not just rely on stock issues.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the recommendations from the joint committee meeting with Ealing Council on 4 March 2015 be noted: The Committee resolved that:

- (i) the reports from Ealing Council, Harrow Council and Carillion Integrated Services be received;
- (ii) a proactive approach be taken in the promotion of libraries and library events around the borough;
- (iii) information on how to sign up for library 'e-bulletins' be forwarded to Councillors for filtering to constituents;
- (iv) community groups be closely involved in the shaping of opening-hours and space hire rates;
- (v) it be ensured that no services are restricted to an online only offer;
- (vi) the importance of data capture for better insight be highlighted;
- (vii) opening hours always be considered within the context of local needs;
- (viii) officers be asked to continue to embed staff training on signposting;
- (ix) That a regular annual review of the library contract be undertaken by Scrutiny each year.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Officers further research into the trend linking reductions in stockfund and fewer visits to libraries to ascertain whether it is replicated in other boroughs, and if so what are they doing to remedy.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Carillion uses the audience development plan to review how the needs of specific communities are being met through libraries stock plans, and that Harrow's libraries are adequately adapting to the changing demographics of parts of the borough. Carillion should undertake further research into 'hidden communities' in Harrow so as to better understand current and future needs around library provision.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Harrow libraries engage with users around the spending on the stock fund to ensure that stock provided meet the needs of library users.

RECOMMENDATION 6: the council make better use of school buildings and school libraries in providing library services, especially to mitigate the impact of library closures for young people.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Harrow's strategy should be a living document that is systematically reviewed and updated on a regular basis, taking on board the suggestions made by this scrutiny review group. It should seek to answer questions such as 'what will Harrow's libraries look like beyond the programme of refurbishment?' and 'what does Harrow's library service, fit for the 21st century, look like?'

RECOMMENDATION 8: In any future decisions around the closure of libraries, the knock on effects on local communities and infrastructure must be more fully considered as libraries are a key part of local district centres. The council must look at the opportunities offered by regeneration plans in assessing how library provision can fit in the plans. The impact on local communities and the local economy should be paramount in any decisions made.

RECOMMENDATION 9: More work is done to analyse data around the decline in visitor numbers and look for correlations with other indicators, drawing on existing research where appropriate. This should be used to inform the development of plans for a new library in Harrow town centre.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The council ensures that any proposals for community libraries that are seriously considered are based on robust business cases that can demonstrate serious financial planning and solid plans for sustainability. For the council to back any proposal it must be feasible.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Carillion's marketing strategy better captures the attention of users and promotes what services are available to library users, as well as plans strategies to target those residents who do not currently use libraries. Carillion should ensure that its marketing plan for 2015-16 is more externally focussed, more challenging with suitable targets and timelines, and demonstrates more innovation. With a programme of refurbishment ahead, the marketing plan should include a comprehensive engagement plan also.

RECOMMENDATION 12: There is better engagement with schools as this is currently an untapped opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The Library Service works with the Harrow Youth Parliament in order to better promote the library services available particularly to young people. An example of this would be 'Library in Your Living Room' – free access to online newspapers and magazines for library card holders, even when outside of the library¹.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The resources available to library users, for example online resources, should be better publicised within libraries, not just at PN terminals but displayed by means of posters on noticeboards for example.

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

The Scrutiny Leadership Group commissioned a scrutiny review of libraries as part of the scrutiny work programme for 2014/2015. Colleagues at Ealing Council had also asked for a joint scrutiny review of the contract and performance of library services that Ealing Council and Harrow Council share with Carillion Integrated Services. The 5-year contract with Carillion commenced in September 2013.

This review considered Carillion's performance in providing a library service for Harrow and Ealing residents in the first year of the contract (2013/14). It also considered the outcomes of the Take Part consultation on the future of Harrow libraries which ran from

¹ <http://www.ccslibraries.com/libraries/harrow-libraries/online-resources>

November 2014 to January 2015. Given the timeframe for this review, it was not in a position to influence the decisions around budget decisions for 2015/16 but rather inform the strategic direction of library services for 2015/16 and beyond.

The aims and objectives of the review were:

Jointly with Ealing Council:

- To jointly review with Ealing Council the current contract with Carillion Integrated Services for the delivery of library services across the two boroughs.
- To examine the current performance of libraries in Harrow and Ealing, as provided by Carillion.

Harrow specific:

- To consider the changes proposed for Harrow's libraries in light of the proposed budget savings for 2015/16 and the outcome of consultation with residents (November 2014 to January 2015).
- To develop an understanding of what residents want from their local libraries.
- To explore innovative practices in the delivery of library services by councils.
- To identify ways in which Harrow Council can deliver 21st century libraries for residents within the context of the financial challenges facing local government.
- To inform the implementation of a 3-year Harrow Library Strategy and work towards a potential West London Library Strategy with the other library authorities also managed by Carillion (Ealing and Hounslow).

The scope for the review is presented in Appendix A.

Review methodology

In preparing for this review we undertook desktop research to better understand the policy background to libraries in the 21st century, surveyed previous reports on Harrow libraries and drew on a number of other authorities' experiences which had demonstrated innovative approaches. Many of these are included as case studies within our report. The review meetings themselves fell in a very concentrated period of three weeks in March 2015. We held a joint committee meeting with Ealing Council on 4 March at Ealing Town Hall and held the Harrow-specific challenge panel over two sessions – on 9 and 17 March 2015. These meetings gathered evidence from council officers (from both Harrow and Ealing Councils), the relevant portfolio holders and officers from Carillion. The review involved a number of external representatives – four library users and two representatives of Harrow Youth Parliament – who were directly involved in the scrutiny sessions and framing our final recommendations. We thank everybody involved in this review for their valuable contribution².

² Library users – Vanessa Harley, Julian Maw, Priya Mistry and Bernard Wainwright.

Harrow Youth Parliament representatives – Anwulika and Natalia.

Carillion officers – Neil Simpson, Fiona Tarn, Fiona Mehta, Ashley Riches and Lee Stallard.

Harrow Council's Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture & Resident Engagement – Councillor Sue Anderson.

Harrow Council officers – Marianne Locke, Tim Bryan and Nahreen Matlib.

POLICY BACKGROUND

“The core purpose of libraries is, and looks set to remain, enabling people to access, explore and enjoy reading and knowledge. For libraries to fulfil this purpose and reverse declining use, the services they provide must be closely attuned to the particular needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. Achieving this goal hinges on community engagement, enablement, and co-production becoming organising principles for libraries, modelling an emerging new settlement between taxpayers and the state.”³

Statutory background to libraries

The specific legal requirements of the Council in relation to libraries is set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 section 7 (amended by the Local Government Act 1972) which requires the authority to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” public library service. The terms “comprehensive and efficient” are not defined within the Act; however the Act requires local authorities to provide, free of charge, access for people who live, work or study in their area to borrow or refer to books and other material in line with their needs and requirements. There is no national standards framework that must be applied, giving local authorities a lot of freedom to design their services to meet local needs and aspirations within their available resources. Government responsibility for public libraries is shared between the Departments for Culture, and for Communities and Local Government.

Recent research on public libraries

Recent research reports have encouraged libraries to innovate and adapt in line with their local communities’ needs in order to meet current challenges, in particular reductions in public sector spending and changes in technology. Three recent reports are outlined here in particular. ‘*Envisioning the library of the future*’ (2012) aimed to develop a long-term vision for public libraries in England, and ‘*Community libraries – Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities*’ (2013) described different models and advised local authorities on community involvement in the provision and management of library services. This was followed most recently in December 2014 by the publication of ‘*Independent Library Report for England*’ commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which outlines the need for a re-invigorated public library service, with Wi-Fi in every library, in a comfortable, retail standard environment similar to modern bookshops.

Envisioning the library of the future

*Envisioning the library of the future*⁴ is a 2012 programme of research commissioned by the Arts Council to help develop a long-term vision for public libraries in England. The research involved

Ealing Council’s Scrutiny Review Panel 3 (Ealing’s Customers) - Councillors: Daniel Crawford (Chair), Munir Ahmed, Joanna Camadoo, Patrick Cogan, Kamaljit Dhindsa, Abdullah Gulaid, Penny Jones, Seema Kumar, Gary Malcolm (Vice-Chair), Karam Mohan, Theresa Mullins, Charan Sharma and Chris Summers.

Ealing Council’s Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture & customer Services – Councillor Patricia Walker.

Ealing Council officers – Manny Manoharan, Alison Reynolds, Carole Stewart, Harjeet Bains and Lee Teasdale.

³ Envisioning the library of the future: full report, p3

speaking to over 800 people (experts, partners, commentators, innovators), receiving 1,400 responses to an online survey and over 10,000 viewed the online conversation by the public.

The research found that public libraries are trusted spaces, open to all, in which people continue to explore and share the joys of reading, information, knowledge and culture. It is clear that people value the services that libraries provide and will continue to do so. There is a clear message that there is a compelling and continuing need for a publicly funded library service. The research also reminds us that public libraries face many challenges in the coming years, including: advances in technology, which affect the ways in which people want to connect to information and culture; reduced public expenditure; the increasing involvement of citizens in the design and delivery of public services; and the needs of an ageing population.

The societal context for changes to library services includes that the UK's population is growing, ageing and becoming increasingly diverse. Reductions in public expenditure look set to continue and public sector reform is likely to accelerate with a stated drive towards localism and the development of new and diverging forms of service delivery. The public are demanding more personalised services which they can use 24 hours a day. This is happening hand in hand with a revolution in the way we communicate and access information. An unprecedented amount of information is free and instantaneous, but often unverifiable. However, one in four people still do not or cannot use the internet and the need for assistance in digital access is growing. In amongst all of this, the number of people visiting their local library is falling. The research details what stakeholders said about library services which can be themed under eight themes and a summary of which can be found in the Appendices.

The research also asked the public for their views⁵. The values and purpose of the library service expressed by participants provide a clear vision of a library service that has a role at the centre of all communities. The value of the public library is to:

- provide a neutral and safe space
- provide a shared space to facilitate interaction and create a sense of community
- be an environment for exploration, a point of trusted information and provide a breadth and depth of knowledge
- introduce children to books and reading, firing their imagination and at the same time supporting the development of children and young people
- provide a learning environment and space for quiet study
- be inclusive and open to all, and provide a non-stigmatising environment

Arts Council England response to 'Envisioning the library of the future'

In response to the research and in order to foster a successful, sustainable library service for the 21st century in light of these challenges, the Arts Council⁶ set out four priority areas for development which have been tested and corroborated by stakeholders:

⁴ *Envisioning the library of the future, phases 1 and 2: full report*, November 2012. Research by Ipsos Mori and Shared Intelligence, commissioned by Arts Council England

⁵ *Envisioning the library of the future Phase 3: understanding what people value about libraries*, research by Involve and Dialogue by Design,

1. Place the library as the hub of the community – this will involve rethinking the way in which library spaces are used to encourage shared and creative activity, integrating library’s physical and virtual spaces, and sustain enough space to meet community needs.
2. Make the most of digital technology and creative media – the true potential of this rely upon local authorities and library services agreeing on an open and enabling ICT infrastructure. A digital divide still exists in society so there is relevance to the inclusivity agenda here.
3. Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable - libraries will need to reduce costs and find other sources of funding to supplement local authority support. Alongside this, communities are becoming more involved in the design and delivery of library services. Challenges include encouraging new approaches and equipping libraries to be commissioned to deliver other public services.
4. Deliver the right skills for those who work in libraries – the research indicates that not enough people working in libraries are equipped to tackle the changes ahead and that current training is not always relevant for the current and future needs of those working in public libraries.

The Arts Council’s response argues that the long-term strategic debate around the future of library services has been overshadowed by the focus on short-term issues of funding, library closures and the perceived tension between books and digital technology. It identifies the following as essential ingredients that define the public library:

- a safe, creative community space that is enjoyable and easy to use, in both physical and virtual form
- an excellent range of quality books, digital resources and other content
- well-trained, friendly people to help users to find what they want either independently or with support

These also help meet wider agendas around skills development, supporting business and economic growth, improving health and wellbeing, and building a healthy democracy through the provision of free access to reliable information through which people can form opinions. The Arts Council sees the future public library as both a physical and virtual place, where people can visit but can also be a part of wherever they are. It expects to see a shift from a service that is provided to a community to one in which local people are more active and involved in its design and delivery.

Community libraries

In research undertaken by Locality, commissioned by Arts Council England and the Local Government Association⁷, the CIPFA survey of public libraries for 2010 /11 is quoted. This found over 21,000 volunteers were involved in England’s 3,300 public libraries. Since 2010, there has been a rapidly growing trend to involve communities in library service delivery in more significant ways – to support and in some places to manage them or even take on ownership and management of library buildings. The report cites that many library authorities have plans for further such libraries in the next few years. The total number of community supported and managed libraries which are either already operating or planned

⁶ *The library of the future: A response to Envisioning the library of the future*, by Arts Council England, May 2013

⁷ *Community Libraries: learning form experience*, Locality, January 2013

is over 425, which is approximately 12 per cent of all public libraries in England. Given that some authorities are reviewing their library services, this number is likely to increase.

The extent to which library authorities choose to embrace a community library model varies greatly. With its longstanding experience of working with volunteers, Buckinghamshire library authority embedded community libraries in its service. There are 14 community partnerships out of a total of 36 static public libraries in the county.

The different types of community library are outlined in the report:

- 1) Independent community library - These have no public sector involvement
 - 1a) Asset owning - Independent community library, owns its own premises, sometimes after asset transfer from local authority
 - 1b) Non-asset owning - Independent community library, with no long term lease or freehold on its premises
- 2) Co-produced library - These are partnership models with both public sector and community involvement
 - 2a) Community managed - These are community-led and largely community delivered, rarely with paid staff, but often with some form of ongoing Council support and often still part of the public library network
 - 2b) Community supported - These are council-led and funded, usually with paid professional staff, but given significant support by volunteers
 - 2c) Commissioned community - These are commissioned and fully funded by the council but delivered by a not-for-private-profit community, social enterprise or mutual organisation, either existing or newly created. Councils might commission i) individual libraries or ii) the whole library service

Emerging approaches highlight that the libraries that are becoming community supported or managed tend to be the smaller libraries in many areas and, as such, they represent a smaller proportion of overall national book lending and borrowers than their numbers may suggest. Currently, the vast majority of community libraries retain links with their local authority library service and indeed many remain part of the statutory library service. Approximately one in six of the current and planned community supported or managed libraries involve the discounted transfer of assets to the community (either the freehold or a lease of 20 years or more).

The role of communities within the library service should be considered within a strategic and long term framework. Community involvement is not a 'quick fix', as it benefits from staged development, training and investment. For more substantial community involvement, local authorities and communities both need time and resources to work out how best they can work together and manage the transition to new arrangements. Distinguishing between a service and the building it operates within can be important in clarifying what sorts of changes, if any, need to be made to a library service. It is possible that community libraries – perhaps in many different shapes and sizes – could evolve to form a valuable part of 21st century public library services in England. But, if that is the case, then further changes, including diversification and enterprise, may also be needed.

In developing an overall strategy, cost reduction is a fundamental consideration. Others include joining up library services with other services, and encouraging their long-term financial viability by making the fostering of enterprise a strategic goal. Clear aims for the

community role are essential and can be identified best within an overall strategic framework.

To determine the most appropriate community role, the research identifies the following questions:

1. What is the council trying to *achieve* by involving communities in library services e.g.
 - offering more activities at the library, including co-locating with other groups?
 - retaining libraries in locations for easier access for more users?
 - protecting opening hours?
 - improving use of a particular library?
 - reducing operational overheads?
 - attracting greater enterprise, new income streams, charitable fund-raising?
 - managing the library service?
 - managing the library building?
 - transferring ownership of the library building to a community group?
2. Which outcomes could community involvement contribute towards?
3. Is the council reviewing individual libraries or the whole service?
4. Is the council reviewing library buildings or services (or both)?

The requirement for more self-funding community libraries in the future transfers increasing responsibility onto community groups intent on securing local library services. Though unsurprising in a period of 'austerity', the strong focus on enterprise brings home the reality of the ongoing cultural shift.

The Locality research provides a number of case study authorities who have adopted different approaches to involving communities in libraries and suggests the following principles around community involvement in libraries:

- Community libraries can be statutory
- There is no single model of community involvement in libraries
- Most community libraries are not independent, they are partnerships with their local council
- Community libraries are testing new approaches to library service delivery
- Communities often want to be involved in their libraries (but not always)
- Community libraries are often more than 'just volunteers'
- Library buildings and assets can be transferred into community ownership

The Localism Act 2012 has given new powers to local communities. The Community Right to Bid enables local communities to nominate properties which they believe are 'assets of community value'. Library assets fall within the scope of the definition of an 'asset of community value'. The Community Right to Challenge enables local communities to formally express interest in taking over the running of a particular local service where they believe they could do so effectively. Library services fall within the range of services to which this new Right applies.

***Independent Library Report for England*⁸**

The Sieghart review was commissioned by government to consider the future of public library services, the role of community libraries and models of delivery. The importance of the

⁸ *Independent Library Report for England*, December 2014, Department for Culture, Media & Sport

development of new services to make libraries vibrant community hubs is stressed, with greater recognition and support for libraries' role across government needed. The report identifies the following key aims:

- Digital library network – Central government should provide funding so that every library has Wi-Fi, computer facilities, and staff skilled to support their use.
- Library taskforce – Established by central government but led by local government to provide the leadership to define the over-arching vision, branding and promotion of the service, develop new ways of working, and ensure delivery of the Review's actions.
- E-lending – Ensure that libraries can provide a strong modern offer of e-book lending.
- Professional development – Designated programme to attract the next generation of library staff and develop the existing library workforce's skills to meet 21st Century needs.
- Volunteers and community-led libraries – To develop sector-led best practice guidelines to help local authorities' work with volunteers and community-led libraries.

Sieghart's review firmly positions local libraries at the hub of local communities and as "*essential for the well-being of the nation*". It sees libraries as uniquely placed to provide the crucial space in which to address the digital inequalities that compound the nation's social inequalities. Sieghart states his greatest fear, in an age of financial austerity, that local authorities "*will just hand over the keys and say goodbye*". In fact, the report identifies the public library's greatest strength as its localism.

Innovative ideas for libraries of the future - *Enabling Enterprise in Libraries*

The 'Enabling Enterprise in Libraries'⁹ report by Locality in 2014 looked at enterprising ways of generating income to invest in library services - without losing or compromising their ethos – highlighting opportunities rather than achievements as such. It explored whether and how significant, additional income can be generated to enable a service transformation which makes full use of libraries' physical space.

The following diverse approaches to income generation were outlined:

1. Non-library public sector contracts with library service providers are contracts for those services - commissioned by public bodies - which are not part of the core library service offer provided for by Government, in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964). For example, Warwickshire County Council has housed front office police services in a number of its libraries since 2011. Yet, non-library service contracts alone cannot provide the significant income needed, and such contracts will become harder to secure in a context of continued austerity.
2. Private sector service contracts - through contracts with the private sector, library services can earn additional outcome by using their space and resources for the purpose of advertisement, or as a delivery point. For example, West Sussex County Council has six libraries which have 'Amazon lockers' now equipped for delivering orders. There is very little evidence that such contracts can generate significant income at present.

⁹ *Enabling Enterprise in Libraries*, Locality, March 2014. Commissioned by the Arts Council England.

3. Direct trading of complementary products - involves selling goods which complement the ongoing core library service offer and/or where retail activity uses library space. However the report identified it as the income generation option with the least potential. Northamptonshire Libraries have introduced library shops and include retail management as part of the library manager's job. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Library Service operates five *Idea Stores*¹⁰ which provide courses ranging from languages to massage. Success rates of direct trading are highly variable but this type of trading works better in urban areas. Care must be taken not to divert trade from local shops, and to preserve libraries as one of the few non-commercial spaces available to the general public.
4. Charged-for services are those that fall outside the scope of a library's core activities and public/private sector service contracts. Room hire is probably the most widespread means of income generation; Nottinghamshire and Cambridgeshire County Councils have used it and increased footfall.
5. New emergent ICT services: developing prototypes - new/emergent ICT services are those services reliant on access to some form of ICT, and currently outside the scope of a library's core activities. A prototype around 'hacker and maker spaces'¹¹ is being developed¹².

CASE STUDY: Tower Hamlets Idea Stores¹³

Tower Hamlets' Idea Stores are now well-known as a model of attractive, modern library facilities that deliver a range of services. They follow many key principles that are instructive, and are continuing to innovate. The philosophy of the Idea Store is to draw in as many users as possible, and use this to provide a gateway to other council services. To do so, they provide high-quality spaces with a full programme of activities (almost entirely free) to attract users, and mix a variety of library, learning and support services in the same spaces.

They have long opening hours (71 hours a week, 357 days a year), and their staff are highly and professionally trained to offer advice on the full range of services, not just one division. They have also sought to actively promote the library service, engaging Tim Coates – who was the former manager of Waterstones – to raise the profile of reading and of books. As a result, from 2008-2012 book issues have increased by 28%, without the opening of any new facilities.

¹⁰ See case study on Ideas Stores.

¹¹ Hack spaces are places to learn, collaborate and work on digital edge projects whereas the 'maker' aspect is more like community workshops which help grow artisan businesses. Hacker and maker spaces can be co-located within, or in partnership with libraries, and are a way of initiating forms of production. They can be a key step in the digital service transformation trajectory.

¹² See case study on Northolt Library.

¹³http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Envisioning_the_library_of_the_future_phase_1_a_review_of_innovations_in_library_services.pdf

“The central Whitechapel Library is one of the best modern public libraries I have been in – the building opened in 2005 and was nominated for the Stirling Prize in 2006.” – Tom Tivnan assesses library e-book loans, and test-drives his local branch’s offer, 2010.

CASE STUDY: Northolt Library – Hack the Library¹⁴

In an effort to develop a thriving community, Northolt Library will be designating an area within the library for users to discover the most up-to-date technologies. This includes a 3D printer, 3D scanner, an embroidery machine, and CAD software machines, to name just a few. This idea will spark creative thinking across the entire community, as entrepreneurs could use the equipment to start a new business; industry experts could hold training sessions to develop the skills of new users; or residents could simply use the equipment for their own personal interests.

Northolt Library had organised an event to provide more information about the new services, in order to give residents the option of dedicating some time to their local community, whilst also participating in projects that they will enjoy. This event has been named ‘Hack the library’ in an effort ‘to build a community of makers, hackers and tinkerers’.

In hard economic times, such programmes can bring people closer together – by allowing residents to meet others who share their creative interests. The Northolt group will be having a follow-up meeting at Wembley in order to understand their creative space and see if there are any areas that Northolt could adopt. This is a chance to build a creative network within the community, so that users can share their ideas and skills whilst doing something they all love.

Feedback from the group’s first meeting has already been hugely positive, as *“so many enthusiastic/curious/talented people came to find out more about the hack the library/creative work spaces”*.

The library group is also keen to emphasise that people of all abilities are welcome to use this space, as *“all you need is an interest not a computer science degree!”*

HARROW CONTEXT

Current service

Harrow Libraries currently operates a network of ten static libraries. In addition the Housebound Library Service provides library services to older residents and those with a disability who are unable to visit a library. The Schools Library Service provides library services to subscribing local schools through a Service Level Agreement.

The ‘People’s Network’ public computers were upgraded in 2013, and free Wi-Fi installed in all libraries in 2014. A new Library Management System was also introduced which enables local residents to access the book stock of 16 London library authorities¹⁵. All libraries provide a range of events and activities for all ages including story times and rhyme times for children, reading groups, computer tuition, and employment support including support for local small businesses.

There were 51,023 active library members (those who have used their library card to borrow an item of stock or use a public computer) during the period September 2013 to August 2014, which represents 21% of Harrow’s residents.

¹⁴ <http://www.meetup.com/New-Creative-Work-Spaces-Northolt-Library-Meetup/events/219850394/>

¹⁵ A multi-borough membership scheme, through the London Libraries Consortium, allows members to search a combined catalogue of 15 member boroughs’ public library catalogues, and check out and return books from and to the library of their choice. Users manage all of their loans through the consortium’s website.

Transforming libraries in Harrow

The Libraries Transformation Programme in 2011 achieved the following objectives with efficiencies also reducing the library budget by £1.14 million:

- Introduction of RFID self-service technology. Currently 95% of stock issue transactions are completed using self-service.
- Restructured the libraries staffing to meet customer needs.
- Improved the online experience of library users by redesigning the library web pages to make them more user friendly and integrating to the Harrow Citizen Portal 'My Harrow Account'.
- Improvements to ICT involved the upgrade of the People's Network public computers and the introduction of free public Wi-Fi in all libraries.

The 'Future of Cultural Services in Harrow' report to Cabinet in January 2012 outlined further aims such as a revision of opening hours, the seeking of opportunities to re-provide library buildings as part of mixed use developments and the exploration of alternative ways to deliver library management services in a cross-borough project. Following a cross borough procurement process the Library Service was commissioned to an external contractor in 2013. A 5-year contract was awarded to John Laing Integrated Services Ltd (now Carillion Integrated Services) from 1 September 2013 to deliver library services, with a possible extension for a further 5 years.

A joint library contract commenced in September 2013, in partnership with Ealing. The annual charge of £2.2million delivers:

- Operational and development staffing of ten static libraries in Harrow
- Stock control and purchase
- Facilities Management
- ICT and e-service provision
- A programme of cultural events and activities
- Outreach and targeted library services including the Schools Library
- Service and Housebound Service

The contract is monitored by Harrow through an Inter Authority Agreement with Ealing and quarterly joint Partnership Boards. The contract contains Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for service standards, with financial credits due to the Council for performance failures. There have been no credits to date. ¹⁶The contract includes service standards with service credits due to the Council for performance failures. These include **output measures**, including for opening hours, maintenance, environmental conditions, cleaning, and reporting. Also there are service credits relating to **outcome measures** include increasing participation, improving user satisfaction, environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability.

In addition the Council maintains a library stock fund, which for 2014-15 is £323,000. The stock spend per library and per 1,000 resident population compares favourably with the other London Authorities managed by Carillion (Croydon, Ealing and Hounslow).

Meeting future challenges

¹⁶ Information taken from briefing to Community, Health & Wellbeing Contracts Board

In keeping with the national trend Harrow Library Service has seen a decrease in issues, visits, and active borrowers over the last five years. Book issues continue to be high, however, compared to the other Outer London Authorities (4th out of 18 Authorities in 2013-14).

As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy the Library Service needs to reduce its budget by £500,000 in 2015-16. This is in addition to the significant savings that have already been made in the last four years. Harrow Council has worked closely with Carillion regarding achieving the savings target for the Library Service of approx. £500,000 in 2015-16. Proposals went out to public consultation in November 2014 and included the closure of 4 libraries and the reduction of opening hours at all libraries apart from Gayton Library. Carillion are also undertaking an asset review of the libraries as a first step to exploring how the Library Service could work with other service providers to make the best use of library space and generate additional income.

'Take Part' Library Service consultation - November 2014 – January 2015¹⁷

The consultation is used to inform the development of the Library Strategy 2015-18, and included proposals to achieve savings of £500,000 in 2015-16. This included the closure of four libraries (Bob Lawrence, Hatch End, North Harrow and Rayners Lane) and extending opening hours at the remaining libraries by using Open+ technology. The draft strategy and decisions around libraries were presented to Cabinet on 19 March 2015. Headline results from the consultation can be found in the Appendices.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The draft strategy was presented at Cabinet on 19 March and therefore it was not within this review's scope to influence its development given that the review took place after the Cabinet report had been developed. However as we see the library strategy as an evolving and living document, the suggestions from the scrutiny review group can still be taken on board in delivering the strategy.

Libraries performance

Previously library performance has been measured using the number of visits, stock loans and the number of active borrowers. All of these performance indicators have been on a steady decline nationally and regionally and in Harrow. However, the rate of decline in Harrow is higher than the England or London figures. Harrow's number of visits have declined by 25% since 2009-10. This compares with a 9% reduction in London, and a 12% reduction nationally. Harrow's stock issues have declined by 33% since 2009-10. This compares with an 18% reduction in London, and a 21% reduction nationally. There is no longer necessarily a correlation between visits to libraries and borrowing rates.

There are a number of societal factors that can be attributed to these declines, including:

- New technologies such as e-readers, downloadable e-books, films and music available on subscription or on demand from a smart device.
- The growth of online shopping sites such as Amazon offering cheap books to buy, delivered to the home, with targeted, intelligent marketing using CRM to promote purchasing.

¹⁷ http://harrow-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/community/libraries_consultation_2014-2015/libraries_consultations_2015?tab=files

- The explosion of information and information sources on the internet (such as Wikipedia) now available to everyone on smartphones and other portable devices
- The availability of cheap books, films, cds to buy in supermarkets as part of a weekly shop.
- The availability of free newspapers such as Metro and the Evening Standard
- Libraries, many of which are over a 100 years old or more, may no longer be situated in the best locations to attract new customers.

Factors specific to Harrow include:

- Lack of investment in buildings and facilities means the offer is uninviting, drab, old-fashioned or in some cases (such as Rayners Lane Library) not fully accessible.
- Lack of updated technology meant that PCs and software were ten years old and could not offer a reliable, fast service and the Library Management System could not offer e-alerts, online membership, ordering/renewal etc. The upgrade of the public computers in April 2013 and software has seen a decline in complaints and an increase in usage.
- Late adoption of technologies such as Wi-Fi, downloads, e-books etc. Implementation in 2014 has seen an increase in visits.
- Lack of marketing of services or marketing only within libraries and not to the wider community.
- Restricted opening hours.
- Reductions in stock-fund.
- Reductions in the overall library budget may have impacted on the levels of service. However, Harrow ranked 6th out of 29 London boroughs for spend per head of population in 2013-14 and compares well with neighbours.
- Six out of the ten Harrow libraries are in leased buildings which means that costs may be higher (e.g. Gayton Library rent is £150,000pa) and there could be less flexibility to adapt or relocate buildings to meet modern standards of delivery or offer additional services.

Current performance - Key statistics for the Carillion contract

Key performance headlines in Carillion's Annual Report for Ealing and Harrow Libraries (September 2013 to August 2014) state:

- A successful staff re-structure across both Boroughs with no claims or tribunals
- Wi-Fi rolled out in all 24 libraries
- A new library management system implemented in Harrow
- Enterprising Libraries grant won and implemented
- Over 100 volunteers engaged across the service
- New web sites launched for each Borough, with over 11,000 people accessing the sites in the first month
- Visitor numbers in Ealing up by 3.19% and Harrow by 0.2% compared to the previous year
- New library members increased in Harrow by 3.32% but decreased in Ealing by 0.27%
- Stock issues continued to follow the trend of recent years with a decrease in Ealing of 8% and in Harrow of 15%
- Engagement with Ealing and Harrow in their strategic discussions relating to the future of their library service

For Harrow, in 2013/4 there were:

- 1.10 million visits to libraries (a decline of 4% on the previous year)

- 1.15million stock loans (13% decrease on previous year)
- 88,000 hours of computer use in libraries (38% increase on previous year due to enhanced ICT offer)
- 3,910 hours of volunteering including more work placements etc.

Carillion's annual targets for Harrow for increasing participation are a 2% increase in library visits, 1.44% increase in stock issues, and 3% increase in members. Carillion need to achieve a minimum of two of these targets otherwise a service credit of £300 will be due to the Council. Carillion are currently only on track to achieve one - the target for increasing the number of members partly due to the improvement in IT since Carillion started the contract.

Library Visits and Stock Issues – 2013/14 compared to 2012/13

	1 st Sept 2013 to 31st Aug 2014	1 st Sept 2012 to 31st Aug 2013	Numbers increase/decrease year on year	% Increase year on year
Library Visits	1,089,183	1,086,936	2,247	0.2%
Stock Issues	1,070,198	1,267,255	-197,057	-15.6%
New Members	13,685	14,140	455	3.32%

		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14*	% change 2009-10 to 2013-14	2014-15 (To Q3 only)
Total visits	Harrow	000	000	000	000	000		
	London	1,470	1,339	1,228	1,197	1,105	-25%	819
	National	54,207	52,200	52,247	49,979	49,154	-9%	
Total visits as share of population	Harrow	322,111	313,987	306,591	288,044	282,332	-12%	
	London	6,447	5,820	5,108	4,938	4,539	-30%	
	National	6,992	6,671	6,397	6,103	5,840	-17%	
Total stock Issues	Harrow	5,275	5,250	4,849	4,522	4,404	-17%	
	London	000	000	000	000	000		
	National	1,715	1,708	1,543	1,428	1,148	-33%	764
Total active borrowers	Harrow	41,564	41,028	38,555	35,109	34,021	-18%	
	London	335,805	324,502	309,472	282,440	266,652	-21%	
	National	68	63	59	58	30	-56%	35
Total active borrowers	Harrow	1,588	1,604	1,547	1,424	1,348	-15%	
	London	12,078	11,919	11,412	10,321	9,883	-18%	
	National							

* New Library Management System installed in 2013-14 which has impacted on stock and active borrower statistics

⁷ www.cipfastats.net

As at April 2014, the total library membership was 146,661 (39% of Harrow's population based on ONS Mid Year Estimates 2011). There were 51,023 active library members (those who have used their library card to borrow an item of stock or use a public computer) during the period September 2013 to August 2014, which represents 21% of Harrow's residents.

We welcome the statement made at the joint committee meeting by Carillion's Director of Local Authority Operations that libraries are fantastic assets but thinking is required in how to take them forward in terms of using intelligence around how people use libraries: "we

need a library service that is fit for the next 10 years, not for the last 50 years just gone by.”

Overall, footfall has not fallen as significantly as stock issues, suggesting that people are using libraries differently now – not just to take out books. The CIPFA indicators of footfall and active membership do not capture all library users, and active membership is always linked to books. Carillion needs to ensure it is capturing data accurately to reflect the use of libraries. People do not always visit libraries to take out books so libraries’ technology must be sophisticated enough to tease out what people do come to libraries for. Measuring ‘active borrowing’ is not enough.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Carillion should improve some of their performance measures to better measure future trends (e.g. demand for e-books) and collect data to capture all usage of libraries, for example more data around active membership should be analysed to better ascertain in what ways are people active in libraries, and not just rely on stock issues.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the recommendations from the joint committee meeting¹⁸ with Ealing Council on 4 March 2015 be noted: The Committee resolved that:

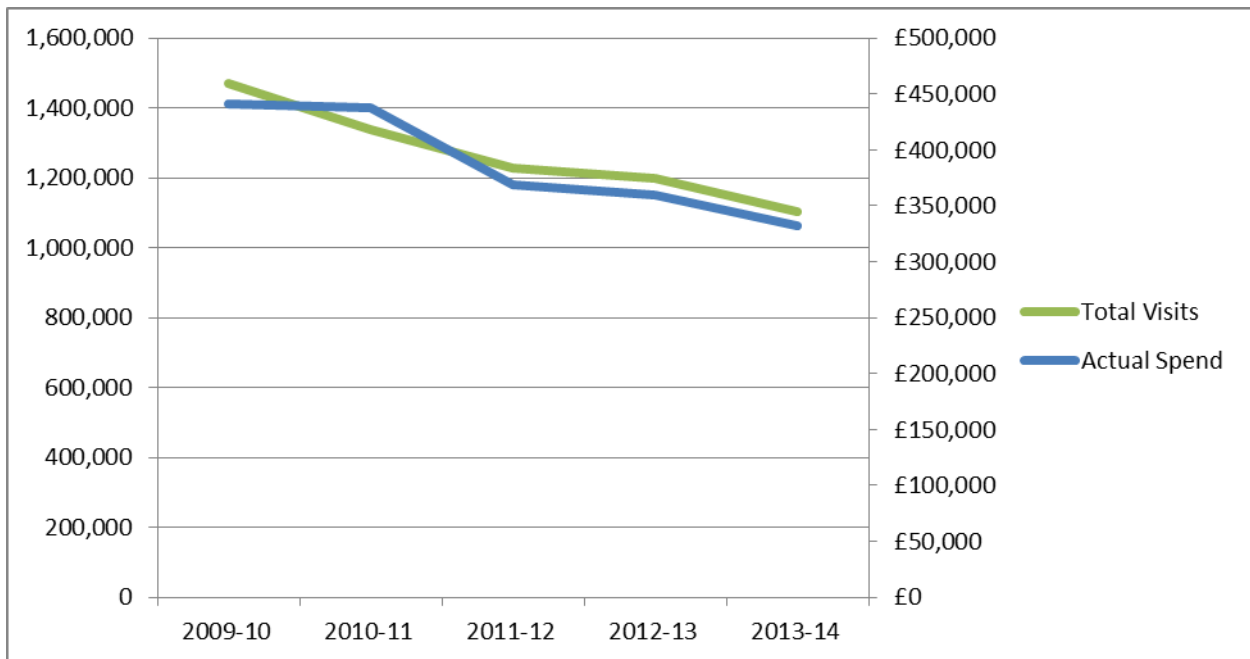
- (x) the reports from Ealing Council, Harrow Council and Carillion Integrated Services be received;
- (xi) a proactive approach be taken in the promotion of libraries and library events around the borough;
- (xii) information on how to sign up for library ‘e-bulletins’ be forwarded to Councillors for filtering to constituents;
- (xiii) community groups be closely involved in the shaping of opening-hours and space hire rates;
- (xiv) it be ensured that no services are restricted to an online only offer;
- (xv) the importance of data capture for better insight be highlighted;
- (xvi) opening hours always be considered within the context of local needs;
- (xvii) officers be asked to continue to embed staff training on signposting;
- (xviii) That a regular annual review of the library contract be undertaken by Scrutiny each year.

Stock fund

The stockfund spend was £320k in 2013-14 compared to £441k in 2009-10. However, the price of books has also reduced and Harrow is now part of the London Libraries Consortium for purchasing which offers better purchasing power across 16 London authorities.

During our own research we found a remarkable link between the decreases in the stock fund spending and the decline in visits. Whilst we acknowledge that without further exploration this may be wholly coincidental, the correlation strikes us as remarkable, as demonstrated in the graph below.

¹⁸ Currently draft.



Figures taken from Draft Library Strategy 2015-18, pages 18 and 21.

The concern for us is that further reducing the stockfund could fuel the decline in visits, and through its actions the council is inadvertently aiding the downward spiral of library visits. Officers have argued that visits are not only for the purpose of borrowing books and we accept this. Furthermore, through the London Libraries Consortium, the service has been purchasing books at more competitive rates and therefore a reduction in the stockfund does not necessarily mean fewer books. Also, with fewer libraries in the borough to buy for the reduced stock fund may in fact provide even more books for the remaining libraries. We appreciate that stock is not the only reason for people visiting libraries, as they offer a whole wealth of other opportunities for people, however we like to see further research done to see if this trend that we have uncovered is replicated in other boroughs.

Councillors' experience of local libraries is that they may not always adequately adapt fast enough to the changing demographics of the local populations that they serve. Carillion's audience development plan provides a better appreciation of demographic changes - to inform stock purchases and community needs. This intelligence should also be used to target marketing campaigns on specific communities within Harrow. We would urge that Carillion better uses its audience development plan data to target its stock plans at specific communities. In order for stock to reflect the needs of users, we suggest that library users be engaged in decisions around how the stock fund is spent.

A better link up with schools is needed in informing stock decisions also with work with school libraries to ensure an adequate supply of key study texts a more efficient way of using the stockfund for younger people.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

RECOMMENDATION 3: Officers further research into the trend linking reductions in stockfund and fewer visits to libraries to ascertain whether it is replicated in other boroughs, and if so what are they doing to remedy.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Carillion uses the audience development plan to review how the needs of specific communities are being met through libraries stock plans, and that Harrow's libraries are adequately adapting to the changing demographics of parts of the borough. Carillion should undertake further research into 'hidden communities' in Harrow so as to better understand current and future needs around library provision.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Harrow libraries engage with users around the spending on the stock fund to ensure that stock provided meet the needs of library users.

Reviewing opening hours

Currently, all libraries except Gayton Library close on Wednesdays, Friday afternoons and Sundays. Gayton Library is open 7 days a week for a total of 62 hours per week. All other libraries are open for a total of 40.5 hours per week.

Reviewing opening hours to find the optimal hours within which people want to access libraries is a necessity. The delivery of Harrow's library strategy commits to a review of the opening hours with a view to implementation from May when four libraries close. This will be informed by the trialling of the Open + technology at Wealdstone Library from April, to gauge whether use of such technology enables the council to open its library doors for longer. There is the assumption that following any library closures the review of opening hours will return cost-neutral options around extending opening hours across the remaining libraries.

The Schools Library Service provides library services to subscribing local schools through a Service Level Agreement. There are currently 24 subscribing primary schools out of a total of 45 schools and 3 subscribing special schools out of a total of 4 schools. This service fully recovers costs and therefore looking to expand it, perhaps to other boroughs (e.g. Ealing Council buys in the service from Bucks County Council) could be fruitful, and possibly generate income.

We have been told that the opening hours of school libraries are restricted and that often pupils, sixth formers in particular, will use their local libraries in between lessons as their school libraries tend to open only during lunchtimes and/or after school for a short period of time. Library closures will impact on the availability of local libraries for students to use therefore extending the opening hours of school libraries would mitigate the impact of the library closures to an extent. The use of school buildings is currently a wasted opportunity and one that should be explored more fully as they represent a valuable community resource implicit in learning for young people.

Looking at the current profile of library users which tend to be young people or the older population, it seems that the 'missing population' cohort here is people of working age.

We would suggest it would be these people, currently non-users, who would benefit most from weekend or evening opening hours.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

RECOMMENDATION 6: the council make better use of school buildings and school libraries in providing library services, especially to mitigate the impact of library closures for young people.

Strategic direction for Harrow libraries

The context for the development of Harrow’s Library Strategy was set out in the report to Cabinet 19 March as:

“Reductions in local government funds and the changing nature of reading and information delivery due to changes in technology have been particular challenges to public libraries in recent years. Harrow Library Service has seen a decrease in loans of material (issues), visits to libraries and the number of library members actively borrowing library stock over the last five years, in common with the national trend for public libraries. Harrow Council has to reduce its overall budget by £25million in 2015-16 (£83million over a four year period). To deliver the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2015-16, the Library Service needs to reduce its annual budget by £500k from 2015-16.”

Following the recent Library Service Consultation undertaken in November 2014 to January 2015 Harrow’s Library Strategy details a vision and direction for the Library Service for the next three years that enhances the lives of residents, is sustainable with reduced financial resources, actively engages with the local community, and provides library buildings and services for the 21st century. The draft Harrow Library Strategy¹⁹ was presented to us at a challenge panel session two days before its presentation at Cabinet, and we are aware that our scope to influence was in the implementation of the strategy rather than its development. The strategy aims to define the delivery of library services in Harrow for the next three years (2015-18) in the light of the challenges outlined above and ensure that the Library Service is sustainable in the future, with reduced financial resources being targeted to best meet the needs of residents. The timeframe given for the strategy aligns with the remaining years of the contract with Carillion.

The Harrow library service of the future – vision and objectives

The vision is as follows:

A 21st Century, vibrant Library Service that will enhance the lives of Harrow residents and promote their well-being by:

- actively promoting, developing and encouraging reading for all ages and abilities both in library buildings and in other venues in the borough
- enabling learning and the development of skills to support Harrow residents to take a full part in our community
- providing access to literature, information and other Council or local services

¹⁹ Subsequent to our review challenge panel sessions, this presented to and adopted by Cabinet on 19 March 2015.

- offering a range of community activities, events and spaces
- reducing the number of libraries in the borough and delivering library services in other community locations
- Increasing virtual (24/7) services and developing innovative service delivery through the use of new technologies

By 2018 Harrow Library Service aims to provide a 21st Century Library Service for residents by the development of:

- A sustainable Library Service, at reduced annual cost, which actively engages with local residents, organisations, and communities. This will require a reduction in the number of library buildings through closure or by transfer into community management.
- Library services that enhance the lives of Harrow residents of all ages through reading, information and learning, and enable the development of new skills and improved literacy levels. This will require library services to engage with communities in new innovative ways and in new locations outside of traditional library buildings.
- Library buildings and services for the 21st Century by an active involvement in regeneration opportunities, and the use of the latest technology and digital formats. This will require a major refurbishment programme for libraries.

The Strategy outlines how this will be delivered and there will be an action plan and KPIs to deliver and evaluate the library strategy. Key points include:

- Library buildings - A reduction of library buildings and a programme of renewal and refurbishment for the remaining libraries including a new Town Centre Library to replace Gayton Library. Refurbishments would be carried out using existing one-off capital budgets. The libraries proposed for closure for 2015-2016 are Bob Lawrence, Hatch End, North Harrow and Rayners Lane. The aim would be to deliver the closures by 16th May 2015.
- Opening hours - A review of staffed opening hours across the borough based on consultation results and ensure libraries are open at peak demand/most cost effective times (new opening hours to be commence on 18th May 2015). To review the Open + technology trial commencing at Wealdstone Library in Spring 2015 to see if opening hours can be extended without cost.
- Core services - Ensuring that core services (book lending, newspapers/magazines, information, events & activities etc) that are most used by customers are continued and enhanced.
- Community services - Developing library services in the community such as:
 - Co-location with community organisations to share costs (e.g. Wealdstone Library). Feasibility by September 2015.
 - Location of library services in Children's Centres in the borough on a self-service basis with events and activities (locations to be delivered by September 2015)
 - Investigating (and implementing if feasible) community management of libraries (by April 2016)
 - In partnership with Access Harrow, reviewing what Council services could be delivered in libraries through video-link access or other channels (March 2016)
 - Increasing the usage of Harrow's schools library and housebound library services, offering the schools library service to out of borough schools (March 2016)

- Delivering the Creative Work Space and Lego Innovation projects to attract new people into libraries and as an offer to schools.(Summer 2015)
- Technology - Using technology to improve services for example the potential to deliver a 'click and collect' service, improved online and digital resources etc. (ongoing)
- Marketing of services and engagement - Developing a new library brand that emphasises the wider library role as well as the traditional offer. Setting up focus groups, encouraging more volunteering and promoting library services through a range of media (ongoing)

Given that Carillion run libraries in three of the West London Alliance boroughs, options to redefine library services across these authorities could be further developed through a West London library strategy. This would have the benefit of delivering on a larger scale, looking at library estate over a wider area and the ability to rationalise services/assets. Carillion could also use their commercial negotiating abilities to drive investment/sponsorship into libraries.

Programme of refurbishment

Although four libraries will close, we welcome the commitment that the remaining libraries will benefit from investment by way of refurbishment. Furthermore we are encouraged to hear that the new library that is planned for the town centre, to replace the current Gayton Library, will be cost-neutral for the council. Harrow libraries can demonstrate a background of change and embracing innovative practices, however they have not been backed by major investment. For example the last time a library benefitted from substantial refurbishment was Gayton Library in 2008.

The capital allocation for libraries refurbishment is £300k for 2015/16 and 2016/17 (including any work to the leisure centre) and £1million for 2017/18 with the Community Infrastructure Levy expected to fund the new town centre library.

The strategy recognises that Harrow's libraries as they currently are, are not fit to meet the evolving needs of customers in what the public expect of libraries in the 21st century, and new-look libraries should at least entice more people into libraries and be able to promote what activities they have to offer.

As councillors, we have heard these commitments before. For many years, we have heard rhetoric around the redevelopment of the town centre, the use of Roxeth Library as part of a multi-agency complex of provision, of plans to look for better use of the Pinner Library site through sharing it with other community ventures, for example. We hope that through this Library Strategy, and its alignment with other council plans, that some progress is made in bringing these commitments to fruition.

Libraries as social hubs

Libraries should serve as more than just buildings, they should be the focal point for communities, social hubs through which people's daily activities can flow. This means libraries need to be in the right places. We believe this will be better achieved if the council expands its efforts in looking to co-locate library services with other services through outposts, for example in children's centres, with activities especially aimed at young families.

Libraries play a valuable role to wider societal agendas and a key role of signposting – all library staff are trained in the Reading Agency’s ‘universal offer’ so are able to offer signposting advice on health and welfare information for example.

With a view to the commercialisation of libraries and introducing income-generation into libraries we note that coffee shops in libraries for example are not the huge income generators that they are sometimes perceived to be. Bringing commercial ventures into library space must be well thought out and lessons learnt from other authorities who have already tried ideas around this. It is also important to maintain the essence of libraries and not compromise their integrity by introducing commercialisation, especially if it is not financially viable in the long run.

CASE STUDY: Brent – Library Lab at Willesden Green Library²⁰

The Library Lab is a ‘pop-up’ economic development project based in Willesden Green Library in Brent. It is a partnership between New Windows on Willesden Green (an economic project that has been funded by the Mayor for London) and Architecture 00:/. The space is part of a ‘meanwhile use’ project on Willesden Green High Street, which has opened up an empty retail space to a number of community groups, events and retailers.

Library Lab is aimed at accelerating entrepreneurship in the local community by providing practical, human-centred help and support. The small team of librarians and hosts work with other local non-profit organisations to run free events and workshops, such as managing small business cash flow, maths for all ages, networking for local artists, book binding, and self-defence. It also provides a pop-up space for freelancers where they hold meetings, and there are market stalls for local traders. In addition to this, the Library Lab runs a free weekday crèche so that parents can use the library to work, study, or even make important phone calls.

The idea of a pop-up space can prove useful in bringing together many different organisations, in a setting where they might not have usually partnered up in. For instance, the Library Lab in Willesden held a successful Careers Fair in association with Careers4Mums that was directed towards women and mums returning to the workplace. By hosting events such as this, or free sessions for entrepreneurs, a younger audience of residents looking to develop their careers can be reached. Feedback has been hugely positive, with one entrepreneur commenting that they “*got so much feedback and help going to def[initely] stay posted*”.



Library Lab at Willesden Green Library, London. Photo: Lynton Pepper at We Own Cameras

CASE STUDY: City of York²¹

²⁰http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Envisioning_the_library_of_the_future_phase_1_a_review_of_innovations_in_library_services.pdf

²¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388989/Independent_Library_Report-18_December.pdf

York's library and archives service (Explore) was one of the first in the country to spin out into a public service mutual organisation, using £100,000 advice and support from the Cabinet Office, Mutuals Support Programme. One third is owned by staff and two thirds are owned by its community members. Since it is a public service independent of the council, Explore has a clear voice and purpose and is able to generate greater involvement of local people in all aspects of the service, encouraging flexibility, innovation and partnership building with the community.

In addition to keeping their libraries open, Explore would also like to use its libraries as community hubs, for instance by creating a health and wellbeing centre in partnership with local GP practices. In addition to this, Explore is working alongside Be Independent, York's adult social care public service mutual, to help 3,500 elderly housebound residents to become more digitally active. This will involve providing training services to allow residents to access the internet through portable WiFi devices so that they can talk via skype to family and friends, do their banking and food shopping online, and even choosing their library books.

This scheme has the ultimate goal of giving residents more independence. By creating community hubs, residents can access multiple services in one area; the elderly will be able to become more digitally accessible; and residents will gain an overall feeling of independence. Training sessions can be tailored to meet individuals' needs, and opening partnership discussions with other services, such as health or social care, could lead to greater savings in the long run.

Library closures

It is not our intention to provide comments on the closure of any specific library site but rather provide comments that can be generically applied. However there may be some instances where our observations inevitably apply more to some library sites than others.

It strikes us odd that a business case for the future of Harrow Arts Centre is planned to be presented to Cabinet in May, however this will be after the library on that site (Hatch End Library) has been closed. The closure could negatively influence the whole business case and make it unviable. In the decision to close Hatch End Library there seems to have been little join-up to the plans for a revitalised Arts Centre provision, of which reading and other services offered by libraries should be integral. Should a library not be considered part of the arts offer? We appreciate that a library may not keep the Arts Centre open, however it could service to increase footfall and the use of other provision on the site.

The council has ambitious plans for regenerating parts of the borough, especially district centres. However library closures could serve to merely take away a key part of the infrastructure in an already fragile local economy. For example, North Harrow no longer enjoys a supermarket, a bank nor a post office. If the library were to be closed, it could negatively impact on the district centre, with a knock on effect of library users no longer using other shops and services in North Harrow.

We would like to see better exploration of the community value of council assets such as libraries and a better understanding of their contribution to the local economy. In the proposals around library closures we would have liked to see more thought and discussion around the impact on the community of closures. The Equality Impact Assessment of course tries to unpick some of the impact on individual communities but the community or local economy at large is not addressed fully. A financial imperative seems at the forefront of the proposals.

Vision

Harrow libraries need strategic direction and to be forward looking. In the past, often they have been reactive in solving short-term problems. There remain questions around the

longer term financial sustainability of the library service - the savings proposals are for 2015/16 and there is nothing in place for subsequent years.

We are of the view that the current draft strategy does not look far enough into the future to be able to give a real understanding of how Harrow can develop libraries for the future. We appreciate that the three-year timeframe aligns with the Carillion contract, however we are of the view that this artificially limits the strategy. The strategy needs to be longer-term and more visionary – it should be a living document that looks beyond the programme of refurbishment and addresses what Harrow’s libraries will offer to make them fit for the 21st century. The vision needs to encompass more than a programme of refurbishment and look at how Harrow will get more people into their libraries. Given the national picture, we appreciate that is no easy feat.

Stories provide a narrative and structure that people can use to help their own lives. The portfolio holder told us that in 10 years time “the human passion for stories will remain” whether this be through books, television, the internet. We would like to see some of that broader-horizon thinking and passion in Harrow’s strategy.

Officers have told us that both Harrow and Ealing’s library strategies will converge in themes as they are both run by Carillion. We can see the logic behind aligning strategic directions as we share a contractor with Ealing, however the individual needs of the boroughs must be met. While Harrow and Ealing share some similarities, not least geographical boundaries, the nature of the libraries and their future are different, for example, Ealing has significantly invested in their libraries in recent years through a significant refurbishment programme.

We would like to see more data to support Harrow’s strategic direction, with reference to what other authorities are doing and what published research suggests is the way forward for public libraries. We hope the policy context and case studies provided in our report will prove helpful in that respect. More work on why there has been a decline in visitor numbers, for example correlation with other indicators such as stocks, availability of digital resources, marketing initiatives, is needed and should inform plans for the new town centre library. Such analysis should influence the design for new libraries.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

RECOMMENDATION 7: Harrow’s strategy should be a living document that is systematically reviewed and updated on a regular basis, taking on board the suggestions made by this scrutiny review group. It should seek to answer questions such as ‘what will Harrow’s libraries look like beyond the programme of refurbishment?’ and ‘what does Harrow’s library service, fit for the 21st century, look like?’.

RECOMMENDATION 8: In any future decisions around the closure of libraries, the knock on effects on local communities and infrastructure must be more fully considered as libraries are a key part of local district centres. The council must look at the opportunities offered by regeneration plans in assessing how library provision can fit in the plans. The impact on local communities and the local economy should be paramount in any decisions made.

RECOMMENDATION 9: More work is done to analyse data around the decline in visitor numbers and look for correlations with other indicators, drawing on existing research where appropriate. This should be used to inform the development of plans for a new library in Harrow town centre.

Alternative models of library provision

The Council has received early proposals for the community management of Bob Lawrence Library and North Harrow Library. The earliest that this could be achieved is April 2016. Experience from other boroughs suggests that costs would remain with the council or in Harrow's case with its library management contractor (Carillion Integrated Services Ltd) including library management systems ICT, stock purchasing, rents etc. depending on the business plans agreed with the community. Cabinet has committed to giving "due consideration" to proposals for community management at North Harrow and Bob Lawrence Libraries before any closures occur.

Community managed libraries

The portfolio holder has undertaken to consider the two bids for community managed libraries – at Bob Lawrence and North Harrow Libraries. We have heard that, although community managed libraries are still in their infancy and therefore not widespread, Bucks County Council and Bexley Council both have community managed libraries. We encourage officers to continue drawing on these authorities' experiences and the resources that they have already shared with the council (SLAs and protocols) in order to better understand if this model of operation could work in Harrow. In turn, whilst it is up to community groups to put together their business models for community libraries, the council could pass on the outline specifications and protocols from other authorities by way of supporting them in the process.

There is no set procedure for the establishment of community libraries as they vary from place to place and require different levels of support from the council. It was noted to us that community libraries did not succeed in neighbouring Brent – the council did not provide support to the community libraries and this may have been a contributing factor. By contrast, Lincolnshire County Council²² has recently voted to hand over 30 libraries to volunteers during their efforts to save approx. £2m. This move seems unprecedented and the first of its type in the country.

We agree with officers and the portfolio holder that any proposal for a community run library must be supported by a robust business case in order for it to succeed and offer a sustainable solution for future provision. We recognise that any venture involving the use of volunteers needs support and time spent in providing training and management support. This must also be set in the context of only 11% of respondents to the Take Part consultation responding that they would be willing to volunteer in Harrow libraries, although 16% supported a move towards more community run libraries.

Through our review we have heard some concern that increasing the number of volunteers in libraries will dilute the quality of service for users. Volunteers should be seen as offering additionality to the service, not replacing a skilled and professional library workforce. In

²² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-31208967>

turn, Harrow's experienced library staff need continuity and stability – they are often unsung heroes in the services they provide the community.

There is an expanding role for technology in Harrow's libraries and the People's Network – visitors are increasingly using the internet, wi-fi, and accessing digital resources. The declining trend in stock issues perhaps best reflects this in that people are no longer using libraries merely to borrow books. Harrow libraries need to be alive to customers' changing needs and ensure that libraries offer the digital resources that more and more people are expecting of public libraries.

Harrow will be one of the first to trial Open + technology at the end of March. This provides self-service to libraries users through extended opening hours at Wealdstone Library. Library members will be able to use their library cards to swipe in and out of the library building when it is otherwise closed. CCTV will be used to monitor the building.

We welcome this advance that demonstrates that the council is optimising the use of new technologies and digital resources. However we urge the council to make sure that it undertakes appropriate vetting of membership to address the security concerns around opening library buildings unattended because of the adoption of Open + technology.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

RECOMMENDATION 10: The council ensures that any proposals for community libraries that are seriously considered are based on robust business cases that can demonstrate serious financial planning and solid plans for sustainability. For the council to back any proposal it must be feasible.

CASE STUDY: Merton's volunteering initiative²³

Over 300 volunteers contributed their time to one of the seven libraries in Merton between 2013-14, with 37,193 hours of volunteering having been completed – the highest in any London library service. The initiative is a partnership between Merton Libraries and the Volunteer Centre Merton (VCM) who are part of Merton Voluntary Council Service. This volunteering model has proven to be very successful, and has previously won the Team London 'Building Stronger Neighbourhoods' award for best practice in volunteer management and was also recognised as a Volunteering England good practice model.

Volunteers undertake a wide variety of roles in Merton Libraries including meeting and greeting, supporting children's activities, helping customers use the IT facilities and helping to promote libraries in the community. The Mayor of Merton, Cllr Agatha Akyigyina, said that *"it was great to see so many volunteers being awarded for the value they add to our library service in Merton. I commend everyone who has given their time to our libraries and helped make them a great place to visit, well done."*

CASE STUDY: Lambeth – Digital Bazaar²⁴

The Digital Bazaar is a monthly event held in Lambeth Libraries, where local people can come along to get help and advice, or share their own knowledge about using technology. People can come to learn about using their mobile phones, putting their digital photos online, borrowing e-books, using online reference material, selling items on eBay, and making video calls to family overseas. People can even bring along the device they wish to learn more about.

The events are led by volunteer trainers, but everyone can join in to the best of their ability, sharing what they know and teaching others. This idea was even shortlisted for the 2012 Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CLIP) Libraries Change Lives awards, and has encouraged other libraries to look at running their own Digital Bazaar.

This idea does not require financial resources, but instead depends on voluntary services from local residents. This is



also a great platform for bringing members of the community together to share their knowledge and mutual interests.

Images taken from the Digital Bazaar website: <http://digitaltuesdays.co.uk/wp/digital-bazaar/>

Marketing and user engagement

Now that Carillion have established the foundations in Harrow for a new library service, advertising and marketing the services that libraries offer to key audiences should be the next priority. More work is needed, for example in better engaging schools in reaching young people who need libraries for study space and support, or advertising to users that they can access the library catalogue in other boroughs. A robust marketing strategy that uses the information that Harrow's 50,000+ library users have provided can help customer segmentation and the targeting of services in order to encourage more active use of libraries.

Having reviewed Carillion's marketing plan 2014-15, we are of the view that the plan is very light on targets and techniques by which to achieve these targets. The plan is highly internally focussed, focussed on current users and not particularly innovative. It focuses a lot on what is currently being done by Carillion and for existing users - it is not ambitious enough in extending its reach to non-users. The service needs to better communicate with users about what services are available to them. Even within our own review group (which included councillors, library users and young people from Harrow Youth Parliament, and so are informed about libraries) we were unaware about some of the resources available to us as library users e.g. free online access to newspapers and magazines, access to other authorities' library catalogues etc.

Carillion plans to launch e-bulletins across Harrow and Ealing – members who have not visited libraries in the last 3 months will be targeted with information around activities going on in libraries, with a view to enticing them back into libraries. However this again targets library users and not those yet to engage with library services. We note that social media and Twitter feature in Carillion's marketing plans. We suggest that using a Twitter account for Harrow libraries as a service will not work as people prefer more localised Twitter feeds e.g. an account for each library that people can choose to follow.

²³ <http://news.merton.gov.uk/2014/07/25/libraries-thank-volunteers/>

²⁴ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Envisioning_the_library_of_the_future_phase_1_a_review_of_innovations_in_library_services.pdf

There is the opportunity to use the forthcoming refurbishment programme to better communicate the services that libraries offer, especially as refurbishments always attract people into their 'new-look' libraries. The refurbishment programme also offers the opportunity to engage people in what they want their libraries to look like. And therefore with a programme of refurbishment ahead we would expect see a robust engagement programme included in Carillion's marketing plan for 2015-16.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

RECOMMENDATION 11: Carillion's marketing strategy better captures the attention of users and promotes what services are available to library users, as well as plans strategies to target those residents who do not currently use libraries. Carillion should ensure that its marketing plan for 2015-16 is more externally focussed, more challenging with suitable targets and timelines, and demonstrates more innovation. With a programme of refurbishment ahead, the marketing plan should include a comprehensive engagement plan also.

RECOMMENDATION 12: There is better engagement with schools as this is currently an untapped opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The Library Service works with the Harrow Youth Parliament in order to better promote the library services available particularly to young people. An example of this would be 'Library in Your Living Room' – free access to online newspapers and magazines for library card holders, even when outside of the library²⁵.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The resources available to library users, for example online resources, should be better publicised within libraries, not just at PN terminals but displayed by means of posters on noticeboards for example.

CASE STUDY: Lambeth – Library Challenge Tool²⁶

Awards and challenges help to inspire new thinking, which is why Lambeth Council has developed an online Library Challenge tool where users can design their own library service by making decisions on how much of their £200,000 budget they want to spend on staff, print and e-book collections, facilities and repairs. Users are able to decide whether or not to use the volunteers in the library and what additional services they would like to offer. The tool is based on real service budgets and ideas can be submitted to Lambeth Council to inform how library funding is spent in the future, and as such the tool is one way of encouraging residents to express their views on how local services are delivered, and even to co-design them.

²⁵ <http://www.ccslibraries.com/libraries/harrow-libraries/online-resources>

²⁶ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Envisioning_the_library_of_the_future_phase_1_a_review_of_innovations_in_library_services.pdf

This tool takes the process of having consultations one step further, as it not only asks for the opinions of service users, but also allows them the chance to put forward their own ideas for improvement. By involving residents and giving them a greater say in how services are run, the Council can again be seen to be meeting its corporate objectives of making a difference for communities. The tool allows greater opportunities for volunteering, collaboration, and inclusion of all members of the community.

“Quite simply the tool has changed and improved the way we work with our library users” – Adrian Smith, Director of Commissioning at Lambeth Council

“We’ve had a great reception for the Lambeth Library Challenge, and are speaking to library services around the world about reusing it. It would be great to see the tool help reshape the provision of library services in the UK and beyond, and in particular helping local people understand the potential of new technology such as eBooks and self-service to enhance the service they get from their libraries.” – Gareth Edmundson, Lambeth Council²⁷

CONCLUSION

Public libraries continue to be trusted spaces, accessible to everyone, where people of all ages and backgrounds can share the joys of reading, information, knowledge, culture and a sense of community. National research, as well as Harrow’s recent public consultation on libraries, has demonstrated that people continue to value libraries.

However public libraries face many challenges including reduced public expenditure in a climate of financial austerity, advances in technology which affect the way people connect with information and culture, and changes in demographics of the people who libraries must meet the needs of.

The council, in partnership with Carillion, must work with Harrow’s communities to redefine what public libraries look like in the borough and what services they provide. Creative thinking must be applied to different models of delivery and engaging communities in designing their service. Data gathered by the service must be used intelligently to market services and bring libraries to people’s notice.

Libraries need to evolve to be fit for purpose in the 21st century. Harrow’s vision for libraries should look beyond the immediate or short-term challenges and look at least ten years into the future, in redefining what will make Harrow’s libraries resilient, sustainable and fit for the 21st century.

APPENDICES

A - Review scope

B - Envisioning the library of the future – what stakeholders say

C - Take Part consultation – summary of headline results

²⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/nominet-partner-zone/lambeth-library-challenge-nominet-internet-awards>

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 2015

REVIEW OF LIBRARIES - DRAFT SCOPE

VERSION HISTORY:

- Version 1 – 22 December 2014 (NM)
- Version 2 – 22 January 2015 (TB/ML)
- Version 3 – February 2015

1	SUBJECT	Libraries
2	COMMITTEE	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
3	REVIEW GROUP	<p>Councillors: Councillor Paul Osborn (Chair, C) Councillor Michael Borio (L) Councillor Barry Kendler (L) Councillor Jerry Miles (L) Councillor Lynda Seymour (C) Councillor Rekha Shah (L) Councillor Stephen Wright (C)</p>
4	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES	<p>Jointly with Ealing Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To jointly review with Ealing Council the current contract with Carillion Integrated Services for the delivery of library services across the two boroughs. • To examine the current performance of libraries in Harrow and Ealing, as provided by Carillion. <p>Harrow specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the changes proposed for Harrow’s libraries in light of the proposed budget savings for 2015/16 and the outcome of consultation with residents (November 2014 to January 2015). • To develop an understanding of what residents want from their local libraries. • To explore innovative practices in the delivery of library services by councils. • To identify ways in which Harrow Council can deliver 21st century libraries for residents within the context of the financial challenges facing local government. • To inform the implementation of a 3-year Harrow Library Strategy and work towards a potential West London Library Strategy with the other library authorities also managed by Carillion (Ealing and Hounslow).
5	MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inform the future development of Harrow’s libraries service so that it best meets the needs of residents.

	REVIEW	
6	SCOPE	This review will consider Carillion's performance in providing a library service for Harrow and Ealing residents in the first year of the contract (2013/14). It will also consider the outcomes of the Take Part consultation on the future of Harrow libraries which ran from November 2014 to January 2015. Given the timeframe for this review, it will not be in a position to influence the decisions around budget decisions for 2015/16 but rather inform the strategic direction of library services for 2015/16 and beyond.
7	SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)	This review relates in particular to the Corporate Priorities 2014/15 of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a difference for communities
8	REVIEW SPONSOR	Marianne Locke, Divisional Director Community & Culture
9	ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER	Rachel Gapp, Head of Policy
10	SUPPORT OFFICER	Nahreen Matlib, Senior Policy Officer
11	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	Business Support Service / Policy Team
12	EXTERNAL INPUT	The input of the following may be useful for the review: <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant corporate/divisional director(s) • Relevant portfolio holder(s) • Residents <p>Partner agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External contractor - Carillion Integrated Services <p>Experts/advisers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative interest groups
13	METHODOLOGY	This review will involve three phases: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desktop research – including gathering evidence from local and national studies around library services, the results of the current consultation on changes to Harrow's libraries, performance data on the current contract with Carillion, other written/oral evidence from senior managers, ward councillors, residents and experts. This will inform the structure and lines of questioning for the next phase of the review. 2. Challenge sessions – to take evidence from Carillion Integrated Services (our contractor for library services), key managers, relevant portfolio holders, residents: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Joint Committee session through Ealing's Standing Review Panel (Ealing's Customers) on 4 March 2015 at Ealing Town Hall – Carillion will be present to answer members' questions. b) Harrow challenge panel session – date tbc, early to

		<p>mid-March</p> <p>3. Writing up of final report and recommendations - for the approval of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 April 2015, for onward transmission to Cabinet on 23 April 2015.</p>
14	EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	<p>The review will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.</p> <p>In carrying out the review, the review group will also need to consider its own practices and how it can facilitate all relevant stakeholders in the borough to have their voices heard.</p>
15	ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS	The success of the review will depend upon the ability and willingness of officers, partners and stakeholders to participate and contribute fully in this work.
16	TIMESCALE	December 2014 to April 2015
17	RESOURCE COMMITMENTS	To be met from existing Policy Team budget. No significant additional expenditure is anticipated.
18	REPORT AUTHOR	Nahreen Matlib, as advised by the Review Group.
19	REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	<p>Outline of formal reporting process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevant Divisional Director (Marianne Locke) and portfolio holder (Councillor Sue Anderson, Community, Culture & Resident Engagement Portfolio Holder) will be invited to both the Ealing/Harrow joint committee and Harrow challenge panel meetings. They will be consulted in the drafting of the final report and recommendations. • Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14 April 2015. • Report to Cabinet, 23 April 2015.
20	FOLLOW UP ARRANGEMENTS (proposals)	Implementation of recommendations to be monitored by exception on a 6-monthly basis by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

APPENDIX B: Envisioning the library of the future research programme (2012) – summary of findings on what stakeholders said about library services

(1) Funding, volunteers and partnership

- the justification for public funding of a core library offer remains strong
- there is likely to be a move towards outcome-based funding, more charged-for services and charitable income as part of a more diverse funding picture
- volunteering in libraries forms part of a new settlement between local councils and communities
- community involvement in libraries will become an organising principle rather than a way of staving off closure

Libraries can only exist if they have sufficient resources. The future of funding as more than simply re-shuffling public cash funding. It was assumed public libraries would remain a free service, but securing resources of all kinds was seen as the biggest challenge – especially resources which were not from government sources.

On volunteers the research heard a change in emphasis from volunteering (being seen by many today as a means of reducing expenditure) to a future position emerging where co-production is the organising principle for community engagement and outreach, community-led library provision, and for embedding libraries in their communities. But this raises significant questions. Firstly, where will the community enabling skills come from? They are currently in short supply in libraries. Secondly, how does this sit with the very imprecise use of the term 'community library' now? 'Community library' is currently being used to refer to anything from a council-led, volunteer-assisted library, to a total withdrawal of public funding. Community libraries of the future will need to be much more clearly explained, and the term used carefully and transparently, if the benefits of collaboration between communities and public services are to be had.

Libraries further extending their collaborations with other services and external organisations comes with concerns that libraries risk delivering significant outcomes for other public services 'for free', ie that those other services benefit from, but make no direct contribution to the cost of achieving those outcomes (supporting jobseekers, helping people use NHS Direct or supplementing children's centre activities). There was also concern about libraries trying to do too much, or acting too opportunistically, and referred to the 'Woolworths effect' of offering lots of useful things, but in an un-guided way which loses connection with the public and leads eventually to failure.

(2) Digital society and e-books, and (3) children and literacy

- the risk of a real digital divide in society is growing rapidly and the potential role of libraries in 'assisted digital' is huge
- unless libraries address the current issues with e-book lending nothing else matters, but it makes no sense for individual library services to find solutions to this independently
- libraries are essential for the learning, literacy and cultural development of people of all ages (especially children) and for information literacy

Stakeholders saw the digital revolution as a social phenomenon, as well as a technological one. National activity on digital inclusion was taking shape so quickly, that the pivotal role libraries could play in the future of digital inclusion might not be exploited. Looking to the future, children growing up now are likely to see less distinction between libraries, information and reading, and other forms of culture and art (music, film and images). Libraries of the future could end up as the physical hubs for a convergence of cultural activity.

(4) Communicating the brand, national consistency and (5) new audiences and users

- libraries offer much more than books and reading, but too few people know this
- libraries of the future must achieve a step-change in how they communicate their offer
- although library usage is falling, there is strong public support for libraries across the population
- it can be difficult to strike a balance between national consistency and local freedoms

(6) Social purpose, making the political case, public space and (7) rural communities

- discussion tends to focus on *what* libraries must do in the future; stakeholders find it harder to articulate *why* they should do it
- there are concerns that the powerful ideas about the purpose and ethos of the library are not well rehearsed outside the sector
- the core purpose of libraries is to give people the experience of the pleasure of reading and knowledge. Libraries are a real space in a virtual world, acting as a gateway to that world for some
- rural libraries face unique challenges, not least in terms of broadband access and demographic change

Local politicians were referred to most often as people who had to be got 'on side' to oppose individual library closures or budget cuts. Local political leaders were perceived by the vast majority of participants as people to be lobbied and influenced rather than people with whom to share the leadership necessary to deliver the library of the future.

(8) Skills, leadership and innovation

- libraries will need information professionals, but also community mobilisers, managers of volunteers, and educators, to support reading, knowledge and new technology
- library staff will have to be innovative – not just in how services are provided, but in how they are funded
- the qualifications provided by the library schools may be less relevant for careers in public libraries as opposed to commercial, medical, or academic libraries

Skills and leadership were seen as the biggest organisational challenges for public libraries of the future.

APPENDIX C: Take Part library consultation (November 2014 to January 2015) – headline results²⁸

There were a total of 1,176 completed surveys. Headline survey results were:

- 53.72% in favour of library buildings being used more as community hubs or library buildings sharing space with other services.
- 10.58% supported the option of having fewer but improved libraries (e.g. refurbished with longer opening hours).
- 22.96% in favour of increased provision of e-books, e-audio or more information for study or leisure use available online.
- 57.31% supported or were willing to consider the introduction of Open+ technology to extend opening hours. The technology enables library members to access a library using their membership card and PIN number without a member of library staff being present.
- 45.15% supported reducing staffed library opening hours as a way of achieving savings, whilst 47.96% were not in favour of this option.
- 71.69% were against the proposed closure of four libraries (Bob Lawrence, Hatch End, North Harrow, and Rayners Lane) to achieve the required savings. 24.06% supported or were willing to consider this proposal.
- 73.64% supported or were willing to consider charging for events and activities, and 67.09% supported or were willing to consider charging for 'premium' additional services such as 'click and collect'.
- 85.21% supported or were willing to consider the use of advertising or sponsorship of library services, and 84.78% supported or were willing to consider the hiring out of library space to other organisations.
- 59.02% supported or were willing to consider community managed libraries.

Consultation sessions were also held at all libraries, Harrow Leisure Centre, Access Harrow and with Harrow Youth Parliament, with information also sent to local community groups and all Harrow schools. Main themes from responses were:

- The community, social, and economic value of libraries particularly in more deprived areas.
- Travel and parking issues are likely to be a barrier to access for many library users if they had to travel to other libraries if their local library was closed.
- The capacity of remaining to meet the increased demand arising from having fewer libraries, particularly given the projected population increase in Harrow.
- Use of volunteers – some support for the use of volunteers to help provide library services, but some concern that the quality of library services would be affected by the loss of trained staff.
- Income generation and suggestions for savings – Library income should be increased e.g. by increasing fees and charges, charging for computer access, charging for activities, hiring out of library space, and the use of sponsorship.

²⁸ http://harrow-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/community/libraries_consultation_2014-2015/libraries_consultations_2015?tab=files