

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	21 May 2015
Subject:	Response to Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Panel report on 'Libraries'
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Marianne Locke, Divisional Director of Community and Culture
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Sue Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No as the recommendation is for noting only.
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to note the response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel.

Reason: This report sets provides members with officer feedback in response to the Scrutiny Challenge panel report 'Libraries'

Section 2 – Report

1. Introductory paragraph

1.1 The Libraries Challenge Panel Review, which reported in April 2015, drew from a range of sources including desktop research and the recent consultation with Harrow residents on Harrow libraries, council officers from both Ealing and Harrow Councils, as well as from Carillion, the contractor for library services for both of the boroughs. A joint committee meeting was held 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. In addition, the Panel drew on the insight from a number of library users and young people who sat on the review and helped both in gathering evidence and framing final recommendations.

2. Outcome of the Panel Review

2.1 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

2.2 The Panel was conducting its review at the same time as the Library Strategy was being considered by Cabinet. The Panel view Harrow's library strategy as an evolving and living document and therefore hopes that suggestions from the Scrutiny review can be used to help in delivering the strategy for Harrow's residents. The report also includes a number of case studies from other local authorities which may provide some insight into innovative approaches elsewhere in the country.

3. Response to Scrutiny Panel report

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.*

Response: Agreed. Harrow officers will work with Carillion to agree definitions of library usage for measurement. Carillion have already adopted the 'active membership' measure above.

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.**

Response:

- i) The Panel received reports as outlined.
- ii) Agreed and outlined in Harrow's Library Strategy and in discussion with Carillion.
- iii) Agreed and will be sent out to all Members. The link for joining the e-newsletter mailing list can be found at:
<http://www.ccslibraries.com/libraries/harrow-libraries/libraries>
- iv) Agreed. Although this recommendation pertained to a particular Ealing Library, it can be seen as good practice for adoption elsewhere.
- v) Partially agreed. Some services are by their very nature only available online e.g. e-newsletter, e-book downloads etc. However, Harrow's Library Strategy sets out the core service which will continue to be provided which include e.g. books for loan.
- vi) Agreed. The Library Management System can provide a range of information which helped to inform the development of the library strategy such as postcode information of users etc.
- vii) Agreed. Harrow's review of opening hours is being informed by consultation results.
- viii) Agreed. Will work with customer services team on key areas for signposting.
- ix) Noted.

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.

Response: Agreed although it is unclear that there is a direct or causal link as reductions in stockfund have not led to equivalent reductions in stock purchases due to the reducing costs of books etc.

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.

Response: Agreed. Officers will monitor the audience development plan and library stock plans to ensure that newer or 'hidden' communities (e.g. Romanian) are taken into account.

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.

Response: Agreed. The contract requires Carillion to set-up Library user Forums and involvement with stock decisions will be part of delivering any new library facilities such as the new Town Centre Library.

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

Response: Agreed. Discussions are already underway with Shaftesbury School on provision in the Hatch End area. In addition, officers will look at the potential for school library service to extend and for school students to order library books online via their school resource centre or ICT.

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?'

Response: Agreed. Officers will bring an update on the first year of implementation to Cabinet in April 2016.

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.

Response: Agreed. Officers will bring an update on the first year of implementation to Cabinet in April 2016.

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.

Response: Agreed. Officers will continue to review new and existing research and work with Carillion and local residents on the development of the 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.

Response: Agreed. Officers have drafted an application form which requires community proposals to outline financial business cases and sustainability. Proposals will be assessed with the support of officers from Finance and Procurement.

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.

Response: Agreed. Officers will review marketing strategies with Carillion and the new communications team in Harrow to ensure that the marketing is targeted at external audiences as well as existing library users. This will be especially important with the proposed introduction of new services such as click and collect.

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

Response: Partially agreed. Please see response to recommendation 6 above. However, it should be noted that many schools already engage with Harrow libraries in a full programme of school visits and through initiatives such as Summer Reading Challenge. In addition, new initiatives such as the Lego Innovation Studio will be targeted at schools.

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 library .

Response: Agreed. Officers will ensure that Carillion engages with Harrow Youth Parliament particularly on the 'Library in your living room'

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.

Response: Agreed. Officers will discuss the best way of doing this with Carillion. Posters advertising 'Library in Your Living Room' are already displayed in every library and at other venues (such as Harrow Civic Centre).

4. Legal Implications

4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 makes it the duty of every library authority to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. The recommendations in this report and in the delivery of the Library Strategy would support this by making the library service more efficient in delivery and extending the range of services on offer to reach more customers.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The library services revenue budget for 2015-16 is £2.1 million. There are no financial implications in this report that are not already contained within the Library Strategy report approved by Members in March 2015. As a ‘living document’ the library strategy will reflect the provision which can be delivered within a changing financial envelope.

5.2 In addition to the revenue funding, the MTFS assumes a capital budget for library and leisure services of £300,000 per annum for 2015-16 to 2016-17, and £150k per annum for 2017-18, together with a specific allocation of £1m in 2017-18 for any refit and refurbishment work arising from the Library Strategy.

6. Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

A full Equalities Impact Assessment on the proposals in the Library Strategy was conducted and is available as a background document..

7. Council Priorities

The Council’s vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
The Library Strategy aims to extend services such as the Housebound Library Service for older or disabled people who may not be able to get to a library building.
- Making a difference for communities
By providing safe library spaces offering a range of community events and activities and access to free internet, WiFi etc.
- Making a difference for local businesses
Through projects such as Enterprising Libraries and Creative Spaces, offering support for individuals and SMEs in employment and business innovation.
- Making a difference for families
By providing services in community locations such as Children’s Centres, the Library Strategy aims to bring books and the love of reading where residents are most at need.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Donna Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 6 May 2015		
Name: Stephen Dorrian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 11 May 2015		

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Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
EqIA carried out:	NO as no decision required, report for information only
EqIA cleared by:	

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Marianne Locke Divisional Director Community & Culture 020 8736 6530

Background Papers:

Report from the Libraries Scrutiny Report April 2015:

<http://modern.gov:8080/documents/b19477/Supplemental%20Agenda%20%20Thursday%2023-Apr-2015%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9>

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

*[Call-in does not apply, as the
Recommendation is for noting
only]*