

Decision Maker: RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE.

Date: March 30th 2021

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES - CONTRACT
PERFORMANCE REPORT

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Ward: All

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 In line with Contract Procedure Rules 23.2-6 this report provides an update on the Provision of Library Services contract with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) over the last six months of operation. The value of the contract over a ten-year period is £40,908,465.
- 1.2 This report updates Members on the performance of the Contractor since the last report was presented in September 2020. The services being provided by GLL include:
- The Frontline/Operational/Virtual Library service
 - Strategic Management Specialist and Support Functions
 - Bromley Historic Collections
 - Facilities Management including cleaning and security
- 1.3 The report demonstrates how the Contractor has delivered the service in line with the contract, specification, and Key Performance Indicators.
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2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 Members of the Renewal, Recreation & Housing Policy, Development and Scrutiny Committee are asked to review the report and to note the performance of the service provider in the last six months of the contract.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: There are no negative impacts from the performance of GLL on children or vulnerable adults in Bromley. The contract has been designed to ensure that the previously existing levels of service are protected. Online library services are available for children and vulnerable adults during periods that Library buildings are closed due to COVID-19.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
2. BBB Priority:

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
3. Budget head/performance centre: Libraries
4. Total current budget for this head: £4.78m
5. Source of funding: Existing 2020/21 revenue budget

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 2.08 fte (Client Team)
2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement: The Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964
2. Call-in: Not Applicable:

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The library service has a statutory duty to be available to all those who live, work and study in the borough. A 2019 estimate identified that 332,336 people live in the London Borough of Bromley. 24,240 registered users used their library card to borrow an item within a library branch in 2020, representing 7.3% of the population of Bromley. This does not include customers who used the library solely for purposes such as studying, attending activities, or using public PCs, nor does it include users who borrowed e-Items via Library Without Walls, the new virtual library.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
 2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A
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3 COMMENTARY

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Libraries contract commenced on 1st November 2017 and has now entered its fourth year of a ten-year contract term with the option of a further five years by mutual consent. The contract makes specific provision for scrutiny by elected Members twice a year. The Client Team are compliant with this with the last report presented in September 2020.
- 3.2 This report analyses performance data for the six-month period from July-December 2020. This includes Quarter 2 when recovery began and Quarter 3 which saw further services including browsing rolled out before closures were mandated again in November. At the time of writing Library buildings remain closed until at least 12th April based on current government advice. 'Click and Collect' services commenced on Monday 8th March at 12 Libraries where customers can reserve books by phone or online and collect them from the library entrance or return items, between the hours of 10am and 2pm.

VIRTUAL LIBRARY SERVICE

- 3.3 Following the unprecedented closure in March due to COVID-19, GLL reacted quickly, improving online provision by creating a new virtual library service offering online resources branded as 'Library Without Walls' (LWW). The concept of a library without walls creatively uses modern technology to provide a new timetable of online activities and videos. A wide range of eBooks, eMagazines and eNewspapers are available free to customers through LWW at the click of a button, along with music streaming and eAudio and reading apps. Lockdown may have changed people's reading habits but has not deterred them from reading. Since March 2020, GLL have held approximately 420 virtual events with 172,000 attendees.

KPI MONITORING

- 3.4 The Client Team continue to measure contract performance using a suite of 26 bespoke Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with significant financial penalties for KPI breaches where mitigation is not accepted each month- see Appendix 1c. A quarterly KPI reporting system is also in place. During the current monitoring period some temporary variations have been made to six KPIs due to the impact of the pandemic as further described in Section 5 and Appendix 1b.
- 3.5 Failures of service performance are managed through a points-based performance adjustment (PA) system which are awarded if a standard identified by a KPI is not met. KPI incidents and their mitigation are discussed at monthly monitoring meetings with GLL and dealt with on a case by case basis. The invoice for the preceding month is reviewed and agreed based on KPI performance during the last month. See Appendix 1 for a summary of the reports covering the last six months.
- 3.6 There were three KPI breaches in the period covered by this report which amounted to a total of 55 performance adjustment points. One monitoring notice was issued by the Client Team for a breach of KPI 5 & 6 requesting more information from GLL. Upon receipt of the monitoring notice GLL provided a full written response and evidence that the issues were entirely due to a third-party contractor as described in paragraphs 3.7-3.9.

- 3.7 The first breach relates to KPI 6 Public IT facilities. On Wednesday 21st October Library users were unable to use public computers (PCs) from 10-3pm due to an unexpected fault occurring during a planned migration of IT services to a new server host. In mitigation eight Libraries are closed on Wednesdays which minimised the levels of disruption.
- 3.8 The remaining KPI breaches are linked to the incident set out above and relate to KPI 5 Public Web access. Overdrive was inaccessible from the afternoon of Thursday 22nd October until the morning of Friday 23rd and then again from Friday afternoon until the evening. This was caused by the initial solution used to resolve the KPI 6 issue and caused temporary problems with the connection between Capita Soprano and Overdrive (our eBook provider). This was escalated and a solution found to resolve both issues.
- 3.9 The mitigation provided by GLL was fully accepted by the Client Team acting reasonably as required by the contract. No penalties were imposed for the temporary loss of public PCs and the eBook service as GLL were able to fully evidence that both IT service issues were due to unexpected third-party issues. A routine system server transfer had taken place at three other GLL Library partnerships with no issues. When the Bromley Libraries transfer took place, it caused an unexpected compatibility issue with the public PC provider. Lessons have been learned from this and will be applied to future IT upgrades.

BENEFITS AND QUALITY

- 3.10 The commissioning of the Library Service was carried out with the goal of maintaining and ensuring the delivery of this statutory service whilst achieving lower ongoing revenue costs, this benefit has been delivered by the contract. GLL is successfully managing the service whilst driving down the Council's costs. Taking this approach has enabled the Council to avoid more extreme measures that other authorities have taken.
- 3.11 GLL remain the UK's largest provider of Library Services operating over one hundred libraries which has ongoing benefits for Bromley. During the first Lockdown GLL had the resources to quickly create and develop Library Without Walls, a high-quality online offer. This developed further on 16th January when GLL launched 'Better at Home' a national programme of virtual events which is the result of collaboration between all five GLL Library partnerships. The Better at Home programme includes author and illustrator events for all ages as well as a weekly family quiz with Maths Expert and Libraries Champion Bobby Seagull. Virtual events hosted by Bromley have been viewed over 2,600 times in the first two weeks of the new programme.
- 3.12 The contract has benefited from the considerable expertise and experience of the GLL National Director of Libraries who during the pandemic has engaged with key partners e.g. Libraries Connected and the DCMS for clarification on service recovery

PERFORMANCE - ITEM ISSUES

- 3.13 A key aim of Bromley Libraries is to promote enjoyment of reading and sharing of books and to increase the number of items issued. Since the GLL contract commenced Bromley Library Service has moved up to 2nd in total book issues and up to 4th in issues per 1,000 population in the last 3 years demonstrating the quality of the service. However, despite the increase in ranking, the number of issues fell by 6% from 1,380,392 last year to this year's total of 1,295,592. This is due to the pandemic which impacted on the Library

Service from March. Had libraries remained open during this period, it is anticipated that issues would have exceeded last year's total. Bromley Central Library was ranked third place out of all individual London libraries for issues with 288,708 items issued.

RISK

- 3.14 The current operational service risk within this contract relates to Force Majeure. The sudden lockdown enforced to control the spread of COVID-19 meant the immediate closure of all Bromley libraries in line with government advice. At the time of writing library buildings are still closed as part of the latest National lockdown (although 'Click and Collect' and online services are available). GLL is pro-active in recovering physical Library services and re-opened Library buildings as soon as possible. Full recovery plans are in place to re-open Library buildings from 12th April based on current advice. Both GLL and the Council continue to update and monitor their risk registers.
- 3.15 Additional operational risk relates to keeping libraries open during industrial action. GLL has shown on two occasions within the contract term that they are able to withstand the risk of library closures during industrial action.
- 3.16 The contract risk register has been updated to include the operational risk attached to the condition of Library buildings. Unresolved issues at both Central and Orpington Libraries have left them currently unable to open to offer Click and collect from 8th March. Under the Contract terms a Landlord/Tenant split of building responsibilities was agreed as set out in Schedule 5 - Appendix 2. GLL is fully compliant with their agreed responsibilities. There is a backlog of issues which is being addressed by the Council.

MANAGEMENT

- 3.17 The Libraries Client Team continues to demonstrate that it can successfully manage and monitor the contract on an ongoing basis which has been reinforced by the successful performance of the service during the pandemic and recovery planning which has required a collaborative approach to set the direction of the Library service during the pandemic.
- 3.18 The Client team work closely with the GLL Management team leading the Bromley Partnership to ensure the ongoing development and successful delivery of the Library service. Good working relationships have been maintained through regular ongoing communication relating to the day to day running of the service.
- 3.19 Contract milestones relating to monitoring and service planning have been fully met over the last six months. All monitoring meetings including focus groups and the annual Contract review meeting have taken place remotely during the pandemic.
- 3.20 Prior to COVID-19 regular spot checks on all libraries were made to ensure that the required standards are being met. After Libraries initially re-opened the Client Team visited each library adhering to social distancing measures to check that all libraries were safe and COVID-19 compliant. Spot check visits will recommence when all sites re-open after the current lockdown. The standard of the virtual library continues to be monitored.

PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

- 3.21 The service provided by this contract over the past six months has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic. The Library service was disrupted for the first time on 23rd March

2020 when the temporary closure of libraries was mandated due to COVID-19. Since then Library buildings have closed for two further periods outlined in paragraphs 3.24 and 3.27 due to the growing transmission rates of the virus within the UK. The management fee has been paid to GLL in full throughout this period due to the high-quality services which have been provided online and the phases of service recovery that have been delivered in between lockdown periods.

SERVICE RECOVERY- COVID-19: JULY 6th - NOVEMBER 5th 2020

- 3.22 From the point of closure the focus was on recovery and extensive work immediately took place to make library buildings COVID-secure. Measures include the installation of protective acrylic screens, hand sanitiser stations, the removal of relaxed seating, and the distancing of public PCs to allow for social distancing. Signage encouraging customers to stay safe during the pandemic was provided along with PPE for staff. A stringent cleaning regime was adopted with a 'housekeeper' in each library throughout the day.
- 3.23 Service recovery began on 6th July 2020, the date set by the Government, and only one fifth of UK Library services re-opened at this time. Six Bromley Libraries re-opened on 6th July offering a Click and Collect service and access to computers with no browsing. The remaining libraries had re-opened by 4th August. From September all Bromley Libraries extended opening hours to 10am-5pm, reaching 82% of pre-COVID-19 opening hours, offering bookable study space, longer computer sessions and browsing.

TIER 3 RESTRICTIONS: 5TH NOVEMBER - 2ND DECEMBER 2020

- 3.24 When Bromley moved into Tier 3 restrictions, it was necessary to close Library buildings again from 5th November. During this period a Click and Collect service was available at all libraries from 12pm-4pm to give residents access to physical stock. Library without Walls continued to provide free access to reading materials and events online.
- 3.25 At the point when buildings closed to the public once again in-branch issues had reached 72% of last year's level, an early indicator of service recovery. Visits had recovered to just 34% of previous years' visits due to there being no physical activities, limited browsing, and controlled numbers of people entering libraries including discouraging customers from lingering in buildings.

SERVICE RECOVERY 3RD DECEMBER - 19TH DECEMBER

- 3.26 From 3rd December after the easing of restrictions all libraries re-opened from 10am-5pm offering browsing, ICT facilities and item sales e.g. food waste bags. During this period on three occasions Libraries closed due to staff testing positive for COVID-19. This occurred on two occasions at Petts Wood Library and once at Central Library, GLL took the only appropriate action which was to close these libraries for deep cleaning and to allow affected staff to self-isolate. By December 2020 monthly issues had recovered further to 88% of December 2019 levels across the service.

NATIONAL LOCKDOWN COVID CLOSURE: 21ST DECEMBER - 7TH MARCH 2021

- 3.27 From 21st December, Bromley Libraries closed again due to Tier 4 restrictions then remained closed in response to another National Lockdown from 4th January. Although Library buildings were mandated to close, the regulations do allow certain services to be

provided by libraries but do not compel them to do so. It is up to the Council to determine whether services can or will be provided after undertaking appropriate risk assessments.

- 3.28 The updated risk assessments provided by GLL identified high risk levels including the Kent variant and the number of staff COVID-19 cases as described above. These factors meant that Click and Collect services could not be safely provided at this time. A decision was made to move the Library service back online to encourage staff and customers to follow the stay at home message and to review the situation every two weeks. The service was fully prepared for this having successfully established LWW during the first Lockdown and quickly set about expanding the programme of online events and activities for all ages.
- 3.29 The impact of moving the Library service back online was further mitigated by the ongoing Investment and growing popularity of eBooks during the pandemic. Increased spending on eltems since lockdown has resulted in increased online issues. 23,750 eltems were issued during January alone with eNewspapers recording the highest number of issues.
- 3.30 Better at Home the current online programme offers something for everyone with loneliness and education prioritised as key areas for development. Reading groups for all ages continue via Zoom. Targeted services for schools include Click and Collect book packs delivered directly to schools. A virtual school visits programme piloted by the Children's team has so far reached 330 students since being launched in January 2021.

REVIEW OF CONTRACT PURPOSE

- 3.31 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to all those who live, work or study within the Borough as defined in the 1964 Public Libraries Act. Library provision in Bromley during COVID-19 fulfilled this requirement as online library services were made available for all. Library buildings initially re-opened as soon as government guidelines allowed. A full report of the status and re-opening plans have been supplied to DCMS.

CONTRACT DEVELOPMENT

- 3.32 The contract requires that the learning and maturity targets of the Contractor are constantly reviewed. The successful recovery and development of the Library service and Bromley Historic Collections by GLL is the top priority. A recovery strategy was set out in a report presented by the Client Team to the Renewal, Regeneration and Housing PDS on December 16th 2020 to inform Members of plans to recover Library services in Bromley and identify development opportunities for both physical and digital services. Further information on contract development is provided in para 6.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 GLL is successfully providing Library services for vulnerable adults and children in all periods of lockdown and as part of ongoing service recovery. GLL are working with a number of partners to look at improvements and changes that can be made to make libraries more accessible. When libraries re-open, Mottingham Library will be Bromley's pilot autism friendly library.

- 4.2 GLL is successfully responding to the concerning social issues of loneliness and isolation that affect many different groups of people of all ages in their communities which has been further brought to light by the pandemic. A group for new parents was launched during the pandemic by the Children's team who share songs and stories to combat the isolation of being a new parent in lockdown and bring people with similar experiences together. GLL will build upon this success.
- 4.3 A programme of events was provided to support wellbeing over the past six months to promote the key messaging of the following national campaigns which include World Mental Health Day (10th October), Self Care Week (November) and Anti Bullying Week (November).

5. SERVICE PROFILE / DATA ANALYSIS

- 5.1 The closure of Library buildings in response to COVID-19 resulted in some temporary changes to the KPI monitoring. Six KPIs set out in Appendix 1c including KPI 1 Opening Hours were temporarily suspended until restrictions are fully lifted which is expected to be 12th April 2021. A temporary reporting system was applied in which GLL were required to submit a monthly COVID-19 report detailing online activities including videos and posts produced for their social media, a higher-detail breakdown of digital items issued, and the work streams of library and BHC staff as shown in Appendix 3.
- 5.2 Observing trends over time has previously allowed the Client team to measure the success of the contract. Given the enormous impact of COVID-19 on library services it will be some time before statistical trends and data comparison can be made in the usual way. For example, future performance will be analysed using both qualitative and quantitative data from a range of sources including the service plans which specify key actions for the service and measure their outcomes and comparison made month on month rather than with the equivalent point last year.

DIGITAL ISSUES AND VISITS

- 5.3 Prior to the closures, regularly monitored statistics included visits and item issues per branch, usage of public PCs and the Home Library Service .The shift to a more extensive online offer has added a new suite of measurable performance statistics which add further value to the service including user reach, video activities created, and views and page followers for the Bromley Libraries Facebook page.
- 5.4 In comparison to the previous year, issues of digital items such as eBooks, eAudiobooks and eNewspapers have increased dramatically. In the July to December 2020, digital issues rose by 135% when compared to the same period in 2019 and increased their share of all items issued in Bromley from 6.2% to 25.0% making it consistently the largest issuing 'library' in the Borough.
- 5.5 Although the number of digital issues and visits grew as set out above, the number of new library members during the last six months reduced by 63% on the same point last year. During lockdown new users were able to join the service online or in branch when libraries were open. As key aim of the service recovery is to attract new Library members due to the increased relevance of the service. For residents who are struggling to apply for jobs, libraries can be a game-changer, providing free access to books and technology.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- 5.6 All events and activities in Bromley Libraries were suspended on 17th March due to the growing pandemic and the need for social distancing. The records of numbers attending activities before libraries closed were not available in the September 2020 report due to the sudden closure of buildings. These are now provided in Appendix 4. When libraries re-opened for short periods of recovery, activities remained online and will be gradually re-introduced when it is safe to do so in line with social distancing guidelines.
- 5.7 In the period covered by this report July-December an online programme of live and pre-recorded video events were posted online on the Bromley Libraries Facebook page. A regular timetable of events was produced including Bounce and Rhyme, Great Reads for Older Children, Singing and Signing, Armchair Talks, Storytime, and Poetry Reading for adults. 120 videos were loaded on Facebook in the period July-December Bromley Libraries Facebook posts were viewed by between 6,000 and 10,000 people per week between July and December 2020 peaking during the Summer Reading challenge.
- 5.8 Reading groups for all ages are amongst the most popular Library activities. These moved online over the last six months GLL successfully ran a total of 20 reading groups each month virtually via Zoom which included 13 for adults and 7 for children and teenagers. New for January is Bookworms book club uLibrary children's talking book group which adds an eAudioBook for children to listen to and discuss through a free app. It also has a Talking Books Book Club for adults. The reading groups have reached approximately 170 people each month.
- 5.9 Available data on participation rates for the 2020 Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) ranks Bromley second in London overall for the number of children starting the challenge. 2,644 children started the Summer Reading Challenge and 840 children completed the 2020 challenge. Whilst our figures have dropped from 2019, this is an enormous achievement as 13% of the 6,471 completing the challenge were from the Bromley.

BROMLEY HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

- 5.10 Bromley Historic Collections (BHC) continue to provide as full a service as possible subject to government guidelines. When the Central Library was open for browsing, they operated an appointment system for face-to-face visits. They also were able to respond to requests for School Loan Boxes which were issued with COVID-19 safety guidelines. As set out in Appendix 3b. The service is expected to re-open from 12th April 2021.
- 5.11 During periods of closure BHC monitored phones and emails daily to provide customers with a full service. Staff have also undertaken research at BHC on behalf of customers who have been unable to visit. They have provided scans of relevant material where possible. Social Media has been used to promote interest in Bromley Historic Collections.
- 5.12 The CALM data cleansing project continues to update individual museum catalogue records and improve the accessibility of the records for Bromley Historic Collections. Approximately 4,900 records have now been cleansed. As part of the process, entries are updated with new information including those in the Lubbock Collection which require careful revision. It is anticipated that the project will be complete by the end of the year.

- 5.13 Work on the Preservica (Digital Preservation System) project is also progressing well, Preservica is a cloud-based, digital preservation system and online archives, designed to integrate with BHC's existing CALM catalogue system and store their digital records remotely. It will allow BHC to keep pace with the way modern users engage with and access historic resources, genealogical material, and archival records offering an easily navigable user interface for remote customers.
- 5.14 Other exciting ongoing projects for the service include The Earth Museum (TEM) volunteer project which creates a virtual learning resource. GLL saw this as an opportunity to increase access to the John Lubbock collection through a story-led approach, which would involve and engage the local community and connect Bromley with people and places around the world.
- 5.15 In December 2020, the first tranche of objects launched live on TEM website along with the first story .The Earth Museum received 70 new unique hits via Bromley's Lubbock collection in the first week of launch showing evidence that the project is meeting its goals of increasing access to the collection as well as supporting skills sharing and knowledge exchange with its volunteer programme.

6. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 The Libraries contract and specification was designed to encourage the Service Provider to think innovatively and continually look for ways to develop and improve the performance of the service as described within is report. User needs have changed during COVID-19 and GLL will work to understand and develop services to meet this need e.g. provision for job seekers will need to be part of new service planning
- 6.2 While lockdown has brought challenges not previously anticipated the Library service and Bromley Historic Collections (BHC) has shown resilience and innovation resulting in an extra dimension to the service Library Without Walls (LWW), a 24/7 virtual library which is available whenever people want to use it day and night.
- 6.3 Reading groups will continue to be provided via Zoom as an alternative for customers after libraries re-open enabling people to connect over a shared love of reading. Videos of popular activities such as Bounce and Rhyme will continue to be provided .Virtual school visits will also continue as they have proved to be a successful way of delivering information skills to a large number of students and will lead to a higher take up of this service resulting in increased library membership amongst children and teenagers.
- 6.4 A key area for development post COVID is the greater need for job seeking, business and career support. Libraries in Bromley are highly accessible, evenly distributed across the Borough, supporting customers to gain new skills. Libraries in Bromley offer free access to a host of learning opportunities. As approved by the Executive on 10th February, Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding has been allocated to GLL to deliver a new 'Start up Bromley' scheme offering support to local businesses and entrepreneurs. Work will commence from March to provide two 'Business Lounges' at Central Library and Orpington Library operated by a dedicated business advisory team who will also provide a roving advice service from all libraries in the Borough.
- 6.5 As part of the recovery strategy a new temporary pattern of opening hours was agreed by Members at the Renewal, Regeneration and Housing PDS on December 16th 2020. The

proposal re-instates the full opening hours total of 527.5 per week which has not been in operation during the pandemic. The number of days each branch is open has not reduced, instead a standardised approach has been taken resulting in some changes to the days of the week libraries are open and to the pattern of late nights. This approach will benefit customers who are staying local these days in response to the pandemic. The new opening hours which were due to be implemented in January 2021 were delayed due the current lockdown. It is anticipated that the new hours will be implemented in May 2021 depending on recovery guidelines see Appendix 5.

- 6.6 GLL consistently meet their contractual requirement to produce strategic plans which deliver the agreed objectives for the Library Service for the year ahead aimed at improving performance. The Library Client Team have approved GLL's Annual Service Plans for 2021/22 which set out key aspirations for the recovery of the service. This includes a more robust marketing plan to promote the range of in-library and online resources, ensuring that new and existing customers can find information about library services more easily.
- 6.7 GLL continue to seek new ways to help combat loneliness and isolation in lockdown prioritising the elderly population in the borough and successfully secured funding from The Reading Agency to deliver the 'Reading Friends project in Bromley .Through this reading befriending programme that helps to connect people who are lonely and isolated, Library users who want to talk about books or films will be aligned with staff with similar interests. This launched in February 2021 with staff making outgoing telephone calls to customers who they think will benefit from this service. The next phase will include Zoom calls and discussions. This scheme has been promoted through the Bromley Council COVID-19 response scheme.

PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN VALUE FOR MONEY

- 7.1 The contract price for year 4 shows a further decrease as set out in the pricing document for this 10-year contract demonstrating ongoing value for money. The monetary values of performance adjustment points relating to the contract KPIs reduced from November 2020 due to the variation in the annual contract price.

STOCK PURCHASING

- 7.2 In compliance with KPI 22 relating to stock purchasing, the stock fund for the current financial year remains at £450k per annum and should be fully committed by the year end. GLL is compliant in providing monthly stock purchasing reports which give a break-down of how this ring-fenced stock purchasing fund has been used, demonstrating it has been used specifically for the purpose intended. Please refer to Appendix 6 for a summary of the current position of the stock spend up to 1st February 2021.
- 7.3 Due to COVID-19, stock purchasing allocations were adjusted to rapidly expand the range and availability of eBooks. There has been an increase of the previous annual funding of eBooks of £14k which covers the annual support and content credit. GLL has currently spent £47,893 on e-Items which represents 10.6% of the stock fund. This includes a £1,000 Arts Council grant, which was given to all UK Library services to spend on eBooks.
- 7.4 As detailed above, the pandemic has accelerated progress in digital provision. In July to December 2020, issues of digital items represented 25.0% of all issued items in the service, up from 6.2% in the same period in 2019. The remaining issues primarily represent physical items borrowed from re-opened branches, or whose loans were

renewed online or by phone. The great performance of the digital library and uptake of services by Library users has shown why reallocation of the stock budget to enhance its availability and range of items would be of great benefit to customers.

BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

- 7.5 GLL is driving change to ensure library facilities change with the times making sure that customers can access the services they want and need in a 21st Century library experience. A key focus for 2021 is making Library buildings COVID-19 secure whilst enhancing and improving the customer experience such as including contactless payment systems and wipeable keyboards and laser pointers, so that staff can assist customers whilst socially distancing.
- 7.6 As detailed in the September 2020 report there are currently several new library building schemes under consideration, either as mixed schemes or more prominent high street positioning. When other libraries within the borough moved to prominent high street locations their issues and visits increased. It is anticipated that the delivery of services from new, re-modelled or co-located buildings will have a positive impact on usage and membership.
- 7.7 Minor refurbishments have taken place at other libraries over the last six months including at Orpington Library where work is ongoing to install a sensory area within the Children's Library. Work is expected to commence in mid-March to install the 'Start Up Bromley' Business Lounge Service at Central Library and Orpington Library as described in paragraph 6.4. It is anticipated that the work will be completed by 1st May when this new scheme will launch in Bromley adding a new dimension to the services provided by Bromley Libraries in order to reach a new audience.

8. USER / STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

SURVEYS

- 8.1 Prior to the first Lockdown, plans were in place to schedule the GLL annual survey in 2020 but was postponed further due to ongoing restrictions. The 2021 survey is expected to take place after libraries fully re-open and will be revised to include questions which ask customers about their experiences of using online library services during lockdown including what they would like to retain. This invaluable feedback will enable GLL to review and improve the services they offer.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

- 8.2 Comments and compliments are also received about the Library Service through email and social media. Many recent comments also relate to the COVID-19. A Biggin Hill Library customer thanked staff for their kindness, positive attitude and professionalism. 5 comments at various libraries thanking staff for making the libraries COVID-19 secure

COMPLAINTS

- 8.3 The number of complaints received about the Library service over the last six months has decreased from 26 in the previous report to 12 during this period which is in line with what would be expected by a customer-facing service. At the request of Members these have

been provided in a format showing the top complaint themes as detailed below. Library services were available online while buildings were closed. During the closed period customers were able to complain via the usual Library email addresses and phone numbers, or through the feedback form on the Better website. All complaints received an immediate reply.

Table 1: Summary of all complaints received: July-December 2020

Complaint Theme	Number of Complaints	Library Locations
COVID-19 RELATED COMPLAINTS		
1 - Lack or small provision of browsing area available to the public	4 Complaints	3 x Beckenham 1 x Biggin Hill
2 - Unhappy with the new proposed opening hours from January 2021 as may impact on reading groups	3 Complaints	3 x Orpington
3 - Unhappy to be challenged for not wearing face mask inside the library	1 Complaint	1x Central
4 - Was not able to pay with cash (cashless payments only)	1 Complaint	1 x St Pauls Cray
5 - Length of reservation time for books	1 Complaint	1x Central
6 - Only offering up to one hour for IT appointments	1 Complaint	1x Central
IT RELATED COMPLAINT		
7 - Technical fault with eBook service	1 Complaint	1 x Central

8.4 COVID-19 analysis of this data shows four customers complained about the limited browsing available at Beckenham and Biggin Hill Libraries when they re-opened which was due to the introduction of social distancing measures in libraries. Four other complaints related to services affected by COVID-19 e.g. no cash payments, limited IT appointments, and longer wait to collect reservations due to Library closures.

8.5 Three complaints were received from Orpington Library customers who were concerned about the potential impact of the temporary change in opening hours on their reading group. This was discussed at the PDS on 16th December and these customers were reassured that when the opening hours change and face to face reading groups resume, they will be consulted if this is likely to be a permanent change.

8.6 Complaint theme number 7 related to a KPI failure detailed in paragraph 3.10 when there was a technical fault with the eBook service which was quickly rectified, and the customer notified that the issue was resolved.

9. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 The Executive Committee approved the commissioning of the Library Service on 19th July 2017 following pre-decision scrutiny by the Renewal & Recreation Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee on 5th July 2017.

- 9.2 This approach is consistent with the council's stated ambitions around vibrant, thriving town centres, supporting independence, children and young people, and an excellent Council under its vision for Building a Better Bromley.
- 9.3 The Council's Corporate Operating Principles include the commitment that services will be provided by whoever offers customers and council taxpayers excellent value for money.

10. PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 In line with 23.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, an annual report must be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for all contracts with a value higher than £500k.

11. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 The annual cost of the library services contract is met from the Library Service revenue budget of £4.980m.
- 11.2 Additional Restrictions Grant of £216,238 has been allocated for the Start Up Bromley scheme to be operated by GLL for 12 months from 1st April 2021. Any extension of this programme will be funded by GLL.

12. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 The Council has various legal duties and powers towards the provision, improvement and maintenance of public library services under the Public Libraries Museum Act 1964 which also includes the circumstances surrounding vulnerable people and children. In furtherance of these powers, the Council has the legal power to enter into a Contract with the Provider (Greenwich Leisure Limited i.e GLL) and may provide and commission through a contract the services outlined in this report.
- 12.2 This Report provides an update on the provision of library services Contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) over the last six months of operation and also analyses the performance data for a six month period from July-December 2020 as detailed in Section 3.2 of the Report. The contract period commenced from 11.11.17, in line with the fourth year of a ten year Contract with the option of a further five years by mutual consent. There is special provision for scrutiny of the Contract by elected members twice a year. The last Report was presented in September 2020 and the client department have been compliant with this. The annual cost of the library services contract is met from the Library Service revenue budget of £4.980m. The contract's overall whole life cost over the whole life of a ten year period is £40,908,465.
- 12.3 Under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's), the Councils requirement to monitor contract performance, evaluation, review, costs, user satisfaction, value for money requirements, compliance with specification and Contract and risk management is in accordance to CPR 23.2-6. An annual report must be submitted to the Executive for all contracts that are high risk holding a value higher than £1,000,000, with the responsible officers having also submitted a formal Gateway Review Report as part of

Contract Monitoring/Management requirements. For Contracts exceeding £500k, a written Report must be submitted to the Portfolio Holder in accordance to CPR 5.2 to be done when the Contract is completed.

12.4 The Contract can be awarded in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules

Non-Applicable Sections:	Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	<p>DRR17/034 and DRR17/035 Contract Award for the Provision of Library Services – PARTS 1 AND 2 Reports to Executive Committee on 19th July 2017 (with pre-decision scrutiny by the Renewal & Recreation Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee on 5th July 2017)</p> <p>HPR2020/045-Post COVID 19 Library Service Recovery Report to Renewal, Recreation & Housing Development & Scrutiny Committee on 16th December 2020</p>