

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

Date: Tuesday 16 November 2021

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

Title: PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES-CONTRACT
PERFORMANCE REPORT

Contact Officer: Paula Young, Head of Culture
Tel: 020 8461 7281 E-mail: Paula.Young@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Sara Bowrey, Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 In line with Contract Procedure Rules 23.2-6 this report provides an update to Members on the performance of Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) in the provision of the Library Services contract. The value of the contract over a ten-year period is currently £41,260,703.
 - 1.2 The report sets out how the Contractor has delivered the library service in line with the contract, specification, and key performance indicators since the last report was presented in March 2021 which includes periods of lockdown due to COVID-19 and subsequent recovery.
-

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 Members of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing, Policy, Development and Scrutiny Committee are asked to review the report and to note the performance of the service provider since the last report on service performance was presented in March 2021.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The contract has been designed to ensure that the existing levels of service are protected. Online library services were available for both children and vulnerable adults during all periods that Library buildings closed due to COVID-19.
-

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Supporting Independence Vibrant, Thriving Town Centres Healthy Bromley Regeneration:
-

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: £4.68m
 5. Source of funding: Existing 2021/22 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: 1964 Public Libraries Act
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): A 2019 estimate identified that 334,539 people live in the London Borough of Bromley. 24,240 registered users used their library card to borrow an item in a library branch in 2020, representing 7.2% of the population of Bromley. This does not include customers who used the library solely for purposes such as studying, activities, or using public PCs.
-

Ward Councillor Views

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

3. COMMENTARY

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report provides information relating to the performance of the Libraries contract delivered by Greenwich Leisure Limited for the period from January-September 2021 which has been impacted by the pandemic. Performance data included is for Quarter 4 (2020/21) January-March and Quarter 1 (2021/22) April-June 2021 whilst commentary covers a longer period until September 2021.
- 3.2 The Libraries contract commenced on 1st November 2017 and has just entered the fifth 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 with the last report presented in March 2021. Due to changes to the forward plan cycle the reporting dates have been changed to May and November having previously been March and September.
- 3.3 The services being managed by GLL covered by this report include:
- The Frontline/Operational/Virtual Library service
 - Strategic Management Specialist and Support Functions
 - Bromley Historic Collections
 - Facilities Management including cleaning and security

CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE

- 3.4 The Client Team measure performance of the Library Service contract using 26 bespoke Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with financial penalties for breaches – set out in Appendix 1. A quarterly KPI reporting system is also in place. During the current monitoring period some temporary variations were made to six KPIs due to the impact of the pandemic which are now back in place.
- 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 2 for a summary of the reports covering the last six months.
- 3.6 There were two KPI breaches in the period between January-June which amounted to a total of 30 performance adjustment points for which the financial value is £1182.10. No monitoring notices were issued by the Client Team in the period covered by this report.
- 3.7 Both KPI breaches related to the late opening of libraries and were as a result of COVID related staff sickness. On 8th May 2021, Chislehurst library opened 30 minutes late, and on 6th June Burnt Ash Library opened 30 minutes late. In both instances the duty manager immediately travelled to the library to cover and stay open for the rest of the day. The Client accepted these mitigating circumstances, and no financial penalties were applied.

BENEFITS AND QUALITY

- 3.8 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 (namely through business rate and economy of scale savings) the contract continues to deliver this. GLL is in the main successfully managing and developing the service whilst driving down the Council's costs. Taking this approach has enabled the Council to avoid more extreme service reduction measures that other authorities have taken.

3.9 GLL is the UK's largest provider of Library Services which has ongoing benefits for Bromley. During the pandemic the contract benefited from the leadership and experience of the GLL National Director of Libraries. During the first Lockdown GLL had the resources to quickly create and develop Library Without Walls - a high-quality online offer. This developed further in January when 'Better at Home' a national programme of virtual events was launched as a collaboration between all five GLL Library partnerships.

MONITORING AND QUALITY CONTROL

3.10 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 both during COVID-19 and service recovery phases which has required a collaborative approach.

3.11 Contract milestones relating to monitoring and service planning have been fully met over the last nine months. All monthly meetings and other milestone meetings including the annual contract review have taken place remotely during the pandemic.

3.12 Prior to COVID-19 closure, regular unannounced spot checks on all libraries were made by the Client team, to ensure that the required standards are being met. This is defined by a checklist which monitors service standards at each library which is included in Appendix 3a. Categories which are reviewed regularly include environment and appearance of the library, quality of stock, staffing levels, and equipment which includes internet speed and other IT equipment. Findings and observations are documented, and issues identified are cross-checked against GLL incident reports to ensure they have been reported to the Council.

3.13 The Client Team visits to libraries were suspended during lockdown due to library closure and did not take place during initial recovery phases. In May, when libraries resumed their full pattern of opening hours, the visits resumed and the Client Team visited each library quarterly, adhering to social distancing regulations to check that all libraries were safe for staff and customers and fully COVID-19 compliant. The checklist that was used is shown in Appendix 3b. Now that services have been restored the original checklist will be used to monitor standards with adaptations to reflect new processes.

RISK

3.14 The main operational service risk to this contract relates to Force Majeure. The sudden lockdown enforced to control the spread of COVID-19 is an example, as it resulted in the immediate closure of all Bromley libraries in line with government advice. GLL is pro-active in recovering physical Library services and re-opened Library buildings as soon as possible. Both GLL and the Council continue to update and monitor their risk registers to include future Force Majeure incidents.

3.15 Additional operational relates to keeping libraries open during industrial action. GLL has shown on two separate occasions within the contract term that they are able to withstand the risk of library closures during industrial action. GLL meet regularly with Unions to give both sides the opportunity to discuss any issues within this forum before it escalates.

3.16 The 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 left them unable to open on March 8th when the other libraries re-opened. A Landlord/Tenant split was agreed under the contract term. GLL is fully compliant with their responsibilities. There is a backlog of issues which will gradually be addressed by the Council.

INCREASED PERFORMANCE

- 3.17 A key aim of this contract is for Bromley Libraries to promote enjoyment of reading and sharing of books and to increase the number of items issued. For the pre-COVID 2019-20 period, CIPFA reported Bromley's library service as having the highest total annual issues of items among the 20 Outer London boroughs and the second highest eBook issues, and the third highest issues per 1,000 population. This demonstrates the focus and success of the of the library service since the GLL contract with Bromley commenced four years ago.
- 3.18 Recovery after the initial lockdown began at the earliest opportunity commencing on 6th July 2020 the date set by the government. Bromley was amongst only one fifth of UK library services who re-opened with others remaining closed. At the point when buildings closed for the next lockdown in branch issues had reached 72% of last years levels providing an early indicator of a strong service recovery. The trend for early recovery continued as after having gradually re-opened on 8th April Bromley Libraries were amongst the first to re-introduce their pre pandemic opening hours total from May 2021- see paragraph 3.27-3.30 after the last lockdown whilst other library services did not.

PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICE

- 3.19 The service provided by this contract over the past six months has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic. Libraries closed on March 23rd 2020 when the immediate closure of libraries was mandated due to COVID-19. Service recovery gradually commenced on 6th July 2020 with all libraries open for browsing from 10am-5pm from September before closing again on 5th November for another lockdown, this time providing Click and Collect and virtual services. The service briefly re-opened on 3rd December when the second Lockdown ended when once again all libraries re-opened from 10.00-5.00pm before closing again due to the National lockdown - see paragraph 3.23. The management fee has been paid to GLL in full throughout this period as high-quality services were provided online during lockdown and during the phases of service recovery in between closed periods.
- 3.20 No library staff were furloughed and remained fully paid during all periods of library closures. When libraries were closed staff roles changed to enable them to work from home on a combination of activities including developing and supporting Libraries Without Walls by providing online events and activities and digital content. Other tasks included wellness calls to customers, digitising and updating event calendars and developing programmes for reopening. This was combined with back-office tasks on site, eg click and collect, stock maintenance and archiving etc.

LIBRARY WITHOUT WALLS

- 3.21 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 peoples reading habits but has not deterred them from reading.
- 3.22 In the period from March 2020-April 2021, 818 activities were hosted online through Library Without Walls and were attended by 191,000 people which compares favourably to a large branch library. This has added an unexpected dimension to the Library service and has been retained as the 15th Library in the borough.

LIBRARY PROVISION: JANUARY-MARCH 2021

- 3.23 Libraries remained closed in response to another National Lockdown from 4th January. Although Library buildings were closed regulations did allow limited services to be provided based on local circumstances and risk assessments but did not compel them to do so. The updated risk assessments provided by GLL identified high risk levels including the Kent variant and the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Bromley. These factors meant that Click and Collect services could not be safely provided at this time.
- 3.24 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. LWW was expanded to Better at Home programme which was a combination of content from all five GLL Library partnerships.
- 3.25 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 items since lockdown has resulted in increased online issues. 23,750 electronic items were issued during January alone with eNewspapers recording the highest number of issues of any category.
- 3.26 The GLL recovery strategy for Bromley Libraries (Appendix 4) was presented to Members in December 2020 and expands on their existing vision and incorporates the opportunities and development of new services that were offered during this period. Whilst this has been a challenging time, it has provided GLL with a unique and valuable opportunity to modernise Library services in Bromley and identify future development opportunities which are a combination of physical and digital services.

PHYSICAL RECOVERY PHASES

- 3.27 On 8th March 2021 Bromley Libraries opened from 10am – 2pm on normal opening days offering click and collect services initially. This excluded Orpington Library which did not open until 26th April due to building issues outlined in paragraph 8.3 and Central Library which re-opened on 19th March.
- 3.28 After over a year of stop start re-opening and closing libraries, full-service restoration commenced on May 17th 2021 when libraries increased their opening hours to their full pre-pandemic total of 527.5 hours per week. A temporary pattern of opening hours approved by Members in December 2020 was implemented initially for six months with an agreed six-month extension to aid recovery. The number of days each branch is open was not reduced. Some changes were made to the closed days and to some late nights to give customers more choice. Two libraries have extended their opening hours including Central Library which is currently open until 7pm on weekdays offering customers access to study facilities, IT and Business Lounge space.
- 3.29 Before making any permanent changes to the opening hours, GLL will carry out a phased customer and staff consultation in October, December, and February 2022. Early indications show that habits of use have changed since the pandemic and we aim to agree a pattern of opening hours that customers want to increase library membership and use.
- 3.30 At the time of writing libraries are fully open in terms of opening hours and services. This includes no restrictions to number of customers in Library buildings and all furniture restored enabling customers to sit and read once more. Study spaces are fully open with time limits lifted and photocopying, printing and scanning has been fully restored. The People's Network

is also back to normal terms and conditions. Stock is no longer being quarantined and all popular newspaper titles have now been restored supplemented by eNewspapers and magazines. Full lending facilities including inter-library loans have also been restored along with hall hire space.

- 3.31 A phased approach was taken to re-introduce events and activities as soon as restrictions were lifted with online activities still running. Pilot events with small groups ran from June before activities were re-introduced throughout September - see paragraphs 5.7-5.10 - and customers welcomed the opportunity to participate in activities to combat social isolation.
- 3.32 Some temporary changes to the service have been made which will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. This includes a booking system for events to ensure that numbers attending can be managed safely. We expect this system to be lifted by the end of November. Hire fees and charges including fines have not been re-applied to encourage further library use, customers can also borrow 35 items instead of 12 prior to COVID restrictions. Contactless is the preferred payment system though exceptions can be made for customers without this facility.
- 3.33 Bromley Historic Collections (BHC) which covers Local Studies, Archive and Museum Collections has also recovered their full service. During the pandemic the archive and local studies team were able to respond to online requests for information from users and this continues. 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. Face-to-face services re-opened in April 2021 initially with an appointment system.

REVIEW OF CONTRACT PURPOSE

- 3.34 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 available for all. This was fully demonstrated to the DCMS who wrote to all library authorities in the UK requesting a written update of recovery, in response a report was supplied to the DCMS in January outlining our recovery plans and online offer. As follow up the DCMS have sent a second letter asking for restoration plans. The Bromley response fully demonstrated that services have been restored.

REVIEW OF CONTRACTOR'S LEARNING AND MATURITY TARGETS

- 3.35 The contract requires that the learning and maturity targets of the Contractor are constantly reviewed by the Council. A successful phased return to business as usual along with the development of the Library service by GLL outlined in section 6 are the key priorities for the service going forward. The Client Team has identified several areas where the service can be further developed which include Start Up Bromley for businesses and entrepreneurs and Library Without Walls offering 24/7 library services. COVID-19 has presented unique learning and maturity targets within the contract which GLL has developed. Other priorities include the digitisation of the Bromley Historic Collections described in paragraph 5.11. The ongoing modernisation of the library service is ongoing including opportunities to maximise partnership and co-located facilities.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 GLL prioritises the needs of vulnerable adults and children and is committed to developing services for them which was demonstrated during lockdown and as part of service recovery.

Since re-opening Mottingham Library has been confirmed as Bromley's first designated autism-friendly library providing a comfortable space for autistic children and their families.

- 4.2 A Pictures to Share Dementia collection is available in most branches and items can be reserved for collection at the most branch. The books in this collection provide an enjoyable way of maintaining communication with someone who may be hard to reach.
- 4.3 A Library offer for Afghan refugees is being developed by GLL across its portfolio. This includes board book packages for babies and toddlers, books in their languages, and simplified library membership that doesn't require a fixed address (e.g. can be a hotel).
- 4.4 GLL has successfully responded to social issues of loneliness and isolation which has been further brought to light by the pandemic. During lockdown library staff made phone calls to users of the Home Library Service to check in with them and act as a point of contact. The Home Library Service has now been fully restored.
- 4.5 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. Face to face activities for children of all ages have now been re-introduced with a free booking system in place to control numbers.

5. SERVICE PROFILE / DATA ANALYSIS

DIGITAL ISSUES AND VISITS

- 5.1 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. This data will continue to be collected going forward.
- 5.2 In comparison to pre-Covid 2019, issues of digital items such as eBooks, eAudiobooks and eNewspapers increased dramatically and represented a much larger share of total items issues by the library service. In the period January to June 2021, digital issues rose by 243% - over tripled - when compared to the same period in 2019 and increased their share of all items issued in Bromley from 5.5% to 35.6%. Throughout this period in 2021, more items were issued from Library Without Walls than any individual branch maintaining issues when physical libraries were closed or access restricted.

ISSUES AND VISITS: RECOVERY DATA

- 5.3 Overall monthly issues of all types indicate strong recovery of the service. In June 2021, 112,000 items were issued which is an improvement on pre-COVID levels (111,000 issues in June 2019). Smaller branches number among the best-recovering branches, including Shortlands, St Paul's Cray, and Burnt Ash, which greatly exceeded June 2019 issuing levels.
- 5.4 There is currently an improvement of 3% between issues in August 2021 when issues reached 142,000, compared to August 2019 when issues were 138,000. This is a positive trend indicating a strong recovery.
- 5.5 Overall visits have recovered to 50% of their pre-COVID levels which is due to the phased re-introduction of outdoor activities which were piloted in June before the full programme started up in September. The smaller branches are initially recovering better than Central and Orpington which is an indicator that the purpose of their visits is centred around activities.

5.6 GLL provide weekly snapshot data of issues and visits, the most recent visit figures for week beginning 4th October 2021 show a 10% increase on the previous week with visits having reached 68% of pre-COVID visits with a total of 17,476, compared to 25,805 for an average week in 2019/20. This is another sign of a positive recovery now that in person activities have been recovered which is reflected by an upward trend in visits to libraries.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

5.7 At the start of first lockdown in March 2020, Bromley Libraries suspended face-to-face activities in library branches and launched an online programme of events to reach users at home, including pre-recorded videos and live Zoom sessions. Face-to-face activities remained suspended due to the government requirements related to social distancing, but trials to reintroduce activities in-branch began in June with outdoor events such as the Wildlife Garden hunts at Shortlands Library. As of September, libraries run a regular timetable of activities indoors but require users to book places ahead of time.

5.8 As part of their 'Library Without Walls' programme, library staff offered a regular timetable of pre-recorded and live video events on Facebook, themed podcasts, virtual reading groups, and school class visits over Zoom. In January alone, 16 Baby Bounce, Sing and Sign, and Storytelling sessions attracted over 4,500 participants. 22 adult and teenage reading groups were conducted every month over Zoom, allowing library users to continue connecting with others with a shared interest. Individual branches also ran or participated in local events, such as Chislehurst's Social Saturday Quiz and the Orpington Literary Festival.

5.9 GLL's 'Better at Home' national programme was benefited from their connections with their other library and leisure partnerships to share video activities and events online on Facebook at weekends, including a weekly Family Quiz with maths expert and library champion Bobby Seagull, regular Meet the Author or Illustrator events, and wellbeing activities such as yoga and Pilates. This programme produced over 100 videos between January and June and reached over 9,800 views in total. This is in addition to continuing to allow library card holders access to over 1,000 on-demand workout and exercise videos from their Virtual Classes catalogue.

5.10 Prior to COVID-19 some attendance statistics for events for both adults and children had been provided. This data is now being collected again now that activities have been restored and will be provided in the next contract review report.

BROMLEY HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

5.11 The digitisation of archived information to improve accessibility is an increased priority for the Service, BHC has a strong team of volunteers who are assisting with this task. The Bromley Borough Local History Society digitisation project has been progressing as planned, with the six volunteers making progress with this work providing collectively twelve hours of support each week. The archivist is editing and uploading this material into Preservica.

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. All 18,884 entries have been checked and 12,275 have been updated with known object locations. In order to resolve the remaining entries, the Earth Museum team have now undertaken four visits to the museum store to work with the curator on the location audit. In between visits the curator and the Earth Museum team have been prioritising updating location and description data and resolving issues such as duplicate accession numbers and accessioned items, with a target of 1,600 entries per week. The Museum Collections Management System CALM has been updated to the latest version of CalmView. The public Catalogue has vastly improved, specifically the ability to open images.

6. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE

6.1 The Libraries contract 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 in paragraph 3.35 maturity targets. Section 5 above demonstrates that improvement in performance has been met. Plans for ongoing improvements in performance are detailed below in paragraphs 6.2- 6.13.

GAINING ADDED VALUE

6.2 Public libraries are uniquely placed to make a difference to their local communities. In all stages of the current crisis Bromley Libraries have demonstrated that libraries do not just provide books but offer services that can provide support during unemployment, mental health issues and a respite from loneliness and isolation. Post-pandemic, along with many UK authorities, GLL is taking the opportunity to identify new areas for development with positive outcomes, supporting economic recovery and positive wellbeing which is detailed in their recovery strategy which was set out to Members in December 2020.

6.3 There is scope for the Council to gain added value from the libraries GLL operate by increasing the scope of services and/or building usage. There is an opportunity for co-location of services in library buildings providing space for other local authority and community partners and potentially also generating income or reducing expenditure. There is scope for libraries to be used on closed days by other services.

6.4 A key area for development post COVID is the greater need for job seeking, business and career support which the contract is delivering through the Start Up Bromley scheme- see paragraphs below. Libraries in Bromley are highly accessible, evenly distributed across the Borough. For residents who are struggling to apply for jobs, our libraries can be a game-changer, providing free access to books and technology, supporting customers to engage with professional networks, or gain new skills during this time. Libraries in Bromley can also offer free access to a host of learning opportunities through virtual programmes.

START UP BROMLEY

6.5 Start Up Bromley is a free membership programme, managed by GLL, the Council's Library operator, in partnership with the Business and IP Centre Network at the British Library, offering specialist facilities and support in town Centre spaces for entrepreneurs and new business owners. Libraries are ideally located across the Borough to support the business community as the local economy continues to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

6.6 An initial £216k investment provided state of the art IT equipment and sound proofed office and meeting spaces in Bromley Central and Orpington libraries. The one-year programme has been funded by the Council's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which is provided by Central Government and can be used to provide financial support to local businesses through grants and business support functions. Additional ARG funding of £40k was secured to refurbish a new business space at Biggin Hill library previously used as community and office space by Mytime.

6.7 The project launched in May 2021 with mainly online content due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions. The Bromley Central library business facilities officially launched in June with a programme of webinars, workshops and access to one-to-one consultations with the Start Up Bromley Business Support Manager. As well as the business lounge, the Central library has a workshop room and meeting rooms which can be booked for free by Start Up Bromley

members. A second business lounge was launched in Orpington library in July and a third opened in Biggin Hill library in October 2021. A roving service will also operate from the Borough's other libraries including Penge, Beckenham and Chislehurst. The business facilities are accessible by any new business owners across the Borough. Additional ARG funding totalling £96K has been allocated to provide a mentoring scheme for business owners and support from business professionals.

- 6.8 Members of Start Up Bromley have access to a free programme of workshops focussing on areas where new business owners may need support such as accountancy, sales and marketing, web design and intellectual property. The scheme has been operating for six months and has exceeded targets for numbers of registered members. There are currently 95 registered members who are actively attending workshops, productivity forums and scheduled networking events. The Start Up Bromley team have delivered over 30 hours of one-to-one business support a figure which increases daily. An active community is also growing around the scheme made up of Bromley councillors, members of the Economic Partnership, the BID Task Force, and representatives from large organisations such as banks, educational institutions, and private business networking groups.
- 6.9 The success of the project will be measured at the end of the project by a set of KPIs as set out in Appendix 5. As of September 2021, no KPI failures have occurred. Both the Client Team and the Economic Development Team are involved in the monitoring of this project and meet regularly with GLL for updates and performance reports. A report will be written when the project concludes. In compliance with the contract requirements a Change Control Notice (CCN) was completed in order to vary the contract price and allocate the ARG funds to GLL.

BROMLEY HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

- 6.10 The Service Accreditation Renewal Application report was completed and submitted in early August, with the outcome due to be returned this autumn. Before submission, a review meeting took place with the National Archives liaison Officer to review a draft, no major concerns were raised, and we expect accreditation to be awarded.
- 6.11 The Museum Collection was awarded temporary accreditation during the first lockdown pending full accreditation which was suspended due to the Lockdown. It is anticipated that this process will re-commence before the next contract review meeting.
- 6.12 Recovery Grants: As part of the museum's recovery grant application a meeting was held with London Museum's Development Team for a guided organisational health check. A report is being generated from this and will be submitted as part of the grant application for BHC which will focus on securing funding for audience development activities.
- 6.13 Online resources are being developed to accompany school loan boxes such as the Roman Loan box. This resource will be available in October for schools to test out with the aim of gathering feedback and to establish the feasibility of expanding the digital offering to accompany the other loan boxes.

7. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN VALUE FOR MONEY

- 7.1 As part of its tender position GLL proposed a three-year strategy to review the staffing model it inherited. This has now been completed and all four phases of recovery complete. The final stage involved changing work patterns to fit customer needs to coincide with the implementation of the temporary opening hours.
- 7.2 ARG funding has enabled Start Up Bromley Spaces to be provided in three libraries in Bromley as detailed in paragraphs 6.5-6.9. Once the project funding ends on 31st March 2022, GLL intend to continue to fund and deliver this service demonstrating further value for money.

STOCK PURCHASING

- 7.3 In compliance with KPI 22 relating to stock purchasing, the stock fund budget remains at £450k per annum, this was fully committed by the Councils 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. Appendix 6 provides a summary of the current stock spend up to September 2021.
- 7.4 A stock plan setting out the allocation of stock spend for the current financial was submitted by GLL. Due to the increased demand for eBooks during the pandemic there has been an increase in the proportion of annual funding of published items which covers the annual support and content credit for the eBook, eAudio and eMagazine and newspaper offer. The £55,900 allocation for eBooks represents 12.4% of the stock fund. The investment has been justified with latest statistics which show that. E-issues increased to represent 40.1% of all issued items in 2020/21.
- 7.5 As part of stock development plan GLL continues to add special collections including access to books in a variety of formats and languages, GLL has expanded this to include the popular Custom Eyes collection for children. Titles in the collection are wide ranging from fiction to textbooks. They are custom made in an A4 format with varied font size and spacing to make reading more accessible for children with visual impairments. The collection is available at most libraries or titles can be reserved free of charge.
- 7.6 Other special collections available include 'Reading Well' - a collection of books made available to public libraries by The Reading Agency with funding from the DCMS to help people understand and manage their health and wellbeing. There are three collections - one for adults, children and teenagers available in every library.

MODERN LIBRARY BUILDINGS

- 7.7 Modern Library buildings provide so much more than books. They are social spaces, where people come together to meet each other. This was demonstrated by their absence during COVID-19 as despite accessing books and activities online, customers were keen to get back into Library buildings to access study space, IT provision and access to workspace for those working at home. New libraries can offer purpose-built enhanced provision to meet the post COVID needs of customers.
- 7.8 As detailed in the March 2021 report there are currently two 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.

BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

- 7.9 GLL continues 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.
- 7.10 In the period between June-October 2021, three Start Up Bromley Business Lounges were installed at Central, Orpington and Biggin Hill Libraries as described in paragraphs 6.5-6.9. This exciting new Start Up Bromley scheme has added a new dimension to the services provided by Bromley Libraries to reach a new audience.

7.11 Minor refurbishments have taken place at other libraries over the last nine months including the installation of a sensory area within the Children’s Library at Orpington Library which is now open to customers. Work to replace the front doors at the Central library is also underway.

7.12 Hayes Library has recently undergone internal decoration to improve the appearance of the Library. This includes new furniture in the library and improved staff areas.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

7.13 Other service improvements include a new booking system for public PCs, iCAM, which has been introduced, replacing the previous Netloan system. The new system is set up to enable customers to either book themselves on computers or book ahead through staff. Other benefits include the integration with Web Print/ WiFi printing using existing multifunctional printers in the library, so customers can prepay as well as print from their personal devices. As all other GLL Library Partnerships use iCAM, IT support is better integrated when troubleshooting is required. Computer usage is increasing as more customers return and new customers join the service.

8. USER / STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

COMPLAINTS

8.1 The total number of complaints received about the Library service in the six-month period January to June 2021 was 5, down from 12 in the previous six months. 4 were received by LBB and passed to GLL, and 1 received directly by GLL. For the range of services being provided by a customer-facing service, the number of complaints is relatively low which is an indication that a good service is being provided and that the customer’s areas of dissatisfaction are being resolved, therefore preventing unnecessary complaints.

8.2 At the request of Members these have been provided in a format showing the top complaint themes as detailed below. Of the 5 reported complaints, one related to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and on the library service. Whilst we would prefer not to receive any service-related complaints, we recognise that complaints offer valuable feedback and welcome the opportunity to improve and respond.

Table 1: Summary of all complaints received January – June 2021

Complaint Theme	Number of Complaints	Library Locations
Received by LBB		
1 - Late reopening of Orpington due to maintenance issues	2 Complaints	2 x Orpington
2 - Smashed external window	1 Complaint	1 x Biggin Hill
3 - External roof protection hanging and causing potential hazard	1 Complaint	1 x Penge
Received by GLL		
4 - Soft play area at Central not reopened at same time as the rest of the library	1 Complaint	1 x Central

8.3 Two of the complaints received were related to the Orpington branch remaining closed until 26th April after most other libraries opened on 8th March. Orpington Library could not be opened to the public during this period due to multiple facilities issues including problems with the heating and plumbing, broken lift, and rodents. Both complaints received full responses.

- 8.4 Two further complaints related to external damage to buildings in January. At Biggin Hill Library and Pool, the external window facing the main road was found to be smashed but did not pose a security issue after inspection. At Penge Library, roof protection on the shared building was visibly hanging and posed a health and safety issue to passers-by. In both instances, the Council alerted the appropriate parties to these issues for resolution.
- 8.5 The final complaint enquired about the soft play area within Central Library remaining closed while other services had resumed. Due to government guidelines related to COVID and the nature of use of the soft play equipment, the library was unable to offer the play area for use. GLL responded to the complainant to explain this.

ANNUAL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

- 8.6 The 2020 annual customer survey was postponed further due to ongoing restrictions. However, the 2021 survey is now underway online for a six-month period, having launched on 5th October. This survey has been revised to include questions which ask customers about their experiences of using online library services during lockdown including what they would like to be retained. This invaluable feedback will enable GLL to review and improve the services they offer in the future an analysis of findings will be provided in the next contract review.

CONSULTATION

- 8.7 The temporary opening hours set out in section 3.28, were initially introduced for a period of six months from May 2021 these will be extended further for a final six months during which GLL will fully consult with staff and customers to allow them to give their views on the opening hours provided by Bromley Libraries currently, pre-pandemic, and for the future. To allow for maximum participation the consultation will take place in three stages within the period from October 2021 to March 2022 and will consist of focus groups which will be evaluated. GLL will present their findings to the Council along with recommendations for permanent opening hours which will be presented to Members in the next Committee report in May 2022.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 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. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The annual cost of the library services contract is met from the Library Service controllable revenue budget for 2021/22 of £4.684m.
- 10.2 Additional Restrictions Grant of £352k was been allocated for the Start Up Bromley schemes to be operated by GLL for 12 months from 1st April 2021. Any extension of this programme will be funded by GLL.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 In line with paragraph 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. The contract is compliant with this process.

12. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

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.

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