

**Decision Maker:** PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING

**Date:** For pre-decision scrutiny by the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee on 14 June 2022

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

**Title:** PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES-CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT & POST COVID OPENING HOURS

**Contact Officer:** Paula Young, Head of Service, Culture  
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**Chief Officer:** Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration

**Ward:** All Wards

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1. Reason for decision/report and options

- 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) relating to the provision of the Library Service 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 November 2021 which includes periods of disruption due to COVID-19 and subsequent recovery and a return to business as usual.
- 1.3 As part of post COVID-19 service recovery, GLL implemented a temporary remodelled pattern of opening hours which meet the contract total of 527.5 hours. These hours are deemed to better fit local need and GLL would like to permanently retain them.
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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 provide comments and/or recommendations to the Portfolio Holder.
- 2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation & Housing Policy, Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- a. Review the report and to note the performance of the service provider since the last report on service performance was presented in November 2021.
  - b. To agree to the temporary opening hours being agreed permanently as set out in paragraphs 3.23-3.27 and Appendix 2

## 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.
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## Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
  2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (delete as appropriate):
    - (1) For children and young People to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
    - (2) For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
    - (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost:
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Libraries
  4. Total current budget for this head: £4.68m
  5. Source of funding: Revenue budget 2021/22
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## 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
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement: 1964 Public Libraries Act
  3. Call-in: Applicable
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## Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: None
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## Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: None
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## Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: Working with GLL, our libraries' contractor we have sought to "reduce, reuse and recycle". Biodegradable library cards have been introduced. Other changes include the cleaning company moving to a 'green regime' by selecting environmentally friendly cleaning products. The recent refurbishment of the Central Library gave

GLL the opportunity to work towards an eco-refit and to ensure that the library was as sustainable as possible which will be replicated in future building projects:

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#### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): A 2020 estimate identified that 332,752 people live in the London Borough of Bromley. 24,016 registered users used their library card to borrow an item in a library branch in 2021, 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.
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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

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1. This report provides an analysis of the performance of Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) relating to the delivery of the Library Services through this contract. Performance data included is for Quarter 2 July - September and Quarter 3 October - December and 2021 whilst commentary covers a longer period until March 2022.
- 3.2 The GLL Libraries contract commenced on 1st November 2017 and is now in 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 November 2021.
- 3.3 The library services managed by GLL include:
- The Frontline/Operational/Virtual Library service
  - Strategic Management Specialist and Support Functions
  - Bromley Historic Collections
  - Facilities Management including cleaning and security

#### MEASURING 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. A quarterly KPI reporting system is also in place. Since the previous monitoring period, any KPIs that had been suspended due to COVID have now been reinstated.
- 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

#### IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PERFORMANCE

- 3.6. There were fourteen KPI breaches in the period between July-December which amounted to a total of 490 performance adjustment (PA) points for which the financial value would be £19,300. No monitoring notices requesting further information were issued by the Client Team in this period.
- 3.7. Thirteen KPI incidents related to opening hours of library branches and of this number, eleven were as a result of COVID related staff sickness which required additional staff to travel to other library locations or for the building to be fogged and deep cleaned for the safety of staff and customers.
- 3.8. The remaining two building closures were due to force majeure incidents, namely a gas leak at Shortlands library which required evacuation of the building and an incident of antisocial behaviour at Biggin Hill Library which required Police intervention. The final incident related to Wi-Fi becoming unavailable as a result of a third-party supplier fault.

#### MITIGATION

- 3.9. The Client accepted the mitigation relating to the COVID related incidents and noted the efforts made by GLL to find replacement staff within 30 minutes to minimise disruption. The anti-social behaviour at Biggin Hill has been an ongoing issue requiring the Council to work with GLL and

the Leisure Provider to provide a long-term security solution to prevent future closures. The mitigation for the Wi-Fi outage was also accepted. Therefore, no financial penalties were applied during this monitoring period.

## BENEFITS AND QUALITY

- 3.10. The commissioning of the Library Service was carried out with the goal of maintaining 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. Throughout the contract term GLL has demonstrated that it is in the main successfully managing the service whilst keeping Council's costs down. Taking this approach has enabled Bromley Council to retain a high-quality library service whilst avoiding more extreme service reduction measures those other authorities have taken.
- 3.11. GLL remains the UK's largest provider of Library Services which has ongoing benefits for Bromley. During the pandemic the contract benefited from the leadership of the GLL National Director of Libraries. During the first Lockdown in March 2020 GLL had the resources to quickly develop Library Without Walls (LWW) a high-quality online offer. This developed further throughout the pandemic including 'Better at Home' a national programme of virtual events through a collaboration between all five GLL Library partnerships. Due to their previous experience in delivering the Start up in London Libraries (SILL) programme in other partnerships GLL were able to successfully launch Start Up Bromley in a short timescale - see paragraphs 6.12 - 6.14.

## MONITORING AND QUALITY CONTROL

- 3.12. The Libraries Client Team continues to demonstrate that it can successfully manage, monitor, and oversee development of the contract on an ongoing basis. The successful performance of the service during COVID-19 recovery and business as usual phases has required a collaborative approach between the Contractor and Client Team.
- 3.13. Contract milestones relating to monitoring and service planning have been fully met during this monitoring period. All monthly contract review meetings along with other milestone meetings have taken place remotely during the pandemic and remain online. This will be reviewed and face to face meetings resumed as appropriate.
- 3.14. Regular unannounced spot checks on all libraries made by the Client team have been reinstated following the easing of COVID measures to ensure that the required standards are being met. This is defined by a checklist which monitors service standards at each library. Categories which are reviewed regularly include environment and appearance of the library, quality of stock, staffing levels, and IT equipment which includes public PCs and self-service kiosks. Findings and observations are documented, and issues identified are cross-checked against GLL incident reports to ensure they have been reported to the Council. Any findings which require any further explanation are raised at the monthly Client review meetings.

## RISK

- 3.15. The main operational risk to this contract relates to force majeure. The enforced closures of all libraries to control the spread of COVID-19 are examples of this. At all stages of lockdown GLL has been pro-active in recovering library services and re-opened library buildings as soon as possible, ahead of other London boroughs. Both GLL and the Council continue to monitor and update their risk registers to include the impact of new force majeure incidents.
- 3.16. Additional operational risk relates to keeping libraries open during industrial action. GLL has shown on two separate occasions within the contract term that they have been able to withstand the risk of library closures during industrial action. GLL meet regularly with Unions to give both

sides the opportunity to discuss and resolve any issues within this forum before it escalates. The Client Team also engage in open dialogue with Unions.

3.17. The contract risk register has been further updated to include the operational risk attached to the condition of library buildings which has resulted in unplanned closures. 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 resulting from the ongoing building review.

#### PROVISION/DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICE: COVID 19

3.18. The Service provided by this contract has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic. Since March 2020 library branches have either been fully or partially closed or offering reduced services to limit the spread of infection. The management fee has been paid in full throughout this period as innovative high-quality services were provided online during all lockdown periods, and during phases of service recovery as set out in paragraph 3.19 below.

#### LIBRARY WITHOUT WALLS (LWW)

3.19. In response to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, GLL expanded their digital offer, branded as Library Without Walls (LWW), to massively enhance the range of eBooks and eAudiobooks available to users on their personal devices, run a regular timetable of video-based and virtual interactive events on Facebook, and introduce the Newsreader service for eNewspapers and eMagazines. In the present day, online reading and listening materials remain popular and convenient among library users, and virtual and hybrid events supplement the reintroduced activities within library branches. This has been a hugely successful initiative and has added to the quality of the library service offer.

3.20. In the period covered by this report, libraries were fully open to their agreed opening hours apart from one period between 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 due to the rise in the Omicron variant. During this period branches switched to a 'click and collect' service which was supplemented by Library Without Walls. This period included the scheduled Christmas bank holiday closure of libraries, normal service was resumed from 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

#### TRANSITION TO PRE-COVID SERVICE - JULY - DECEMBER 2021

3.21. At the time of writing libraries are fully open in terms of opening hours with full services now available. There are no restrictions to the number of customers in Library buildings, with all furniture restored enabling customers to sit and read once more which has been welcomed. Study spaces are fully open with time limits lifted and photocopying, printing and scanning fully restored. The Peoples Network is also back to normal terms and conditions. A new booking system ICAM has been introduced to enable customers to either book themselves onto computers rather than booking ahead with staff. Computer use is increasing as more customers return to the service.

3.22. Full lending facilities including inter-library loans have been restored. Stock is no longer being quarantined and all popular newspaper titles have been restored supplemented by eNewspapers and magazines. 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. Hall hire space is available once more, cash payments have been restored alongside the contactless payment system. A phased approach was taken to safely re-introduce face to face activities and events as set out in paragraph 5.6.

## OPENING HOURS

- 3.23. Apart from the period described above from 22<sup>nd</sup> December - 10<sup>th</sup> January, libraries have remained fully open during the period covered by this report. After over a year of significant service disruption full-service restoration commenced on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, when libraries increased their opening hours to their full pre-pandemic total of 527.5 hours per week. Some changes were made to the closed days and to some late nights to give customers more choice.
- 3.24. In December 2019 the Portfolio Holder agreed a temporary pattern of opening hours initially for a six-month period with a further six-month extension option which was implemented by GLL. Before making the changes permanent, GLL were required to undertake consultation with both customers and staff on whether to revert to pre pandemic opening hours or to retain the current hours with key suggestions resulting from the consultation. Headlines of the consultation are further set out in section 8.
- 3.25. To make a permanent change to opening hours, the contract terms require the Change Control procedure to be followed. This must clearly set out the change of circumstances which has led to the service change which in this case is COVID-19 recovery. The service specification further states that changes to opening hours will require a full Equalities Impact Assessment, Needs Assessment, and Consultation which is produced by the Service Provider and agreed by the Client Team. GLL is fully compliant with all stages of the Change Control processes.
- 3.26. Members are asked to support the recommendations set out in Appendix 2 to make permanent the temporary opening hours with two adaptations resulting from consultation findings. The late night at Mottingham Library will change from Monday to Wednesday to further spread coverage. The closed day at Hayes library will move from Thursday to Friday. The total number of opening hours across the borough has not changed and remains at 527.5 hours per week which is the agreed total as set out within the contract.
- 3.27. The temporary opening hours have proved popular with customers as they have resulted in improved access at many libraries including five late nights until 7pm at Central Library which have been of great benefit to students and Business Lounge users. Other benefits include Penge Library which is open six days each week further increasing access to cash payments through the Council Tax kiosk. Late nights have been spread across the borough Southborough and Petts Wood libraries now have different closed days which benefit customers given their proximity.

## INCREASED PERFORMANCE

- 3.28. 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 early-COVID 2020-21 period, initial CIPFA reports indicate Bromley's library service as having the highest total annual issues of items among the 20 Outer London boroughs (for the second year in a row) and the second highest visits to libraries. This shows that Bromley was able to maintain its dominant service levels in comparison to other boroughs despite the impact of the pandemic.
- 3.29. Despite lockdown causing overall library issues to fall to half of normal levels in 2020/21, issues of digital items jumped +155% annually representing 40% of all issues. Digital issue levels have remained at a consistent issuing level through 2021/22 even as non-digital issues regain their popularity once again. See section 5.2 for additional data of the six-month period covered by this report.

## REVIEW OF CONTRACTOR PURPOSE

3.30. 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 set out in the 1964 Public Libraries Act. Library provision in Bromley continues to fulfil this duty including during COVID-19 as online library services including eltems were fully available for all. This was 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 in January outlining our recovery plans and online offer. As follow up the DCMS then sent a second letter asking for restoration plans. The Bromley response fully demonstrated that services have been restored and that plans are in place to further develop the library service to meet changing customer need following the pandemic.

## REVIEW OF CONTRACTORS LEARNING AND MATURITY TARGETS

3.31. The contract requires that the learning and maturity targets of the contractor are reviewed by the Council on an ongoing basis to ensure value for money and continuous high service standards. Since the last report in November 2021, GLL have returned to full business as usual model for all libraries which includes activities and events along with ongoing development of the library service. This is fully outlined in section 6 which sets out the current key priorities for the service going forward. The Client Team has asked GLL to prioritise further develop the Home Library Service to increase membership and link in with the Councils Loneliness Strategy. The Council has also asked GLL to develop and deliver a programme of Cultural events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

## 4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

4.1 GLL prioritises the needs of vulnerable adults and children and is committed to delivering services for them which was demonstrated both during lockdown and during all phases of service recovery.

4.2 Since September 2021, as national Covid restrictions were reduced, face-to-face activities were restored across the service connecting library users through reading groups, baby bounce and rhyme, craft sessions, social Saturdays, and other community activities. The importance of these activities to all age groups remains a priority for the library service with the aim of combatting social isolation and supporting the Council's loneliness strategy.

4.3 Mottingham library are trialling a fun interactive fitness technology resulting from a successful funding bid for funding from London Sport Tackling Inequality Fund (TIF). The technology aims to improve health outcomes and tackle higher than average levels of obesity in the community in a fun and engaging way. Fixed to the ceiling, the gaming console projects interactive games on to the floor or a table. The equipment has been selected because of its ability to engage children in physical activity, however it can also be used by other community groups that work with senior citizens to support a more active lifestyle as well as supporting the prevention of illnesses such as dementia. It also encourages increased social interaction and confidence after lockdown stages. Sessions have been running since February with 127 children and 26 adults attending. The gaming console has attracted new families into the building who have become library members.

4.4 A Library offer for refugees has been developed by GLL across its portfolio. This includes books in their languages for all ages, and simplified library membership that doesn't require a fixed address (e.g. can be a hotel). For recent Ukrainian refugees, GLL are supporting the Council including making libraries available to the 'Room to Zoom' campaign which launched in May 2022. This provides private spaces for people who need to sit job interviews or contact family. GLL in partnership with the Council are also hosting fortnightly coffee mornings for Ukranian refugees and sponsors, the first was on the 7<sup>th</sup> May with 170 attendees.

4.5 The Home Library Service has now been fully restored and the service is offered to those living at home and care home residents. Library staff continue to make phone calls to members taking



part in the Reading Friends scheme which aims to reduce loneliness in the community through reading and social connection.

## **5. SERVICE PROFILE/DATA ANALYSIS**

### **DIGITAL ISSUES**

- 5.1 Prior to the pandemic, 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 had added a new suite of measurable performance statistics including Facebook page videos and posts. Now that libraries are largely running as business-as-usual, the previous statistics have become the primary measures once again, although it should be noted that usage habits of the service have changed for library users, as has been observed nationally.
- 5.2 Comparing the Jul to Dec period for 2019 (pre-COVID) to 2021, 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. Comparing these periods, issues of digital items increased by 164% (more than doubling its popularity), and the share of issued items increased its share from 6.2% to 15.6% of all items issued in Bromley. During this period in 2021, Library Without Walls positioned itself as the second most-issuing library in Bromley, after Central Library.

### **ISSUES & VISITS-RECOVERY DATA**

- 5.3 Overall monthly issues of all types indicate recovery of the service beyond 2019 levels. In the July to Dec 2021 period, 762,000 items were issued cross the service – a 5% increase against 2019 for the same months (726,000). Smaller branches number among the best-recovering branches, including Shortlands and Burnt Ash libraries, which exceeded their 2019 levels by 21% and 13% respectively
- 5.4 In the latest quarter Jan to Mar 2022, there is provisionally an improvement of 2% between issues in 2022 compared to 2019. National statistics show that the average library service in England is only reaching pre-COVID issue levels from March 2022, whereas Bromley has been consistently achieving this since Sep 2021, showcasing Bromley's rapid recovery.
- 5.5 Overall visits have recovered to 60% of their pre-COVID levels – an improvement of 10% on the previous reporting period - which is due to the phased re-introduction of events and activities in branches. To compare, 50% recovery of footfall has been observed in library services nationally in the same period. Events were piloted in Bromley in June before the full programme was returned to in September – earlier than the majority of other library services in England. 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. While visitor levels remain low compared to pre-COVID, Bromley remains ahead-of-the-curve nationally, showing adaptation to the changing needs and expectations of the public for a library service.

### **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS**

- 5.6 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 pilots to reintroduce activities in-branch began in June 2021 with outdoor events such as the Wildlife Garden hunts at Shortlands Library. By September, a full activities programme was reintroduced, with booking required to manage attendee numbers. This requirement was removed at the end of January 2022 to coincide with the removal of 'Plan B' COVID restrictions.

- 5.7 The activities programme contains activities focussed at either children or adult age groups. The children's programme ran over 750 events with 12,900 attendees between July and December, which includes regular activities such as Baby Rhyme Time, Story Time, Books Aloud, Lego Club, and Craft Club. One-off events are also held including class visits, author events, puppet shows, and holiday-themed events. The regular adult programme includes Coffee Morning, Social Saturdays, Craft sessions and Tea and Topics, totalling 290 adult events with 2,350 attendees. Teenage and Adult reading groups meet in branches with around 300 participants monthly.
- 5.8 The annual Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) took place between July and September 2021 with the 'Wild World Heroes' theme, with a focus on environmental awareness and greener living. A hybrid approach was adopted this year, with SRC packs being given out, plus weekly craft packs at each library, and 'conversation starters about the books' for parents so that the challenge could be done at home as well as through libraries. Library staff reached schools through virtual assemblies resulting in over 5,200 children participating, with 2,300 completing the challenge this year, nearing pre-pandemic levels. Next year it is intended to reintroduce the young volunteer programme where children taking the challenge get to discuss the books with older teenagers.
- 5.9 As part of their calendar of large-scale events GLL also delivered events for Black History Month in October 2021 and World Book Day in March 2022. Bromley Libraries also recently participated in The Spine Festival which launched on 3rd March and ran until 31st March 2022. The theme this year was Kindness and performers worked to engage children and young people from schools by delivering a wide range of activities and performances at libraries across the Borough. Highlights included a theatre show for primary school children by Half Moon Theatre and Telling Tales Workshop by Apples and Snakes.
- 5.10 During the pandemic, the library service offered online events and videos as part of the 'Library Without Walls' programme. The offer included video versions of children's activities described above, live author events on Facebook, themed podcasts, virtual reading groups, and school class visits over Zoom. While the focus of the activities programme has now shifted to in-branch activities, a reduced offer is still provided online with a mixture of videos led by Bromley staff and by GLL's other library partnerships which include popular weekly Rhyme Time sessions. Additional video content was produced to celebrate Christmas, and during periods where library locations were closed due to COVID surges.

## BROMLEY HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

- 5.11 In November 2021 the accreditation of Bromley Archive Service was renewed following a successful application. In March 2022, the Museum Collection also received full accreditation from Arts Council England having previously had temporary accreditation status during national lockdowns whilst the accreditation process was suspended.
- 5.12 Face-to-face activities at Bromley Historic Collections have fully resumed, there have been school visits and more bookings for the loan boxes. Online resources have been developed to accompany the popular school loan boxes such as the Roman Loan box. In October 2021 these were available 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.
- 5.13 The Calm data cleansing project to update individual museum catalogue records to improve accessibility was concluded in December 2021. The Earth Museum worked with the curator on a location audit at the museum to ensure location and description data has been updated and resolved issues such as duplicate accession numbers.
- 5.14 In September 2021, Bromley Historic Collections secured a small grant from Art Fund and Museum Development London to undertake Audience Development Research. This work was undertaken by The Earth Museum / Revels Office and consisted of a day of surveying the public

in three locations (Bromley Central Library / The Glades / The Churchill Theatre). The work concluded at the end of March and an accompanying report of findings and recommendations was received to inform ongoing development work. These findings have had a direct effect on improved marketing of exhibitions.

5.15 In April 2022, the Bromley Historic Collection showcased the work of artist Gram Hilleard in an exhibition, Escaping in Suburbia. The art works were displayed alongside objects and ephemera from the artist himself and from the Memory Museum. Following the results of the audience development work, the marketing for this exhibition was more targeted attracting an alternative demographic coming into the library and engaging with the display. The artist remained in residence for the duration of the exhibition run and received more than 350 visitors over one week.

## **6. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENT 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 3.30 maturity targets. Section 5 above provides examples of the strong performance of the service during the monitoring period. Plans for ongoing improvements in performance are detailed below in paragraphs 6.2- 6.17.

6.2 GLL have recently begun undertaking a project to redesign their 'Better' website which represents their online information hub for all their library and leisure partnerships. The project will be 'libraries-first' with initial publication of libraries pages expected in the late Summer 2022. The new design will focus on modernising and future-proofing the website, including ensuring it is optimised for mobile devices, enhancing data-led systems and displaying information appropriately, and ensuring key stakeholders are involved throughout the process.

### **FURTHER ADDED VALUE**

6.3 As libraries are a statutory service, there is scope for the Council to gain added value from the libraries GLL operate by increasing the range of services and/or building usage. This includes opportunities 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 further scope for libraries to be used on closed times/days by other services.

### **REDUCING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION**

6.4 Public libraries are uniquely placed to make a difference to their local communities. Prior to the pandemic, libraries were at the forefront of great work to bring people together. In all stages of the pandemic Bromley Libraries have demonstrated that libraries do not just provide books but also offer services that 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.

6.5 As demonstrated throughout this report libraries deliver a wide range of activities for all ages which bring people together and combat loneliness. These link into the Council's Loneliness Strategy which adds further value to the service. Both GLL and the Libraries Client Team took part in workshops for the Loneliness Strategy, and it underpins the annual service plans relating to reader development.

6.6 Our libraries are positioned to bring people together for social interaction by offering free opportunities to the community to learn new skills and make friends. Many examples are set out in sections 4 and 5 of this report. Further examples include the Social Saturday Group at Chislehurst Library which brings older people together on Saturday mornings to chat over tea and

biscuits with puzzles, board games and quizzes available too. Baby Bounce and Rhyme sessions at all our libraries are invaluable for new parents wanting to make friends with a shared experience. Having moved online during the pandemic these activities are now back in person and well received by customers. Start Up Bromley has given a platform for Start Up businesses to come together and create a unique supportive network

## PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

- 6.7 As part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Bromley, GLL is delivering a programme of Cultural events at all libraries which commenced in April and are running until the Jubilee weekend in June. The programme includes some activities provided as part of the contract which are set out in paragraphs 6.8-6.9. Activities provided by other funding streams are set out in paragraphs 6.10-6.11. A full update including numbers attending will be given in the next contract review report.
- 6.8 Staff at all libraries have developed a creative range of children's events which include a puppet show, a variety of craft activities ranging from crown creation and bunting design sessions to Jubilee Lego clubs building castles and palaces. Other highlights for children include Fairy Tale Castle and Queens Corgis treasure hunt sessions. Toddler time and bounce and rhyme sessions are Jubilee themed with parents encouraged to bring their babies dressed in Jubilee colours.
- 6.9 Upcoming highlights for adults include Reminiscence Coffee Mornings at Central Library where those attending can share memories of past coronations, jubilees, and other royal events. "A Majestic Meander" – an illustrated Virtual Walk from St Martin in the fields to Buckingham Palace will take place at Mottingham Library. Plant swaps which exchange of seedlings and plants are taking place at several libraries along with a floristry demonstration at West Wickham Library where people can come along and learn how to create Jubilee floral displays and arrangements.
- 6.10 The #EveryoneaRoyal programme went live on Monday 25th April and runs until 6th June 2022. All children in Bromley have been invited to design a portrait of themselves as a Royal. All entries will be displayed in The Glades Shopping Centre for the whole community to enjoy in June and July. To complement the portrait challenge, a programme of illustrator events partly funded from the Council's Jubilee budget and match funded by GLL have taken place giving local schoolchildren the chance to work with illustrators. Match funded music and song writing workshops with Arts Train have also taken place at some libraries for young people who don't usually get the opportunity to participate in such a wide range of cultural events.
- 6.11 As part of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) cultural grant phase, GLL was successful in a grant to deliver a poet/writer in residence programme for a Jubilee legacy project for Bromley. Lemn Sissay, the Poet in residence at the London 2012 Olympics, will deliver this project. With a focus on Children looked after, Lemn will work with children and young people in July to create a legacy of poetry. Lemn will also stage a series of public performances across the Borough which began on 19<sup>th</sup> May with a performance at the Orpington Literacy festival. The project will culminate with a Showcase performance on National Poetry Day on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2022.

## START UP BROMLEY

- 6.12 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. The one-year programme has been funded by the Council's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which is provided by Central Government and used to provide financial support to local businesses through grants and business support functions. The scheme launched in May 2021 establishing three business centres with sound-proofed office and meeting spaces in Bromley Central, Orpington and Biggin Hill libraries.

6.13 The Start Up Bromley programme has attracted more than 270 members to date who have regularly attended workshops, business consultations and networking events. The programme has also been supported by an active business community across the Borough. In January 2022 a mentoring scheme was launched with one-to-one support for members from business coaches. Towards the end of the project in March 2022, Start Up Bromley delivered the Bromley Business Week programme, including hosting the Business Panel discussion moderated by Emily Maitlis, talks from industry professionals, a pitch competition, and a Spring showcase event where members were able to demonstrate the range of their businesses to the public.

6.14 The success of the Start Up Bromley project was measured quantitatively by defining a suite of seven Project KPIs, plus ten annual targets, at the beginning of the project and monitoring progress against these – see Appendix 3. In total 20 KPI incidents were recorded, however all 20 were related to the closure of library spaces to the public in December/January, which affected the availability of Start Up Bromley business lounges, and IT. Five of the ten annual targets were reached – with ‘Number of businesses registered with Start Up Bromley’ being exceeded by 236%. The five that were not reached were all related to the number of aspiring entrepreneurs using the service.

## DEVELOPING BROMLEY HISTORIC COLLECTIONS

6.15 The recent achievements of Bromley Historic Collections (BHC) are set out in paragraphs 5.11-5.15. The digitisation of archived information is ongoing, and the significant progress made with digital preservation software Preservica will continue. Improving accessibility of records is an increased priority for the Service and volunteers have worked closely with the archivist to progress this which will continue.

6.16 In early March 2022, Bromley Historic Collections collaborated with the Churchill Theatre putting on an exhibition about the experiences of local soldiers during World War I to accompany performances of Michael Morpurgo’s Private Peaceful. BHC aim to develop and work with other partners and local community groups using the library’s flexible temporary exhibition space to attract new customers.

6.17 Bromley Historic Collections is currently reviewing the retention and storage of Council records to ensure that adequate space and conditions are put in place to retain historic documents in line with recommendations made as part of the accreditation from The National Archives.

## 7. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN VALUE FOR MONEY

7.1 Additional restrictions funding (ARG) enabled Start Up Bromley spaces to be provided in libraries in Bromley as detailed in paragraphs 6.5-6.1. GLL will now continue to offer this service demonstrating further value for money on the initial investment.

7.2 After a successful first year of Start-up Bromley, the service has moved into a new phase with GLL funding the service which will bring about some changes, whilst still maintaining an exciting calendar of business events and opportunities for SUB members. Staff presence will be targeted to Thursday, Fridays and alternate Wednesdays which have been the busiest. Staff can contact by e-mail in the first instance at other times and the Start Up Bromley meeting rooms can be accessed by key code giving Members full access. GLL will continue to deliver engaging opportunities for Start Up Bromley members to participate in, in addition to 121’s and access to our business lounges and rooms. GLL will work with the Economic Development Team within the Council to maximise any further opportunities to develop this service.

## STOCK PURCHASING

7.3 In compliance with KPI 22 relating to stock purchasing, the stock fund annual budget remains unchanged at £450k per annum, this was fully committed by the Council’s 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 4 provides a summary of the current stock spend up to March 2022.

- 7.4 A stock plan setting out the allocation of stock spend for the current financial is submitted annually by GLL for approval from the Client Team. Due to the increased demand for eBooks during the pandemic there has been an increase in the proportion of annual funding of published eltems which covers the annual support and content credit for the eBook, eAudio and eMagazine and newspaper offer. The £55,900 allocation for eltems set in March 2021 represents 12.4% of the stock fund. Through the following 12 months to March 2022, issues of eltems represented 17.1% of all issues annually in Bromley Libraries.

## MODERN LIBRARY BUILDINGS

- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 Planning permission has just been granted for a housing development and a connected modern library in West Wickham. The plans for expanded library provision include a café, fully accessible public toilets, hireable business spaces, new community space for residents and an outdoor space and classroom for children. Most importantly, there is increased library space on the new mezzanine floor which will also improve stock holdings.
- 7.7 When other libraries within the borough moved to prominent high street locations their issues and visits increased. It is anticipated that the delivery of an extended range of stock and services from an expanded building will have a positive impact on usage and membership at West Wickham which is currently the 5th busiest library in the Borough.
- 7.8 The library will move into temporary accommodation while the new library is developed. GLL has considerable experience of decanting libraries and delivering services in temporary provision along with experience and knowledge of library design which will benefit the project. The libraries contract makes provision for GLL to operate new libraries on behalf of the Council.

## 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 over the last twelve months 2021 has been 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 Orpington library have opened a Sensory Room for those with additional needs which is bookable for members of the public and school groups. A series of sessions are commencing with Rivermead, a community school in Kent for young people (11-19) with a range of complex needs. Rivermead has provided specialist knowledge to ensure Orpington's Sensory Room is suitable such as correct lighting levels.
- 7.11 Improvements have been made to the dimension of services offered at Mottingham library with better use of the outdoor space with equipment such as a table tennis table and inside with the installation of an interactive projector inside to the library. Fixed to the ceiling, the gaming console projects interactive games on to the floor or a table and was installed following a successful

funding bid from London Sport's Tackling Inequality Fund (TIF). Mottingham will also be the first library in Bromley to be fitted with a defibrillator which is being fundraised for by the local resident's association.

7.12 GLL was recently awarded a Cultural Grant amount of £13k from a new round of Additional Restrictions Grant scheme for a project with Dementia Sufferers, GLL match funded this amount. As set out in their proposal this cultural award has enabled GLL to buy a portable Social-Ability Magic Table 360. The interactive light technology combined with a structured guided programme, is designed to stimulate physical, social, and cognitive engagement. The sessions allow users to create music, explore art and play a wide variety of fun and intellectually stimulating games either individually or as a group. This will benefit and improve the outcomes of those with Dementia and their carers and families and is adding an extra dimension to the Library Service as this equipment can be moved around libraries. It will be used as a basis for a series of activities and events throughout the Borough.

## 8. USER / STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

### COMPLAINTS

8.1 The total number of complaints received about the library service in the six-month period July to December 2021 was 12, the same number as July to December 2020. Three were received by LBB and passed to GLL, and nine received directly by GLL, which includes one duplicate complaint. For the range of services being provided by a customer-facing service across 14 service points, 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. All complaints have been provided with a written response and are discussed at the monthly contract monitoring meetings.

8.2 At the request of Members, complaints have been provided in a format showing the top complaint themes as detailed below. Of the twelve reported complaints, five related to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the library service and were out of the control of GLL who were following Government COVID guidance. 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 July – December 2021

<u>Complaint Type</u>	<u>Number of Complaints</u>	<u>Libraries</u>
<b>Received by GLL</b>		
Lack of cash payments in-branch (due to COVID)	3 Complaints	1x Central 1x Penge 1x St Paul's Cray
Customer service experience of visual-impaired user (received each by GLL and LBB)	1 Complaint	1x Central
Disliked COVID mask policy	1 Complaint	1x Beckenham
Hot indoor temperature/poor air conditioning	1 Complaint	1x Central
No hard copy newspapers available	1 Complaint	1x Central
Furniture cluttering study space	1 Complaint	1x Beckenham
Click & Collect-only service instated due to COVID	1 Complaint	1x Central
<b>Received by LBB</b>		
Unable to locate specific books previously stocked	1 Complaint	1x Stock Team
Change made to time of reading group	1 Complaint	1x Mottingham

[Duplicate] Customer service experience of visually-impaired user (received each by GLL and LBB)	1 Complaint	1x West Wickham
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- 8.3 Of the five COVID-related complaints, three related to the inability to make cash payments in-branch. Cash payment has since been re-introduced in libraries following relaxation of COVID measures. One complaint was related to disagreement with the policy encouraging wearing face masks indoors, and one due to branches closing around the new year due to the surge in Omicron-variant COVID cases at that time.
- 8.4 One complaint, which was received each by GLL and LBB, related to the standard of customer service received by a customer which resulted in recommendations for staff training. Two complaints were related to stock: one due to the lack of hard copy newspapers available (This service had been suspended due to COVID but was reinstated shortly after this complaint) and one related to being unable to find three specific book titles which was addressed.
- 8.5 One complaint related to the changed time of a reading group related to the library's COVID-related opening hours. The remaining two complaints related to the library environment – one noted the hot internal temperature of the building during a summer heatwave, and one related to a cluttering amount furniture which had since been removed.

#### ANNUAL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

- 8.6 GLL ran their 2021/22 Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey for Bromley Libraries online between October 2021 and March 2022, running for 22 weeks and receiving 299 responses in total. Respondents were asked to indicate their local library to better identify customer opinion by branch, with Central and Beckenham being the most represented branches in this survey. This survey was written with extra questions compared to pre-COVID to help profile how users used the library service during the pandemic, and what range of services they were aware existed. Appendix 5 gives a numerical summary report of the survey's questions and responses.
- 8.7 On average, respondents rated their overall experience of their local library a 4.4 out of 5, and 9.1 out of 10 for their likelihood of recommending it to a friend. Other highly rated metrics which stand out were for the welcoming attitude of staff, the wide range of books available, and the cleanliness of libraries. Over 60% of respondents rated most services offered within library branches as 4 or more out of 5 across all asked questions, with the activities offer for adults and children falling just short of this.
- 8.8 Of the questions related to ascertaining the usage of libraries during the pandemic, 96% indicated they had visited a branch in-person within the past 12 months. 65% indicated they had used the library service's online resources when not able to visit a library, however 10% said they were not aware this online offer existed. The quality/range of online activities for children, and the ease of use of the online catalogue, were the most highly rated aspects of the online service. Most users described that their habits changed as a result of the pandemic in that they increased the number of books they borrowed, or that their habits remained unchanged for other service areas.

#### OPENING HOURS CONSULTATION

- 8.9 The temporary opening hours set out in section 3.24-3.26, were initially introduced for a period of six months from May 2021. An extension for a further six months was given during which GLL consulted with staff and customers to enable them to give their views on the opening hours provided by Bromley Libraries at all stages including pre-pandemic, currently and for the future. To allow for maximum participation the consultation took place in three stages within the period



from October 2021 to March 2022. A total of 837 customers gave their opinions across the three survey periods which is higher than the total who responded to the satisfaction survey.

- 8.10 GLL presented their findings and recommendations to the Council in April 2022. The response to the temporary opening hours was positive, 76% of library users were satisfied with the current opening hours. The feedback received from the 20% of those dissatisfied with the library opening hours included those who valued their libraries and would like them open even longer, some suggested 24 hour opening and Sunday opening which is not feasible as it would require increased investment and staffing levels.
- 8.11 A significant proportion of responses were from members of reading groups in Mottingham and Orpington libraries who would like to continue the reading groups which historically have finished at 8pm. GLL have agreed that they will work with these groups.
- 8.12 GLL received a high proportion of comments from users of Mottingham that they would like the late night changed from Monday to Wednesday. A number of suggestions from Hayes to open on Thursday instead of Friday were also received. This feedback has been listened to and incorporated into the revised proposal for permanent opening hours.
- 8.13 62 staff out of a possible 112 staff responded to the opening hours survey, an overall response rate of 52% . Of these 75% which equates to 46 staff members said that there had been a positive impact of introducing the standardised opening hours. 25% (16) staff members felt that there had been a negative impact. GLL are following up on this feedback as some feedback was more operational rather than related to the opening hours specifically
- 8.14 Based on the findings of the staff and customer consultation and the annual customer satisfaction survey these opening hours are being put forward as a permanent timetable with Members asked to approve them.

## **9. TRANSFORMATION/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 Councils stated ambitions around vibrant 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 the year to 31 March 2022 this £4.684m.
- 10.2 There is no additional cost relating to the permanent changes to Library opening hours. The overall number of hours has not increased, just variations in opening times
- 10.3 Additional Restrictions Grant of £352k was allocated for the Start Up Bromley schemes operated by GLL for 12 months from 1st April 2021. The extension of this programme will be funded by GLL.
- 10.4 Further payments totalling an additional £53k were made from the ARG Cultural Grant to GLL. Of this £13k was spent on the Magic Table and £40k on the Lemn Sissay writer in residence project.

10.5 The cost of Platinum Jubilee events in libraries has been covered by the project budget which was agreed by Executive on 12 January 2022. £5,000 of the Cultural activity programme has been allocated to libraries

## **11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None identified

## **12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The report demonstrates the Council's compliance with Contract Procedure Rule 23, to monitor contract performance, costs, user satisfaction and risk management and report annually to the Portfolio Holder and to authorise the proposed change in the specification in relation to opening hours.

## **13. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 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.

## **14. PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 None identified.

## **15. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 GLL aim to "reduce, always reuse and recycle". They are the first library provider to introduce biodegradable library cards which have been introduced in their partnerships. The recent refurbishment of the Central Library gave GLL the opportunity to work towards an eco-refit and to ensure that the library was as sustainable as possible which will be replicated in future building projects. Other changes include the cleaning company moving to a 'green regime' by selecting environmentally friendly cleaning products. GLL also looked at IT provision to ensure that all hardware is either reused or recycled.

## **16. CUSTOMER IMPACT**

16.1 See Section1 - 24,016 registered users used their library card to borrow an item in a library branch in 2021, 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.

## **17. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

17.1 None.

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