

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

Date: **For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on 16 November 2022**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: **PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

Ward: All Wards

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 Services contract. The value of the contract over a ten-year period is currently £41,260,703.

1.2 The report details 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 June 2022 which includes the new opening hours which were implemented on 1st September 2022.

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 review the report and to note the performance of the service provider since the last report on service performance was presented in June 2022.

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 with scope for ongoing development. Online library services were available for both children and vulnerable adults during all periods that Library buildings closed due to COVID-1 and have been retained. The new opening hours improve access to library buildings.
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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 2022/23
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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
 2. Call-in: Applicable: Portfolio Holder decision.
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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" where possible. 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.

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): The 2021 Census identified that 330,000 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 7.3% 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? No
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 contract. Performance data included is for Quarter 4 January-March 2022 and Quarter 1 April-June 2022. However, commentary covers a longer period until September 2022.
- 3.2. The GLL Libraries contract commenced on 1st November 2017 and is approaching the sixth 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 June 2022.
- 3.3. The library services managed by GLL as defined by the contract and service specification include:
- The Frontline/Operational/Virtual Library service
 - Strategic Management Specialist and Support Functions
 - Bromley Historic Collections
 - Facilities Management including cleaning and security

Measuring Contactor 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. Any KPIs that had been previously suspended due to COVID have since 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 six month period from January-June 2022.

Contractor performance

- 3.6. There were four recorded KPI breaches in the period between January-June 2022 which amounted to a total of 105 performance adjustment (PA) points for which the financial value would be £4,135. The Client Team issued one monitoring notice in March 2022 to formally request supplementary information on one incident to assist in the decision to apply or waive a financial penalty.
- 3.7. All four KPI incidents related to opening hours of library branches and, of this number, two were as a result of COVID related staff sickness which required additional staff to be arranged and travel from other library locations.
- 3.8. The remaining two building closures were due to uncontrollable circumstances. A suspected gas leak was discovered at Chislehurst Library and the building was evacuated on the advice of National Grid Gas. At Biggin Hill there was an unforeseen hygiene incident involving a customer requiring the library area to be closed for the remainder of the day for cleaning. A contractor was requested immediately for a deep clean to allow the library area to re-open.

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, or immediately

requesting appropriate contractors to manage the gas leak/deep cleaning as required. GLL responded to the Monitoring Notice formally requesting additional information surrounding a COVID-related closure, which the Client was satisfied with. 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 rates exemption and economy of scale savings), which the contract delivers. 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 which continues to develop 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 including their quick response to the COVID pandemic. In the first Lockdown in March 2020 GLL had the resources to quickly develop Library Without Walls (LWW) - a high-quality online offer. GLL were able to quickly plan and deliver a programme for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations on behalf of the Council. As mentioned in paragraph 3.10 GLL are eligible for economy of scale savings which includes stock purchasing benefits due to the size of their organisation.

Monitoring and Quality Control

- 3.12. The Libraries Client Team continues to demonstrate that it can successfully manage, monitor, and oversee ongoing development of the contract on an ongoing basis. Following the successful performance of the service during COVID-19 recovery the focus for both the Contractor and the Client Team is to fully restore business as usual including restoring service usage levels and to further develop the service, which requires a collaborative approach.
- 3.13. Contract milestones relating to monitoring and service planning have been fully met during this monitoring period. This includes monthly contract review meetings and six month and annual reviews. These are a hybrid of face-to-face and online meetings as appropriate.
- 3.14. Post Covid-19 the unannounced spot checks on all libraries made by the Client team are fully re-instated to ensure that the required standards of the contract are being met. Categories which are reviewed regularly on a checklist 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 contract review meetings.

Risk

- 3.15. The main operational risk to this contract is defined as 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 based on government guidance. Both GLL and the Council continue to monitor and update their risk registers to include the impact of new force majeure incidents.
- 3.16. All Council contracts carry the operational risk of industrial action. GLL meet regularly with Unite representatives to discuss any issues on an ongoing basis. The Council's HR team and the

Libraries Client Team continue to offer open dialogue with Unions as required to resolve issues before they escalate.

3.17. The contract risk register includes 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 as part of the operational property review (OPR).

Provision/Delivery of Library Service: COVID 19

3.18. At the start of the period covered by this report, there was a prolonged Christmas closure due to the increase in COVID cases due to the Omicron variant. Apart from this period from 22nd December to 10th January 2022 libraries have remained fully open during the reporting period.

3.19. At 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. This has been a hugely successful initiative and has added to the quality of the library service offer.

Service Recovery

3.20. At the time of writing business as usual has been restored meaning full services are available. This means there are no restrictions to the number of customers in Library buildings, all furniture is restored enabling customers to sit and read once more which has been welcomed. Study spaces are fully open with time limits lifted which was popular during the exam period when the demand for study space led to GLL increasing additional desk space at Central Library. Photocopying, printing and scanning is fully restored the People's Network (public PCs) 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.

3.21. Full lending facilities including inter-library loans, newspapers and magazines have been restored in online or physical formats. Customers can borrow 25 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

3.22. When libraries re-opened after COVID, a temporary pattern of opening hours was trialled. In June 2022 Members agreed to the temporary opening hours being made permanent with two adaptations resulting from consultation findings. From 1st September 2022, the late night at Mottingham Library changed from Monday to Wednesday to further spread coverage. From this date the closed day at Hayes Library moved 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.

3.23. 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 improved access to Penge Library which is open six days each week further increasing access

to the Council Tax kiosk at which cash payments can be made. Late nights have been spread across the borough - Southborough and Petts Wood libraries now have different closed days which benefit customers given their proximity. Appendix 2 gives the timetable of opening hours for all libraries as of September 2022.

Increased performance

- 3.24. 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, final 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 second highest across all London Boroughs. Additionally Bromley Libraries achieved 2nd in annual eBook issues, 2nd in total book stock, and 3rd in annual visits in Outer London boroughs. Bromley continues to run a dominant library service across London.
- 3.25. Despite lockdown causing overall library issues to fall to half of normal levels in 2020/21, issues of digital items initially jumped +155% annually representing 40% of all issues. Digital issue levels have continued to increase this year even as non-digital issues regained their popularity once again, indicating the increased usage of digital services during COVID has become a permanent. See section 5.2 for additional data of the six-month period covered by this report.

Review of Contractor purpose

- 3.26. 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 at all times including during COVID-19 when online library services including eItems were fully available for all. As part of their duty to superintend the provision of library services the DCMS wrote to all UK library authorities requesting a written update of post COVID recovery in June 2020. Bromley and GLL were both compliant with this and sent full written responses. 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 which is set out within this report

Review of contractors learning and maturity targets

- 3.27. The Library Service contract requires that the learning and maturity targets of the contractor are reviewed by the Council on an ongoing basis to ensure both value for money and that continuous high service standards are maintained. Since the last report in June 2022, GLL have returned to full business as usual model for all libraries which includes fully restoring face to face activities and events.
- 3.28. The ongoing development of the library service is a priority for the Contractor and the Council and is an agenda item at monthly contract review meetings, section 6 sets out the current key priorities for the service going forward. The Client Team has asked GLL to prioritise development of the Home Library Service to increase membership and support the Councils Loneliness Strategy. The development of Bromley Historic Collections (see paragraphs 5.11-5.18) is also a priority for the Council. Having received both Museum and Archive accreditation GLL are continuing to develop and market the BHC brand to attract new audiences
- 3.29. As part of its Cultural events programme the Council asked GLL to develop and deliver a programme of events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. GLL also had a role to play in the Councils Operation London Bridge plans to mark the death of Her Majesty Queen including placing books of condolences in the largest libraries and community cultural events including a memorial quilt and Bromley Historic Collections are curating online and in library exhibitions.

GLL will be asked to deliver a cultural programme for the Coronation of King Charles .See paragraphs 6.8-6.13

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 both during lockdown and during all phases of service recovery. Libraries run face-to-face activities 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 see paragraph 6.4 onward.
- 4.2 In January 2022, Mottingham Library installed an interactive fitness console with funding from London Sport Tackling Inequality Fund (TIF). The technology aims to improve health outcomes and tackle high levels of obesity in a fun and engaging way. The gaming console projects interactive games onto the floor or a table and engages children in physical activity. It is also used by other community groups that work with senior citizens to support a more active lifestyle and the prevention of illnesses such as dementia. Plans are in place to use it to relaunch sessions for neuro-divergent children with Bromley Mencap. The project has attracted new families into the building who have become library members. 'Move It' sessions at the library to date have involved over 800 children and 170 adults. GLL were invited to speak at the Active London conference in September about the success of this innovative project.
- 4.3 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 began in May 2022. This provides private spaces for people to contact family or sit job interviews. GLL in partnership with the Council are hosting fortnightly coffee mornings for Ukrainian refugees and sponsors, the first was on the 7th May with 170 attendees. For Refugee week in June, storytelling sessions and displays took place across all libraries. GLL are working with the Rotary Club to deliver Beginners Language classes for adult refugees in Bromley Central Library.
- 4.4 Support for dementia sufferers and their carers is a priority for the library service. Staff members have received Dementia Friends training and training using the 'Magic Table' as part of the Happiness programme provided by Social Ability. The Happiness Programme is an initiative helping to change the lives of people living with physical and cognitive challenges using interactive light technology. Using funding from Bromley's cultural grant programme, GLL have purchased a 'Magic Table'. Light is projected onto a surface – this could be a table, floor, ceiling or even someone's bed – and as hands, arms or feet move through the light, the games that are projected begin to change and move. The table is used in activities across libraries including coffee mornings and support for dementia sufferers. Three groups have been established so far at Beckenham, Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray. The 'Magic Table' is also being used to support library partnerships with Mencap at St Paul's Cray and Mottingham.
- 4.5 The Home Library Service is offered to those living at home and unable to visit a library and also to care home residents. A new marketing campaign has been launched promoting 'Books and More to Your Door'. Home Library Champions have been appointed in all libraries and leaflets sent out to doctor's surgeries to promote the service.

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 during periods of lockdown had added a new suite of measurable performance statistics including Facebook page videos and posts. Bromley Libraries are now considered as running business-as-usual for the period covered by this report as all usual services have returned in-branch, therefore the previous statistics have become the primary measures once again. It should be noted that usage habits of library users have appeared to change between now and then, with greater usage (and accessibility) of online resources.
- 5.2 Comparing the Jan to Jun period for 2019 (pre-COVID) to 2022, 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 209% (more than tripling its popularity), and the share of issued items increased its share from 5.5% to 16.2% of all items issued in Bromley. During this period in 2022, Library Without Walls positioned itself as the second most-issuing library in Bromley, after Central Library.

Issues and Visits - recovery data

- 5.3 Overall monthly issues of all types indicate recovery of the service beyond 2019 levels. In the Jan to Jun 2022 period, 753,000 items were issued cross the service – a 5.5% increase against 2019 for the same months (713,600). Smaller branches number among the best-recovering branches, including Shortlands, St Paul’s Cray, and Burnt Ash libraries, which exceeded their 2019 levels by 30%, 16%, and 14% respectively
- 5.4 In the latest quarter Jun to Sep 2022, there is an improvement of 10% between overall issues in 2022 compared to 2019. The level of issues of physical items from library branches has now recovered to 99% compared to 2019, meaning this 10% increase is attributed almost solely to the expansion and increased popularity of the offer of digital items between the two time periods. Issues of digital items now represent 15% of all items issued from Bromley Libraries.
- 5.5 Overall visits have recovered to just under 73% of their pre-COVID levels – a slight decrease of 2% on the previous reporting period – which was likely influenced by the additional Jubilee-related bank holidays this year. To compare, the national average at this time sits around 60-65% recovery of footfall. A regular programme of events had been reinstated in most libraries from September 2021 – earlier than the majority of other library services in England. Following the small period of COVID-related closures in December/January, a full programme has run from February 2022 in all Bromley libraries successfully. Smaller branches have continuously recovered visitor figures better than larger libraries which is an indicator that the purpose of their visits is centred around activities.

Activities & 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 regular activities programme in most libraries 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. Every library has resumed a full programme from February 2022.
- 5.7 The focus of the activities programme has now shifted to in-branch activities from the extensive video offer via the Bromley Libraries Facebook page. However 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, Storytime, and Meet the Author/Poet videos for customers who prefer online activities.

- 5.8 The activities programme contains activities and reading groups focussed at either children or adult age groups. The children's programme ran over 1,330 events with 17,200 attendees between January and June, 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 350 adult events with 2,800 attendees. Teenage and Adult reading groups meet in branches with around 300 participants monthly.
- 5.9 The annual Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) took place between July and September 2022 with the 'Gadgeteers' theme, which focussed on exploring the science and innovation present in everyday life. Compared to the previous two years, activities were focused physically in library branches this year, including science workshops hosted by Alom Shaha, Jamb Owls owl handling sessions at all libraries, and the return of young volunteers offering their time to read books with children. Nearly 4,200 children participated this year, with 1,800 completing the challenge this year - a small decrease on the previous year, which has been observed across London and is explained by the overlap with the much more popular Jubilee-related events this year at the same time.
- 5.10 Bromley Libraries delivered a programme of Jubilee-related events in May and June in partnership with the Council, including the #EveryoneARoyal art challenge and Young Poets Festival, as detailed in section 6.7 onwards. As part of their calendar of large-scale events GLL also delivered events observing national themed days and weeks. Bromley Libraries 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. Other dates observed between January and June included National Storytelling Week, World Book Day, Empathy Week, Refugee Week, and the Carnegie Greenaway Awards.

Bromley Historic Collections

- 5.11 In March 2022, the Museum Collection provided by GLL through Bromley Historic Collections received full accreditation from Arts Council England having previously had temporary accreditation status during national lockdowns whilst the accreditation process was suspended.

Activities & Exhibitions

- 5.12 Bromley Historic Collections secured a small grant from Art Fund and Museum Development London for Audience Development Research undertaken by The Earth Museum / Revels Office in three locations (Bromley Central Library / The Glades / The Churchill Theatre) in March 2022. The findings and recommendations have had a direct effect on improved marketing of exhibitions including the work of artist Gram Hilleard in an exhibition, Escaping in Suburbia. The art works were displayed in April 2022 alongside objects and ephemera from the artist himself and from the Memory Museum. 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.
- 5.13 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.

- 5.14 Museum of London visited and provided advice and guidance on developing the loan box collections for schools which now include Titanic history information.
- 5.15 In May 2022, Bromley Historic Collections supported the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations with an exhibition of Royal visits to the Borough. A further commemorative exhibition is now on display entitled 'Bromley Remembers the Queen'.
- 5.16 In June 2022, Bromley Historic Collection successfully received £5,000 from the National Archives Testbed Funding Award for equipment and training in the process of 3D imaging, and hosting online, interactive versions of our exhibitions. BHC partnered with staff from Goldsmith's University to deliver project.

Development Opportunities - Bromley Historic Collections

- 5.17 Bromley Historic Collections is working with the Council's information management team to review the retention and storage of Council records. This will 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. BHC also continues to support those holding historic records across the Borough. For example, this year they completed an appraisal of Camden Place documents at Chislehurst Golf Club. This was carried out on location in the historic house and is now awaiting the Wallace Collection to finish their appraisal of elements of the collection before setting a date for transfer
- 5.18 The Earth Museum, who have delivered a number of projects for Bromley Historic Collection, have now been contracted to provide ongoing support and recruit a new museum curator who will join the BHC team in November 2022.

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 this year begun undertaking a project to redesign their 'Better' website which represents their online information hub for all their library and leisure partnerships. The project is being approached in a 'libraries-first' manner so that libraries sections of the website will be published first. GLL and their consultants have now spoken extensively with stakeholders, including senior library staff and the Council's Libraries Client Team. The new design will focus on modernising and future-proofing the website, including ensuring it is optimised for mobile devices (80% of the website's users), enhancing data-led systems and displaying information appropriately, and ensuring key stakeholders are involved throughout the process.

Added value: Supporting Council priorities

- 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 on offer. This includes co-location opportunities in library buildings providing space for other local authority and community partners and potentially generating income or reducing expenditure. There is further scope for libraries to be used on closed times/days by other services. The Community Resource Centre at Cotmandene (CCRC) was forced to close temporarily in September 2022 due to building issues and moved to nearby St Paul's Cray Library where it is currently operating in the short term.

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 support economic recovery and positive wellbeing. As demonstrated throughout this report libraries deliver a wide range of activities for all ages which combat loneliness. These link into the Council's Loneliness Strategy which adds further value to the service. GLL attend meetings with Bromley's Loneliness Officers and are developing partnerships with voluntary groups such as Community Links.
- 6.5 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. 'Tea and Topics' is very popular at Shortlands library, and more coffee morning groups are being set up for older residents at Beckenham and St Paul's Cray. Craft groups are proving increasingly popular as a way to bring people together with similar interests of all ages as well with the therapeutic benefit of making. GLL is committed to its Under 5s programme to connect new parents and their children. Bounce and Rhyme and Storytime sessions at all our libraries are invaluable for new parents wanting to make friends with a shared experience. See section 4 for further details
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 As we have not yet seen a full return to pre-pandemic levels of library use, GLL is encouraging more residents to use the library service. GLL is introducing free tea and coffee for library users which it is hoped will attract new customers and encourage them to spend time in the library relaxing, reading and enjoying activities in shared spaces which are comfortable and warm. In keeping with their role as information providers our Libraries can support residents with rising energy bills both with practical help such as providing links to other agencies and use of free computers and Wi-Fi .
- 6.8 Start Up Bromley has given a platform for Start Up businesses to come together and create a unique supportive network for entrepreneurs and sole traders - see section 6.16.

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

- 6.9 GLL delivered a programme of Cultural events on behalf of the Council as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Bromley. The events programme at libraries commenced in April 2022 and are ran until after the Jubilee weekend in June.
- 6.10 Over 70 events were planned and delivered in the period April-June for people of all ages. These included professional events hosted by authors illustrators, musicians including #EveryoneaRoyal and our Poet in residence and the Arts Train Music workshops. The programme included many local events delivered by library staff including garden parties, bake offs, craft events, history walks exhibitions, puppet shows, illustrator and author events. Staff were incredibly creative, and this was a great period of community engagement.
- 6.11 The #EveryoneaRoyal art challenge was delivered by GLL in partnership with Bromley Council and the Glades shopping centre, GLL launched the #EveryoneaRoyal programme on 25th April 2022 which ran until 6th June. The exhibition at the Glades ran until the end of July 2022.

- 6.12 This innovative art challenge was promoted by GLL on their social media channels. As part of the project all children in Bromley were invited to design a portrait of themselves. 20 illustrator events took place overall across the borough, every library received an event with a further two events taking place at the Glades shopping Centre. 520 children submitted their entries for the exhibition to their local libraries whilst other children took their pictures home with them. Feedback has been very positive from children and young people across the borough who welcomed the opportunity to be creative and work with a wide range of illustrators.
- 6.13 Lemn Sissay OBE was Bromley's poet in residence from May-October 2022 as part of the Borough's Inspire Bromley cultural events. A key part of Lemn's residency was a targeted programme with looked after children and care leavers. Lemn worked with a group of young people to teach them the art of poetry and performance skills through a series of workshops. Following the workshops, the group went on to perform with Lemn at the Young Poet Festival in July 2022 which was also an Inspire Bromley funded event.
- 6.14 Another part of Lemn's residency was delivery of a series of public performances across the Borough which began on 19th May with a performance at the Orpington Literacy festival. Other performances included the Young Poets Festival. The programme ended with a successful showcase performance at Central Library which was attended by 50 local secondary school children on National Poetry Day on October 6th 2022. The programme ended with a showcase performance as part of Black History month celebrations for the group of Children Looked After that Lemn has been working with.

Operation London Bridge

- 6.15 GLL worked with the Council to implement Operation London Bridge following the announcement of the death of HM Queen Elizabeth. Books of condolences were placed in Beckenham, Biggin Hill, Central and Orpington Libraries to enable residents to pay their respects. These have been archived within Bromley Historic Collections. An exhibition of digital photographs of the Queen was on display at Bromley Central Library entitled Bromley Remembers the Queen. Work on the digital exhibition is also underway. Work on the digital exhibition is also underway.

Memorial Quilt

- 6.16 As set out in the Council's Operation London Bridge plan, GLL are working with the Beckenham Quilters on a project to create a memorial quilt which will become part of Bromley Historic Collections. All quilting, sewing and embroidery groups in the borough and design and technology sixth form students will be invited to make the Community quilt over a year long period. Memories/quotes and images from residents can be included.

Start Up Bromley

- 6.17 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 first year of the programme was funded by the Council's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which is provided by Central Government to aid local businesses through grants and business support functions. At the end of the funded programme the number of businesses registered with Start Up Bromley exceeded its target by 236%. 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. The Start Up Bromley rooms are still available for drop-in sessions for members but are now also available for hire offering professional work and meeting space to the wider Bromley community.

6.18 The Start Up Bromley programme has attracted more than 340 members to date to date who have regularly attended workshops, business consultations and networking events 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. In March 2022, Start Up Bromley delivered the Bromley Business Week programme, including a Business Panel discussion moderated by Emily Maitlis, a pitch competition, and a Spring showcase event where members were able to demonstrate the range of their businesses to the public. A further two-day Summer showcase was held in June 2022 at The Glades Shopping Centre in Bromley representing a wide demographic of industries. Business workshops continue to be well-attended by members on subjects including social media marketing, podcasting and e-commerce. The success of the Start Up Bromley model has led GLL to relaunch their business support services in Greenwich libraries as 'Start Up Greenwich'.

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 6.16-6.17. GLL continue to provide this service demonstrating further value for money on the initial investment.

7.2 From October Barclays Bank are going to be providing advice from the Business Lounge space at Biggin Hill Library due to the closure of the Biggin Hill Barclays branch. This will add further value to the service and will be a lifeline for residents requiring financial advice who are unable to travel out of the area. Additionally, this will attract new customers to the library. The success of this scheme will be monitored and potentially rolled out to other sites.

Stock purchasing

7.3 In compliance with KPI 22 relating to stock purchasing, the stock fund budget remains unchanged at £450k per annum, this was fully committed by the Council's year end. GLL is compliant in providing regular stock purchasing reports which give a break-down of spending of this ring-fenced stock purchasing fund demonstrating it has been used only for the purpose intended. Appendix 3 provides a summary of the current stock spend up to 19th September 2022. Currently 54% of the stock fund has currently been committed/spent this financial year.

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 eltems which covers the annual support and content credit for the eBook, eAudio and eMagazine and newspaper offer which remains. The £57,900 allocation for eltems set in March 2022 represents 12.9% of the stock fund. This is an increase of £2,000 on the eltem budget for this financial year. 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 more than books alone. They are social spaces, bringing people together. 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 workspace. New libraries can offer purpose-built enhanced provision to meet the post COVID needs of customers.

7.6 Planning permission has been granted for a housing development and a 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. The library will move into temporary accommodation while the new

library is developed, with various options under consideration. The libraries contract makes provision for GLL to operate new libraries on behalf of the Council.

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.

Building improvements

7.8 GLL continues to ensure library facilities change with the times making sure that customers can access the services they want and need as part of a 21st Century library experience. A key focus since March 2020 has been making Library buildings COVID-19 secure whilst enhancing and improving the customer experience such as including contactless payment systems and wipeable keyboards. As Covid cases are on the rise again, these measures will enable customers to continue to use library services safely.

7.9 As part of the Council's building maintenance programme building works have recently taken place at Hayes Library which includes exterior decorations to the doors and windows, repairs to some of the sash window mechanisms and gutter repairs.

7.10 Mottingham is the first library in Bromley to be fitted with a defibrillator which was funded by the local resident's association. The defibrillator has now been installed and training provided and will significantly benefit the local community.

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 2022 was 17 which is 5 more than the previous six-month period. All were received directly by GLL, with none received by LBB. The majority of complaints were received were concentrated around the study and exam periods where library usage is altered compared to other times in the year. 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 17 reported complaints, nine related directly to the impact of increased usage of the study spaces by students surrounding exam periods. 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. Numbers of complaints dropped during COVID when services were restricted, therefore the slight increase is not concerning

Table 1 Summary of all complaints received January – June 2022

<u>Complaint Type</u>	<u>Number of Complaints</u>	<u>Libraries</u>
Received by GLL		
Not enough study space during exam period	5 Complaints	5 x Central
Noisy students during exam period	4 Complaints	4 x Central
Toilets unavailable	2 Complaints	2 x Central
Staff running the activity	1 Complaint	1 x Petts Wood
Ill child with parent asked to leave library	1 Complaint	1 x Penge
Poor quality of food waste bags sold in library	1 Complaint	1 x Orpington

Wireless printing too complex to set up	1 Complaint	1 x Chislehurst
Cost of replacement cards too high	1 Complaint	1 x Central
Fewer leaflets than before	1 Complaint	1 x Central
Received by LBB		
<i>None</i>		

- 8.3 At Central Library, five complaints related to the lack of available study space was received, which GLL responded to by putting out more furniture for study usage. Four complaints about noisy students in the library were received. Apologies were offered to the users who complained and staff spoke to the disruptive students to help manage noise levels. In response to these complaints GLL have already discussed with The Client Team their intention to plan ahead and manage the exam period next year .
- 8.4 Two complaints were received at Central Library regarding the lack of available public toilets which had recently become inoperative and require extensive building work to fix. Whilst GLL have carried out quick fix solutions these have not been sustainable and as the issues are complex, significant investment is required to install new toilets . This will be addressed by the Councils operational property review (OPR).
- 8.5 One complaint at Petts Wood and one at Penge Library related an issue with a staff member which was addressed with both the customer and staff and resolved . One complaint at Penge related to an ill child and parent being asked to leave the library – this was investigated also and the concerns were found to be genuine.
- 8.6 One complaint noted that wireless printing was difficult to use. GLL are investigating an alternative printing software supplier for all their library partnerships. The remaining three complaints related to miscellaneous issues including the poor quality of food waste bags sold in libraries on the Council’s behalf, the cost of replacing lost library cards being too high, and fewer leaflets being on display in the library. In all cases, the customer received help or an explanation in response to their complaint.
- 8.7 Alongside complaints, 22 compliments of the library service were received. 14 indicated praise for particular staff members or teams, 2 for an ‘Easy Peasy’ craft session at Central Library, 1 for the ‘Coding Club’ at Central, 1 for the quality of a school trip into St Paul’s Cray Library, and 1 for the excellent book stock available across the service

Annual customer satisfaction survey

- 8.8 GLL ran their 2021/22 Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey for Bromley Libraries online between October 2021 and March 2022, which was reported on in the previous report to committee. Key outcomes included the average respondent 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. The next Satisfaction Survey is due to be run in Bromley between October and December 2022 alongside GLL’s other library partnerships.

TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.9 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.

8.10 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.

8.11 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.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The annual cost of the library services contract is met from the Library Service controllable revenue budget. For the year to 31 March 2023 this is £4.873m.

9.2 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 is now being funded by GLL.

9.3 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. A further amount of £10,000 has been allocated for Queens memorial activities.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This Committee is requested to review and comment on the information contained within this report as to the recent performance of the library service contract provided by GLL. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 created a statutory duty for local authorities "to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons"

10.2 The Council's Constitution, at Part 4 – Rules of Procedure, provides the terms of reference for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee as it relates to renewal, recreation, and housing. Under these terms of reference, this Committee is responsible for receiving reports and making recommendations on performance monitoring of services falling within the remit of this portfolio which includes libraries, leisure, and culture, including theatres.

10.3 Contract Procedure Rule 23.2 provides that for all Contracts with a value higher than £500,000, or which are High Risk, an annual report must be submitted to the Portfolio Holder, the responsible Officers having submitted for consideration a formal Gateway Review, covering, as appropriate, the matters identified in the Council's standard Gateway Review Template for consideration as part of Contract Monitoring/Management requirements.

11. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 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.

12. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 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. GLL have also provided information to Bromley Council on libraries that would benefit from LED lighting programmes.

13. CUSTOMER IMPACT

13.1 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.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Property implications; Personnel implications; Ward Councillor views
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