

Introduction

- 1 This report details findings of the Working Group, commissioned by the Renewal and Recreation Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee, to consider the future shape and scope of the borough's Library service.
- 2 The Working Group was established following completion of a new state of the art library at Biggin Hill, and good progress at the town centre development in Orpington, which includes a library, and is expected to open in March 2011. It was recognised that there was further need to review the Bromley libraries in other parts of the borough.
- 3 In addition, huge financial pressures caused by the national deficit, have forced all areas of the council to review their services and to operate with severely reduced revenue budgets. However, the Working Group has looked at imaginative options that might limit or negate any cuts, and may improve the quality of some services available to residents.
- 4 The Working Group has looked at the full breadth of front end services offered at libraries from the traditional book lending function, through to modern information services, and including all the additional social facilities such as rhyme groups for toddlers, junior reading clubs and IT support help for those new to modern technology. It has considered appropriate charging, storage facilities, use of space and access, opening times and location. It has also discussed management structure behind the scenes, and possible joint working arrangements.
- 5 The recommendations focus on major changes required that will ensure a balanced budget whilst retaining a good service .
- 6 The Working Group has received much valued help from Council officers, and comments from library staff and library users and it is very appreciative of this input.
- 7 I commend this report and thank my colleagues and officers in reaching the conclusion and recommendations outlined in the following pages.

Councillor Sarah Phillips
Chairman of the Working Group
February 2011

LIBRARIES REVIEW REPORT

Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the work and findings of the Renewal and Recreation PDS Working Group on the Library Service and it furthermore makes a number of recommendations for the future shape, structure and composition of the borough's library service.
- 1.2 The objectives of the Working Group were to "Identify further opportunities to modernise and improve the borough's library offer as set out in 'Building a Better Bromley' 2010 to 2012".
- 1.3 The PDS Investigation Project Outline was reported to the Renewal and Recreation PDS on the 29th June 2010.
- 1.4 Members will be further aware that the report to the Executive on 12th January 2011 identified two initial areas of savings within the library service:
 - i) Tender the services currently provided by the Library Site Officers.
 - ii) Amalgamate Penge and Anerley Libraries.
- 1.5 The work required to market test the Site Officer function will be undertaken during 2011/12, with savings being delivered in the financial year 2012/13. The work to amalgamate Penge and Anerley libraries is currently ongoing and subject to the identification of suitable premises. This work will be subject to further reports to the Renewal and Recreation PH/PDS.
- 1.6 Members of the Working Group were as follows:

Cllr. Sarah Phillips (Chairman)

Cllr. Russell Jackson

Cllr. John Ince

Cllr. Brian Humphrys
- 1.7 The following documents were considered by the Working Group as part of the PDS Working Groups examination of the Library Service.
 - PDS Investigation Project Outline

- Hierarchy of Libraries
- Libraries Coverage
- Visitor and Issue Figures
- Activities by Library
- Existing Staffing structure
- Ed Vaizey's letter – 3rd December 2010
- Library Site Coverage
- Revised Travel times

1.7 As part of its consideration of the boroughs library service, the Unison Branch Secretary attended a Working Group meeting to present a range of views and comments, in particular:

- That the public expected to see a library service run by a democratically elected and accountable body.
- That the nature of a library service has changed significantly over the years to become a busy multipurpose environment serving a wider cross section of the community.
- That libraries were now in even more demand in the current economic climate
- That libraries should act as a hub for local communities and be a point at which to access a wide range of council services.
- A diminishing book fund has been part of the cause of the reduction in visits and issues and that this needs to be addressed. Hillingdon was cited as an example where following an increase in the book stock fund, issues had risen five fold.
- That the library service had already incurred significant cuts, with £340k being removed from the employee budgets in this year and that this had on occasion led to unplanned closures.

2. WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION(S)

The member working group recommends to the Renewal and Recreation Performance, Development and Scrutiny Committee that:

2.1 The Renewal and Recreation PDS notes the contents of the Working Group's report and in particular the Option 4 which the Working Group recommends as the preferred model for taking the borough's library service forward and that this option is subject to further reports to Members.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At the first meeting of the Working Group Members were advised of the current pressures facing the library service, these being:

- Reduction in book loans from four million issues per annum in 1990 to two million issues per annum in 2010.
- Reduction in the value of the stock fund from £2 million per annum to £650,000 per annum.
- The lack of investment in the library service resulting in a tired looking service.
- Reduction in staff with £340,000 of staffing costs being removed in 2010/11.
- Introduction and impact of new technology on usage patterns within Libraries. Use of the Peoples network continues to remain strong and demand out strips capacity.
- Reducing income.
- Broadening role for libraries to support the wider Council agenda, i.e. choice-based lettings.

3.2 Members of the Working Group considered that the following themes should be addressed:

- The location of and number of libraries in the borough.
- The range of services provided in libraries.
- The out-sourcing option “contract versus trust versus in-house delivery”.

3.3 Members of the Working Group were updated on the existing hierarchy of libraries within the borough, and the distribution of the existing library service and the Visitor and Issues Figures.

15 Static libraries

Tier 1

Central Library

Tier 2 – District

Beckenham Library

Orpington Library

Tier 3 – Neighbourhood

Biggin Hill Library

Tier 4 – Community

Anerley Library

Burnt Ash Library

Hayes Library

Mottingham Library

Penge Library

Shortlands Library

Southborough Library

St Pauls Cray Library

1 Mobile Library

Chislehurst Library
Petts Wood Library
West Wickham Library

- 3.4 A full list of activities provided by the Bromley Library Service was provided to the Working Group and in order that Members of the Working Group could fully consider the borough's library offer, all of the libraries were visited on Saturday 13th November 2010.
- 3.5 Broadening out the Working Group debate, the efficiency of the library service was considered in terms of:
- Are the arrangements for the delivery of the library service – buildings, staff, service provision, facilities and technology – meeting the demands of the community and are they cost efficient?
 - What partnership opportunities exist to make the services more efficient and effective? For instance, Biggin Hill Library was cited as an example of good practice. Opening hours had been extended within existing budgets, the range of services had been broadened and book borrowing had risen by 30%.
- 3.6 The Biggin Hill model also highlighted the potential value in integrating or co-locating library services with other public sector services, in this case a swimming pool. However members of the Working Group noted that co-location of services was not always an option that was available, but there was general agreement that Biggin Hill provided a broader template for what a modern library offer could look like, and the positive effect that this could have on a local community.
- 3.7 In March 2010 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published "The Modernisation Review of Public Libraries", a policy statement.
- 3.8 The key drivers behind this report were to:
- Drive forward the quality of all library services up to the level of the best.
 - Aim to reverse the decline in library usage.
 - Aim to ensure that library services respond to the current economic climate and limited public sector resources.
 - Aim to respond to the growing expectations of people and communities in terms of access to information.
- 3.9 In order to achieve these drivers, this report set out a number of proposals.

A Library Offer to the Public

- 3.10 The working Group were advised that the Government had issued advice on what a library offer should comprise for all public libraries in England. The library offer will be made up of a 'core offer' of services which all library services should deliver and a 'local offer' of service shaped and delivered at local level.

A core offer for all libraries

- 3.11 Central Government recommends that the core offer for all libraries should include the following provisions to be made available across all library authorities:

- **Library membership from birth:** Details of local schemes to ensure that library membership is available from the earliest point in a child's life (The Government expects that from April 2011 all local authorities ensure that library membership is an entitlement to children from birth).
- **An opportunity to have your say and get involved in shaping the service.**
- **Free access to a range of quality book stock to browse and borrow and online resources and information that meet local needs** (including e-books as the market grows).
- **Access to the national book collection** – any book from anywhere: Order any book through your library (even out of print books).
- **Free internet access for all:** computers and access to online information and communication. (The Government will change legislation to prevent library authorities charging for internet access from April 2011).
- **Help to get online:** support for people using the internet for the first time or searching for information.
- **Links to other public services and opportunities:** connections to health, education and learning or employment opportunities (local details to be set out).
- **A community of Readers:** connecting people to other readers through reading groups, activities and recommendations.
- **Flexible opening hours:** to suit the needs of the local people (local details to be set out).
- **Commitment to customer service and expert, helpful staff.**
- **A safe local space which is accessible and convenient for the community.**

- **24 hour access:** through your library's online catalogue, online reference and other services. Website details to be set out.
- **Services which reach out and attract local people** (local details to be set out including 'at home' services to housebound people).
- **An opportunity to be a member of all libraries in England:** easy to join, accessible services as announced by the Society of Chief Librarians.

3.12 On 3rd December 2010 Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries wrote to all local authorities around the financial challenges on local authorities, particularly in relation to library services. The Minister set out a number of key considerations that every library service should have in mind, these are:

- a statement of what the service is trying to achieve;
- a description of local needs, including the general and specific needs of adults and children who live, work and study in the area;
- a detailed description of how the service will be delivered and how the plans will fully take into account the demography of the area and the different needs of adults and children in different areas (both in general and specific terms);
- the resources available for the service, including an annual budget.

3.13 In order for the authority to avoid a successful challenge that was the case in the Wirral prior to implementing any proposed changes to the service it would have to comply with the above statement.

3.14 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires the authority to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" public library service. The terms "comprehensive and efficient" are not defined within the Act; however the Act requires local authorities to provide, free of charge, access for people who live, work or study in their area to borrow or refer to books and other material in line with their needs and requirements.

4. OPTIONS FOR RECOMENDATION

Option 1 – Status Quo

4.1 Proposed revenue savings of £140k in 2012/13 made up of £50k savings from changes to the way in which the Site Officer function is delivered and £90k saving from the amalgamation of the Penge of and Anerley libraries providing a similar service, but no further planned closures. The delivery of the Penge/Anerley option is dependent on the authority securing suitable premises and the Working Group acknowledged that this area of work would be subject to further reports.

Option 2 - **Library Rationalisation and Reduction in Service Points**

4.2 A rationalisation plan would reduce the number of service points (Tier 4 – Community Libraries) and significantly improves the remaining libraries (Tiers 1, 2 and 3).

4.3 One approach arising from this option could be based on retaining:

Penge Library (merged with Anerley)
West Wickham Library
Bromley Town Library
Biggin Hill Library
Petts Wood Library
Beckenham Library
Orpington Library
Chislehurst Library

and releasing:

ANERLEY: Poor site at the back of the Town Hall. Low level of book issues and close to Penge

PENGE: Popular but totally inadequate for a modern library service as it is so small and provides no room for children's activities, learning or the growing demand for PC based services

BURNT ASH: This small part time branch is the least used for book borrowing. Whilst it's activities are popular it is very close to the Central Library.

HAYES: Another part-time library with reasonable book issues and range of events. However it is divorced from the shops in the area and many Hayes residents will shop in either Bromley or West Wickham.

MOTTINGHAM: This branch, right on the edge of the borough, is poorly used for book borrowing but has a very vibrant range of popular activities. Potential for merging with the Learning shop elsewhere in Mottingham.

SHORTLANDS: Close to Central Library, although separated by the railway line, this is a reasonably popular library but in the middle of a residential area.

SOUTHBOROUGH: Although this library is the busiest book borrowing Community library this branch is poorly designed with an inaccessible upper floor and is very close to the bigger Petts Wood Library with significant overlap in their catchment areas. The branch is also close to the wider catchment of the Central Library.

ST. PAUL'S CRAY: Book borrowing is about average at this branch, serving a more isolated and relatively deprived area. The isolated location makes it

more prone to vandalism. However the facility is quite near to Orpington Library which is currently undergoing a major improvement. There is also the potential for merging the service with the Cotmandene Learning Shop.

- 4.4 If this option were to be implemented it is considered necessary to improve the remaining libraries with the funds from the sale of these sites will be used to refurbish:

Petts Wood Library
Bromley Central Library
West Wickham Library
Beckenham Library
Chislehurst Library

- 4.5 LBB's 15 libraries currently have coverage of 98% in terms of proximity (households within one mile.) Adopting the above approach would reduce the coverage, based on the same criteria (households within one mile) to 91%. . Members of the Working Group were advised that the Public Enquiry in Wirral Metropolitan Borough Councils (MBC) library found that the Council's decision to restructure its library service to be in breach of its statutory duties under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The primary reason for this breach was that the Council failed to make an assessment of local needs within its strategic asset review whereby it sought to restructure its library service down from 24 to 13 neighbourhood centres.

- 4.6 This approach would require the ring-fencing of the capital sums achieved from the disposal of the five sites (assuming that capital receipts from releasing Penge and Anerley are themselves ring-fenced to the costs of the new Penge Library) into development works at Petts Wood, Central, West Wickham, Beckenham and Chislehurst. (A new modern Orpington Library is due to open at the end of March/early April 2011.) The concept being to create "super" libraries that embrace the components of Biggin Hill and shortly Orpington Libraries, in that they are modern and welcoming spaces that are accessible with an enhanced offer, both in terms of opening hours/days but also in terms of the services that they offer.

- 4.7 This option can be developed at a number of levels in terms of the number of libraries closed and the final cost savings will be dependent on what branches are closed and which are retained, the hours and days of operation and the range of services offered. Furthermore, within this option it is possible to mitigate the impact further by utilising the two learning shops at Cotmandene and Mottingham. A reduced library offer in terms of books for loan could be provided in each of the shops which currently duplicate a range of services within St.Pauls Cray and Mottingham libraries. If this was accepted it would be possible to explore the range of opening hours of the learning shops. The Working Group discussed the potential of providing a libraries 'outreach' service, in much the same way that the sports development role is delivered. For instance, if a particular branch were to be closed, certain non core activities, such a book reading clubs, could be delivered in local venues.

- 4.8 Members of the working group were advised that Initial valuations of those libraries which could be released (excluding Penge and Anerley) indicate potential capital receipts in the region of £2.6 million. As already identified, it is recommended that this is reinvested in the five libraries identified in paragraph 4.3 to fully modernise them and to introduce self-service (RFID) to those sites that currently are not on the network. As with Option 1, this option would require further reports to members

Option 3 Market Test current of reduced service

- 4.9 A 'soft' market testing exercise has been undertaken in conjunction with John Laing integrated Services Ltd who currently manage the library service in the London Borough of Hounslow. Savings have been identified by Laings based on the eight super library approach as set out in Option 2. These savings are in the main achieved through:

- Increased self service across the libraries network
- Service rationalisation
- Asset management
- Creation of a lean organisational structure
- Utilisation of site officers/security guards instead of core library staff to prolong opening hours.
- Encouraging co-location of a wider range of services to share costs.
- Creation of a virtual library

In order to fully understand the financial benefit from this approach it would be necessary to undertake a formal market testing exercise. This could specify a range of options, including management of the current 15 plus mobile service through to the option above featuring 8 super library hubs. The market for outsourcing library services is increasing albeit at a relatively moderate rate with the latest outcome being that of Slough Borough Council who, through a formal tender have invited Essex County Council to manage their library service.

Option 4 Partnership Model.

- 4.10 Discussions have been held with the London Borough of Bexley to examine the concept of merging two library services into one new organisation. There is a strong indication that significant savings could be realised through the merging of management structures from head of service to branch manager and junior professional level. Furthermore, it should be possible to save an additional sum through economies of scale and rationalisation of resources and other parts of the budgets not covered by the management structure. This option has been examined on the basis of maintaining the existing library stock within each of the two boroughs. An initial analysis would seem to indicate that creating one library management team would save in the region of £350,000 - £550,000 in staff costs. Further costs savings are currently being identified from services areas such as:

- Shared IT and Library Management Systems

- Book stack amalgamation
- Deliveries and book movements
- Shared head office accommodation
- Cash Collection

4.11 In addition, if incorporated into a 'trust', further savings could accrue to the two authorities relating to the potential rate relief on their NNDR costs.

4.12 As with Option 2, the Partnership model still enables the distribution of libraries to be considered and the Working Group considered that it was important that consideration was given within this option to consider the distribution of the library branch network and that as part of this work any potential capital receipts should be reinvested into remaining libraries as part of a modernisation programme.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 As already set out in the report local authorities through The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 have a duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" public library service.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The working Group were advised that a range of savings had been identified from within the following options:

Option 1 Status Quo

£140,000 comprising £90,000 from merging Penge and Anerley Libraries providing a like for like service and £50,000 from the review of the libraries Site Officers. This option will be considered by the Executive on 14th February 2011.

Option 2 – Library Rationalisation

This option would save between £500,000 and £750,000 depending on the final structure of the revised offer. For example if this option was pursued, members may wish to see the remaining 8 libraries operating with extended hours and days, above that of the current provision. If this option was opted for, then savings at the lower end of the spectrum would be achieved, not enhancing opening hours would see savings at the higher end, i.e. £750,000. Similarly, if members were of the view that not all of the community libraries should close, i.e. the option to merge St. Pauls Cray Library with the Cotmandene Learning Shop and Mottingham Library with the Mottingham Learning Shop, the levels of savings achieved would be reduced.

Option 3 Market Testing

Savings have been identified, through a 'soft' market testing exercise for an eight library service and further savings have been identified over a ten year contract. Actual savings would only be identified following a formal tender process and would ultimately be dependent on the level of service delivery that was specified.

Option 4 Partnership/Trust Model.

Savings in the region of £350,000 - £550,000 have been identified from merging two boroughs management structures, further savings from joint working are currently being developed with a view to identifying more savings. Further savings could accrue from the partnership model expanding into a trust.

As with the Option 2, if a number of libraries were to be closed as part of this option, then the level of savings would increase.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Members of the Working Group were advised that there were a number of pieces of legislation that affected the authorities decision making on the delivery of a library service, in particular:
- 7.2 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires the authority to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” public library service. The terms “comprehensive and efficient” are not defined within the Act; however the Act requires local authorities to provide, free of charge, access for people who live, work or study in their area to borrow or refer to books and other material in line with their needs and requirements.
- 7.3 The race relations (Amendment Act) (2000), Disability Discrimination Act (2005) and the Equality Act 2006 further place a duty on a public body to carry out equality Impact Assessments as soon as a new policy, function or service is considered.
- 7.4 The Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007 and the new Statutory Guidance for the Duty to involve as it places authorities under a duty to consider the possibilities for provision of information to, consultation with and involvement of representatives of local persons across all authority areas.