

# CULTURE, TOURISM & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING

## Agenda Item 32

Brighton & Hove City Council

**Subject:** *Libraries Consultation – Systems Thinking Approach*  
**Date of Meeting:** **24 November 2011**  
**Report of:** *Director of Communities*  
**Contact Officer:** Name: **Sally McMahon** Tel: **29-6963**  
E-mail: [sally.mcmahon@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:sally.mcmahon@brighton-hove.gov.uk)  
**Key Decision:** No Forward Plan No.  
**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the results of recent libraries consultation and to note the action plans arising from this work.
- 1.2 This report highlights the main findings from a project to apply a systems thinking approach to libraries services review, where the customer is engaged in a conversation with open questions, as opposed to the more traditional survey approach where the questions are mainly closed with a range of predetermined answers suggested.
- 1.3 Managers and staff spoke with 2,328 people between May and September 2010 and the results were analysed to see where the service had failed to meet either the demands from customers or their values. The purpose of focusing on failure demand and value is to help the service identify the main areas on which to focus improvement activity.
- 1.4 The results of the systems thinking review shows that Brighton & Hove Libraries satisfy a significantly high number of the demands (87.2%) and values (89.8%) placed on it. However, there is a small but important 12.6% of demands and 7.9% of values not being achieved and where services can be improved. The action plan developed as part of this review focuses on ways to reduce that failure demand or value.
- 1.5 This customer research is part of a comprehensive approach to consult with users and non-users and to identify the library needs of people in the city. The range of methods used include: regular user surveys in libraries, and also online; community engagement activity to identify the needs of specific communities; customer comments and complaints; feedback from events and activities; city wide residents' survey; public meetings related to specific developments.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 To note the results of the review of libraries services using a systems thinking approach.
- 2.2 To approve the actions to improve Libraries Services as outlined in section 3.9 and appendix 1.

## **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 With training and support from Vanguard Consulting Ltd., paid for by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Libraries Service in Brighton & Hove started Systems Thinking work during 2010 in order to better tailor services to the needs of customers. This report is the result of the first phase of this Systems Thinking work ("Check") which comprised of questioning a range of customers and some key flow work to identify how resources are used to meet customer's demands.
- 3.2 Systems Thinking is a very different approach from the traditional survey work undertaken by the library service. In a survey, the questions are mainly closed and already pre-determined and a range of answers suggested. Thus the customer is restricted to only responding on certain topics and only within a certain range of answers. With Systems Thinking the customer is engaged in conversation with open questions. Thus they can talk freely about anything that is particularly important to them about the service. Staff record their responses in the customer's own language where possible so as not to lose the true essence of what they have said.
- 3.3 It is clear from what customers said that libraries are not just a transaction-based service. Many customers visit libraries because they value libraries, for example as a communal space and for social reasons. Thus the values that customers said they attach to libraries were analysed to the same depth as their direct demands on the service.
- 3.4 The top 80% of things that customers had come into the library for were:
  - Borrowing or using stock (48.8%)
  - Using ICT facilities (10.7%)
  - Gaining information and studying, including researching jobs (7.4%)
  - Meeting friends, bringing children in to play and read, and using the library as a community space (5.8%)
  - To sit and read or write (5.0%)
  - To attend an event or activity (3.2%)
- 3.5 The top 80% of things that customers said they valued about their libraries were:
  - Being able to borrow from a good selection of stock (21.6%)
  - Having a nice environment – nice building with good facilities which is welcoming, relaxing and family friendly (18.9%)
  - "I love everything about my library" (14.0%)
  - The library is part of their local community (12.9%)

- Welcoming and helpful staff (8.8%)
  - Services are free (5.0%)
  - Availability of ICT facilities (3.6%)
- 3.6 The results were analysed to see where the service had failed to meet either the demands from customers or their values. A failure is counted where the service failed to provide what the customer expected on the first contact, or where libraries currently do not provide the service. Also, for the purposes of analysis, customers expressing a fear of cuts in the service were counted as a “Failure”.
- The service failed to meet 12.6% of demands made on it
  - The service failed to meet 7.9% of customer values
- 3.7 The results show clearly that libraries are not monolithic and that customers in different libraries make different demands of the service and have differing values. The main differences in demands on the service were:
- Jubilee Library had a more than 10% lower proportion of demands for stock relative to the demands for other services compared with the other libraries in the city
  - Jubilee Library had the highest proportion of demands for gaining information and studying, including researching jobs. Connected to this Jubilee also had by far the highest proportion of customers wanting to sit and read or write.
  - Jubilee Library had the highest proportion of demands for meeting friends, bringing children in to play and read, and using the library as a community space. Community libraries came second on this and Hove had a much lower proportion (half that of community libraries).
- 3.8 There were much bigger differences shown in the responses from customers in different libraries about what they value in the service. The main differences being:
- Customers in the Community Libraries placed their highest value in the library as an integral part of their local community. Their next highest values were the quality of service they received from staff and that services were free.
  - Customers in Hove Library often said “I love everything about my library” without being more specific. They also placed high value on a peaceful, relaxing and friendly environment.
  - Customers in Jubilee Library most valued being able to borrow from a good range of stock. This was closely followed by valuing the building itself for its space and ambience, and finding it a peaceful and relaxing place to be.
- 3.9 The service will be working to improve the small, but important, percentage of demands and values that were failures. Cutting down on failures also cuts down on wasted work putting those failures right. The key recommendations of this report are that:
- Improve range of stock supplied, as well as the processing and flow of stock between libraries

- Seek opportunities to improve many aspects of the environment through wholesale redevelopment or refurbishment of libraries
- Review all library opening hours to better meet community need
- Modernise the ICT facilities, providing WiFi at Jubilee Library and changing the PC booking system to allow longer time slots
- Train and support staff to give a consistent standard of service
- Deploy staff to mirror customer demand at different times so that customers are well served, and staff less stressed
- Review and change the flow of back-office work to ensure that it directly supports the front-line offer in ways that are of value to customers. This will improve the service to the customer while cutting down on waste.

A copy of the detailed action plan is in Appendix 1

#### **4. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 4.1 The consultation was carried out between May and September 2010 across all service points including the mobile library. 2,328 people were asked, mainly users in libraries but also including outreach to community locations and events, and a web questionnaire. In this way the work covered non-users as well as current customers. 9,011 comments were captured overall.
- 4.2 The library customers were engaged in conversation with two open questions:
- What have you come into the library to do today? (Demands)
  - What do you value about libraries? (Values)
- 4.3 In addition to engaging customers in conversation, a system of Post-It notes was used in Jubilee Library to find out the views of customers who are difficult to reach. This was found to be particularly useful in reaching young people, those with mental health issues and those who preferred not to have their study or ICT time interrupted.
- 4.4 Staff also attended several outreach events in the community where further data was collected, including from non-library users and there was also an online questionnaire on the council website.
- 4.5 Enquiries coming in through the back-office service points (telephone, email and the national “Enquire” online system) were looked at.
- 4.6 In addition to the customer comments, managers spent time observing the front line, looking at the flow of work and finding out from front-line workers what helps and what hinders their giving a good service to customers.
- 4.7 A draft of this report was shared with other departments in the council who have done Systems Thinking work in order to gain a critical review of this work.

## 5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The actions proposed are expected to improve efficiency, the customer experience and deliver improved value for money. Implementation of a number of the actions is underway funded from the current budget. The proposals arising from the review of opening hours and seeking options for redevelopment/refurbishment of libraries will be considered in the new three year Libraries Plan which will be consulted on in the autumn and reflected in revenue and capital budget strategies.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley      Date: 2 August 2011

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce Principal Solicitor      Date: 12 August 2011

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Programme of consultation and improving Libraries Services is part of an equalities strategy to widen access for all, and in particular to target services to the priority groups identified by the council. An equalities impact assessment has been completed on this research, and the improvements proposed will benefit all service users and in particular children and families, including loan parents; unemployed people; disabled people, and some targeted groups such as LGBT.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 *Sustainable Consumption and Production* : No implications  
*Climate Change and Energy*: No implications.  
*Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement*: No implications.  
*Sustainable Communities*: The involvement of local people in identifying improvements in services is one way libraries engage the community. The research has highlighted the important role of libraries in local communities including the community around Jubilee Library.

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications.

### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There is a risk that regular surveys may raise expectations which cannot be delivered within the current economic climate.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Consulting with library users supports the corporate priority to have 'Open and Effective Leadership' as it helps involve and engage local people in decisions about their local library services.
- 5.8 Improving Library Services will support the corporate priority to 'Reducing inequality by increasing opportunity', as they help increase opportunities through access to information and computer facilities, supporting learning and skills development, and broadening cultural understanding in the community.

Public Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 5.9 Libraries deliver health and wellbeing information services, and Improvements to these services will benefit the wider community.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

No other options considered.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 To improve the quality of libraries services, increase library use and to deliver better value for money.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**1. Appendices:**

Action Plan – extract from full report

**2. Documents In Members' Rooms**

Consultation using Systems Thinking Approach Report August 2011

**3. Background Documents**

None

## Recommendations and Action Plan

Recommendations	Actions	Measures of success	Lead Officer(s) and Time
<p><b>Stock</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Flow of stock – look at time to deliver new titles to libraries. This includes looking at the Bibliographic Service Provider’s supply times, our processing and moving the stock to community libraries via courier.</li> <li>▪ Flow of stock – look at time taken to deliver Reservations to libraries. This includes looking at our processing, the courier service route and the effect of Bank Holidays on delivery times.</li> <li>▪ Broaden the range of stock of all types, especially at community libraries, and cut out duplication of Adult Fiction titles (unless needed eg large print and normal print copies). Ensure that the selection profiles reflect the need for a broad range of stock.</li> <li>▪ Where there is a series of books, ensure that we have the complete series as customers find missing books in a series frustrating (happens a lot with Children &amp; Young People’s stock)</li> <li>▪ Stock layout – Experiment with taking out crime, and possibly sci-fi and romance, Adult Fiction into their own areas at a few community libraries and see how customers react, with a view to rolling</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stock</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stock Project</li> <li>▪ Courier Project</li> <li>▪ Rewrite stock profiles and ensure that Bertrams’ buyers understand the new specifications</li> <li>▪ Use Engage software to identify problems with serials. Inform the Bibliographic Service Provider of failures.</li> <li>▪ Experiment with Crime genre separately shelved in one or two libraries and monitor customer responses. Rollout more genres/other libraries dependant on</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stock</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stock Project report and action plan completed</li> <li>▪ Courier Project report and action plan completed</li> <li>▪ Stock Project report and action plan completed</li> <li>▪ Reduction in number of missing copies from series</li> <li>▪ Body of evidence from experiments for use in informing further</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stock</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stock Project Manager to be appointed (Autumn 2011)</li> <li>▪ Courier Project Lead to be appointed (Autumn 2011)</li> <li>▪ Stock staff and Stock Project Manager (December 2011)</li> <li>▪ Stock staff (March 2012)</li> <li>▪ Stock staff and library managers (March 2012)</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Lead Officer(s) and Time</b>
<p>out to all libraries if customer reaction is positive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that stock shelving and shelf tidying is done consistently so as to reduce the number of reservations that are failure demands on the service. This is particularly important at Jubilee Library.</li> <li>▪ Provide better central support from Jubilee Library to Hove Library and the Community Libraries from the managers with stock responsibilities.</li> <li>▪ Stock online services - Ensure that all items on the catalogue that are never likely to be available to customers are not seen on the public OPAC (ie the public catalogue in libraries and on the website) – customers do not like messages like “bring repaired since 2007” or “out of circulation”</li> </ul>	<p>responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review Jubilee Library timetabling to ensure effective use of Library Officers and Assistants for shelving and to free managers’ time at regular intervals for supporting other libraries.</li> <li>▪ Change the necessary parameters in Spydus to hide unavailable stock and either set this up to be automated or set up a regular manual review to keep the data up to date.</li> </ul>	<p>work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced failure demand for reservations</li> <li>▪ Improved stock in community libraries and Hove</li> <li>▪ Unavailable stock hidden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operations and Service Development Managers (December 2011)</li> <li>▪ Stock and library Service Development Managers (December 2011)</li> <li>▪ ICT manager (December 2011)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve many aspects of the environment through wholesale redevelopment or refurbishment of libraries.</li> <li>▪ To reduce the level of complaints about noise, staff should be encouraged to challenge inappropriate noise (eg. someone speaking very loudly on a mobile phone, a child running around screaming loudly, responding quickly to the alarm system, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek opportunities to improve many aspects of the environment through wholesale redevelopment or refurbishment of libraries.</li> <li>▪ Managers to ensure that staff understand that it is an expectation that they should challenge inappropriate noise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced number of complaints and failures due to environment.</li> <li>▪ Reduced number of complaints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Library Management Team (ongoing)</li> <li>▪ All managers (October 2011)</li> </ul>



<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Lead Officer(s) and Time</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide a toilet and baby changing facility in every library.</li> <li>▪ Provide sufficient space for parents and children, with toys to play with, in every library.</li> <li>▪ Review use of space in Jubilee – seating and tables versus use for stock and activities. In the months leading up to exams use the Learning Centre as an extra quiet space for study with extra seats and tables.</li> <li>▪ Review the use of space in other libraries to ensure sufficient study and seating space.</li> <li>▪ Provide refreshments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide toilet and baby changing facilities when refurbishing or redeveloping any libraries.</li> <li>▪ Courier project needs to look at the movement of toys between libraries. If a wider distribution of toys is felt desirable, a larger toy budget would be needed.</li> <li>▪ Investigate the use of the Learning Centre in Jubilee Library as an extra quiet space for study with extra seats and tables.</li> <li>▪ Review the use of space in libraries.</li> <li>▪ Introduce refreshments in Jubilee Library.</li> <li>▪ Review how best to provide refreshments in all other libraries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased facilities</li> <li>▪ Improved movement of toy stock across the city</li> <li>▪ Extra seating and tables available during the exam period</li> <li>▪ Review completed</li> <li>▪ Refreshments available in all libraries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighbourhood &amp; Enterprise Manager (ongoing)</li> <li>▪ Courier Project Lead (March 2012)</li> <li>▪ Marketing &amp; Income Manager and Libraries Facilities Manager (September 2011)</li> <li>▪ Service Development Managers (December 2011)</li> <li>▪ Library Managers (Jubilee July 2011, review other libraries by Dec 2011)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure all staff, including relief staff, are trained to the same level of customer service and that standards are maintained through proper management and supervision on the floor.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that customer service standards form part of the induction training of any staff member or member of relief staff.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that customer service standards are maintained through managers regularly supervising on the floor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved standard of customer service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All Managers (September 2011)</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Lead Officer(s) and Time</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek opportunities to improve Library opening hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review all library opening hours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Library Management Team (December 2011)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information and Enquiry service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review our information provision and seek new ways of working that will ensure better consistency of information regardless of the location or time of the customer request.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Information and Enquiry service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review our information provision and implement new ways of working.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New ways of working implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information &amp; Learning Manager (April 2012)</li> </ul>
<p><b>ICT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide WiFi at Jubilee Library.</li> <li>▪ Allow more than 1hr time slots.</li> <li>▪ Provide access to power points to plug in laptops, particularly at Jubilee Library.</li> <li>▪ Become proactive in monitoring the need to upgrade key software and putting in place ways to avoid customers being unable to open common file formats.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ICT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide WiFi at Jubilee Library.</li> <li>▪ Change booking system to allow greater than 1hr time slots.</li> <li>▪ Find a way to enable access to power points to plug in laptops, particularly at Jubilee Library.</li> <li>▪ Set up a system for monitoring the need to upgrade key software. Proactively ensure that customers are able to open common file formats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WiFi available to customers</li> <li>▪ Change in time slots</li> <li>▪ Sufficient supply of power points for customers with appropriate Health &amp; Safety precautions</li> <li>▪ Reduced customer complaints about the age of the ICT available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICT Manager (March 2012)</li> <li>▪ ICT Manager (September 2011)</li> <li>▪ Libraries Facilities Manager (March 2012)</li> <li>▪ ICT Manager (March 2012)</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Lead Officer(s) and Time</b>
<p><b>Staff deployment and Back-office work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The deployment of staff on the front-line should be further checked against customer demand to ensure that we deploy staff in a way that maximises our capacity to meet customer demand.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that all back-office (“function”) work done is of direct value to our customers and is properly resourced.</li> <li>▪ Flow of “function” work done by staff should be looked at to ensure that the work is being done in the most time-effective way using all the tools available, such as ICT, in the most efficient manner.</li> <li>▪ The current model of teams of staff concentrating on similar function work should be made more flexible to better use the skills and abilities of staff and to encourage the sharing of knowledge.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Staff deployment and Back-office work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check footfall against deployment in all libraries</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate that each piece of back-office work is making a necessary contribution to front-line priorities. If this cannot be demonstrated then that piece of work should be dropped. If the work is necessary, then ensure that it is properly resourced.</li> <li>▪ Carry out Systems Thinking flow work with front-line staff and identify with them where changes in work practice would be beneficial. This includes all work done in all libraries that is not directly on the front-line. It also includes ensuring that work is distributed effectively across the service.</li> <li>▪ Create opportunities for staff in all libraries to broaden their range of skills when looking at how to change the flow of the back-office work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Better quality front-line service particularly during busy periods, and reduced levels of stress on staff at busy times</li> <li>▪ Reduced levels of back-office work while ensuring proper resourcing for work that is necessary</li> <li>▪ Reduced levels of back-office work by using the most efficient approach to it and deploying staff effectively to do it</li> <li>▪ Better focus and quality of back-office work, and more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Library Management Team (March 2012)</li> <li>▪ Service Development Managers (December 2011)</li> <li>▪ All Managers (December 2011)</li> <li>▪ All Managers (December 2011)</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Lead Officer(s) and Time</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Managers should ensure that they thoroughly understand the work their staff are doing in their function time and constantly review this to ensure that it is making a necessary contribution to front-line priorities. Individual Performance Reviews should include clear objectives and target setting for functional roles, and this information should be collated and reviewed by Service Development Managers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All managers to include careful setting of tasks and clear deadlines in IPRs and 121s</li> <li>▪ Service Development Managers to collate tasks and deadline information in their areas to monitor the ongoing relevance and efficiency of back-office work. This information to be shared across the SDM team with a view to flexible working.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ opportunities for staff to gain new skills.</li> <li>▪ Better focus of back-office work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All Managers (immediate)</li> <li>▪ Service Development Managers (December 2011)</li> </ul>