

Subject:	Role of Public Libraries in the Community		
Date of Meeting:	11th March 2019		
Report of:	Executive Director (Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing)		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the role of public libraries in achieving strategic outcomes for local communities and illustrate how the direction of travel for libraries ties in with and goes beyond the Neighbourhoods development work that this committee has championed.
- 1.2 National context:
- 1.2.1 The most recent independent review of Public Libraries in England, the Seighart Review, published in December 2014, found that '*not enough decision makers at national or local level appear sufficiently aware of the remarkable and vital value that a good library service can offer modern communities of every size and character*'. It identified libraries as a '*golden thread throughout our lives*', and found that: '*Despite the growth in digital technologies, there is still a clear need and demand within communities for modern, safe, non-judgemental, flexible spaces, where citizens of all ages can mine the knowledge of the world for free, supported by the help and knowledge of the library workforce. This is particularly true for the most vulnerable in society who need support and guidance and to children and young people who benefit from engagement with libraries outside of the formal classroom environment.*'
- 1.2.2 The report envisages libraries as vibrant and attractive community hubs, which support individuals and communities to become more enterprising, more literate, and in consequence, more prosperous.

1.2.3 Libraries major role in rectifying literacy standards is recognised, working in partnership with schools and colleges. Support for digital literacy and fluency are also seen as core library roles.

1.2.4 Sieghart also identifies the opportunity for other government departments to use libraries as a resource to help deliver their services and so deliver better value for money.

1.3 Brighton & Hove Libraries Delivering for their Local Communities

Brighton & Hove Libraries have taken a lead from the Seighart Review, and the more recent Libraries Taskforce, which sees Libraries as delivering for their local communities in seven different ways:

1. Stronger more resilient communities
2. Healthier and happier lives
3. Improved digital access and literacy
4. Cultural and creative enrichment
5. Increased reading and literacy
6. Helping everyone achieve their potential
7. Greater prosperity

How each of these community outcomes is delivered by Libraries is outlined in section 3 below.

1.4 A report on a new Libraries Plan for 2020-24 will be presented to this committee in Autumn 2019. This report will build on the achievements of the last plan covering 2016-20.

2 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

2.1 That committee members note the direction of travel for Libraries in the city.

2.2 That committee members request a report on the development of the new Libraries Plan for 2020-24 be brought to them in Autumn 2019.

3 **CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 Stronger more resilient communities

3.1.1 As an active partner in the Neighbourhoods work in Brighton & Hove, Libraries are helping deliver stronger more resilient communities by providing:

- A welcoming space for all
- Events and activities to suit a variety of needs and for all ages to enjoy
- Opportunities to reduce loneliness
- Safe non-judgemental spaces for social interaction
- Places where diverse communities can integrate
- Opportunities for local access to services working with partners

- 3.1.2 Whitehawk Library is a core part of the Whitehawk Hub and is working with other services at the hub and in the area to collaborate over service provision. Libraries have provided a base for Due East community organisation and free wifi not only for library users but also for the community café. The library is used by health partners, advice agencies, community groups and other service providers to meet with clients, run events or other activities on a regular basis.
- 3.1.3 Moulsecoomb Library will be at the centre of the new hub for Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, and Hangleton Library has a long history of working with Hangleton & Knoll Project to support community development activity in the area.
- 3.1.4 Looking beyond the initial four hub priority areas, all the libraries in the city have the potential to facilitate community cohesion in their localities, and many have some experience of working with local partners to provide advice, information, support and activities to achieve beneficial outcomes for their communities. Examples of some of these partners are listed below in 3.1.5 – 3.1.9.
- 3.1.5 CAB have used Jubilee and Hove Libraries to hold advise surgeries and are interested in potentially using some of the community libraries to reach into local communities in the city.
- 3.1.6 Libraries are working with Hollingdean Community Trust to improve access to library and digital resources through the local community centre. As a result of this partnership working, the Centre will soon have free wifi access, and a small community collection of library resources. Library staff and volunteers will work with other colleagues to provide support for learning and digital access in this new location.
- 3.1.7 This year Libraries have been working to support refugees in the city and are preparing to sign up as a Library of Sanctuary as part of Sanctuary on Sea in Brighton & Hove. Libraries have also been working with the Network of International Women and EuroMernet and supporting Young Voices.
- 3.1.8 Examples of other agencies who have already worked with libraries include:
- Trust for Developing Communities – a community development organisation
 - Money Advice Service
 - YMCA counselling – providing counselling to young people
 - Youth Employment Services – providing employment advice to young people
 - Possability People – supporting people with disabilities
 - Grass Routes -suicide prevention organisation
 - Creative Futures – art training for people with mental health problems
 - Alzheimer’s Society Dementia café – for those with Alzheimer and their carers
 - Early Childhood Project – providing development through play in libraries
 - U3A and the local universities – supporting adults learning
 - Health professionals – such as community nurses
 - Schools – through class visits or creative activities in libraries
- 3.1.9 The introduction of Libraries Extra which enables library members to get into their local library seven days a week (10 libraries, the remainder have six-day opening), means that more local groups, organisations and schools as well as individual local people can get to their local library on days to suit them. Local groups can drive the development of community hubs, as they are encouraged to use the library during Libraries Extra days e.g. local schools bringing class visits, local carers groups

holding mutual support sessions, etc. Since Libraries Extra was introduced in 2016, the number of visits during these times has increased and is on target to exceed 30,000 this year.

3.1.10 Libraries' reputation as welcoming, safe, non-judgemental spaces attracts a great variety of individuals and groups to use library spaces, and resources, and can result in people who might otherwise never mix, meeting and interacting with each other, helping to foster social cohesion and building links, knowledge and understanding between different residents in the community.

3.1.11 Last year over 26,000 people attended library events or activities inside libraries or as outreach activities, and there is scope for more community lead activity to be hosted in Brighton & Hove Libraries, making the most of this community asset.

3.2 Healthier and happier lives

3.2.1 Libraries offer a wide range of health information, both online and through quality-assured reading lists dealing with the more common health conditions. Reading Well – Books on Prescription service - provides self-help books for managing common conditions including stress, depression, anxiety and dementia. In their role as community hubs, libraries also offer non-clinical spaces in localities where health and wellbeing groups can work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue.

3.2.2 Libraries reduce levels of loneliness by bringing people together and provide volunteering opportunities keeping people active and engaged. Libraries support community lead health initiatives, especially where they are co-located with GP surgeries as in Whitehawk, Woodingdean and Portslade. Reading has been shown to reduce stress, and the library provides Mood-boosting books to lift spirits and help contribute to well-being.

3.2.3 Libraries have arranged with Public Health for Social Navigators to work in Whitehawk and Hangleton Libraries twice a month. Libraries have also worked with the local NHS teaching hospital and Mind on 'Time to Talk' to encourage discussion on mental health concerns. Other initiatives such as World Mental Health day and Movember have also been supported.

3.2.4 Libraries provide Bookstart gifting programme from birth. Regular book sharing significantly shapes behavioural patterns and attitudes and increases a child's life opportunities. The benefits gained from Bookstart contribute to parental bonding, early listening and communication skills, development of attention span, pre-literacy skills and social skills.

3.3 Improved digital access and literacy

3.3.1 Libraries provide digital access and support the improvement of digital literacy, which is critical to central and local government strategies around economic development, channel-shift, reducing social isolation and creating community cohesion. Brighton & Hove Libraries are a founding member of the Digital Brighton & Hove Network which has brought together over 130 organisations to support digital inclusion activity in the city. By the end of December 2018, Digital Brighton & Hove had recruited 413 Digital Champions and supported 3,238 individual learners. Libraries have made significant contributions through the provision of free access to computers and the internet in all libraries, and free one-to-one support from Libraries Connect

volunteers. In the first three quarters of this year, Libraries delivered 1,372 hours of Libraries Connect support to 572 people.

- 3.3.2 A new innovation this year will be the provision of Coding Clubs working with a local digital company starting in March. The Code Club will be targeted at young people to develop their digital skills

3.4 Cultural and creative enrichment

- 3.4.1 Brighton & Hove Libraries lead the highly successful Arts Council England funded projects such as Evolving in Conversation – a ground-breaking multidisciplinary Arts project engaging communities with professional artists. Partners included: Artswork, Photoworks, New Writing South, South East Dance, Culture Shift, range of community organisations, including Creative Futures, Whitehawk Inn, Hangleton & Knoll Project, Brighton Youth Centre, BACA & PACA.

- 3.4.2 More recently, Libraries have supported the ‘Our Place’ project to bring cultural offers to Hangleton and Whitehawk during the Brighton Festival. Libraries have hosted the Polari tour in Jubilee and Whitehawk Libraries and continue to work with local schools and universities on creative cultural events for children and young people. New reading and writing groups regularly emerge and libraries support these by hosting them or providing the books for them to read. In previous years, Brighton & Hove Libraries have been at the forefront of innovative practice in hosting and delivering creative cultural events and installations such as the Rice Pavilion, and library theatre and dance events.

3.5 Increased reading and literacy, helping everyone achieve their potential:

- 3.5.1 Libraries play an important role supplementing formal learning through activities such as book groups, study support and code clubs, discussion groups and events for children and families. They also provide opportunities for adult learning at all stages and levels, giving everyone opportunities to learn new skills and explore a range of subjects, either independently or in groups. Libraries provide free resources for study and learning; study space and access to e-books and magazines to support individual learning. For example, the online resource Access to Research provides free access to over 15 million academic research papers through local libraries.

- 3.5.2 Brighton & Hove Libraries have around half a million items in stock, and purchase around 35,000 new items each year. Each year, Libraries run the Summer Reading Challenge to maintain children’s reading levels across the summer break and Libraries participate annually in the City Reads and Young City Reads events to promote reading at all levels. Last year 73% of Brighton & Hove schools either visited the library or were visited by library staff.

3.6 Greater prosperity

- 3.6.1 A new initiative that Libraries are developing with colleagues in the Economic Development Team is the creation of a British Library supported Business and Intellectual Property Centre in Brighton & Hove. This will help local businesses by providing access to information and expertise, with free access to market intelligence/insights on sectors, trends and consumer behaviour, UK and global

company information, UK/global patents, trademarks and registered designs; free or discounted library-led workshops; events delivered by private sector partners on setting up and running a business, marketing, finance, etc, and one-to-one coaching on IP and business research, and clinics with local partners.

3.6.2 As well as supporting businesses, libraries also help individuals into work by running job clubs, CV surgeries and facilitated events with partner agencies. They also provide training and support for digital skills and lifelong learning to prepare people for successful careers.

3.7 Universal Offers:

3.7.1 In support of these community outcomes, Brighton & Hove Libraries, together with all public library authorities in the country, deliver Universal Offers, which are a promise to library customers and a commitment to quality provision across these six core areas of library services:

- Reading Offer: To create a more literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting reading activities in libraries.
- Information Offer: To support all library users to access quality information and online services in key areas such as health, personal finance, careers and benefits.
- Digital Offer: To deliver digital activities and training, especially to those with limited digital capacity.
- Health Offer: To improve the health and wellbeing of local communities with service including self-help reading, creative activities and volunteering.
- Learning Offer: To enhance the presence of libraries throughout a person's learning journey to raise confidence, support education and increase creativity.
- Cultural Offer: To provide quality and diverse cultural experiences and events through libraries, especially to those less likely to access arts and culture.

4 **ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 The options regarding public libraries development in the city have been discussed and agreed by full council when the current Libraries Plan 2016-20 was approved in March 2016. There will be an opportunity to take a fresh look at options for the future of Brighton & Hove Libraries during the development of the new Libraries Plan for 2020-24.

5 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

5.1 Extensive consultation and engagement was carried out as part of the Libraries Services Review and Needs Analysis in 2015, and the evidence compiled into a report that was taken to the Economic Development and Culture committee in November 2015.

5.2 Libraries continue to consult library users in the following ways:

- Library surveys every year
- Feedback from service users through comments, compliments and complaints

- Discussions with specific groups such as community groups and organisations, equalities groups and organisations, targeted client groups such as carers, people in residential accommodation, young people, etc
- Qualitative research through focus groups
- Quantitative data from library systems
- Staff structured observation

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Libraries can connect communities and transform people's lives, helping to deliver strategic outcomes for local communities; focusing on living healthier and happier lives; improving digital access, literacy and learning; encouraging creativity and culture experiences and supporting local skills, employment and prosperity.
- 6.2 Previous local research has evidenced that people want to see their libraries developed as community hubs in the broadest sense, including supporting literacy, learning, health and wellbeing; digital access, knowledge and skills development; recreational and cultural resources as well as enabling social interaction and access to other services.
- 6.3 Looking to the future, Brighton & Hove Libraries will continue to focus on the needs of local communities, encouraging and enabling people to make best use of this valuable community asset. Future success will be dependent on how far Libraries can encourage and facilitate local people, groups and partner organisations to take the lead in the development and implementation of activity in their local libraries. The library service has made them accessible for much longer hours and is looking to partner organisations and local people to work with them to make the most of the resources and opportunities on offer.
- 6.4 The Libraries Taskforce 'Libraries Deliver' has summed up the message to existing or potential partners, whether they be service deliverers or local groups: Adopt 'Libraries First' thinking, as it may help save costs and simplify access for local people.

7 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The revenue budget for Libraries 2019/20 is included within the Neighbourhoods, communities and Housing Directorate budget agreed at budget council on 28 February 2019.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks Date: 6 March 2019

7.2 Legal Implications:

Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 places local authorities under a duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. The proposals described in the report will assist the Council to ensure that it meets its statutory duties.

Lawyers Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 6 March 2019

7.3 Equalities Implications:

Increasing equality - A driving force for Libraries is increasing equality and creating new opportunities for more people to access the services, information and activities they need in the community. The library acts as a resource for the whole community and a conduit to reach disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Following on from the recent service reviews, annual library plans have focused on improving the satisfaction levels of particular target groups where the results were below average. Equalities impact assessments are carried out each time there is a major service change.

7.4 Sustainability Implications:

Environmental sustainability –The use of libraries as community hubs and Libraries Extra makes sense environmentally by better utilisation of accommodation. Availability of ‘local’ libraries reduces the need for car journeys to the city centre or across city and increases access to services for a greater number of people.

7.5 Any Other Significant Implications:

See Appendix 1.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Other significant implications
2. Libraries Taskforce Summaries 2016-21

Documents in Members’ Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

Appendix 1: Other Significant Implications

1.1 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Enhanced security arrangements have been put in place to support Libraries Extra. This includes live monitoring of increased CCTV within each library, with a direct intercom to the security personnel in the case of emergency. There is direct audio feed from the security monitoring station into each library so immediate announcements can be made by the security staff. Security personnel open up and close down the buildings each day, including a sweep of the building to ensure all is well. IT systems monitor who is entering and exiting the buildings. All these enhanced arrangements are significantly more than other library authorities who are implementing this sort of access.

1.2 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

Risks and opportunities of the Libraries Plan were assessed as part of the development of the proposals and are reviewed and updated as part of the annual service planning process.

1.3 Public Health Implications:

Links between reading improving health and wellbeing are being increasingly recognised. There is strong evidence that reading for pleasure can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and the risk of dementia, and improve wellbeing throughout life. Library spaces are already being used to provide health and social care services such as the social navigators. Libraries provide opportunities for greater social contact and helps in tackling loneliness. Libraries work in tackling digital exclusion also supports social inclusion and has health benefits.

1.4 Corporate/Citywide Implications:

The role of Libraries in the Community support the council's priorities and principles in the following ways, (in addition to those comments in the public health and equalities sections above):

Corporate Principles: 'to increase our equality and improve our engagement'

In addition to the comments at 7.3 above, Libraries are community focused and local people are being engaged with developing and promoting library services through opportunities such as volunteering and fundraising. Local groups can drive the development of community hubs, as they are encouraged to use the library during Libraries Extra days e.g. local schools bringing class visits, local carers groups holding mutual support sessions, etc. The introduction of Libraries Extra has utilise self-service to increase the times that services can be accessed. Qualitative research revealed that people want libraries to be developed as community centres and to become more of a community resource.

Corporate Priorities:

Economy – Libraries as community hubs will increase opportunities for education and employment activities. Facilities are available for those who are digitally excluded. The

development of the Business and Intellectual Property Centre which focuses on supporting small and medium sized businesses and sole trader, will contribute to the local economy.

Children and Young People – Increased opening hours supports more visits by schools who carry out group visits during school hours even when the library is unstaffed. Increasing fund raising and grants will maximise the use of the library for all added value activities and projects which will include those aimed at children and young people such as study support.

Community safety and resilience – Libraries provide culture and leisure activities in the City that can promote community cohesion. Shared buildings can be used to foster positive relationships between public services and different communities.

Health & Wellbeing – see 1.3 in this appendix.

Environmental Sustainability – see 7.4 in main body of the report.