

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 20 May 2019

Report Title

Consultation on a New Library Strategy 2020 – 2025

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide “a comprehensive and efficient” public library service “for all persons desiring to make use thereof” (Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964). The Act states that the local authority has a duty to provide facilities for borrowing books and other materials and that it should encourage both adults and children to make full use of the service.

This report sets out proposals to undertake consultation on a new library strategy for the period 2020 – 2025 and a future service delivery model for the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service. This will ensure that the Service continues to meet the needs of Rotherham residents and also that the Council meets the statutory service requirement.

Recommendations

1. That consultation be undertaken with the public, partners, stakeholders and interested parties in respect of developing a new Library Strategy 2020 – 2025.
2. That a further report be brought to Cabinet detailing proposals for a draft library strategy 2020 – 2025. The report will identify potential improvements to service and potential efficiencies.

3. That the Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport of the consultation and potential changes to service provision.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Aston Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 2 Brinsworth Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 3 Dinnington Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 4 Greasbrough Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 5 Kimberworth Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 6 Kiveton Park Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 7 Maltby Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 8 Mowbray Gardens Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 9 Rawmarsh Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 10 Riverside House Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 11 Swinton Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 12 Thorpe Hesley Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 13 Thurcroft Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 14 Wath Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile
- Appendix 15 Wickersley Library and Neighbourhood Hub site profile

Background Papers

Library Strategy 2016-19

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 15 May 2019

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Consultation on a New Library Strategy 2020 – 2025

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide “a comprehensive and efficient” public library service “for all persons desiring to make use thereof” (Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964). The Act states that the Local Authority has a duty to provide facilities for borrowing books and other materials and that it should encourage both adults and children to make full use of the service.
- 1.2 Other than the statutory duty, there are no longer national standards for library provision. It is the responsibility of each library authority to determine how to deliver public library services in the context of local need. Library services are now being delivered in different ways and services are being shaped by local policy, local needs and available resources. There is a local requirement to ensure that the decision making process is clear, transparent and robust, that decisions are based on an assessment of need, an approved Library Strategy and that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in terms of service delivery.
- 1.3 Rotherham’s library service provides 15 library buildings across the Borough bringing people together in welcoming community hubs. It offers a wide range of free books, e-books and other material for loan. It provides free access to computers and to the internet. There is an ‘assisted digital’ offer so that customers who need help applying for and accessing Council and partner services are supported by trained staff. The Service also provides a range of activities and events for children, adults and families. See appendices 1 to 15 for profiles providing detailed information in relation to the service offer by site.
- 1.4 As part of a commitment to widening access, the library service provides vehicle-based services, predominantly to older people who might otherwise be unable to get to a library, and a Schools’ Loan Service, which offers resources to support reading, literacy and the wider curriculum in schools.
- 1.5 There is also a digital library provision, which enables people to access the service online. Users can join the library, download e-books and other digital resources.
- 1.6 The library service currently has a net budget of £2.64m (this includes all known property costs with the exception of Joint Service Centres and Riverside House). The service has a total establishment of 78.5 full time equivalent staff.
- 1.7 Satisfaction ratings are exceptional, averaging at 99.08% in 2018/19 for overall service delivery.
- 1.8 In 2016 Council approved Rotherham’s Library Strategy 2016-19 and the future service offer. Both the Strategy and the service offer had been developed following an analysis of local need for the service and took account of the results of significant consultation.

1.9 The assessment of local need identified a role for the service in supporting employment, developing and improving key life skills, including literacy, improving mental health, community cohesion and supporting the digital agenda.

1.10 The overarching vision for the service is that:

- Our libraries are well used, cost effective and responsive to changing customer needs, available technology and resources;
- The services we offer and enable will reflect the needs and make up of Rotherham's communities;
- We will inspire Rotherham's children, young people and their families to enjoy reading and develop their knowledge and skills, so that they are able to improve their quality of life and have an opportunity to realise their full potential;
- Located in the heart of Rotherham's communities, our libraries will be recognised neighbourhood hubs, offering welcoming spaces and providing access to modern digital technology;
- Our staff will bridge the digital divide by supporting Rotherham's communities to get online and explore all the benefits that being online brings

1.11 Authorities considering making changes to the provision of their library service are advised to notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

2. Key Issues

2.1 Council will be required to approve a refreshed Library Strategy. In order to ensure that the Strategy continues to be relevant to local communities, it is necessary to re-assess local need and to consider opportunities to improve or amend the core service offer. This will also need to take account of the changing expectations of current service users and non-users, the changing nature of reading and information delivery, Rotherham's local demographic profile and reductions in local government funding.

2.2 There is national recognition of the continuing role that libraries can play in contributing to wider economic, social, cultural and educational goals. These roles are reflected in the national "Universal Offers", six key areas which are regarded as essential to a 21st century library service. These cover: reading, information, digital, health, learning and culture.

2.3 Locally, there are clear opportunities for the service to play significant roles in:

- the Customer Access Strategy and Digital Strategy by supporting the "digital first" principle, encouraging customers to make use of the digital offer through the promotion of online services. Digital assistance is provided in every library so that customers who need help feel supported and able to access the services they need. This ranges from showing people how to set up an email address, helping them complete an online form or provision of basic ICT courses. This service is enabled through public access terminals, laptop points and free Wi Fi;

- the Cultural Strategy by delivering a quality and diverse cultural experience within libraries through a clear, consistent, and accessible programme of cultural activities and events. Supporting the key goal of enabling everyone in Rotherham to “get active, get creative and get outdoors more often”;
- the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy by giving opportunities for people to come together, to get involved in their local neighbourhood and to participate in interesting, enjoyable and creative events and activities;
- the Economic Growth Plan by supporting individuals to become job-ready;
- the delivery of the Building Stronger Communities action plan by providing opportunities for neighbourhood engagement and a visible, well-used and vibrant community hub;
- the Children and Young People’s Plan by providing opportunities for informal and intergenerational learning in a safe, attractive space;
- the Health and Wellbeing Strategy by reducing social isolation and maintaining good mental health, using the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a framework for activities;
- supporting Adult Social Care and Housing in providing safe, trusted community-based places for service users and increasing opportunities for independent living.

2.4 Consultation undertaken during 2016 reinforced the perceived role of libraries within their communities. 571 (94%) of respondents to the consultation on the Library Strategy agreed with the proposal to keep all 15 static sites open, many commenting that libraries are essential community hubs. 577 (95%) respondents agreed with the proposal to continue with the redevelopment of libraries as modern, welcoming spaces.

2.5 The consultation process also identified further opportunities, changes and improvements to service delivery including; working with partners and volunteers to support the delivery of additional services; co-location with other services and/or relocation to more accessible places; involving individuals and communities in supporting service delivery and maintaining relevant, accessible services within communities.

2.6 Usage of libraries nationally is declining, however a significant proportion (72%) of people in England continue to say that public libraries are important for their community. (Source: English data about attributes to and use of public libraries 2011-2016, Carnegie UK Trust). Libraries continue to be popular as places to take part in social activities, undertake informal learning and seek assistance with a wide range of enquiries. They are also perceived as a trusted community space to combat digital and social exclusion and support wellbeing.

2.7 The table below provides library usage statistics over the last 3 years:

Note: an “active borrower” is anyone who borrows at least one item within a 12 month period.

Library	2016/17			2017/18			2018/19		
	Visits	Active Borrowers	Issues / Renewals	Visits	Active Borrowers	Issues / Renewals	Visits	Active Borrowers	Issues / Renewals
Aston	37165	1717	35054	31604	1617	31670	44246	1692	32775
Booklink	5408	387	25957	3800	362	24158	3723	331	22011
Brinsworth	12265	508	10535	7104	485	9509	6523	417	9420
Dinnington	40288	1581	38538	32881	1472	35080	32392	1576	36527
Greasbrough	23542	871	23320	23410	871	20967	20542	899	17961
Kimberworth	8415	531	17230	8592	499	15301	8965	526	15104
Kiveton Park	14665	790	24306	17563	845	23758	19085	862	28341
Maltby	38046	1351	27254	27681	1222	24967	43296	1560	31443
Mowbray Gardens	30231	746	17626	33338	1116	18523	32219	1286	20750
Rawmarsh	40962	789	20922	30050	786	18922	33738	834	19174
Riverside (Central)	202038	4057	93865	191315	3768	87722	176996	3461	79403
Schools Loans Service	0	929	N/A	0	849	N/A	0	781	N/A
Swinton	54815	1110	26648	53654	973	24413	48981	1043	23836
Thorpe Hesley	8604	392	10299	7463	376	10505	7788	396	11293
Thurcroft	11427	459	9946	8054	389	7959	4454	264	6774
Wath	79035	2191	39226	74345	2173	37642	72931	2362	38408
Wickersley	58731	2104	44720	53865	1967	43229	60508	1979	42765
Online Library (customers only using digital)	N/A	463	7227	N/A	346	7030	N/A	384	6314
Totals	665637	20976	472673	604719	20116	441355	616387	20653	442299

2.8 For the year 2018/19 the service showed an increase in visits, active borrowers and issues/renewals when compared to the previous year. This is the first time in 10 years that active borrowers have exceeded the previous year's figure.

2.9 Libraries are visited for a variety of reasons in addition to borrowing books and other items. There is a full yearly programme of activities for all ages which receives in the region of 70,000 visits per annum. These include regular Rhymetimes for pre-school children, storytimes, Lego and code clubs plus holiday and after-school craft activities. For adults libraries offer work clubs, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, a variety of readers groups, author visits and a range of social activities including knit and natter, bridge clubs, family history and basic computer sessions.

2.10 The table below shows the number of digital downloads over the last 3 years:

Format downloads	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
e-Books	9,268	8,302	16,171
e-Audio	3,175	4,450	4,924
e-Magazine	3,395	3,367	7,119

2.11 The service joined six other library authorities in an e-book co-operative during April 2018, significantly increasing the choice of stock at no extra cost to the Authority. Since this date the number of e-book loans has nearly doubled.

2.12 It is also recognised that the service and the Council are required to make the most effective use of their resources, including considering the needs of communities to inform service redesign. In line with the Council's budget and service design principles there is also a need to consider opportunities to support residents to carry out transactions online in line with the Council's Customer Access Strategy, to share/integrate services and to review the location of face to face delivery points, recognising that there is potential to reduce costs of provision for other Council and partner services.

2.13 In addition, as part of the engagement process, the service would like to seek views on the role and provision of library services within Rotherham town centre.

2.14 In order to effectively refresh the Library Strategy, to ensure that the vision and core offer for the Service remains relevant and in order to make the most effective use of resources, further consultation is needed with current and potential partners, stakeholders and interested parties to develop options for a future service delivery model.

2.15 The initial programme of engagement will explore views on the range of alternative service delivery options; the right one for Rotherham will be dependent on the community needs and priorities. In line with previous consultation feedback, it is intended that any future option will look to deliver comprehensive, effective and efficient services, to improve access to current and additional services and to avoid, where possible, the closure of libraries.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Undertake an initial assessment of local need and engagement with partners, stakeholders and interested parties in respect of developing options for a future service delivery model, followed by a further report to Cabinet detailing proposals to be consulted on for a future service model, including identification of potential improvements to service and efficiencies, in the context of a refreshed Library Strategy. This is the recommended option.
- 1.2 Present options for future service delivery without undertaking initial public engagement. Whilst this reduces the timetable needed to deliver the project, it would present a risk in terms of:
- the Council's ability to make decisions which are fully informed by the needs and aspirations of the public and other stakeholders
 - and the need for the Council to meet its statutory obligations in terms of service delivery.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 In readiness to commence consultation the service has:
- assessed the Service's contribution to corporate outcomes and priorities;
 - taken into account key national, regional and local strategies;
 - benchmarked the service against other local authorities taking account of innovation, good practice and lessons learned;
 - examined usage, performance and demand for the service;
 - reviewed available resources, including staff, buildings and stock.
- 4.2 It is proposed that an initial engagement programme is carried out over a period of 6 weeks. This would explore with members of the public, partners and stakeholders, the factors which are important to them in relation to library provision in order to develop a sustainable model that meets their needs.
- 4.3 Consultation would also assess the potential in relation to different service models and help the Council understand the interest from the community and local partnerships in relation to getting involved in supporting the delivery of library services. It will also provide a mechanism for other ideas to be put forward from outside the service.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the first phase of the engagement programme consists of:
- online and paper based surveys, supplemented by a dedicated email address
 - drop in sessions at each of the 15 libraries
 - focus groups with partners, including schools, town and parish councils, Voluntary Action Rotherham and Rotherfed
 - focus groups with Council services, including Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, Children and Young People's Services, Asset Management, Performance, Intelligence and Improvement team
 - focus groups with staff
 - focus groups with children and young people
 - focus groups with Members

- engagement with Unions, communities of interest and under-represented groups
- engagement with non-library users in busy locations across the borough

4.5 Feedback from this initial engagement combined with a comprehensive local assessment of need and equality analysis will support the development of proposals for a future service delivery model, which in turn would be subject to engagement and consultation over a period of 6 to 12 weeks dependent on the complexity and impact of the proposed model.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The Service recognises the importance of engaging with the community at an early stage of shaping the future service model. This will allow for informed decision making in order to develop an effective library provision.

5.2 There is a legal requirement to ensure that extensive public consultation on the future Library service and on any related savings proposals is undertaken so that the Council complies with its duty to act fairly. In consideration of the diversity of interested parties and the potential impacts of a new service model the following engagement timeline has been proposed:

Activity / Task	Start Date
Cabinet approval for 1 st Phase of engagement	May 2019
Staff/Trade Union engagement	May 2019
Notification to Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) of stakeholder engagement	May 2019
Public engagement survey 6 weeks - 1 st phase of engagement on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaping the future library service • The role and provision of library services within the town centre • Options to inform the new Library Strategy 	Jun 2019
Public engagement closes	Jul 2019
Public engagement survey analysis	Jul 2019
Notification to Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) of potential changes to service delivery	Jul 2019
Design public engagement survey – 2 nd phase of engagement on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Service Offer • Draft Library Strategy 	Aug 2019
Cabinet Report for approval to engage - 2 nd phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Service Offer • Draft Library Strategy 	Oct 2019
Public engagement starts – 2 nd phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Service Offer • Draft Library Strategy (6 to 12 weeks engagement dependant on the outcomes of the 1 st phase)	Nov 2019
Public engagement ends - 2 nd phase	Feb 2020
Public engagement results analysis - 2 nd phase	Feb 2020
Review and finalise equality analysis	Mar 2020
Produce engagement analysis report	Mar 2020

Activity / Task	Start Date
Finalise Library Strategy, revised service offer and associated budget savings (revisions based on public engagement)	Mar 2020
Staff/Trade Union engagement	Apr 2020
Sign off from Cabinet of the Library Strategy and final service offer (date to be confirmed)	Apr 2020
Staff/Trade Union engagement - revised service structure	Apr 2020
Sign off of Library Strategy by full Council (date to be confirmed)	May 2020
Mobilisation of new service model	Aug 2020 onwards

5.3 The above timetable has been developed in recognition of the need to complete this programme quickly and efficiently. However, based on previous experience of delivering library reviews, and in recognition that this review is more complex and far-reaching, combined with timelines given in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport good practice tool kit and advice provided by the Council’s Legal Services, completion may take as long as March 2021.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The current net budget for the Library service is £2.64m.

6.2 It is envisaged that the bulk of the consultation exercise will be undertaken by staff within the Culture, Sport and Tourism Service and primarily communicated electronically with any small ancillary costs e.g. printing being contained within existing budgets. Any meetings required will be held in Council owned buildings wherever possible, so no additional costs are anticipated.

6.3 Any investment proposals or cost implications that may result from the analysis of the consultation feedback will be subject to future reports and approval mechanisms in the context of the Council’s Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 makes it the duty of every library authority to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. The Act sets out that, in fulfilling its duties, a library authority shall have particular regard to the desirability of:- securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to books and other printed matter, and pictures, records, films and other materials in sufficient number, range and quality to meet the public’s requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it.

7.2 The Council also has to ensure it complies with its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Under section 1 of that Act, the Council must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage. In addition, under section 149 of the Act, the Council must comply with the public sector equality duty which requires it to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

In dealing with this duty, the Council must have due regard in particular, to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different to the needs of persons who do not share it; and
- Encourage persons who share a relevant characteristic to participate in public life or any other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- Protected characteristics include disability, age, race, sex, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity and sexual orientation.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications arising directly from this report. However, it is possible that library staff may be affected by any future proposal and as such early discussions have begun with Trade Unions. Any resulting proposed operational changes will be undertaken in full consultation with employees and Trade Union representatives.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Any changes to the Library Strategy and core service offer will impact on services to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Strategy currently includes a “children’s offer” within the core offer and the Service is currently particularly well-used by children up until the age of 11 years.

9.2 The service has a role to play in supporting the aim of becoming a child-centred borough, where children and young people are healthy, safe from harm, start school ready to learn for life and are ready for the world of work. To this end, the service has become an active partner in the Local Cultural Education Partnership (The Embassy for Reimagining Rotherham).

9.3 New service delivery options could include the delivery of activities co-created with children and young people and co-located and co-delivered services.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An equality analysis will be undertaken on any proposals.
- 10.2 The service provides safe, trusted and accessible places available to everyone and is keen to build on current levels of engagement and participation, particularly with under-represented groups and communities.

11. Implications for Partners

- 11.1 During previous consultation a wide range of partners and Council services expressed an interest in continuing to work with the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service in the future. Potential developments include co-location and joint delivery of services in support of demand reduction plans in other services as well as the opportunity to better jointly deliver on the Thriving Neighbourhoods strategy.
- 11.2 Specific consultation will be undertaken with Asset Management in order to identify opportunities in relation to relocation or co-location of services and in regard to One Public Estate.

12. Risks and Mitigation

- 12.1 In order to ensure rigorous and robust decision making, proposals for consultation should take account of the statutory nature of the service, the resources available and existing and projected need for the service, including consideration of the needs of vulnerable groups.
- 12.2 As the Authority continues to face challenging financial circumstances, there will be a need to ensure that proposals make best use of available resources. Consultation therefore needs to be undertaken as soon as possible to ensure that the Service is ready to respond positively to changing circumstances.
- 12.3 Feedback from initial consultation may affect the timescale for future proposals, consultation and decision making.

13. Accountable Officers

Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism
Zoe Oxley, Head of Operations and Business Transformation

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	26/04/19
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	23/04/19
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A

Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A
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