

Libraries Consultation and Engagement Plan

Introduction

The Council is refreshing its Library Strategy. In order to ensure that the Strategy continues to be relevant to local communities it is necessary to re-assess local need through the effective communication and engagement with its residents and key stakeholders.

Background:

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.

Rotherham’s Library and Neighbourhood Hubs service aims to:

- Promote a love of reading and help to improve literacy
- Provide a space where people can engage in informal learning, develop skills and improve their lives.
- Provide children and young people with a safe, inspiring place to learn, explore their creativity and find their talent.
- Support businesses and contribute to the sustainability and regeneration of our local communities.
- Provide welcoming spaces, open for all to use to improve their lives and their communities.
- Offer information and reading services that can improve the health and wellbeing of customers.
- Bridge the digital divide and become, for many people, an essential point of access to online knowledge resources.

The Council has a duty to provide a library service. A review of the libraries and neighbourhood hubs service is being undertaken to identify proposals for future service delivery, consideration of the current library locations, and inform the new library strategy. These proposals are based on an assessment of local need for the service and take into account the statutory requirement for the service and available resources.

The consultation and engagement takes place in three stages:

Phase 1:

Proposal to relocate the town centre library from Riverside House to a new community/cultural hub within the Markets, Guardian Centre, Drummond Street, Rotherham, which is being planned as part of the Town Centre Masterplan. The hub would form part of the markets development and it is imagined that it would house a range of community services and functions that would benefit the whole community as well as benefiting people that work and study in Rotherham.

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The phase 1 consultation will run for four weeks from Monday, April 1 to Tuesday 30 April, 2019 - **Completed**

Phase 2:

This consultation will explore how residents use their library service and what is important to residents in the future. As well as hearing residents' views and ideas on how the library service could be delivered more efficiently, the Council will also like to hear from residents who do not currently use the library service to find out what would makes them more likely to visit.

The phase 2 consultation will run for six weeks from 3rd June 2019 to 14th July, 2019 - **Completed**

Phase 3:

The draft Library Strategy 2020-2025 and the associated service offer will be considered in the January 2020 Cabinet meeting and will include a request for approval to go out to a final phase of engagement and consultation. This consultation and engagement will deliver the proposed final service offer and draft Library Strategy, after analysing residents' views and those of staff, stakeholders and unions on how the library service could be delivered more efficiently from phases 1 and 2 of the consultation process.

The phase 3 consultation will run for twelve weeks from 3rd February, 2020 to 26th April, 2020. This 12 week period will include bespoke public consultation and engagement to take place with residents in relation to Brinsworth Library becoming Community Managed.

Feedback from this consultation will inform a final version of the Library Strategy, including a revised service offer and any associated budget savings which will be presented back to Cabinet and full Council for consideration.

Objectives:

The Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs service key objective is to successfully engage residents in the engagement and consultation.

The communications objectives will align with the service objectives, and will:

- Raise awareness of the consultation and how they can engage (awareness raising)
- Encourage all Rotherham's residents contribute to the consultation (behavioural change)
- Ensure residents and stakeholders have an understanding of any proposed changes, the impact they will have and any benefits (perception change)

Risks and mitigation:

Any proposed changes to libraries are sensitive, particularly where it impacts on residents, individuals or families, with potential perceived loss of services. No closure of library services are proposed as part of the consultation, and so reassurance needs to be given to residents on this.

Equality and Diversity:

Anyone delivering changes on behalf of the Council must adhere to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Rotherham Council is committed to working on behalf of and for all of its customers, residents, partners and visitors. By better understanding the diversity of communities and their specific needs, the Council is able to provide the most appropriate and responsive services; an approach that supports the Council's priorities of providing services that are customer-focused, effective, efficient and of a high quality.

The Council's commitment is reinforced by the Equality Act 2010 which requires the Council to promote fairness and equality through community leadership, in employment practice and the delivery of services, where relevant. In particular, the Equality Act 2010 specifically covers nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race (ethnic origin, nationality, skin colour)
- Religion and Belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation
- Any other status as identified within the European Convention of Human rights and any other domestic or relevant UK or EU law.

Consideration may be needed during the consultation to messages around accessibility, specifically in relation to the possible relocation of the library.

The Council's full policy can be found on the intranet page for Equality and Diversity: <http://rmbcintranet/Directorates/ACE/HRandPayroll/A-ZofHRInformation/EqualitiesandDiversity/default.aspx>

Key audiences/stakeholders:

Communications will focus on utilising the key external communication channels as listed in channels below. This will include a press release, online content, social media and other channels.

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Targeted briefings will be undertaken with elected members (through the Members Briefing) and officers at the Council across directorates. MPs will also be briefed so they understand the proposed service changes.

Internal communications channels will also be used to encourage council staff to engage in the consultation and engagement, including Friday Briefing, Directorate newsletters.

A series of drop in consultation briefing sessions will be delivered by managers across the 15 Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs, ensuring that sessions are arranged across the 7 working days that the service is available and delivered at varying times in line with opening hours.

Further engagement work will be carried out by the Libraries and Neighbourhood hubs with the following key audiences:

- Sight and Sound
- Older Peoples Forum
- Different but Equal
- Rainbow Project
- Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance
- Voluntary Action Rotherham
- Faith Leaders Forum
- Member seminar
- Youth Cabinet
- Town and Parish Councils

Communication and Marketing Methods:

A number of communications tools will be used to publicise the consultation. These will include:

- **Website**

A news item will be published on the Council's website, with a link from the home page. Dependant on other 'news', the home page may also include a click through from the 'carousel' news image.

- **Social media**

The Council's social media sites will be used to promote consultation changes. This will include a schedule of tweets through Twitter, posts of Facebook, linking to both press releases, online consultation, and any drop-in sessions.

- **Media**

A separate press release will be produced to publicise each of the three consultations and these will be distributed to all local and regional media.

- **Direct mail**

Key stakeholders/partner organisations will be contacted directly as part of the consultation by the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hub services. Key organisations such as Voluntary Action Rotherham, will be asked to disseminate information to partner organisations.

- **Intranet**

The consultation and engagement will be publicised on the home page, with a link to further information on the external website.

- **Friday Briefing**

This will be used to publicise the propose changes and the consultation to staff.

- **Internal briefings**

Following the consultation and engagement, direct briefings will take place with frontline staff and other office-based staff.