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| BRIEFING | TO: | Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment |
| | DATE: | 20 July 2020 |
| | LEAD OFFICER: | Zoe Oxley Head of Operations & Business Transformation Culture, Sport & Tourism Regeneration and Environment 07585795975 |
| | TITLE: | Reopening of libraries – COVID-19 |

1. Background

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| 1.1 | This report sets out the current position in relation to Rotherham's library service following the outbreak of COVID-19 and makes a series of recommendations in order to gradually reopen some face to face library provision to the public. |
| 1.2 | <p>This paper seeks approval for the library offer to be reinstated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of the enhanced online service • Continuation of targeted activities to vulnerable people • New 'Order and Collect' service to be delivered from 11 sites starting 3rd August. • New 'Pop-up Outdoor Library' to be trialled in parks during August (subject to approval of the risk assessment) • Three library sites to open to the public on Saturday 5th September |
| 1.3 | <p>A further paper making recommendations in relation to the wider customer services offer will be submitted to Tactical/Gold by Customer Information and Digital Services (CIDS) from 16 July 2020.</p> <p><u>Legal Background</u></p> |
| 1.4 | All library services closed to the public on Tuesday, 24 March following the lockdown measures announced by the Prime Minister on Monday 23 March 2020. The closure of the library service was enforced by the introduction of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) Regulations 2020. |
| 1.5 | The Government has announced that libraries are included in phase 3 of the UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy which means that they are legally permitted to re-open from 4 July, with appropriate safety precautions, dependent upon the local authority decision and provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The revocation of the above-mentioned regulations and the introduction of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restriction) (No.2) Regulations means that the library service can legally re-open. |

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| 1.6 | On 23 June the Government notified the public that from the 4 July the two metre (six foot) social distancing guidance will change in England. The prime minister stated that where it is not possible to stay two metres apart, people should keep a distance of "one metre plus" - this means staying at least one metre apart, while observing precautions to reduce the risk of transmission. |
| 1.7 | The safeguarding of our staff and customers is at the forefront of our service recovery strategy, therefore, libraries are proposing a phased approach to resume services ensuring the service is adhering to the latest Public Health England guidelines. |
| | <u>Library Services and the Council's Recovery Themes and Principles</u> |
| 1.8 | When considering bringing library services back into operation the Council's 'recovery principles' have been applied. Since the new Library Strategy has been out for consultation during this period, there has also been the opportunity to consider the feedback in the light of learning from the lockdown period. It should be noted that it is proposed that the way in which the library service delivers its offer moving forward will be different to the way it was prior to lockdown particularly in relation to it's online offer and how services are delivered through physical library sites. In particular, the service has had to reconsider the implications of reinstating frontline building-based provision. |
| | Thriving neighbourhoods and local delivery |
| 1.9 | Libraries occupy a position of trust within local communities, with a customer base which strongly values local proximity and the diverse offer which is available in libraries within a neighbourhood setting. Over the last few months, the service has increased engagement with over 400 new members accessing online services and these new relationships will continue to be nurtured online. However, as we continue to encourage residents to stay local, particularly if they are vulnerable, the physical library building has an invaluable role in enabling people to come to terms with 'the new normal' and to reconnect, safely, with friends and neighbours. |
| 1.10 | Rotherham's Library Service currently has a customer satisfaction rating of 99% and residents really value the relationships with staff. Libraries can contribute to a range of Council agendas and act as a hub for the delivery of a wide range of services and engagement activities. Libraries have the potential to reduce demand on the community hub, Adult Social Care and the NHS, as they can support vulnerable residents with non-clinical interventions. |
| | Promoting confidence and hope, in and for Rotherham |
| 1.11 | Restarting of library provision will help to lift spirits and rebuild confidence across communities. It will assist in reducing isolation by encouraging residents to safely venture out again and for those who can't go out, the service will continue to stay connected through the delivery of the online offer and home library service. |
| | Health, physical and mental |
| 1.12 | Libraries play an important role in supporting health and wellbeing. For vulnerable and inactive people, the reopening of the library can re-motivate individuals to go outside and walk to their local library, giving purpose to their 'daily exercise'. Reading has been proven to be beneficial to mental health, and libraries have been developing work in this field, recognising that, particularly for people with low-level mental health issues (depression and anxiety), libraries offer a source of solace, respite and self-help. For this latter group, safe engagement with the physical world is an important part of reducing social isolation. |

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| 1.13 | <p>Economic recovery with a clear focus on place and added social value for Rotherham's communities</p> <p>Queries are coming in now from partners seeking to refer members of the public to libraries for support to apply for jobs. This is particularly important for those who have become recently unemployed. In providing another reason for people to visit their neighbourhood centre, libraries also support the recovery of the wider economy, such as retail and hospitality businesses.</p> |
| 2. Key Issues | |
| <p><u>Service provision during lockdown</u></p> | |
| 2.1 | <p>During the lockdown period library staff have worked to deliver an online service comprising the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expanded range of e-books, e-magazines and e-audio available to borrow / download, whereby there has been 400 new members joining during lockdown. • Free access to a large range of information online • A range of activities and resources for children delivered through social media which has proven to be very popular with excess of 1000 views on each live online Facebook video, reaching nearly 80,000 views in total to date. • Rotherham Online Readers Group – online Facebook reader group. |
| 2.2 | <p>Given the success of libraries online service offer which has been considered valuable throughout the lockdown period, customers would still expect this service to continue. It is proposed that the library service continues to sustain this online offer.</p> |
| 2.3 | <p>Work has also been done to deliver targeted services not dependant on internet access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular telephone contact and limited deliveries to elderly Home Library Service users • Over 1,300 welfare phone calls made to library members aged 70+ • Bookstart materials delivered to vulnerable families through Early Help and YMCA partners. |
| <p><u>Factors to be considered when re-opening libraries</u></p> | |
| <p>Employees</p> | |
| 2.4 | <p>When planning for the recovery of the service, due consideration has been given to the current situation within libraries in respect of staffing levels. The overall picture has been reviewed when considering how the services are delivered moving forward, ensuring that libraries are restarted in the most efficient way whilst still maintaining the Council's high levels of customer service. The library service has approximately 70% of its establishment currently available to return to work. With the remaining 30% predominantly being made up of vacant posts, staff who are shielding and sickness absence.</p> |
| 2.5 | <p>Staff with no homeworking provision to deliver library services and who are not themselves ill, vulnerable or shielding, have been available for redeployment to assist critical services. It is proposed that staff who are currently providing critical support continue to do so.</p> |

Safety Measures

- 2.6** Libraries are proposing a phased approach to reopening in order to ensure safety measures can be adhered to in line with Government guidance. It is also essential that one week is allowed for staff-only access to buildings prior to the implementation of the order and collect service being offered from a site.
- 2.7** Detailed safety measures on reopening are provided within a library service recovery document. These include such measures as the installation of safety screens on staff desks and public sanitiser points at entrances.
- 2.8** The risk assessments for the buildings and PPE have been produced in consultation with the appropriate staff, Health and Safety and the Asset Management team. The overarching risk assessment for the whole service can be found in Appendix 1. The building risk assessments include the number of visitors permitted to be inside each site at one time whilst maintaining social distancing. An example of one such assessment is supplied at Appendix 2. The risk assessments will be shared with all staff and Trade Unions.

New Library Management System (LMS)

- 2.9** Lockdown occurred when the Library Service, in conjunction with Customer Information and Digital Services (CIDS) was in the final stage of implementing a new LMS without which, the service is unable to function. Although the “go-live” date of the new system was 2 April this was during lockdown and certain elements of the implementation are still incomplete and untested. The closure also meant that the staff training programme was interrupted, and this was unable to continue from home due to the majority of staff not having a home working solution. Work is currently ongoing to complete the implementation and the training of staff and this will be completed by 28 July 2020.

Stock

- 2.10** Time will be required in order to ensure that appropriate stock is available at sites across the Borough. A process will be put in place to ensure that items returned by customers are quarantined for 72 hours before being touched by staff.

Customer Service Functions

- 2.11** The proposed phased reopening of libraries to the public from 5th September will focus on the return and issuing of books and limited use of public computers.
- Library staff will be available at a distance to provide information regarding the use of public computers so that customers can access online information and services independently. There are no plans for staff to provide a customer service role in terms of handling enquiries such as blue badge applications, housing benefits, council tax and payments; although staff will continue to actively signpost customers to the Council’s website or provide customers with the contact centre telephone number if this is more appropriate.
- 2.12** A separate paper outlining the proposals relating to the provision of face to face customer service is being prepared by Customer Information and Digital Services (CIDS). This will be presented to Tactical/Gold from 16 July 2020.

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| | <p>Outreach and Targeted services</p> <p>2.13 The Home Library Service (HLS), Booklink and Schools Library Service have maintained contact with customers by telephone during the lockdown period and alternative services have been offered either online or through periodic, limited deliveries. It is proposed that the service will gradually increase the extent of its deliveries from Bailey House.</p> <p>2.14 In addition, the service is developing plans for a Pop-Up Outdoor Library which could be delivered in local parks, with a specific focus on activities for children and young people linked to the Summer Reading Challenge. A separate risk assessment is in development for this which will be shared with Public Health, Health and Safety and Children and Young People's Services.</p> <p>Test and Trace</p> <p>2.15 The Government published new guidance on 3 July in relation to keeping records of staff and customers for Test & Trace within libraries. This means that as libraries reopen to the public, information of visitors will need to be stored securely for 21 days and then destroyed securely. Personal information of visitors is shared across organisations for the purpose of responding to the critical public health crisis in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic. A Privacy Notice will be displayed within each library site explaining the collection of data and a process will be in place for this to be collated as per the requirement.</p> <p>Order and Collect</p> <p>2.16 It is proposed that like many other Council's, an Order and Collect service is temporarily implemented prior to opening for public access. Libraries will operate this during the normal opening hours of each site Monday to Sunday but closing at 2 p.m. at sites that would usually exceed this time. Any requests received after this time will be processed the following day.</p> <p>2.17 Customers can browse the online catalogue by site and contact their local library to reserve a book of their choice. Customers can easily make a request via email, phone or web-form directly to their local library. Staff will agree a date for collection and will meet the customer at the library door with their books at the time arranged. For those unable to access the online catalogue they can simply call and request a subject or author which staff will locate and advise what is available. It is proposed that this service will be managed at 11 library sites around the Borough. Stock will be limited to each site that customer chose to collect from.</p> <p>2.18 This temporary service enables staff and customers to stay safe, by limiting contact until libraries can safely reopen for public access.</p> <p>Best practice</p> <p>2.19 The following information has been taken into consideration in the proposal to reopen sites along with ensuring that the Council deliver a robust and worth-while service and ensuring both staff and customers stay safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Government instructions and guidance on appropriate safety measures • Libraries Connected toolkit which has been endorsed by the Government. • Information gleaned from several national webinars conducted by Libraries Connected, discussing issues and best practice. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and discussion through Council emergency planning procedures (Council Operational Property Emergency (COPE), Health & Safety (H&S), Facilities and Buildings Management, Unions to be consistent with Council policy • Principles for returning services briefing paper by Judith Hurcombe dated 1st and 8th June. • Actions being taken in other sections of Culture, Sport, Tourism (CST) (e.g. Green Spaces, Heritage, Theatres). • Examples of good practice from other local authorities (e.g. through involvement in Libraries Connected Basecamp forum). <p>Consultation</p> |
| 2.20 | The service has consulted with the Cabinet Member for Cleaner Greener Communities and has had ongoing discussions with staff. |
| 2.21 | <p>The library service has consulted with its neighbouring authorities about their plans for reopening, details are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnsley – Phased approach adopted. Phase one opened 3 libraries including the central library from Monday 6th July, the Home Library Service also resumed on the 6th July. The next 3 libraries are planned to open on 16th, 20th and 21st July. Phase three, dates to be agreed, will see more libraries reopening. Order and Collect service is now in place. • Sheffield – Awaiting approval of a “order and collect” service from 3 to 4 of their neighbourhood hubs, this is likely to be offered from the central library at a later date. Aiming to get the Home Library Service resumed during July. Looking to deliver limited browsing and Public Network by early August. Plans yet to be signed off. • Doncaster - restarting the Home Library Service, extended delivery service, Schools Library Service and Click & Collect from the central building for the moment, taken orders from 15th July, and reopening for orders and returns only from 17th July. Looking from 27 July to open 3 staffed branch libraries for Click & Collect only. Mid to late August a staggered opening of Community Led Libraries following the Click & Collect model. |
| 2.22 | <p>Following the Government announcement in relation to libraries being able to reopen from the 4 July, the service has received numerous enquiries from the public in relation to when they will be able access their local library.</p> <p>Capital Improvements</p> |
| 2.23 | <p>The Library Service is embarking on the delivery of a programme of improvements to library sites across the borough. The service is in discussion with Asset Management and Digital Services to agree for Kimberworth, Maltby becoming the first phase of delivery, with a view to reopening these on 5 September. Kiveton Park will continue to remain closed until November 2020 in order for capital improvements to take place.</p> <p>Financial Implications</p> |
| 2.24 | Net Budgeted cost of Libraries is £2.2m of which £2.1m is staffing which is continuing to be delivered within budget. |
| 2.25 | Libraries fees and charges levels have been impacted by COVID-19 resulting in £51,000 pressure. This figure assumes that chargeable services will mostly not be available this |

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| | financial year, these services include the delivery of the Visa Biometric Checking Service, printing, photocopying, events and activities. If any of these functions can be reinstated prior to the end of the year the position in relation to income recovery will improve. |
| 3. Key Actions and Timelines | |
| | Key Actions |
| 3.1 | <p>The following tasks are required prior to reopening to the public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate staff, unions and public communications are issued with timelines and revised service offer. • All risk assessments are signed off by appropriate parties. • With support of Asset Management/landlords, implement safety measures such as PPE, one-way routes, alter layout of shelving and remove seating/tables, quarantining of stock, display relevant notices and guidance. • LMS system implementation to be completed and tested. • Implement a process for Order and Collect at 11 sites. • Implement library improvements to Mowbray Gardens, Maltby and Kimberworth • Implement a process for Test and Trace. • Completion of staff training on the new LMS. • Reducing the Public IT provision across all site as they reopen to maintain social distancing. • Organise staffing rotas to consider revised opening times. • Remove DVD collections, reserved books in libraries and new stock to be processed. • Agreement to reopen from landlords where the library isn't owned by the Council. |
| 3.2 | <p>Proposal to reopen services and timelines</p> <p>It is proposed that there is the first phase of re-opening of libraries will start from Saturday 5th September.</p> |
| 3.3 | <p>In the meantime, alternative services are proposed to be introduced from Monday 3rd August onwards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Order and Collect service for customers will be available from 3rd August delivered from 11 sites. This service will cease once all libraries open. • A trial of Pop-up Outdoor Library Storytimes and Rhymetimes will be offered from local parks in August, with additional engagement activities for children and young people related to the Summer Reading Challenge. This is subject to an approved risk assessment. • The Home Library Service has been keeping in touch with and delivering resources to some of our most vulnerable and isolated residents during lockdown. The team will be resuming a full timetable of deliveries. • The Schools Library Service has provided a weekly email update to subscribing schools during lockdown with video storytimes and craft activities, along with doing essential collections from schools. The team will prepare for September. <p>From 5th September, for the three libraries opening to manage safety measures</p> |

| 3.4 | effectively, it is proposed that they open to the public 30 minutes later than the usual opening time to allow relevant cleaning and preparation time and will close for one hour over lunchtime, which will also allow staff to adhere to social distancing while at lunch. Where the normal closing time exceeds 5:30p.m. it is proposed that this will be adjusted temporarily to close the site at 5:30p.m. | | | | | | |
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| 3.5 | <p>From 5th September, it is also proposed that the following services are available from the three library buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic return and issuing of books – public to use self-service library units for issuing loans where these are available. • Limited public computers – required to be pre-booked in two hour sessions, this was previously three hours sessions. | | | | | | |
| 3.6 | <p>It is proposed that the following services continue to be suspended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events and activities • Newspapers • Printing/photocopying • Payments • One to one digital support • Public toilets <p>The following will also be in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items returned will be quarantined for 72 hours before further processing by staff. • Hand sanitiser / antibacterial wipes will be available to public and staff. Public sanitiser points at entrances. • Social distancing measures will be in place at each library and the numbers allowed into the library at one time will be limited and based on the size of the library site which will be reflected within the Risk Assessment. • Regular cleaning by Facilities Management/landlord and Library staff. <p>The proposed timeline for the phased reopening of sites is detailed below. The service will continue to monitor the progress of the plan and may need to make alterations dependant on any changing circumstances.</p> | | | | | | |
| 3.7 | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="217 1386 703 1424">Timeline</th><th data-bbox="703 1386 1369 1424">Action</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="217 1424 703 1904">Monday 27 July 2020</td><td data-bbox="703 1424 1369 1904"> <p>Staff access to buildings - Preparation of 11 sites with safety measure and processes for Order and Collect service.</p> <p>Implementation of LMS, training in new processes, stock work, safety measures and preparation of sites for Order and Collect service.</p> <p>Preparation of 'Pop Up Library' materials, finalise programme and risk assessments</p> </td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="217 1904 703 2123">Monday 3 August 2020</td><td data-bbox="703 1904 1369 2123"> <p>Order and collect to operate from 11 sites - Aston Brinsworth Dinnington Greasbrough Rawmarsh</p> </td></tr> </tbody> </table> | Timeline | Action | Monday 27 July 2020 | <p>Staff access to buildings - Preparation of 11 sites with safety measure and processes for Order and Collect service.</p> <p>Implementation of LMS, training in new processes, stock work, safety measures and preparation of sites for Order and Collect service.</p> <p>Preparation of 'Pop Up Library' materials, finalise programme and risk assessments</p> | Monday 3 August 2020 | <p>Order and collect to operate from 11 sites - Aston Brinsworth Dinnington Greasbrough Rawmarsh</p> |
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| | Riverside Swinton Thorpe Hesley Thurcroft Wath Wickersley | |
| Saturday 5 September 2020 | Phase one of sites to reopen for public access with appropriate health and safety measures in place: Kimberworth, Mowbray Gardens and Maltby Order and collect will not be implemented at these sites | |
| It is proposed that a review will be undertaken in September to assess if the service offer and opening hours can increase and if additional sites can safely reopen for public access. | | |

4. Recommendations

- 4.1** Given the importance that Rotherham libraries play in their communities it is important that the Council consider restarting these services in some form. However, safety of customers and Council staff is paramount, therefore, it is requested that the following recommendations are considered for approval in order that libraries can reopen safely:
- Staff access to Library buildings (including Bailey House) from 27 July 2020 in order to develop and implement the Order and Collect service and the Pop-Up Outdoor Library Service.
 - Delivery of the Order and Collect service from Monday 3 August to operate from 11 sites.
 - The delivery of customer service processes within libraries to be suspended. Proposals for future customer service delivery to be agreed as part of “the resumption of face to face customer contact at Council buildings” paper which will be submitted by Customer Information and Digital Services (CIDS) on 16 July.
 - Supply the appropriate PPE as per the risk assessments for libraries to reopen safely.
 - Communications to go out to staff, Members, public, partner organisations and other stakeholders in relation to the phased reopening, revised service offer and opening hours.
 - Refurbishment of Mowbray Gardens, Maltby, Kimberworth and Kiveton Park sites prior to reopening to the public.
 - Reopening of Mowbray Gardens, Maltby and Kimberworth on 5th September for a basic library offer with reduced opening times.

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| 4.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a programme of online activities and pop up library events during the summer period for children and young people.• A review of the temporary arrangements to take place in September 2020. <p>A decision will need to be taken no later than Friday 17 July for essential communications to be issued to staff, trade unions, stakeholders and the public and for processes to be put in place prior to the phased reopening. If a decision is made after this date it will impact on the proposed timetable.</p> | | | |
| 5. | Cabinet Member and Leader Comments | | | |
| 5.1 | Cabinet Member - Cleaner, Greener Communities <p>I am supportive of the approach outlined in this paper. It places safety at the forefront of the resuming of library services whilst recognising the demand from residents for this valued service. I would, however, want to regularly monitor the impact that reopening has on users and staff, with particular attention to any track and trace cases arising.</p> | | | |
| 5.2 | Leader <p>I am content to proceed on this basis.</p> | | | |
| 6. | Briefing Consultation and Sign Off | | | |
| | Legal | Officer: Liz Anderton | Date: 15/7/20 | Comments: <p>The revocation of the initial coronavirus restriction regulations and the introduction of the new regulations means that the library service can legally reopen.</p> <p>The Government has produced specific guidance around the safe re-opening of community facilities and this guidance must be properly considered and applied.</p> <p>Full risk assessments should be conducted and consider all relevant information available and this can legitimately include the 'R' Rate in the Borough. It is vital that the risk assessments are properly implemented and regularly reviewed to minimise risk and protect the health of both staff and members of the public, as required by the Health and Safety at Work. etc Act 1974. Any business/venue that fails to properly</p> |

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| | | | | <p>implement their risk assessments and ensure social distancing can potentially be served with an enforcement notice under the above mentioned legislation and this equally applies to the Council in respect of the facilities/services it provides.</p> <p>In re-opening the service, the Council should properly consider and discharge the public sector equality duty, particularly in terms use of the services by those with protected characteristics and those that appear to be disproportionately impacted by the virus.</p> |
| | HR | Officer: Kathryn Roberts | Date: 15/7/20 | Comments: Authorised, would recommend regular evaluation and communication with staff regularly to maintain wellbeing/address concerns as needed. |
| | Finance | Officer: Richard Young | Date: 15/7/20 | Comments: Finance implications added to the report noting current position. |
| | Customer Information and Digital Services | Officer: Susan Gray | Date: 8/7/20 | Comments: IT workplan to support libraries reopening agreed. |
| | | Officer: Helen Barker | Date: 15/7/20 | Comments: Continued suspension of customer face to face service referenced and details aligned to Customer Services paper being presented to tactical group 16.7.20 |