

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 02 November 2021

Report Title

Service update of the Library Strategy 2021 – 2026 and Action Plan 2020-2022 for Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report updates the Improving Places Select Commission of the progress made against the Library Strategy 2021-2026 and the associated action plan which was approved by Council on the 11th November 2020. The report sets out how the Strategy and new service offer is enabling the Council to fulfil its statutory duty under the Public Library Act and meet the needs of the community through the delivery of the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service.

Recommendations

1. Note the progress made against the Library Strategy 2021-2026 and the action plan.
2. Note the progress made on the development of the new Central Library
3. Note the progress made on the transfer of Brinsworth Library to Brinsworth Parish Council
4. Note the progress made on the relocation of Thurcroft Library from Thurcroft Junior Academy to the Gordon Bennett Memorial Hall site utilising the approved libraries capital allocated.
5. Note the progress made on the implementation of self-service technology in order for customers to access library sites independently.
6. Note the impact that Covid-19 has had on the Library and Neighbourhood Hubs service.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Action Plan for Rotherham Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs 2020-2022
- Appendix 2 Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Rotherham Library Strategy 2021-2026

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

1. Background

- 1.1 Following approval from Council on the 11th November 2020, the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service launched the new five-year Library Strategy 2021-2026. The strategy was formed following extensive consultation and engagement with Rotherham residents to ensure that the future service delivery model was aligned to the needs of local communities.
- 1.2 An Action Plan was also produced to set out how the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service would deliver against the new Strategy in 2020-2022, taking into account the findings of the Equalities Impact Assessment and Assessment of Local Need.
- 1.3 This updated report is intended to review the key actions detailed within the Strategy and report on the current service position and significant achievements to date. The associated action plan provides a comprehensive overview of progress in a more detailed format.
- 1.4 It is important to note that on 23rd March 2020 the UK entered the first national lockdown as a result of Covid-19, which saw an immediate closure of library sites across the borough. Throughout the last eighteen months there has been a range of operating conditions from full and partial closures to normal service resuming. During these challenging times the Library service has continued to provide a range of opportunities for Rotherham's residents to engage with its services, supporting vulnerable communities, reducing isolation and increasing participation. Services have been adapted to ensure that libraries were accessible either digitally, outdoors or face to face.

2. Key Issues

Covid-19 pandemic

- 2.1 Due to Covid-19, Rotherham Libraries have been unable to deliver activities within sites for a 17 month period, this has impacted significantly on the ability to deliver the key actions detailed within the Library Strategy and associated action. However, in order to ensure that Libraries were continuing to have a presence in their local community, the service responded quickly to the raft of changing lockdown measures, adapting events and activities to enable audiences to continue accessing library services and in some cases growing audiences through social media and digital activities.
- 2.2 Throughout the pandemic, Libraries provided a wide range of online activities, Rhyme Times, events, readers groups and crafts with a Facebook reach of 865,728. An expanded range of e-books, e-magazines and e-audio led to 3823 new library members. The Order and Collect service for books was introduced in August 2020 and has continued to operate from all sites as an alternative access channel for those still nervous about entering the library to browse. To date there has been a total of 12,961 books issued via the Order and Collect service with 135,199 library e-resources issued.

- 2.3 The trial of pop-up outdoor libraries was offered initially in August 2020 from Rosehill Park, Herringthorpe Valley Park and Clifton Park. These sessions allowed the service to safely offer a service to adults and children in Rotherham and provided a library presence within local communities to promote the importance of reading, which was integrated as part of the summer reading challenge. These sessions proved successful resulting in libraries delivering further pop-up outdoor libraries in the summer of 2021, with equal success, with 166 adults and 207 children attending.
- 2.4 Rotherham libraries have continued to follow the Government guidelines and the step by step roadmap to inform all stages of service recovery. Safety measures and protocol guidance for Libraries has been clearly set out by both Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Libraries Connected throughout the pandemic and Rotherham Libraries have ensured that they have worked in line with the toolkit provided at every stage, regularly liaising with neighbouring local authorities to understand their plans.

Face to Face Services

- 2.5 In September 2021, the Library service started to reconnect with partners in order to restart activities and events and whilst the Library service has made some progress in welcoming back groups and restarting activities a small number of groups are not ready to come back due to the pandemic. Due to previous activity being placed on hold this has resulted in key areas within the action plan having not yet been actioned, specifically those areas where partnership working is vital.
- 2.6 Specialist services offered from Aston, Dinnington, Maltby, Rawmarsh and Swinton resumed in July 2021 on an appointment basis, each site offers this service one day per week. To date the service has delivered 136 appointments face to face and responded to 2942 customer enquiries about specialist services.

The percentage breakdown by service of the 136 appointments delivered is provided below:

- 85% Blue Car Badge
- 3% Housing Benefits
- 3% Council Tax
- 5% Concessionary Travel
- 4% Other

- 2.7 Comprehensive risk assessments have been devised covering all aspects of service recovery, service delivery and site by site information. A Covid protocol for the return of events, activities and groups is in place, which ensures that any risks have been considered and mitigated.

Library Strategy Action Plan 2020-2022

- 2.8 In order to monitor the progress of the service in achieving the Library Strategy objectives, a comprehensive action plan was developed as a tool to allow the service to track service development over the first two years of the Strategy. The plan is split into seven main objectives, which in turn link back to the Library Strategy and the wider Cultural Strategy. Update on progress against each of the objectives is provided below. See Appendix 1 for full details of the plan.

Objective 1 - Creative and Cultural Enrichment

- 2.9 Championed by the Head of Creative Programming & Engagement, this area of the action plan covers how libraries can support wider cultural and arts engagement across the borough, including how they can work better with partners to enrich communities and access funding in order to do so. Currently, libraries are working with colleagues in heritage and the wider Culture, Sport and Tourism (CST) service to deliver co-created activities. Pop up libraries were delivered in green spaces throughout the summer as part of the Culture, Sport and Tourism summer programme. Libraries are also displaying memory trees to branch off from Thrybergh Country Park “Hope Fields”, promoting death positive engagement following the pandemic. Libraries delivered Fun Palaces in 13 sites this year, as well as working with the Flux Capacitor programme to specifically target underrepresented groups.

Projects relating to this objective are as follows:

Fun Palace

Fun Palace is a nationwide celebration of culture at the heart of community, using arts, science, craft, tech, digital, heritage and sports activities as a catalyst for community engagement. This annual event takes place over the first weekend in October. Fun Palaces are free community events, created by and for local people. This year Rotherham Libraries once again joined in with the national Fun Palace weekend. Thirteen of the fifteen libraries had community led activities over the three days (expanding on 3 sites in 2019) with over 120 people attending. The offer included talks from local history societies, electric guitar playing, photography skills, crafting, knitting, quilting, sketching, Morris dancing and an interactive singalong with a local choir.

The service has recently recruited a Rotherham Fun Palace Ambassador funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The main objective of this role will be to engage with communities in order to expand the current offer but also develop Fun Palaces with other area such as theatres, museum, community halls and country parks.

Flux – Creative People & Places

Rotherham Libraries are a key player in this action research programme, funded by the Arts Council People and Places which is designed to deliver a lasting impact on Rotherham communities participation in arts and culture. A new Programme Director has been appointed to lead this work and libraries

will be included in a year one test programme to work with communities to co-produce new engagement programmes across libraries in Rotherham.

Contain Outbreak Management Fund

Culture, Sport and Tourism will be using the Government funding to deliver a programme designed to improve confidence for the 55 and over age group following the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the next 6 months a targeted programme of cultural activities will support this group to return to daily activities across cultural services including libraries.

Objective 2 - Reading and literacy

- 2.10 Championed by the Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism, this objective is focused on the library services commitment to developing a life-long love of reading, and how this can be achieved starting from a young age.

The objective tasks include key milestones to ensure that libraries across the borough are working with national and local partners to encourage engagement and building on links already formed with schools and children's centres, this includes the continued promotion of the Schools Loans Service to enhance the learning experience using written language. This objective covers all aspects of reading, including digital resources and audio, and is set out to ensure that access is free and inclusive of all, and that libraries have the right stock in the right place and that it is promoted in the correct way. The objective pays importance to the building of readers groups (face to face and digital) and participating in national readers events such as the summer reading challenge, leaving no child behind. Many of the milestones within this area are currently in progress or have already been delivered, with planning moving forward for further engagement activities. Projects relating to this objective are as follows:

Novels that Shaped our World

Novels that Shaped Our World is a BBC initiative, working with libraries to increase levels of reading in local communities. "Page, paragraph or poem" is a creative writing event for Rotherham people.

Rotherham libraries challenged their readers to try their hands at their own writing, encouraging them to reflect on, and make sense in their own words, of these last few months in lockdown. There were three video workshops led by Ray Hearne, local writer, encouraging creative activity – before, during and after lockdown.

Home Educators Book Group

A monthly virtual Home Educations Book Group was launched in April 2021. The children vary in ages and attend as a family with their parents/carers. The group has been so successful that they are now holding monthly face to face meetings with the first one taking place at Rawmarsh Library in October 2021.

Reading Pictures, Seeing Stories

Building on the success of the 2018 Reading Pictures: Seeing Stories Festival the service will contribute to the delivery of a high quality and effective visual literacy programme across Yorkshire and the Humber which will take place during April and May 2022. Working with visual and creative digital artists and book illustrators, children and young people will be given the opportunity to meet, learn and to explore the connection between literacy and the visual arts. Working with key partners of book illustrators the library service will reach children and families not normally engaged with the arts.

BookTrust Storytime

Rawmarsh Library was selected as one of ten libraries in England to be a pilot for the new BookTrust library offer – BookTrust Storytime. BookTrust Storytime aims to inspire families, in particular disadvantaged families, to engage with a diverse range of books and experiences through their library and to help them make sharing stories a regular family activity. The pilot successfully commenced in October 2021, families attending the first session all enjoyed it with the children receiving a copy of the book to keep. The library service is really looking forward to continuing to work with BookTrust and with children and families in the community to make the pilot successful and to obtain useful feedback before the new offer is rolled out nationally.

Objective 3 - Digital access and literacy

- 2.11 Championed by the Head of Digital Services, this objective covers all aspects of digital engagement, from the libraries having the most up to date technology (public PC's, printers etc), to delivering digital makerspaces for local people, schools and groups. Improving digital literacy is high on the agenda, and it is therefore important that libraries can offer access to physical equipment and digital know-how, to ensure that the digital divide is reduced within Rotherham communities.

Projects relating to this objective are as follows:

Libraries Capital I.T Programme

All libraries have received new public PC's, with new printers and self-service kiosks also installed at 9 sites. In doing this, these communities have access to new technology and the ability to self-serve when using the library.

The service is currently in the process of exploring Wi-Fi printing and a libraries digital application, as well as the procurement of further self-service kiosks.

Plans for the roll out of self-service technology are underway and will be piloted at Brinsworth and Mowbray Gardens to allow self-service access to the library building. This will promote and encourage ownership and the use of the available space by the community as well as extend opening hours. Libraries are working closely with Bibliotheca to implement Open plus technology at the two library sites and anticipate a completion date of January 2022.

Makerspaces

Makerspaces encourage creative learning and exploring within the local communities by the provision of sessions and support that is different from anything we have regularly provided before in libraries. A Makerspace is in place at Wath and is currently being developed at Kiveton Park. The Makerspaces will include digital code club sessions, digital technology demonstrations, digital makerspace sessions and ICT sessions. The project builds on the “Mini Makers” project that we received funding for in 2019, using more innovative technology such as 3D printers, pottery wheels and VR headsets. As part of this piece of work a training package is also forming part of this project to give staff the skills and confidence to successfully facilitate a makerspace in its true sense. Support has been accessed from the University of Sheffield, the regional STEM ambassadors, an online introductory course and a visit to Barnsley Makerspace.

Objective 4 - Helping everyone achieve their potential

- 2.12 Championed by the Head of Operations and Business Transformation, this objective is intended to focus on the way in which libraries shape the current offer to ensure it meets the needs of the local community. Libraries are for everyone, so we will continue to offer resources in all formats, adapting each library to meet the local demographic and working with Ward Councillors and other cross cutting agendas and strategies such as Thriving Neighbourhoods to keep abreast of local issues and resolutions.

Libraries will support school children right up to sixth form, delivering homework clubs and safe spaces to study and bring their own devices using the new ICT equipment installed as part of the capital refurbishments, to encourage the use of library resources with their studies and offering free wi-fi to assist getting online. Work is in progress to re-establish job seeker support, deliver functional skills and training to those not currently in work and also give opportunities to work within libraries as an apprentice or volunteer which has reduced vastly through lockdown. Rotherham libraries are currently setting up a business and intellectual property centre (BIPC) in the central library to support small businesses and entrepreneurs to grow, working in partnership with neighbouring local authorities.

Projects relating to this objective are as follows:

Volunteers

There has been recognition that volunteers can bring new skills and ideas to libraries as well as reap the positive benefits that volunteering brings (such as improving mental health and reducing social isolation). The lockdown period and the subsequent temporary closure of libraries has impacted on the number of volunteers that wish to return. Now libraries have reopened with a full library offer the service will continue to seek to increase the number of volunteers working closely with RMBC volunteer coordinators within Neighbourhoods.

The Business and IP Centre (BIPC)

The BIPC provides free access to in depth databases and books that help businesses search best practice, research their market and understand their Intellectual Property. Delivering expert advice on all aspects of business by providing 1-1s, seminars and major events.

The BIPC is part of a National Network led by the British Library in London. They recently secured funding from DCMS to expand the BIPC offer regionally, of which Rotherham are supporting this initiative within Riverside Library.

A training programme for staff has been produced and currently being rolled out in order to support the BIPC to operate from Riverside in partnership with British Library and Sheffield Council. There will be a dedicated space within Riverside library and PC's specifically for the users of BIPC. The BIPC will open for public use in November 2021.

Objective 5 - Healthier and happier lives

- 2.13 Championed by the Head of Public Health, this area of the action plan primarily focuses on all aspects of health and wellbeing, and how libraries can support better health to those communities across the borough. By utilising resources and working with partners, Rotherham libraries will promote the "get healthy" ethos, and offer resources relating to wellbeing and mental health, encouraging customers to use libraries to reduce social isolation and meet in a safe space. Libraries are planning to organise and facilitate groups and sessions to enhance this offer, working with Public Health, NHS, local care homes and social care to ensure that the services offered meet the needs of the community. Libraries have invested in quiet spaces for children with autism, including sensory toys and props. The service is co-creating outdoor activities and events wherever possible, promoting people to "get outdoors" to access services. The two new library developments at Thurcroft and Swinton will have reading gardens incorporated within the plans to further encourage reading for pleasure and enjoying the fresh air at the same time.

Projects delivered or planned to be delivered against this objective are as follows:

Covid-19 testing partnership with Public Health

Community testing originally began on 7th January 2021 operating from the Café space within Riverside House. Staff were needed to support this and as libraries remained closed at this time staff from across the library service worked in partnership with Public Health to deliver the lateral flow testing centre. Library staff continued to support the test at the site until 29th June 2021.

In addition, as part of a Government campaign to 'embed the habit' making testing eligibility simpler, more convenient, and habitual, it was agreed

that more collection points within the community were required in addition to the pharmacies that were already doing this. Therefore on 19th April libraries became part of the LFT Community Collect initiative supporting self-testing at home.

Rotherham Show

Rotherham libraries had a fantastic turn out, with lots of customer engagement and exciting conversations taking place across the weekend. A series of story time sessions and rhyme times took place, with a digital demonstration of e-services and book give-aways also included. Families enjoyed Lego making, craft and colouring sessions as drop-in activities. The service recorded 881 engagements and signed up 52 new borrowers over the three days.

Objective 6 - Greater prosperity

- 2.14 Championed by the Head of Operations and Business Transformation, the action plan focuses on those within the local community who require support seeking employment, training or further education. Libraries will work closely with partners to ensure that there is adequate provision in each site to assist those locally requiring support. Partners attending the people and skills networking group will work with the service to plan and deliver these sessions. Libraries will offer volunteering opportunities, work placements to enhance employability skills for the future, as well as working with educational partners such as RNN Group, The Source and the UCR to promote higher education and training. ICT classes facilitated by library staff will continue alongside the assisted digital support to bridge the digital divide and improve digital skills for all ages. Libraries will work with Job Centre Plus and RMBC Pathways to extend the reach of this offer and encourage those wishing to seek this support, to use their local library to do so.

The Source Skills Academy

The Source Community Outreach Programme is due to commence in October taking experienced tutors and engagement officers into local libraries which are now kitted out with the latest IT equipment for the public to use. Sessions will run at the central Riverside Library and branches in Dinnington and Maltby. This is the first time teams from The Source have gone out to work from libraries.

This project is aimed at boosting young people's confidence and skills and encouraging them in to work or training, especially young people between 16-25 whose job prospects may have been impacted by the pandemic and feeling lost or isolated. This partnership will mean young people can benefit from the libraries new facilities whilst getting the right help and support they need. They will be guided onto courses including money management, English and Maths boosters, organisational skills, self-awareness and confidence-building as well as presenting and speaking skills, creative writing and digital skills courses which will be available.

Employment and skills network

As part of the working group, partners from across the borough will come together with Rotherham libraries to re-establish employment support for local communities. Links are currently being formed with Job Centre Plus, Pathways and RUCST, to ensure that each community has a presence where people can access this type of support to get them back into work or training.

Objective 7 – Stronger more resilient communities

- 2.15 Championed by the Head of Neighbourhoods, Rotherham libraries have designated this area of the action plan around how we view the location of our buildings and the offer delivered from each site in line with community need. Utilising the approved Capital funding, libraries are in the midst of a two year programme of improvements to library buildings and ICT provision. The capital refurbishment programme has allowed the service to review sites and either refurbish, relocate or co-locate where necessary. The service has worked with partners and other services as part of this piece of work, including colleagues in ICT, Asset Management and Children's Services. This area of the action plan also focuses on how libraries can work better with local communities to deliver services, extending responsibility and giving communities a safe, modern and accessible place that they can be proud of. This programme is still ongoing with several areas still awaiting completion in the coming months.

Capital Programme

As part of the capital improvement programme, monies were approved to either refurbish, relocate or co-locate ten neighbourhood libraries, progress on each site is as follows:

Thorpe Hesley Library: The site has been fully redecorated, with new carpets and blinds. A new reception desk provides a focal point within the library, with a new ICT desk layout to make better use of the space. The site has also benefitted from some new shelving in the children's area and book storage, and refreshed book signage. The library offer is currently restricted based on the library space available and the location of the existing site. Investigations are ongoing to identify an alternative location.

Wath: This site has undergone extensive refurbishment to the interior and exterior and has benefitted from a full redecoration to the ground floor, community meeting space and staff room. New carpets have been laid across the ground floor and new vinyl in the upstairs community space. All shelving and furniture has been replaced which includes the ICT area and Children's area along with the introduction of toilet and refreshment facilities, and a Makerspace where Mini Makers sessions take place teaching children a range of STEM activities. New book signage and wall graphics have also been added.

Greasbrough: To further enhance this library following the partial refresh in 2018, the site has benefitted from brand new shelving throughout with new signage, new furniture including children's, and a new ICT area.

Wickersley: The site has benefitted from a full redecoration to the library space and meeting room. New carpets have been laid throughout, with vinyl in the staff room and refreshment area. Most furniture has been replaced where required, including a new reception counter and mobile shelving in the centre to allow a more flexible space. A new ICT suite, study desk and quiet space have been created. New book signage has also been installed. This site also has hot refreshment facilities.

Mowbray Gardens: The library has had a general modernisation including the fitting of new carpets, and painting. The furniture has been refreshed where necessary and in addition, new technology which allows for the library to be open without staff being present is to be piloted at this site. The outside space has also had some improvements to remove weeding and vegetation, jet wash paved areas and remove debris from the roof.

Kimberworth: The library has had a general modernisation including the fitting of new carpets, and painting. The furniture has also been refreshed where necessary. The outside space has also benefitted from some improvements along with new signage on the building. Vinyl wraps applied to the blanking panels in the curtain wall as well as the block paving area which has been cleaned up and wild-flower seeds planted in the outside garden area.

Dinnington: This library has received new shelving along the back of the library, mobile shelving in the centre and reduced height shelving in the children's area. The upstairs has been completely revamped, with all stock now relocated on the ground floor. Upstairs has a new ICT suite, activity tables, casual comfy seating and areas for study and reading. New carpets have been laid on the first floor in addition to new blinds.

Kiveton Park: Early Help services are now located within the library and work is underway to deliver a range of activities for children aged 0 – 5 years including baby massage and other childrens activities. The space has been redesigned to incorporate both services, with a new meeting room that doubles as a hot desk facility, 1:1 meeting room, new open catering kitchen and casual "café" style space to deliver cooking demonstrations as part of the Youth Engagement Programme. A new ICT suite has been created where ICT classes are delivered, with tables for study or meeting. Makerspace facilities are currently in development. New furniture and mobile shelving has been installed throughout to allow additional flexibility when the library is both open and closed.

Thurcroft Library: This library will be relocated to the Gordon Bennett Memorial Hall in the form of an extension to the current building. This will increase opportunities to work more closely with the Parish Council and local

community groups along with the potential to increase numbers to the library. The project is currently in the tender process. Work is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2022.

Swinton Library relocation: The redevelopment programme for the Swinton town centre will provide improved community facilities including a refurbished Civic Hall and the existing Library being relocated to the former customer service centre. The refreshed community facilities will include a café and meeting spaces. The public realm and accessibility within this area will be improved through a significant landscaping scheme which will open up the site improving visibility of community facilities, safety and accessibility. The project is currently awaiting planning sign off before commencement of the works.

Building Signage

Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs displaying old style RMBC logos and corporate colours have been replaced with the new style signage with the exception of Rawmarsh which is still in progress and Thurcroft due to the site relocation plans.

Digital Screens

Wall mounted screens are in the process of being rolled out across Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs in order to display notices and messages relating to local and corporate information to keep the community up to date with all the latest news within the Rotherham borough.

Central Library

As part of the Future High Street Fund Programme, plans are ongoing to relocate the Central Library to the Market. The new library will create a new civic building as part of the redevelopment of the wider Rotherham Markets as outlined in the Town Centre Masterplan along with significantly improving the quality of the built environment in the town centre. It is planned for planning approval and public consultation to be undertaken by November 2021 with appointment of contractor to the scheme in place by June 2022. It is anticipated that construction will start on site in Spring 2022, indoor markets 2023 and finally the library in 2024.

Brinsworth Community Library and Neighbourhood Hub

Following Cabinet approval, Brinsworth Library successfully transferred to a community managed library on 26th April 2021 supported by Brinsworth Parish Council. A concession agreement in relation to the provision of community managed library services was put in place to ensure that training and ongoing support was available following the transition over to a community managed library in April 2021. As part of the successful transition, RMBC provided initial training for both Brinsworth Parish Council staff and volunteers.

When comparing the footfall statistics for Quarter 1 (2021-2022) with the footfall in a “normal” year (using 2019-2020 for this comparison) the service currently has a 61% decrease in customers physically coming into libraries, this is concurrent with the national picture. In order to encourage communities back into libraries as well as showcasing the capital improvements made across Rotherham libraries a relaunch programme has been planned. The relaunch event will welcome the communities back into Libraries under the strapline ‘Love your Libraries’. The events will be themed based on the Universal Library Offers - Culture and Creativity, Health and Wellbeing, Information and Digital and Reading and will include a range of activities and events for both adults and children to enjoy. The programme will commence at Kiveton Park on 28th October 2021 and will then be delivered from Dinnington, Wath, Kimberworth Park, Mowbray Gardens, Greasbrough and Wickersley throughout November and December 2021.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 IPSC to note key achievements and progress made against the Library Strategy and associated action plan.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1

Milestone	Date
Roll out of digital screens displaying Council information	Completion date: November 2021 <i>** Swinton and Thurcroft to be installed at the point of relocation</i>
Progress updates of new Libraries Action Plan	Ongoing
Thurcroft Library co-location with Thurcroft Parish Council	Completion date: May 2022
Swinton Library relocation	TBC
Roll out of technology to access a library outside staffing opening hours (Mowbray Gardens and Brinsworth)	Completion date: January 2022

Relocation of the Central Library as part of the Town Centre master plan and Rotherham Markets redevelopment.	Completion date: 2024
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6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 6.1 The cost incurred to date on refurbishing the 14 neighbourhood sites amounts to £1.5m and is being met from the Libraries Capital Investment Programme budget.
- 6.2 A further £2.9m supports the outcomes of the strategic review including the proposal for a new site in the town centre for the Central Library. The new central Library is part of a wider scheme involving the markets, public realm and includes funding from the Government’s Future High Street Fund.
- 6.3 In relation to the improvement and modernisation works, the procurement of any third-party Contractor to supply/deliver will be undertaken in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council’s own Financial and Procurement and Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

- 7.1 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. The Act does not try to define what a ‘comprehensive and efficient Library service’ is, but when considering how best to deliver the statutory duty, each library authority is responsible for determining, through consultation, the local needs and to deliver a modern and efficient library service that meets the requirements of their communities within available resources.
- 7.2 Should the Secretary of State receive a complaint that the library authority has failed to carry out its duties relating to the public library service imposed on it by the Act they can instigate an investigation as to whether such a failure has occurred. If the outcome of that investigation is that the library authority has failed in its duties, then an order can be made declaring the library authority to be in default and setting out directions for the purpose of removing the fault. Should there be a failure to comply with such an order the functions of the library authority can be transferred to the Secretary of State.
- 7.3 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.

7.4 Legal Services prepared a concession agreement under which Brinsworth Parish Council were granted the opportunity (on a concession basis) to operate Brinsworth Library. This agreement is now in place and signed by all parties.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 None

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The service is currently well used by children up to the age of 11 years. Support for literacy is very strong for pre-school and Early Years children and their families through Bookstart, Story Times, Rhymetimes, Chatterbooks reading groups, class visits and the Summer Reading Challenge. This support has been tailored during the closure of Libraries due to COVID-19 and transferred, where possible, online.

9.2 The service is aware that the number of young people aged between 11 and 18 accessing their library provision is low. Building on the information already collated throughout all phases of engagement, the service will be looking to improve the offer for this age group with the development of programmes

including code clubs, young readers groups, makerspaces and volunteering in libraries.

- 9.3 The Library Service will be a key player in supporting young people in their ambition to create a programme of events and activities to "make all of Rotherham's cultural destinations, libraries, leisure centres and green spaces child-focused, family-friendly and safe for everyone, young and old." in order to deliver against the Children's Capital of Culture initiative.
- 9.4 Co-location of Kiveton Park Library with Children and Young People's Services brings opportunities for the community to utilise a new facility to improve skills and learning for example using the new catering kitchen to deliver food hygiene courses in order to equip Children with essential life skills.
- 9.5 During 2020 library events and activities, such as Rhymetimes and Storytimes moved online and had good engagement with the public via the Rotherham Libraries Facebook page. The Schools Library Service team were able to offer virtual sessions to schools to help with reading and literacy, which they would normally deliver in classrooms. Two team members had recently completed a Makaton training course and so were able to produce some signed storytelling and singing videos to send to schools to share with their children, which were positively received
- 9.6 In April 2021 Rotherham Libraries started an online book club for home educated children and families with the elective home education officer for RMBC. When restrictions eased the group moved onto sessions in a local park and from November 2021 it will meet face to face in Rawmarsh Library. Some of the group members have since attended other library activities, such as a Makerspace session at Wath Library.
- 9.7 Increased volunteering opportunities will be available to both young people and adults including those who are older, vulnerable or disabled. Evidence suggests that volunteering benefits people by helping to alleviate social isolation and loneliness.
- 9.8 As part of a commitment to widening access, the library service will continue to provide vehicle-based services, mainly to older people who might otherwise be unable to get to a library.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Equalities Analysis and Screening Assessment for the Library Strategy is attached at Appendix 2.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 In order to breakdown potential impacts on emissions an Emissions Impact Assessment form is attached at Appendix 3.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The library service is increasingly working in partnership with other public, voluntary and community sector bodies in delivering services in order to deliver against the Library Strategy and associated action plan.
- 12.2 In some cases partnership working has resulted in co-location and joint delivery of services. Future opportunities will continue to be explored.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Due to the impact of Covid-19, the ability to deliver the key actions detailed within the Library Strategy and associated action plan have been heavily restricted. However, in order to ensure that Libraries were continuing to have a presence in their local community, the service responded quickly to the raft of changing lockdown measures, adapting events and activities to enable audiences to continue accessing Library services and in some cases, growing audiences through social media and digital activities. Although the results to date have been very positive, audiences have started to experience digital fatigue and as a result of digital inequalities not everyone has had the opportunity to access the services and activities offered.
- 13.2 Rotherham libraries have continued to follow the Government guidelines and step by step roadmap to inform all stages of service recovery. Safety measures and protocol guidance has been clearly set out by both Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Libraries Connected throughout the pandemic and Rotherham Libraries have ensured that they have worked in line with the toolkit at every phase, regularly liaising with neighbouring local authorities to benchmark this

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Zoe Oxley, Acting Assistant Director Culture, Sport and Tourism

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	15/10/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	15/10/21
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

Report Author: Zoe Oxley, Acting Assistant Director Culture, Sport and Tourism

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