

Subject:		Libraries Strategy 2022-25	
Date of Meeting:		25th November 2021	
Report of:		Executive Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities	
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Ward(s) affected:		All	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The report is seeking agreement from the Committee to the Libraries Strategy 2022-25. The Libraries Strategy is needed because public libraries are highly valued in the city and are integral to the delivery of council plan and city-wide priorities.
- 1.2 Brighton & Hove Library Services have been highly successful over recent decades, including the continuing popularity of the award-winning Jubilee Library which is the fourth most visited public library in the country. This strategy provides a framework for the future of the service, so that libraries can continue to meet the needs of local people and support the priorities of the council plan.
- 1.3 The strategy has been informed by extensive consultation with the public, partner organisations, councillors, and library staff from March to July 2021. It sets the vision and priorities for Brighton & Hove library services for 2022-2025, aligning with the corporate plan, and provides the framework for more detailed service planning in this period. The strategy will guide the city's libraries to achieve key outcomes for local people, helping them achieve their full potential through reading, learning, culture, digital access, and support to health and wellbeing, and local business development.
- 1.4 The strategy is accompanied by a new Libraries Stock Policy 2021, which sets out how library stock is selected, acquired, maintained, and managed to meet the needs of library users in the city.
- 1.5 The Libraries Strategy will inform the more detailed actions of the annual business plans created by Library Services, and as an important strategic document, will be considered by full Council in accordance with the current constitution.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee:

- 2.1 recommends to Full Council that it approves the Libraries Strategy 2022-25 set out at Appendix 1
- 2.2 approves the Libraries Stock Policy as set out at Appendix 2

That Full Council:

- 2.3 approves the Libraries Strategy 2022-25 set out at Appendix 1

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Public libraries are a statutory service under the [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#). The act requires library authorities to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient service' for people who live, work or study within the authority area. In addition, councils are required to 'encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service and provide advice as to its use'.
- 3.2 In 2016, the Libraries Taskforce, established by the DCMS (Department of Culture, Media and Sport) and the LGA (Local Government Association), published '[Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021](#)' in which it sets out the strategic vision and commitment to public libraries in England, recognising the challenging times that councils are facing running library services, calling for radical thinking to protect frontline library services and acknowledging the need for councils to work in 'new and different ways' to 'thrive and not just survive'. The Libraries Taskforce identified seven outcomes that library services should contribute to at a local level, which have been used as a guide for the development of outcomes for libraries in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.1 The Libraries Strategy has been shaped by the Libraries Taskforce's 'common design principles' so that public libraries:
 - meet legal requirements
 - are shaped by local need
 - focus on public benefit and deliver a high-quality user experience
 - support the delivery of council priorities
 - meet agreed access criteria
 - make decisions informed by evidence, building on success
 - support the delivery of the national Universal Library Offers
 - promote partnership working, innovation and enterprise
 - use public funds effectively and efficiently
- 3.2 Public libraries across the country have developed a set of six Universal Library Offers to set out standards that people can expect from their local library service wherever they are. These Universal Offers have been included in the Library Strategy in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.3 The Strategy sets out the current provision of libraries across the city with 14 library locations across the city and a net budget of £3.223 million, plus annual

income of c. £466,000 (2019-20) plus £1.505m PFI (Private Finance Initiative) grant. It provides performance data for the service with the latest comparisons to other similar authorities using pre-Covid data as this is the latest available. Libraries brought in £6,924 total revenue income per 1000 population, more than double the average for our comparator group, and the cost per library visitor (£3) was 25% below average (£4).

- 3.4 The challenges and opportunities facing Library Services are outlined in the Strategy, one of the most significant challenges being the coming savings that are needed after many years of annual budget reduction. Libraries have made £903k savings in the past six years which represents nearly 41% of the current net budget excluding the Jubilee Library PFI expenditure and government grant (28% of the net budget with PFI expenditure and grant included). At the same time, Libraries have significantly improved efficiencies by doubling library opening hours, introducing Libraries Extra and greater collaboration with partner organisations and volunteers.
- 3.5 Having made significant efficiencies, including reductions to the PFI budget and reductions in staff at all levels, any further savings will result in reduced services and reduced accessibility of libraries across the city. Delivering the Library Strategy depends on a steady state budget, so any proposals for savings will have to include identification of which libraries services or locations will cease.
- 3.6 Increasing income is one opportunity that Libraries Services wish to follow as previous successes have demonstrated, but this can only happen after pre-Covid levels of income have been achieved. Library Services income has plummeted during the Covid pandemic, dropping to £60,000 in 2020-21 from £466,000 the previous year. It will take time to attract back room hire clients and retail sales to pre-Covid levels before additional income can be achieved.
- 3.7 There are good opportunities for Library Services to contribute to community wealth building through the new BIPC (Business and Intellectual Property Centre), and to the One Council approach to delivering council services. Libraries can also help address issues such as social isolation and loneliness, health, and wellbeing, including mental health issues and long-term health conditions, in addition to the more traditional support to literacy and learning.
- 3.8 The vision and purpose for library Services in Brighton & Hove have been developed by the senior team in the service. They reflect the breadth of what libraries do, and the role libraries play in helping people improve their lives in many ways.

Our purpose: 'Public libraries connect our communities to culture, reading, learning, and each other.'

What we do: 'We provide impartial and inclusive access to library resources and services to inspire learning, development, discovery, creativity, and enjoyment, in welcoming, safe, supportive, and accessible places.'

Our vision for the future: 'We aspire to strengthen communities, promote inclusion, and inspire people to improve their lives, making libraries a cornerstone for our community's economic, social, and cultural wellbeing.'

- 3.9 The Libraries Strategy identifies priorities for the immediate future. Library services can contribute to the city's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in five ways:
- Supporting children and babies catching up with learning and development. The National Literacy Trust has reported that the lack of language and social interaction for 0-4year-olds will need two decades of sustained support to each individual through childhood to redress this, with the disadvantaged being hit harder than others.
 - Supporting new or recovering small businesses through the Business and IP Centre, with targeted support for women and black and minority ethnic developing new enterprises.
 - Supporting unemployed people through information to help with job applications, access to digital resources to apply for jobs and access benefits.
 - Supporting local communities to recover by providing a safe and welcoming place for social interaction and community development.
 - Supporting people affected by Covid-19 through access to trusted information, self-help resources, and recreational reading to help with social isolation.
- 3.10 Other priorities for action have emerged during the development of the strategy and the analysis of the results of the consultation and engagement process:
- Effective marketing and promotion to get people back into libraries and enable those who would benefit most from libraries are reached
 - Accessibility of libraries services – ensuring all buildings and services are appropriately located and fully accessible
 - Targeted services for those most in need
 - Community use of libraries – enabling access to other services through libraries, and encouraging community groups to use their local library especially during Libraries Extra
 - Effective engagement of more volunteers in appropriate activities
 - Deliver core Universal Libraries Offers across the city
 - Increase commercial income – retail, room hire and tenancies
 - Increase project funding from fundraising – donations and grants
 - Review and amend senior staffing to align with new strategy
 - Amend staff recruitment to bring libraries' staffing more in line with city profile
 - Staff development programme that meets the strategic needs of the service
 - Effective evidence gathering to measure impact and performance of Libraries Services
- 3.11 In the Libraries Strategy, the priorities identified have been placed into a framework of six aims and related objectives for the Library Services and linked these to corporate plan priorities.

Aims	Objectives	Outcomes	Council Plan Priorities

Reading, learning and creativity through libraries	<p>Implement the new Stock Policy, building the collection of books, e-books, and other materials to meet community needs</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all ages and needs that spark curiosity, nurture learning and develop creative and critical thinking</p> <p>Develop constructive activities for children and young people</p> <p>Provide space for study, work, and creativity</p> <p>Promote enjoyment of reading for all</p>	<p>Increased reading and literacy</p> <p>Helping everyone achieve their full potential</p>	A growing and learning city
Libraries as community hubs	<p>Delivering council and community services</p> <p>Providing digital services and inclusion</p> <p>Enabling cultural and creative opportunities</p> <p>Encouraging inclusive community interaction and understanding</p>	<p>Stronger more resilient communities</p> <p>Improved digital access and literacy</p> <p>Cultural and creative enrichment</p>	A stronger city
Libraries supporting community wealth building	<p>Deliver support to local small or new businesses and through the Business and IP Centre</p> <p>Support adult learning</p> <p>Provide trainee and apprenticeship opportunities</p> <p>Work with schools and colleges to support children learning</p>	Greater prosperity	A city working for all
Libraries supporting health and well-being	<p>Develop targeted services to reach those most in need</p> <p>Provide home delivery services to those restricted at home or in residential units</p> <p>Link services to council priority issues, working collaboratively with other service providers</p>	Healthier and happier lives	A healthy and caring city
Sustainable and innovative libraries services	<p>Develop and promote Libraries Extra</p> <p>Make best use of volunteers</p> <p>Collaborate with other partners in service development and delivery</p>	Efficient and effective use of resources delivering value for money	A modernising council

	Increase Income generation Extend fundraising to support projects and activities Regularly upgrade library technology Expand digital services Develop the library workforce	Happier and productive workforce (staff and volunteers) Increased effectiveness through collaborative working	Working in partnership
High visibility of library services delivered to a high standard	Effective publicity for library service offers Marketing of targeted services to specific communities Clear customer service standards for libraries to provide a high-quality user experience Deliver consistent Universal Library Offers across the city Effective evidence gathering to measure impact and performance of Libraries Services	More residents able to benefit from high quality library services and resources	Our customer promise

The strategy contains case studies to illustrate impact, and an implementation plan (appendix 1).

3.12 The Libraries Stock Policy 2021 (in appendix 2) aims to:

- support the Libraries Strategy and corporate policies and priorities of Brighton & Hove City Council
- provide for continually changing educational, information, cultural, lifelong learning, and recreational needs by listening to customers and communities
- enable the greatest number of people to have access to the widest range of resources, in the most appropriate formats balancing customer needs and service requirements with environmental impact by:
 - providing books in a wide range of formats, including electronic, to meet the needs and interests of local communities and of people of all ages and backgrounds
 - providing and enhancing access to information in print and electronic format and promoting an awareness of its value in sustaining the highest possible quality of life
 - working with groups and individuals who are unable to have full access to library services and to be active in working for social inclusion
- support, where appropriate, national initiatives stemming from central government and other organisations (for example, the Universal Library Offers)
- to achieve Best Value for the Library Service by: -
 - obtaining library materials in the most cost-effective way
 - ensuring the efficient and effective use of library materials, and consistency in stock management through a service wide approach to selection, development, and maintenance

- 3.13 Brighton & Hove Libraries purchase more books (122) per 1000 population per year than average (89) for our comparator authorities (CIPFA statistics for 2019-20 latest available). The number of books bought each year varies depending on book prices, numbers published, size of budget and other circumstances. For instance, more e-books and less hard copy books were bought during Covid-19 pandemic. Broadly speaking there is a trend to buying more e-books and e-audiobooks, however, we have had generally steady numbers of hardcopy books purchased each year up until the pandemic.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Book acquisitions	35,582	35,525	19,640
Audio-visual (includes talking books)	1,777	1,660	560
E-books	7,865	7,698	10,036
E-audio and e-audio-visual (includes e-talking books)	2,109	5,791	7,811

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The last Libraries Plan covered 2016 to 2020. The 'do nothing' option of not producing a new library plan would leave the Library Service without any strategic framework for its operation or development and would fail to meet the council's constitution which requires a council approval for library development plans. This option has been discounted for these reasons.
- 4.2 The proposed Libraries Strategy will provide a framework for the future of the service, so that libraries can continue to meet the needs of local people and support the priorities of the council plan.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Brighton & Hove Library Services has consulted with the public and key stakeholders to find out their views on Library Services and library stock in general, as well as their experience of using libraries in Brighton & Hove, both before and during the Covid pandemic. The methods used were:
- Public surveys – three versions targeted at people 0-12 years, 13-19 years, and adults 20 years and above
 - Focus groups to gather more qualitative feedback from specific groups, and to reach those less likely to complete an online survey
 - Survey of partner organisations
 - Staff survey and workshops
 - Councillors' survey and workshops
- 5.2 The results of all the consultation and engagement was overwhelmingly positive, giving good indications of what is working well, and with detailed suggestions on how to improve and develop library services.
- 5.3 Customer service standards and ease of use
- All the surveys gave great results for the two corporate performance measures, and good results from similar questions to partner organisations and staff.

	Services were very or fairly easy to use	Standards of customer service were very or fairly good
Adult survey	92%	93%
13-19 years survey	100%	96%
0-12 years survey	98%	98%
Partner organisations described their experience of working with library services as very or fairly good		86%
Staff were asked how proud they are of the customer experience in libraries, on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being extremely proud and 5 being not proud		1 (extremely proud) 35% 2 43% 3 22%

5.4 General summary of feedback

- Most people use more than one library and visit at least once every three weeks, and most people walk to the library.
- The traditional services of borrowing, reading in the library, and finding information, remain the most important services for many users. The most important stock remains printed fiction and non-fiction, followed by online information.
- The library as an important provider of space to study, read, and meet people, in a safe and welcoming environment, with helpful staff, is evidenced by the survey results. The top three most important things to respondents are opening hours, the library as a safe place to visit and seating areas. When asked what they would most like to see changed, longer opening hours was the most suggested change, with many mentioning that they want to see more staffed hours.

5.5 Areas for improvement and development

There were common areas for improvement that emerged from the public surveys (all age groups), focus groups, partner survey, and staff survey. They asked for:

- Better, more effective promotion of library services, to targeted groups and to partners who often do not know what libraries have to offer, with less reliance on social media.
- Better, more accessible signage, and guides on how to use the library, especially how to use the various technologies like self-service kiosks, printers, and computers. The website was criticized for being too wordy and difficult to find what you need.
- More and better stock; seating/study space; events and activities; IT and digital resources.
- Improvements in some specific areas of stock, such as books in languages other than English, and bilingual books.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The process of consultation and engagement has produced a wealth of information which Libraries Services can use to develop and improve services to meet local needs. The Libraries Strategy has set out a framework for action, identifying priorities and linking library services into the delivery of the corporate plan.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley

Date: 04/11/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Libraries Plan is required by law to be adopted by Full Council. Other legal implications are set out in the body of the report.

Lawyer Consulted:

Alice Rowland

Date: 21/10/21

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. The Libraries Strategy aims and priorities impact positively on many people with protected characteristics to help support those facing inequality.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 The ethos behind public libraries is sustainability, with books and other resources being shared by everyone rather than individually owned. Libraries continues this ethos in the sharing of access to digital equipment. New or refurbished libraries will produce more sustainable buildings, and library practices will be regularly reviewed to reduce libraries carbon footprint.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 None.

Any Other Significant Implications:

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 None.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 None.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 Support to health and wellbeing is a key Libraries Universal Offer: To promote healthy living, provide self-management support and effective signposting and information to reduce health, social and economic inequalities. To offer a range of creative and social activities which engage and connect individuals and communities, reduce stigma, combat loneliness, and improve wellbeing.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

7.8 Libraries are a highly valued statutory service in the city and protecting libraries is a current administration commitment. Libraries support the delivery of corporate plan priorities in many ways:

- Libraries new Business and IP Centre supports local small business and entrepreneurs to start and develop their businesses and recover from the economic impacts from Covid and austerity
- Libraries continue to provide essential resources for adult and community learning, and have essential free digital access
- Libraries have a long track record of supporting children and young people's learning and development
- Libraries support to health and wellbeing has been outlined in 7.7 above
- Libraries can promote environmental and sustainability awareness through information, events, and exhibitions

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Libraries Strategy 2022-25

Appendix 2 Libraries Stock Policy 2021

Background Documents: None