

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny

31st March 2017



Report of: Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods

Title: Library Update

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Kate Murray, Head of Libraries:
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Recommendation:

As a prelude to the forthcoming public consultation, the service would like a conversation with Scrutiny about how to assess all libraries as part of a new network of council run libraries. This is primarily about -

**Criteria for assessing libraries to be included in the council run network
Whether weighting should be applied and if so what?**

Summary

The library service is preparing for a citywide public consultation and is in the process of creating a consultation draft with updated supporting material as available in the previous consultation. We will be assessing our current libraries against criteria to establish a geographical spread of provision for the city which will be reduced in number. We would welcome input on the criteria to be used and how these might be weighted.

The significant issues arising are:**A. Proposed criteria to be used in assessing libraries**

In the last library review of 2014/2015, we assessed libraries in the city and did not include usage. The consultation feedback showed how strongly citizens felt about using this criterion. However in isolation, this criterion would exclude communities in need where opening hours and therefore usage is low but the service is needed. We have looked at the criteria that other local authorities have used in recent library consultations and have reviewed the last Bristol library consultation. This produced a long list of:

Quality of buildings and size,

Parking and transport links,

Offer to local and wider community and how can they be adapted for future flexible use

Usage – visits, issues, computer use

Geographic spread across the city

Distance to the next library provision

Catchment area

Area of deprivation or need

Whether it is an area of council support - other depts. have identified the need in the area (JNSA)

Other provision (council and community) available in the area

Current lease arrangement and rental costs within the library budget – 5 libraries are commercially rented

Commercial retail value of the buildings

In discussion with our Executive Member and the consultation team who are experts in the field, we have simplified the long list. We want the citizens of Bristol to have a clear and simple explanation of how we have assessed the current libraries.

1. Building suitability & sustainability:

Costs over the next 5 years (include rents where appropriate, repairs etc.)

Accessibility

How well the building could cope with being one of a smaller number of libraries in the city (and therefore having more people using it).

2. Location:

Close to retail, close to community centres

Transport links and parking

If the location is suitable for future use as one of a smaller number of libraries in the city, with more people travelling to it.

3. Usage:

How well used the library is currently

Visits, items borrowed and computer bookings

4. Community need:

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation score

B. Weighting

We would welcome input on whether the criteria should all be equal or be weighted? A variety of options are possible.

Options can be generated using the following principles:

- Central Library reverts to full opening hours (increase from 45 to 54 hrs and Wednesday reinstated)
- Geographical spread of libraries is needed

Three different weightings can be applied (equal, weighted towards deprivation, weighted towards building suitability). These show that there is a core of libraries which appear in every option and some other libraries which change depending on weighting.

C. Draft Timescales

Consultation: 12 weeks from Mid- May to Mid- August 2017

Consultation Analysis and report: September 2017

Cabinet Paper: November or December 2017

Staff Review: December – July 2018

Changes begin: April 2018

Budget savings realised: August 1st 2018

Context

Budget – The budget proposal agreed was a saving of £1.4m. This was profiled as a saving of £300,000 in 17/18, £740,000 in 18/19, £360,000 in 19/20. This saving is 30% of the current library budget. The £300,000 saving has been achieved for 17/18. We propose to find the savings in one staff review and to implement a new structure and service by August 2018 with changes to libraries and buildings from April 2018.

Proposal

To move to a public consultation from Mid-May to Mid-August for 12 weeks about the future library service within a reduced budget and with a reduced number of council run libraries. To achieve these timescales, it is necessary to agree the consultation principles before Easter.

Appendices: