

Appendix A

Community Engagement

1. The confirmation of a council run library service offers a window of opportunity for essential conversations with local communities. It is vital that the service and the communities use this period to work together to pilot new approaches, extend the current services offered from the building, maximise use of the buildings and explore new partnerships. This is a different approach to the previous proposal and will be led by community needs and solutions. We trust that communities are best placed to coproduce a future service that works for them.
2. Whilst the longer term future is uncertain (as for many council services), this opportunity to explore change will lead to a more community involved service that is more resilient and able to adapt to future scenarios. We will also use this time to understand future needs of local communities and develop a strategy to adapt to changed reading and usage habits.
3. We propose to begin local community engagement around all 27 library sites from October 2018, to discuss the library buildings and services, other neighbourhood assets, local needs, ideas previously presented and new ideas. We will aim to talk to all 27 communities initially to inform the strategy and then develop a more phased approach for future in depth return conversations. There will be council officer support for communities to further any suggestions or turn ideas into pilot projects.
4. These conversations will include local councillors and community organisations. They will form a basis for ongoing engagement, the potential formulation of more Friends Groups and will explore how the library service and buildings can be extended by community-led use. We will be clear to the community if there are any constraints to consider, such as insurance, lease agreements and any legal issues. We will aim to involve current and potential users of the service and space and are keen to involve the Youth Mayors.
5. We have a wealth of information from the 2015 library consultations and the 2017 Your Neighbourhood Consultation. We also had suggestions and proposals as part of the consultation in 2017. We will use this as the basis for starting the community conversations. We will support this work by using council project resources that will help facilitate conversations across communities and partners. Engagement will be supported by research of what others are doing outside of Bristol, and what may be possible in Bristol. We will compliment this work with internal discussions to take advantage of any Property or service developments in local neighbourhoods.
6. Library staff will be involved at a local library level as they have valuable professional knowledge of the service, and the needs of their local communities and citizens.
7. We are aware that the communities have experienced a lot of recent consultation about the service and want to be very clear that the community conversations are not assessments or based around any criteria. They will not be based around savings targets. We are very interested in exploring in more depth the ideas and suggestions already presented, as well as

any new ideas. It is intended that these will supplement or enhance the existing library service, and will be community led. We imagine each community conversation may be different.

8. We recognise that this work will take some time to complete and will aim to work with all communities equally in the first phase to inform the strategy, and then in a more detailed way in the second phase. We will undertake a phased approach as we can pilot projects and pass on the lessons learnt to other areas, so will prioritise library development as some ideas and plans may be more formed than others. They may be existing interest and groups that can form part of a first pilot. This will reflect community readiness. However, conversations will happen in all existing library locations. The work will be flexible and iterative so as not to lose opportunities that may arise from wider developments in local areas and other, as yet unknown, property changes.
9. The existing Libraries savings target for 18/19 will be covered from reserves and savings targets for 19/20 and thereafter will be considered as part of the refresh of the medium term financial plan and 2019/20 budget process in February 2019. The budget has not increased nor has any capital funds been granted. Therefore the community conversations will be held in an honest and pragmatic way - with the service being clear about what is possible within that budget. Any savings which may be realised will be reinvested in the service, in this three year time period.

Technology Review

10. The library service is supported by a range of technology – from the free public computers and booking systems to the self-service kiosks - and we now need to ensure that all the contracts are compliant with a longer term strategy for the service and procurement policies for the council. This will begin with work on a mandate to review all the technology contracts, assisted by the Project Management officers.
11. The library service offers a service over 7 days and needs to have resilient systems in place that are supported as a frontline service for the council. The current support is only weekdays. We will consider this as part of the technology review.

Continuous Service Development

12. The library service will continue to identify and deliver service improvements as business as usual and will begin by a change of shelving in Bedminster Library, which is likely to mean a short-term closure, and a revision of the layout in the Central Library.
13. We will investigate and then implement a way to improve the Central Library opening hours. We have extensive feedback on usage patterns and customer and staff comments on the impact on the service, since April 2016, when the hours were reduced. If implemented this may enhance digital inclusion with more access to the more than 50 free public computers held at Central. This will be within the existing revenue service budget.

14. We will investigate and implement increases in some priority branch opening hours to improve access for current and potential customers. This will be within the revenue budget. The priority sites will be those whose current hours are more inconsistent and have evidence through usage that an increase would increase access.
15. The provision of additional hours to the service will not impact or delay the community conversation but run parallel to it. Following the 25% reduction in opening hours in April 2016, initially borrowing and visits decreased, but not as a percentage, as much as opening hours. However, we are now seeing a further reduction in borrowing and visits as usage patterns settle after the April 2016 change. There has been no significant change to our service or to our stock offer during this period, but the change in opening hours has reduced access to almost all of our libraries. Therefore we anticipate that the addition of extra opening hours will increase use of the service.
16. We will continue to explore new partnerships and digital pilots to enhance the service, working with established and new partners who have come forward during this period of review.

2017 “Your Neighbourhood” Consultation

17. In the 2017 Your Neighbourhoods consultation, the service originally asked two questions; question 1 asked respondents about their preference for three options for which ten libraries should continue to be run by Bristol City Council; question 2 was a free text question which invited any other feedback on the changes to Bristol Libraries, including suggestions of a different way forward. The full report is available at the link in Appendix B.
18. There were 3,749 responses to the Your Neighbourhoods survey. 93% of these filled in the section about libraries.
19. Of 3,473 people who responded to the libraries consultation, 2,132 people (61%) selected a preferred option of the three libraries options proposed. 286 (13% of those who selected an option) of these also expressed a dislike of all three options in the free text response. A further 1,341 respondents (39% of 3,473 library respondents) provided free text comments - mostly expressing concern and / or alternative suggestions for running the future library service - but did not select a preferred option in question 1. 816 (almost two-thirds of the 1,341) explicitly stated that they did not support any of the three options.
20. The library service wants to respond to the outcome of the above consultation, subsequent discussions with campaigners and members and the changed financial position from Cabinet in July 2018, where the savings target originally set at £1.4m, was removed to allow for the community conversations to happen and be implemented.

ENDS