

PLAN FOR LIBRARIES

Scrutiny Briefing Report



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to prepare correctly for any future changes to the library network the Library Service have reviewed:

- the recommendations and advice set out in the Red Quadrant Report – ‘The Future Shape of Plymouth’s Library Service’;
- the March 2014 report ‘Creating a Sustainable Library Service’ approved by Cabinet, where the Council signed up to a method of conducting the Library Review, with the specific mention of Plymouth City Council consulting extensively to inform the strategic design of the revised library network;
- The Charteris Report, a review into the approach Wirral Council took in conducting the Library Review on the report’s recommendations to consider.
 - the needs of those who live work and study in the area;
 - an assessment of accessibility;
 - the views of existing users;
 - an assessment of whether any specific communities or groups would suffer adverse impacts;
 - Information from partner organisations and other departments.

Following this advice the Library Service held a ‘conversation’ over the summer of 2016 to assess the views of existing users.

2. WHAT WE’VE DONE SO FAR

2.1. The Library Conversation

The Library Conversation ran from 27 June until 17 September 2016. In that time 3327 were completed and processed, 2241 online and 1086 paper based.

The Library Conversation took place between 27 June and 17 September 2016. A questionnaire was put together using SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool chosen for its ease of use, responsiveness and reporting abilities.

Printed copies of the questionnaire were available for those who preferred them or who were unable to complete online. These were sent to all libraries, 1st Stop, Registration Service and other council buildings.



As an added incentive, all those who completed the survey were entered into a prize draw to win an iPad Mini.

Branding for the conversation was designed to work in print, online, including social media. Plus on the digital screens in the Central Library, 1st Stop and Ballard House.

2.2. Key Findings

The Library conversation provided the following key findings:

- 66% of respondents visit the library at least once a month. 35% visited infrequently or never.
- 88% of respondents used Central, Plympton and Plymstock Libraries.
- Most respondents travelled to their library by car (44%) or walked (62%)
- Books (92%), Computers (78%), the 247 Library (76%) and Wi-Fi (68%) were the services respondents most used now. Digital skills training (71%), help with job seeking (72%), access to council services (63%) and finding health information (62%) were the services respondents could see themselves using in the future.
- 90% said the current library opening hours were convenient.
- Of those who identified as non-users 76% had used library services in the past.
- 86% of non-users last visited between 1 and 10 years ago.
- 57% of non-users think that they don't have need to visit the library
- Free membership (85%) and free books to borrow (84%) were the most recognisable of the library offers. Awareness was low for online resources.

The results are being used with other comparators and data sets to inform the Library Plan that will form part of Statutory Public Consultation.

2.3. Equality Impact Assessment

We must be able to demonstrate that we properly understand the needs of people being affected by any changes before making any proposals for changes to the service. This must be comprehensive in its approach and take account of the needs of all groups of users, including the impact on equality groups who are likely to be affected by the changes. We have already completed an EIA for the "Conversation" and will be completing one as part of the development of the Library Plan.

2.4. Vision and Strategy Development

In 2014, Plymouth City Council's Cabinet recognised the need for fundamental changes to the statutory service. The Plan for Libraries, when drafted, will set out proposals for these changes and help support the financial pressures and challenges to transform the delivery of local services.

Our vision and strategic aims for a new approach to these essential community facilities have been determined by a combination of community needs, the Plymouth Plan and lengthy community engagement.

Our vision is that "Plymouth Libraries will deliver modern digital services that inspire learning and improve health and wellbeing".

The following five strategic aims have been identified as integral to the delivery of a modern library service:

1. Reading and Literacy

We'll provide free access to books and literature for all, promoting reading for pleasure. Through initiatives including the Summer Reading Challenge, Bookstart and Reading Ahead the library service aspires to raising literacy levels across the city.

2. Information and History

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We will ensure that everyone has access to information and services to help them make informed decisions. We will contribute to economic development, providing support for job seekers and small businesses through work clubs and PatLib.

We will make the most of the library's history collections ensuring access and preserving for future generations.

3. Digital

We will provide free Wi-Fi and computers with skilled staff on hand to help people make the most of the internet and digital world. An active digital inclusion programme will ensure that no-one is left behind.

4. Health and Wellbeing

We will provide access to public health information, including signposting and referrals. Through creative and social activities and initiatives such as Books on Prescription, Memory Cafes and Feel Better with a Book we will contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities.

5. Learning

We will provide space, resources and opportunities to support lifelong learning for all. The Library Service to Schools supports learning in schools by providing quality resources, expertise and advice.

3. WHAT WE WILL BE DOING NEXT

3.1. Developing a Plan

We are developing a 'Plan for Libraries' to meet the demands set from the Libraries Taskforce and align to the Council's Customer Service Strategy 2015 – 2018, which sets out 3 aims to the way Plymouth City Council interacts with and provides services to its customers;

1. To improve the way we understand our customers
2. To better serve our customers
3. To listen and respond better to our customers

Now is the time to ensure the Library service and our Library Plan aligns to the future of the City and achieves its Strategic Aims and delivers a consistent and sustainable service for our residents and communities.

3.2. Designing a Communication and Engagement Approach – the Consultation

Any proposals to change the library service must be taken through a statutory consultation exercise and it is vital the Council has a clear offer and vision which can be communicated to the communities affected. It is also important that local communities have the opportunity to consider whether the libraries can be run as community assets rather than by the Council.

The Plan for Libraries aims to outline the key activities and timescales for communicating the proposals and the consultation process to all stakeholder groups. This will inform the Consultation plan.

3.3. Delivering the Consultation

Involving and consulting with the community is essential in preparing and delivering an effective and sustainable future for the Library Service. The Consultation is proposed to run from 16 January – 10 April 2017, and will be communicated via various channels including online, via social media, and in all libraries around the City.

The next stage is to consult on options that we believe will:

- deliver services that are fit for purpose, reliable, quality and efficient that are relevant for local communities
- improve accessibility and availability of the library service by offering better library facilities in the correct locations
- develop the library workforce and improve the skills, tools and abilities
- build on the online library experience for all our residents; increasing the opportunities for self service delivery and access to council services
- provide a vibrant physical Library spaces for a variety of activities; improving layout and design and encouraging a more relaxing, creative environment
- increase the number of events and outreach programmes in collaboration with partner organisations
- Make best use of council resources in way that provides the best outcomes for both the authority and the customer.

The plan sets out the approach to consulting with stakeholders on the options for delivery of the Plan for Libraries. The focus of the consultation will be around the Plan which will detail the new service offering and rationale for any proposed changes.

The full consultation will abide our organisational objectives, by being open, democratic, fair and partnership focussed. It is intended that the communication and consultation with all stakeholders including partners will bring about the following:

- An evidence base on which robust, democratic decisions can be made with regards to the future of the library service
- A Plan for libraries which is widely supported by all stakeholders and supports the delivery of the Plymouth Plan
- Identification of gaps in service provision and/or areas of underperformance along with measures to address these.
- A library service which provides the infrastructure to enable vibrant and relevant community hubs.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Support the development of the Consultation plan

It is recommended that the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the existing stakeholder detail to inform the Consultation Plan and make recommendations on any omissions in order to ensure all affected groups have the opportunity to be included.

4.2 Support the Vision and Strategic Aims

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It is recommended that the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Vision and 5 Strategic Aims as outlined in this report for inclusion in the final 'Plan for Libraries' to go to public consultation in January 2017.

4.3 Note the outcomes of the Library Service conversation

It is recommended that the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the outcomes from the Library Service conversation held over the summer of 2016.

In addition, we would welcome any suggestions for improved engagement activities that the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee can provide.

5. BACKGROUND PAPER

Background Papers					
 Final report Future of Libraries.pdf	Creating a Sustainable Library Service	Charteris Report	 Communication Findings.docx	 CST_08 Library Conversation EIA CB	 Key Stakeholders.docx