

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	12 th July 2016	
Report Title	Library Local Improvement Programme	
Cabinet Portfolio	Councillor Sharon Waldron, Portfolio Lead Member for Digital and Customer Services	
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Wards affected	Hatch Lane, Hale End & Highams Park, Higham Hill, William Morris, Chapel End, Wood Street and Lea Bridge	
Public Access	OPEN except for Appendix 8 which is EXEMPT in accordance with Section 100(A-H) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Schedule 12A as amended, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1, paragraph 3, as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information) and disclosure would not be in the public interest.	
Appendices	Appendix 1 Vision for Library Locals Appendix 2 (a), (b), (c) and (d).Business Cases (for each Library Local) Appendix 3 Needs Assessment Appendix 4 Consultation plan and example visuals Appendix 5 Equalities Analysis Appendix 6 Maps of library and user locations Appendix 7 Sustainability Matrix Appendix 8 Finance, Value for Money and Risk (Exempt)	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for redefining the Council's Library Local service and ensuring all four Library Local branches continue to provide residents with valued resources and support well into the future.

- 1.2 Specifically, this report seeks Cabinet agreement to a new Vision for Library Locals and, importantly, the relocation of three branches to new sites where the Council can provide a more accessible and cost-effective service aligned to local community needs. This proposal is underpinned by Business Cases for each library, a Needs Assessment, Equalities Analysis and maps of user locations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 For the reasons given in this report, Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1.1 Agree in principle to:
- The Vision for Library Locals (Appendix 1) proposes the relocation of three of the four Library Locals and refurbishment of the fourth. This is evidenced by the four Business Cases (Appendix 2) and maps of current and future catchment areas (Appendix 6).
- 2.1.2 All costs to refurbish, relocate and any acquisition / lease costs for the four Library Locals to be funded from the disposal receipts from the sale of three of the current buildings.
- 2.1.3 The agreement in principle is subject to delegating to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Commercial Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Junior Cabinet Member the following:
- a) undertaking a public consultation that builds on the extensive consultation exercise undertaken in 2011 that led to the decisions taken at Cabinet on 11th October 2011 (Appendix 4);
 - b) authority having regard to the outcome of the consultation exercise to make minor amendments to the Library Local Vision in Appendix 1
 - c) authority to, having conscientiously taken into account the responses from the consultation exercise, take the decision to proceed with the implementation of the new Vision
- 2.1.3 In the event that the outcome and responses of the public consultation result in the recommendation of significant changes to the new Vision for Library Locals, officers are to report back to Cabinet before the taking of a decision to move the location of Library Locals
- 2.1.4 Cabinet agrees that, to ensure the Library Local Programme as set out in the new Vision is progressed rapidly, that design development work, surveys and detailed costings will be carried out on the basis that such expenditure is “at risk” and that no decisions will be taken to implement until the completion of the Vision as set out in paragraph 2.1.3 above.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1.1 The Review of the Library and Information Service was approved by Cabinet in October 2011. A new overall vision, objectives and service model, taking account of local need and the level of resources available, was approved as were specific proposals for delivering the this vision, objectives and service model in practice.
- 3.1.2 The Council has a statutory duty (under the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to residents, those who work in or are in full-time education in the borough. The Council has a service standard that all residents should live within 1.5 miles of their nearest library, and 2 miles of their nearest Library Plus. The Council is committed to providing a modern and inclusive Library Service that meets the needs of our customers and local communities.
- 3.1.3 The Library Local Vision has been drafted to share with the community and stakeholders proposals of what Library Locals might look like in the future. Feedback will be sought as part of the proposed consultation with communities and stakeholders (a plan is attached at Appendix 4)

3.2. **Library Locals Vision Statement (Appendix 1)**

- 3.2.1 The Council's vision is that Library Locals will:
- a) Be modern and attractive spaces which match up to the best public library buildings in London and have the built-in flexibility to adapt to future service needs.
 - b) Offer a 21st century library service supporting literacy and numeracy, reading and information needs and access to digital services. Be public spaces which are welcoming and support community cohesion
 - c) Be located in accessible places alongside other community facilities
 - d) Recognise the varying needs of different age groups and supports younger people to get the most from the library experience especially in the area of ICT software and hardware
 - e) Enable and empower members of the community supported by library staff to shape the local service to offer the best customer experience, now and in the future
- 3.2.2 This project directly supports the Council's agreed priorities for:
- Regeneration
 - Building a strong local economy and thriving town centres
 - Housing
 - Good quality of life

3.2.3 **Relocation or Refurbishment of Library Locals**

- 3.2.4 It is proposed that the Council relocates Hale End, Higham Hill and Wood Street libraries into new 'fit for purpose' premises. This will

enable the Council to deliver a more cost-effective service, provide greater accessibility, meet local needs, enable reinvestment in the service and release development sites for new housing.

3.2.5 Due to the central location of Lea Bridge Library, the Grade II Listing by Historic England and the restrictive covenant in place that only permits a public library to be operated from the building, the Council proposes to remodel and refurbish this site to bring it in line with the Council's vision for Library Locals, aligned to Library Plus.

3.2.6 If agreed, the implementation of the Library Local Vision in relation to the relocation and refurbishment programme will be phased to minimise disruption and be designed to enable the Council to take advantage of different regeneration opportunities across the Borough.

3.2.7 **Hale End Library**

1. Relocation offers a clear opportunity, to place the library in a busier and more accessible location while offering greater flexibility of space. A number of sites, including the "Town Square" development, the former Budgens supermarket on Larkshall Road and the old cinema on Hale End Road, are under consideration.
2. A number of sources, including central and local government, professional bodies and architects, indicate that retail locations work better than residential areas for libraries, because they are likely to offer residents a desirable location, easy access and ample parking. To achieve this, the Council is investigating sites, co-located with retail activity to take advantage of passing traffic. It is anticipated that such a move will increase footfall by approximately 20%.
3. The anticipated timescale for negotiations, fit out, relocation and re-opening is a maximum of 45 weeks but preliminary work is already underway to test the suitability of sites and to develop the Client Brief with Capital Projects and NPS.

3.2.8 **Higham Hill Library**

1. The current performance of this library is heavily affected by the poor condition of the building, which was classed as being beyond its useful life in 2011. The interior is dark, unwelcoming and poorly designed and there is little flexible space available. A modern and central location will support the literacy, numeracy, information and learning needs of the culturally diverse local community and offer meeting facilities for library and community/partner use delivering the Council's vision for Library Locals.
2. The high level of deprivation in Higham Hill (where the library is currently located) and its neighbouring wards, makes it essential that library provision in this area is enhanced to effectively meet local needs. This relocation provides the opportunity for the Library Local to be at the centre of a new community hub either

directly delivering or facilitating services that will support local peoples learning, employment and social and cultural aspirations. These might include employment support for unemployed residents, computer courses and workshops, ICT drop-ins and workshops, money saving workshops and active support for reading, literacy and numeracy for all ages.

3. The proposed location for the new Higham Hill Library, is approximately 0.5km or a three minute walk away from the current library and located within the Priory Court Estate. This will be informed by the People Shaping Places consultation carried out February – April 2016 and offers the opportunity to involve residents in the design and commissioning of the library as part of the Priory Court Estate Renaissance.
4. The decision to relocate the library is linked to the progression of plans to regenerate the Priory Court Community Centre site which is owned by the Council. The timescale for this relocation, which is part of a wider regeneration scheme for the Priory Court Estate, is approximately two years. It is anticipated that it will be completed in 2018-19. This will be the subject of a separate Business Case which will be presented to Cabinet in September.

3.2.9 **Lea Bridge Library**

1. Lea Bridge library is well located on Lea Bridge Road near the junction with Markhouse Road/Church Road, in an area of retail activity. As the site cannot be used for any purpose other than a public library, relocating it would be an inefficient use of Council resources, as this asset would remain empty and unused.
2. Appropriate refurbishment and remodelling will be carried out to align the library with the Council's vision, and research will need to be conducted into the possibility of attracting a community partner to lease circa 190 m² to maximise income potential.
3. The building is viewed to be performing as intended and operating efficiently within the limitations of a late 19th century Grade II Listed Building. This is due in part to the investment of £1.1 million to refurbish the building in 2010, which means that the building needs limited remodelling to bring it up to the required standard outlined in the Vision for Library Locals.
4. The timescale for improvement is three to six months. It is proposed that work would start in 2018-19. If necessary it would be possible to deliver this sooner if the Council wanted to speed up the Library Local Improvement Programme.

3.2.10 Wood Street Library

1. The area is one of significant deprivation, being amongst the 10-20% most deprived areas in England, measured by IMDs and delivering better outcomes for these residents is a primary focus of the service and one that can be better tackled through relocation.
2. Significant new development is planned to take place from Spring 2016 as part of the Marlowe Road development with an exciting array of commercial and residential units proposed. This is likely to take footfall away from the current location of the library by creating a new hub of activity further down Wood Street.
3. Two units within this new development have been identified as potential locations for a new library. It is anticipated that the new development would be completed in 2018-19.
4. There are also a significant number of maintenance costs associated with the current library, which has been assessed by Asset Management as being beyond its useful life. Refurbishment to the necessary standard would require a significant capital investment. Relocation offers a clear opportunity for the Council to release the site for residential development.

3.3 The proposed relocations and/or remodelling will ensure that the Council continues to deliver its commitment of ensuring that every resident lives within 1.5 miles of their nearest library.

3 OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

4.1 Alternative locations, refurbishment or mixed use development of existing site(s) and “do nothing” were all considered but not considered appropriate as they would not deliver the changes to the library and information service for the benefit of the community; release sites for housing developments or realise sufficient capital receipts to fund both library and information service changes and housing developments. These options are detailed in the individual Business Cases for each library (**Appendix 2 a,b,c &d**)

5 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)

- 5.1 This project directly supports the Council’s agreed priorities for:
- Regeneration
 - Building a strong local economy and thriving town centres
 - Housing
 - Good quality of life

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 In 2011 the Council undertook extensive consultation leading up to the decision taken to establish Library Plus', Library Local, the closure of two libraries and the Library and Information Service Development Plan. The results of that consultation have been used to inform the consultation which will take place over these proposed changes.
- 6.2 The proposal is that the library and information service will consult library users and local residents on the proposed Vision for Library Local over a four week period, subject to this period being reviewed and extended in the event that this is not considered to be sufficient to be meaningful. The consultation will include public meetings in each library, meetings with protected groups, a consultation survey/on-line survey, leaflets, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) etc.
- 6.3 In the event that the outcome and responses of the public consultation result in the recommendation of significant changes to the new Vision for Library Locals, officers will report back to Cabinet.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

- 7.1.1 The full financial implications are included within Appendix 8 and are exempt as it currently contains some commercially sensitive information. This appendix sets out the full potential costs (e.g. refurbishment, future rental / lease) as well as any disposal receipts from the sale of three of the current buildings.
- 7.1.2 All options for the four Library Locals are affordable and generate a net contribution to the Capital Programme after all costs.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The Council's duty under Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964 is to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service to those who wish to use it. This duty must be complied with alongside the Council's other statutory duties. In fulfilling its duty, a local authority must have regard to the desirability of:

- ensuring that facilities are available for the borrowing of and reference to books and other printed material and pictures and film to meet the general and special requirements adults and children;
- encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service and of providing advice as to its use and information as may be required by users of the service;

7.2.2 Case law has considered the meaning of the duty, specifically Ouseley, J in *Bailey v London Borough of Brent* [2011] EWHC 2572 (Admin), stated that:

‘A comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library. This has never been the case. Comprehensive has therefore been taken to mean delivering a service that is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources. Decisions about the Service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough.’

7.2.3 The proposals are to relocate libraries as set out in the body of this report and Cabinet are being asked to make an ‘in principle’ decision on the express understanding that such a decision is subject to a consultation exercise with library users and local residents and that the consultation outcome may result in a further report to Cabinet seeking a different decision.

7.2.4 The consultation proposed is to be carried out with those affected by the proposal, who must be provided with sufficient time and information to provide an intelligent response. The outcome of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account by the officers and members who are delegated by Cabinet to take any decision subject to that consultation. Consultation responses are not binding on decision makers but must be taken into account. In the event the outcome of the consultation is that there are recommended significant changes to the proposals, those must be brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.

7.2.5 In deciding whether to approve in principle the proposals, Members must comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and Members are referred to Appendix 5 (the Equality Analysis) that sets out the nature of the duty. The analysis identifies a negative impact which cannot be fully mitigated since the proposal inevitably means change for some users who may be within a protected group, and who may experience change. Members must be satisfied that any negative impacts on protected groups identified that are not fully mitigated is justified, and is a proportionate means of achieving the outcome sought, and that there is no fairer way of achieving the outcome. Equality monitoring should continue and be informed by the consultation exercise and steps taken to address any apparent as yet unforeseen impact on any group.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

- 7.3.1 The Equality Analysis has concluded that overall, moving the libraries to a new location co-located with shopping facilities will improve access for a number of people.
- 7.3.2 However, potential negative impacts have been identified in the change of location in that some of the current users will need to walk further. However, at the same time the new locations will be closer to other current and potential new users. During any implementation there will be an inevitable disruption in services provided which may also adversely impact upon users within protected groups. As an example, this can be mitigated by further active promotion of the home Book Delivery Service meeting the needs of residents who are unable to travel to the libraries
- 7.3.3 In the longer term however, public transport access will improve, disabled parking will improve and accessibility of the buildings will improve both in terms of the design, access for those with mobility needs and in terms of the convenience of the location. .
- 7.3.4 The newly designed modern buildings will provide opportunities to continue or improve access - in particular for disabled people, parents and carers of small children, for people with limited mobility, older people and pregnant women.
- 7.3.5 Officers will continue to monitoring impacts of the proposals on protected groups and will use information from the consultation undertaken to inform the Equality Analysis.

7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

- 7.4.1 Proposals will be developed in accordance with national, regional and local standards for sustainable development and opportunities to exceed these will be explored. All new libraries will be designed to meet the Council's requirement to reduce carbon emissions by 35% below 2013 Building Regulations and comply with planning policy requirements for new build and refurbishment standards to meet BREEAM 'Very Good'. Details of specific measures will be included within the final detailed plans. Awareness raising campaigns will be carried out with library users to dis-encourage travel by car and encourage alternative means of transport such as walking, cycling and use of public transport.
- 7.4.2 Libraries have a number of health and wellbeing benefits, as they are a trusted place to go for health support. They can also help reduce social isolation through the provision of non-stigmatised community space and skilled and sympathetic staff. This will build on the support already provided in Library Locals.
- 7.4.3 Libraries provide safe community spaces and a supportive environment for both individuals and groups. Libraries are a legitimate space for

young people to “hang out” with a variety of learning and leisure opportunities.

7.5 Council Infrastructure

- 7.5.1 All work to achieve these relocations/refurbishments will be undertaken within existing resources and use of specialist external agencies as outlined in the project. Staff employed in the local libraries will move to the newly located libraries once complete. There are no indications of any reductions in library staffing as a result of these proposals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None