

Libraries and Local Communities: Bath & North East Somerset Plan for Public Library Services 2012-2015

This document sets out the proposed strategic principles and action plan for Bath and North East Somerset Council's Library Service to embed library services into the community

1 Key Vision and Value statements:

1.1 The Council's Vision and Values:

Bath and North East Somerset: where everyone fulfils their potential, with lively, active communities, unique places and beautiful surroundings

Four objectives:

Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone
Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live
Building a stronger economy
Developing resilient communities

1.2 Libraries Mission Statement:

"To help everyone to achieve their goals and boost their well-being.

We will do this by working with partners to offer accessible, affordable and relevant resources for learning, reading and enjoyment, and to create opportunities for people to become involved with community life"

2. Budget

The current economic climate is putting a pressure on libraries to define their role more clearly, use resources efficiently and effectively and look to communities and partnerships for support and involvement.

The Library Service is required to provide savings of £59K in 2012/13, none of which affect frontline service delivery. It is difficult to see beyond this year as budget circumstances from 2013 onward may dictate some radical changes to structure and delivery mechanisms.

This plan is written in the context of these budget pressures. It is possible that major restructuring may have to take place in the future years to address the challenges that the Council, as well as the Library Service, is facing. However, it is clear that to achieve our ambitions we will move towards a core professional service that is supported by a greater number of volunteers that have distinct roles in extending the accessibility of libraries services and embedding libraries more deeply within the communities they serve.

Examples of voluntary contributions to include:

- Opening our local libraries for longer periods each week.
- Expanding the home delivery services.
- Assisting and helping customers with computer queries
- Helping with children's activities.

3. Consultation

There have been three periods of consultation.

Consultation 1: utilised the Council's Voicebox Survey system to give us a better understanding of the citizens view of our services – both users and those who presently do not use our services. Voice Box 16 is a public document located upon the Council's website:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Leisure%20and%20Culture/Libraries/Library%20Report%20-%20VB16%20final.pdf>

Consultation 2: gave library users and staff an opportunity to 'Have your say on our Library Service' and .consisted of online and paper questionnaires available in all libraries, plus 5 library coffee mornings and 2 focus groups during September to October 2011. **371** paper copies and **251** online forms were completed

In particular the information from question 5, which asked people to rank 10 library services in order of priority, has directed our thinking on the 5 strategic principles for 2012/15. The word document is located on the Council's website within 'Library Consultations'.

Consultation 3: was carried out between Dec and Feb 2012. This consisted of 4 parts:

- 1) An equalities focused questionnaire to all registered mobile library users to obtain information about the needs of our current users and their use of mobile library services. **829** responses
- 2) Questionnaire via online and paper to all library users. **68** paper copies and **864** online forms completed
- 3) Questionnaire to schools, playgroups and other organisations that currently use the mobile service asking for their response to the proposal to withdraw the service. **11** responses received from 12 questionnaires sent out
- 4) Four public meetings at Batheaston, Chew Stoke, Peasedown-St-John and Combe Down attended by Cllr David Dixon, (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods), David Lawrence, (Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure and Culture) and June Brassington, (Library Services Manager) to hear from local users of the mobile library service on what they valued about the service plus their comments on the proposed mitigations if the service was withdrawn.
- 5) Traffic enumerators have also accompanied the two mobile libraries over two weeks, to validate the number of people using each stop

In addition a petition of around 800 signatures was delivered to full Council on 14th February 2012 requesting that the proposal to remove the mobile library service be reconsidered.

Reports and analysis of the three consultations can be found on the libraries web page:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/leisureandculture/Libraries/information/Pages/Consultations.aspx>

4. Key findings from these consultations

4.1 Re Library services in general

Respondents ranked

- Better range of books and other items;
- Extended opening hours
- Improved customer care

as the three aspects of service delivery they would most like to see developed.

The range of books and other items available and the standard of customer care were also two of the most highly valued aspects of the service overall.

4.2 Re Mobile Libraries

The service is valued particularly by older people, school age children, families with young children and residents of isolated communities.

Aspects of the service that are highly valued:

- The social aspect of the service. The library provides an important local social space where neighbours can meet; children can meet others in their village; people who live alone can meet other people; and local news can be exchanged. In many communities there is no longer a pub, shop or post office which makes the mobile library one of the only public places in which to meet others from the community.
- Supporting independent living. The mobile library enables people to remain independent which is very highly valued particularly by older people. The accessibility and convenience of the vehicles means that people are able to visit it without having to rely on the help of friends or family or having to use public transport which may not be available. For some people the Mobile Library is the only place they can visit without support from other people.
- Support for learning by adults and children. Schools and pre-school groups use the mobiles.
- Support for the disadvantaged. Recession means people have less money to buy books.
- Mobile libraries are one of the few services available to residents of rural communities. Mobile service users are in a minority. They often don't use many other council services but pay the same community charge.

- Staff . Access to knowledgeable staff who can advise on books and provide information
- Stock . Provision of a wide range of stock that is changed regularly and the provision of large print and audio books that are not easily obtainable from any other source
- Flexibility of the loan periods.

The plan reflects the strong views that were expressed to keep a mobile library service and consequently the proposal to withdraw the service completely was abandoned.

4.3 National guidance

4.3.1 '*What Do The Public Want From Libraries?*' (MLA, London, 2010)

This guide for practitioners in the public library sector was produced by Museums Libraries and Archives in 2010 based on information collected at focus groups and surveys. It analysed customer perception of libraries in the UK and its principle findings are summarised thus:

- Libraries are loved and trusted and the 'Public Library' brand is strong
- The public thinks that libraries are principally about books and reading
- Libraries should concentrate on motivating people to visit instead of trying to reduce barriers
- Basics matter: customer service and book stock are the most important

5. Strategic Principles

Based on the information gathered from the consultations, these are the 5 strategic principles under an overarching theme of working with communities to embed library services within localities:

The Council will provide, enable and support accessible library services, consisting of a free core service and embedded community based services which:

- Is committed to the fundamental principle that the support of reading for learning, literacy and enjoyment is central to all that it does.
- Remains up to date and relevant to people's needs, promoting local identity, community pride, and supports the most vulnerable in society.
- Is available in ways, places and times to suit people's needs and works in partnership with local communities to provide local services and library activities.
- Is affordable, of high quality, giving good value for money.
- Will develop through digitisation, improved storage or disposal, the archive collections within the library service to benefit all.
- Engage partners in development & delivery

Five Priorities

Priority 1 A library service that is committed to the fundamental principle that the support of reading for learning, literacy and enjoyment is central to all that it does

Commitments

Library Service Staff will work to promote reading and literacy in all its forms to individuals of all ages and other service providers.
The Stock Management Policy will be evaluated regularly and adapted to ensure that all stock continues to be relevant and well used.
An increase in the number of reading and literacy based activities taking place, in libraries and in community based localities

Resources

As appropriate, specialised staff will provide targeted support to identified communities and groups

Outcomes & Measures

Increase in the attendance of Library Service activities related to reading and literacy
'Bookstart Packs' consistently delivered to 95%+ of children within the target age range 0-4 years.
Summer Reading Challenge completers up to 1,100 young people.
Customer satisfaction up to 88% (next PLUS survey).
Active membership increased to 29,000.
5% of total stock on rotation between libraries increased to 10% by end of 3 years

Priority 2 A Library Service that stays up to date and relevant to customers' needs, promoting local identity and community pride

Commitments

Regular consultation will take place with local people and partners as detailed in the libraries Consultation Strategy. Opportunities for participation in service planning and service delivery for people of all ages will be available. Opportunities also for communities to work with the service to extend services into suitable locations.
Service will respond and adapt to suit changing customer demands, new advances in technology etc. always considering the needs of people who are at risk of social exclusion for any reason.

Resources

Additional sources of funding will be sought as appropriate.

Outcomes/Indicators

Increase in library membership and visitor figures
Improvement in satisfaction figures to 88%
Friends Groups extended to more libraries.
Focus groups invited to participate in service planning workshops annually

Priority 3 A library service that is available in ways, places and times to suit people's needs and works in partnership with local communities to provide local services and library activities.

Commitments

There will be four bands of service:

1. Larger libraries: Bath Central, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock
2. Smaller local libraries: Saltford, Paulton, Moorland Road and Weston, plus the mobile libraries
3. Community Libraries , i.e. library collections in local community centres/village halls, managed by local groups/organisations which would receive support from the library service in the form of materials and targeted activities, 3 will be set up by March 2013 and further ones planned with local communities in the following years
4. 'Library Links' places such as Post Offices, village shops etc, where reservations can be collected and returned – 2 to be set up by March 2013

In addition targeted outreach work will continue i.e. Home Library Service, Bookstart (under 5's,) Reader development projects with targeted groups.

Underpinned with electronic self service systems in our buildings and a virtual library service providing 24 hour access to library catalogues, e-books and e-audio books downloads, renewals, reservations, information. This includes a 'local telephone number' Enquiry Centre which operates within normal working hours.

The work to start up 'Community Libraries' and 'Library Links' will be carried out by the appointment of a project worker for one year. Community management of libraries and Community Asset Management will also be explored. Volunteer support will be sought to enable the libraries in band 2 to be open at times appropriate to the local community providing books and other resources for loan for all ages and access to IT.

All existing libraries and the new Community Libraries will have access to trained staff in welcoming and comfortable surroundings.

Paulton Library will move to the 'The Hub' community building and will be managed in partnership with the community. The offer will include an Coffee Bar, bookable meeting rooms and a library

Keynsham Library will move to a temporary location in preparation for the town centre development. All current services will be delivered from this location.

Access to the service will remain universal

Resources

Funding for the Paulton community building obtained through the Capital Programme.

Funding for Keynsham Library development from the WorkPlace project /Keynsham Redevelopment Project

Additional sources of funding will be sought as appropriate.

Partnership with the Volunteer Centre and other appropriate agencies

Outcomes / Indicators

Actual physical visitor figures increased by 1%

Virtual visitor figures increased by 5%

No. of volunteers working within Home Library Service increased by 20 people

Opening hours for the band 2 local libraries increased, the pattern of opening times across all the libraries made consistent e.g. opening at lunchtimes, less half day openings.

Customer satisfaction to 88% (next PLUS user survey)

3 Community Libraries and 2 'Library Links' to be established by March 2013

Priority 4: A library service that is affordable, of high quality and giving good value for money**Commitments**

Core services will remain free

All services will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate, quality is maintained and they are continuing to provide good value for money.

Procurement for goods and services will be conducted in accordance with Council procedures.

The Council will play an appropriate role in the development of the LibrariesWest Consortium

Staff training will continue to be of high priority and resources will be re-directed where necessary to support this.

Resources

Additional sources of funding will be sought as appropriate

Outcomes /Indicators

Customer satisfaction level to 88% (next PLUS survey)

Cost per visit benchmarked against comparable local authorities showing value for money.

Customer Service Excellence Award maintained.

Priority 5: A library service that will develop the archive collections within the service through digitisation, improved storage or disposal.**Commitment**

Develop a strategy with Archives and Records Management to assess the storage requirement for collections of historical and cultural interest, e.g. Napoleonic Collection, Bath Chronicle archives and materials in digital format, in order to determine the most cost efficient and accessible way to manage this material.

Resources

Partnership with Bath in Time to continue

Seek alternative sources of funding including new partnerships

Outcomes / Indication

Strategy for control and management of digital material in place
More volunteers working on organisation of collections to enable easier access.
More items/collections digitised
Work towards BS5454 (recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents)
Informed decisions taken regarding the storage or disposal of particular collections.
Additional income is generated, e.g. by sales of reproductions

6. Future Library Service – 3 year plan – general descriptions

6.1 The library service will continue to offer a comprehensive range of services with information available in traditional and non-traditional formats. Work to develop contacts with non-users and socially excluded groups will continue e.g. Bookstart, school visits, Reader Development activities. New ways to do this will be explored, in partnership with other agencies.

6.2 The LibrariesWest Consortium provides a value-for –money service and work will continue to develop shared services and other financial benefits.

6.3 Bath Central Library will continue to deliver a full range of services. Opening hours will be reviewed in particular to enable opening earlier in the morning than 9 30 a.m.

6.4 The proposed re-location of Keynsham Library into a new building with a one-stop shop will provide the potential for increased opening hours due to opportunities to share staffing with Council Connect.

6.5 Midsomer Norton and Radstock libraries will maintain current staffed opening hours,

6.6 The opening hours of the smaller libraries, Weston, Moorland Road, Paulton and Saltford will be extended and made more consistent by support from volunteers or other partners.

6.7 Paulton Library to relocate to new premises in Paulton that will also include a coffee bar and meeting rooms , managed in partnership with the local community. This would be an exemplar for B&NES approach to the ‘The Big Society’ agenda.

6.8 The current mobile service provides access to the library service for people who may find it difficult to access in any other way, particularly older people and those living in rural areas. The introduction of Community Libraries, ‘Library Links’, extension of opening hours and extension of Home Library Service will enable the older vehicle to be withdrawn in 2013-14 when it will have achieved 13 years of service

6.9 There is a need to consolidate the various library storage areas in order to improve access for library users and produce savings for the service. We will continue to explore opportunities with Heritage, Archives and Records Management to improve how physical as well as digital material from all council services will be stored.

6.10. Library Collections. Access to the content of library collections has been widened through the digitisation of images and maps and their exposure on the Web. Further work is needed to expand the range of items from library collections that can be viewed digitally. As well as providing better access to the content of library collections, digitisation will contribute to the preservation of rare and delicate items as well as providing opportunities for raising income through sales of reproductions etc. Work is also needed on developing a strategy for the preservation of digital material which will become increasingly prevalent e.g. websites, digital files and images.

6.11 Saltford is currently the only library with a 'Friend's Group' During the next three years, Friend's Groups will be established for the other libraries, the form of each group dependent on the identity they would like to pursue. Friends Groups will be consulted about service activities, proposals and community engagement. Library Committees may also be formed where suitable, for members of the community to manage volunteer activity and potentially governance.

6.12 Home Library Service. This service will be extended by attracting more volunteers. It is a very cost effective service which not only delivers books to people but provides personal contact. The library service will also explore working closer with Adult Social Care and NHS to deliver a library service alongside a care package.

6.13 IT developments. The Library Service will continue to provide access to PC's and the Internet. Free Wi-fi connectivity will be available at Bath Central, Keynsham Midsomer Norton and the new Paulton 'Hub' by the end of 2012. The E-book offer which became available to library users by end of 2011 will be developed further.

A review of the charging structure for People's Network will take place in 2012/13 plus review of available applications and hardware to keep system up to date.

Social Media opportunities will be exploited to communicate more effectively with customers, examples include a Library App to access the catalogue, SMS notifications, further developments using Facebook, Twitter etc.

3 year plan to embed Library services within the community – key activities

Year 1 2012/13	
Project	Funding
Temporary post for 1 year – Project Officer - alternative service delivery. Responsible to research and set up 3 Community Libraries and 'Library Links'	Internal – Library budget
Salford – extend opening using volunteers/parish clerk alongside single members of staff . PILOT two methods of extending opening a) jointly with existing staff; b) separate teams of staff and volunteers.	Existing resources + new volunteers
Keynsham relocate to temporary accommodation June/July 2012	WorkPlace project Keynsham redevelopment Project
Paulton – upgrade shop unit to accommodate new Library./Coffee bar 'The Hub' (new governance model)	Capital grant
New Community Libraries x 3 Larkhall (Pilot) , Combe Hay / Wellow Western Riverside Peasedown Bishop Sutton	Internal – Library budget Parish Councils? Community Development Grants S106 money?

Retain 2 mobiles - re design routes as new community libraries develop	Existing resources
Home Library Service – extend number of recipients by recruiting additional volunteers - Approach on an area by area basis as community library project progresses	Existing resources + new volunteers
Community Transport – engage with community transport schemes to enable mobile library users to travel to existing static libraries	Existing resources
Create Friends Groups at Moorland Road Library/Weston Library	Existing resources
Focus groups invited to participate in annual service planning workshops annually	Existing resources

Year 2 2013/14	
Project	Funding
Mobiles staff team reorganisation to enable continuation / development of community libraries project	Existing resources
Extend opening hours at additional part time libraries using best method as discovered from the Saltford pilot.	Existing resources + new volunteers. Staff will continue to staff each library for the number of hours currently allocated, extra hours supported by volunteers
Keynsham Library continues in temporary accommodation. Plan for move to new facility.	Workplace funding
Embed new Paulton facility	Community building will have to be self-financing

<p>Two Library Links (pick-up/drop off points for library materials) created (Twerton Time bank/ Southside?) Purchase /lease 'low emissions' (electric exemplar) vehicle for delivery of materials to new community libraries and Library Links</p>	<p>Allocate funding for the vehicle from savings made from removal of one mobile library.</p>
<p>Remove the 13 year old mobile vehicle from service. Retain the younger mobile – working on a monthly timetable with single member of staff. Volunteers support work at selected stops.</p>	
<p>Home Library Service – continue extending number of recipients by recruiting additional volunteers - Approach on an area by area basis as community library project progresses</p>	<p>Existing resources + new volunteers</p>
<p>Continue to work with communities to create a further 2 community libraries</p>	<p>Parish Councils? Community Development Grants S106 money?</p>
<p>Community Transport – continue to engage with community transport schemes to enable mobile library users to travel to existing static libraries</p>	<p>No additional cost</p>
<p>Create Friends Groups - Radstock Library</p>	

Year 3 2014/15	
Project	Funding
New Keynsham Library opens Aug 2014	
Governance: Develop library 'committees' to enable communities to be actively involved in their libraries	Within existing resources
IT advancing technology – web based library management systems should now be available which will enable easier access for volunteers	It is possible that web based systems will be less expensive than the current server based systems
Community libraries. Review their effectiveness	Existing resources
Repeat the Library Service Survey	Existing resources