

## **Committee: Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 22 February 2017**

Wards: All

**Subject: Library & Heritage Service Annual Report 2016/17**

Lead officer: Anthony Hopkins

Lead member: Councillor Nick Draper

Contact officer: Anthony Hopkins

---

### **Recommendations:**

- A. That the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel note progress made with the Library & Heritage Service in the last financial year, review performance and discuss key projects.
- 

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Library & Heritage Service annual report sets out the key achievements that have been delivered over the last year and highlights future challenges. It also provides a summary of performance against all key performance indicators (KPI's).
- 1.2. On 1 December 2016 the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) published the Libraries Taskforce's 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021', which sets out the government's 5-year strategy for public libraries in England. The strategy is based around 7 key objectives that have been used to present this report. The 7 objectives are:
1. Increased reading and literacy
  2. Cultural and creative enrichment
  3. Improved digital access and literacy
  4. Healthier and happier lives
  5. Stronger, more resilient communities
  6. Greater prosperity
  7. Helping everyone achieve their potential
- 1.3. Since 2011 Merton has kept all of its libraries open and has extended the opening hours of all of them. Usage and customer satisfaction has also increased and the new Colliers Wood Library is scheduled to open in summer 2017.
- 1.4. These achievements have been made whilst delivering efficiencies and the Library & Heritage Service continues to have one of the lowest operational budgets of any London library service.

## 2 DETAILS

### **Increased Reading and Literacy**

2.1. *Reading and literacy are two of the most fundamental skills in life. Libraries give everyone free access to books and literature regardless of age, disability, wealth or education. This access makes libraries a catalyst for improved reading and literacy skills.*

### **2.2. Schools and Libraries Membership Scheme**

2.3. Reading for pleasure is important. The Reading Agency published some research that suggests that both children and adults who do this are healthier, happier and more confident than those who don't. Increasing literacy is vital to increase people's chances in the job market, reducing dependence on benefits and improving quality of life.

2.4. All 44 Merton primary schools are signed up the scheme, which aims to work with schools to support them with improving the literacy levels of children and in particular to develop reading for pleasure. All primary school children are now library members and an annual engagement plan is in place with each school.

2.5. Since the scheme was set up 26 of 44 primary schools have reported demonstrable improvements in children's reading skills measured through Key Stage 2 results. Unique to Merton, the scheme is the only active model in England where every primary school child in the borough is a library member.

2.6. The success of the scheme has gained national attention and has been promoted by both the DCMS and Arts Council England. The scheme is currently being developed to include high school children, which is planned to be established for the 2017/18 academic year.

2.7. The Library Service also continues to promote and deliver national reading initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge for 4 to 11 year olds. 2,983 children participated this year with 1,781 completing the scheme.

### **2.8. Increasing Adult Literacy**

2.9. The Library Service continues to promote reading for all ages and has facilitated events and promotions such as National Libraries Day, World Book Day, Black History Month and Adult Learning Week. Merton also continues to run the annual Reading Ahead campaign for adults with low literacy skills and works collaboratively with the new adult education providers to provide pathways and support for people to improve their literacy.

### **2.10. Library Opening Hours**

2.11. All libraries have extended their opening hours since 2011 and the offer is continually reviewed. Customers report high satisfaction levels with the current offer and the recent Merton Library User Survey for adults shows that 98% of users rate library opening hours as either very good (59%), good (33%) or adequate (6%).

2.12. In order to achieve efficiencies in the libraries budget from May 2017 all libraries will continue to remain open with the current opening hours offer but at off peak teams in branch libraries (Raynes Park, West Barnes, Colliers Wood and Pollards Hill) there will be a limited staffing presence and the offer will be predominantly self-service. The self-service hours have been defined following analysis of all available usage data.

2.13. **Library Connect**

2.14. Merton's very own pop up library solution has been established for almost 3 years. During this time pop up libraries have been set up in 13 locations and have received 10,584 visits. Library Connect is designed to engage with people who are not regular users of the library service to showcase the wide range of services available. Library Connect events are usually hosted in places where there is low take up or where underrepresented user groups frequent.

**Cultural and Creative Enrichment**

2.15. *Cultural and creative opportunities enrich lives. They are important in developing local quality of life, sense of place and individual wellbeing. Libraries are well placed to extend cultural engagement because of their use by all social groups and their role as inclusive cultural hubs within communities.*

2.16. **Merton Arts Space**

2.17. The Library & Heritage Service received a £65,360 grant from Arts Council England to convert the back space in Wimbledon Library into a multi-use space that can be used for library purposes in the day and converts to a performance space that can be used for theatre, dance, music and other cultural activities in the evening.

2.18. Professional sound and lighting equipment along with a flexible stage and seating have been installed. The space has also been enhanced for regular library users with increased study space. The main space can host up to 300 people for performances. Two exhibition rooms have also been installed which enable artists to exhibit their works or for smaller activities to take place both during in and outside of library opening hours.

2.19. A professionally delivered program of events has been delivered in partnership with organisations such as Love Wimbledon, Wimbledon College of Art, Attic Theatre Company, Wimbledon Bookfest and ACAA. A mid evaluation report was issued to Arts Council in October 2016, which showed that since opening the space it has:

- Hosted 84 events that have attracted total audience numbers of 24,243 people.
- 2,522 people have participated in artistic activities.
- Of the events delivered so far 123 artists have been used across a range of different artistic disciplines.

2.20. The figures above do not include the 2-week theatre production of 'Great Expectations' in December 2016 that was delivered by Attic Theatre Company and which incorporated into its run the launch event for the space.

2.21. **Carved in Stone**

2.22. The Heritage Lottery Fund project 'Carved in Stone' concludes in February 2017. It has built on the success of the Merton Memories website that hosts over 15,000 images of the borough.

2.23. The Carved in Stone project has developed an online portal of Merton's combatants from World War One and has enabled a number of documents to be preserved and to be made available online for the first time. Supporting officers have been a team of over 30 volunteers who have assisted with research and adding content to the website. The resource officially launched on Merton's last Heritage Discovery Day on 28 May 2016. It has been accessed over 21,294 times since being made available to the public.

2.24. **Heritage Strategy**

2.25. Cabinet agreed the new Heritage Strategy on 7 December 2015. It has been drawn up in collaboration with local historical and community organisations and presents a plan of activity across all sectors of the borough. Reviews of progress for the strategy continue to take place through Heritage Forum meetings. The main objectives included in the strategy are:

1. Increasing the profile and public access to the borough's unique and diverse cultural heritage;
2. Safeguarding the borough's varied heritage sites and resources;
3. Making Merton's heritage provision more inclusive and working collaboratively to widen public engagement and participation;
4. Increasing funding and investment in Merton's heritage through partnership work, external funding and sponsorship.

2.26. **Other cultural activities**

2.27. The Library & Heritage Service works with a wide range of partners to enhance the borough's cultural offer. Partners include the Polka and Open Theatre companies, African Educational and Cultural Health organisation (AECHO) and Petals of Peace.

**Improved digital access and literacy**

2.28. *Public libraries provide a trusted network of accessible locations with free WiFi, computers, and other technology. As the world becomes more digital, access to technology and the ability to operate confidently and safely are ever more important. Digital gives people the opportunity to access services more easily, to learn, and to interact with others. Digital skills also boost their employability, and the productivity and prosperity of the organisations they work for.*

2.29. *Trained library staff, supported by volunteers, help local people use online services covering areas like benefits, business, health and wellbeing. They can also provide the training and support individuals need to become independent users of digital services.*

2.30. **Digital Information Skills**

- 2.31. All libraries provide one-to-one ICT support provided by staff and volunteers and the provision of ICT support in libraries is expanding through partnership work.
- 2.32. All library staff have completed an online training course in improving their digital information skills. The course has been developed by the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) and has been designed so that those people who work with customers on a daily basis will be able to fluently navigate and use national and local government information sites. Staff are able to demonstrate where these sites would be relevant for someone out of work, needing to claim benefits, wanting to open a business or start a career, or concerned about their health. They have the knowledge and skills they need to refer to partners to meet the specific needs of customers and communities.
- 2.33. Merton's libraries are playing an important role in supporting the most vulnerable to get online including support with setting up e-mail accounts, renewals of Freedom passes and completing government forms. Partnerships with agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) continue to run. The role of library staff, supported by volunteers, is expected to increase with further rollout of Universal Credit and the transfer of more government services online.
- 2.34. **Self-Service Technology**
- 2.35. The libraries self-service technology was replaced last year. The new technology provides improved reliability and reduced operating costs. Self-service technology currently accounts for 97% of customer transactions and is an integral part of the new delivery model for Merton libraries to support self-service libraries at off peak times.
- 2.36. **Library website**
- 2.37. The Library & Heritage Service website continues to be updated and improved and is now available in a mobile friendly format. Pages continue to be rationalised so that content is easier to find and the service has further developed its use of social media. 232,472 visits were made to the website in 2015/16. This is an increase of 16% since the previous year. The libraries website is the second most popular channel, behind physical visits, for customers to access the service.
- 2.38. In the recent Merton Library User Survey 99% of respondents rated the libraries online resources as very good (39%), good (44%) or satisfactory (15%).
- 2.39. **E-Services**
- 2.40. The annual 'Always With You' online campaign continues to raise awareness of the many free online resources available online. Both the free e-book and e-magazines services have increased usage by 52%. 7,222 customers used the e-book service in 2015/16. 5,196 customers have used the other e-services including the e-magazines service. Whilst only a fraction of overall library usage these figures continue to grow each year.
- 2.41. **People's Network and Public Wi-Fi**

- 2.42. Customers continue to have access to free public computers with high speed Internet at all libraries. Printing and scanning facilities are also becoming more popular. Free public Wi-Fi is also available in all libraries.
- 2.43. In the recent Merton Library User Survey customers acknowledged the improvements to these services with:
- 85% of customers rating access to public computers as good to excellent.
  - 76% rating the software quality as good to excellent.
  - 81% rating the functionality of library computers as good to excellent.
  - 72% rating the reliability of Wi-Fi as good to excellent.
  - 70% rating the speed of Wi-Fi as good to excellent.

2.44. **Healthier and Happier Lives**

2.45. *Councils have a responsibility for their communities' social wellbeing and for public health. They increasingly focus on preventative work, helping people manage their own health to reduce both the burden on the NHS and health inequalities. By extending joint working and sharing resources with health providers, public libraries will become increasingly important partners, leading to users having healthier and happier lives.*

2.46. All of Merton's libraries deliver a range of activities to support healthier lifestyles working in partnership with organisations such as the Alzheimer's Society, Arthritis Care, Terence Higgins Trust and Livewell. Libraries continue to promote a range of both physical and online reading and information materials.

2.47. With GP's the service provides Books on Prescription where in certain cases a patient's health could be improved through reading self-help books or by gaining material available from a local library as opposed to being prescribed medication. The programme is supported by the NHS and has recently evolved to include titles around dementia, which have been used in particular with the Home Visits Library Service. A collection of mood boosting books aimed at young people has also recently been established.

2.48. Collaborative work between libraries and Public Health continues to expand. A recent example is the pathway recovery work undertaken with providers to encourage people recovering from drug and alcohol addictions into volunteering opportunities in libraries and the library involvement in facilitating 'Community Conversations'.

**Stronger, More Resilient Communities**

2.49. *Libraries are open to everyone. Their staff understand their community's needs and are trusted to provide reliable guidance and support on a wide range of issues when people need help. So they're vital to help public service's reach out into communities. Libraries already bring people together in welcoming community hubs which host local events and provide a shared sense of place for their users – ever more important in an increasingly digital age.*

2.50. *They're uniquely placed to help local government and its partners deliver their strategic objectives, whether linked to community cohesion, health and wellbeing, economic growth, promoting independent living or increasing life chances. They also have an important role in reducing social inequalities; 35.8% of people living in the most disadvantaged areas visit their library (source: Taking Part Survey 2015/16).*

2.51. **Volunteering**

2.52. Merton's nationally recognised volunteering model continues to flourish. 669 volunteers contributed over 36,044 hours of time in 2015/16, which was a 16% increase in volunteer numbers from the previous year. Volunteering opportunities continue to broaden and roles have been developed to support with the delivery of the self-service library delivery model.

2.53. The library service continues to advise other boroughs on the establishment of their own volunteering schemes along with advice on other projects, which has assisted with bringing income into the service. The service has also played an active role in the progression of some national projects being delivered by the Libraries Taskforce.

2.54. **Colliers Wood Library**

2.55. Temporary services continue to be provided at Merton Vision - Guardian Centre, Clarendon Road whilst the new library at Cavendish House is built. The new library is scheduled to open in late summer 2017 and will have increased floor space, community meeting/learning rooms and a coffee shop housed over 3 levels. Further consultation has been undertaken with residents over the year to ascertain requirements for internal fittings and furniture that have been incorporated into specifications.

2.56. **Coffee Shops**

2.57. The Service is also in the process of rolling out coffee shop facilities in its libraries and the first dedicated coffee shop opened in Wimbledon Library in January 2017. The income supports future savings and also encourages more customers to visit and use library facilities. Coffee shops was identified as a major factor to encourage non-users back into using the service when they were consulted in spring 2015.

**Greater Prosperity**

2.58. *The prosperity of an area is crucial for residents' wellbeing and quality of life. We want everyone to have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from this.*

2.59. *Libraries support business to start up and grow by providing information and working with local economic development organisations to signpost businesses to sources of support and advice. They can also help attract businesses into an area and keep them there by contributing to 'placemaking' and overall quality of life.*

2.60. **Employability and skills support**

2.61. All libraries have established job clubs working with partners such as the Job Centre Plus and Merton Priory Circle Housing. CV writing workshops and other skills support is also provided. Along with our free ICT support offer

this is helping to reduce unemployment figures in the borough. Resource is particularly focussed in areas where unemployment and skills gaps are at their highest.

2.62. **Wimbletech**

2.63. Wimbletech, based in Wimbledon Library, has been a particular success and is part of the Council's inward investment strategy. Using underutilised space Wimbletech provides advice and support for start-up companies and co-workers. In a little over 3 years it has over 200 members and its members have raised over £115,000,000 of investment in their projects. It also delivers free coding clubs to young people and is now operating in a growing number of local authorities under the banner of the 'Workary'.

**Helping Everyone Achieve Their Full Potential**

2.64. *Libraries raise people's aspirations and promote lifelong learning, supplementing formal education provided through schools, colleges and adult education. This is increasingly important given the accelerated pace of change in the workplace and the world more generally, meaning that skills and knowledge need more frequent updating.*

2.65. Examples such as the expansion of the Schools and Reading Initiative and the work delivered with a range of partners demonstrates how the service is working collaboratively to support people to fulfil their potential.

2.66. On top of the ICT, reading and information resources study space is integral and is incorporated into all of our libraries. Through funding from the Arts Council for the Merton Arts Space this has also assisted with further increasing study space at Wimbledon Library for example.

2.67. A range of online study resources are also available through the libraries website including resources such as Britannica Online, Oxford dictionaries, Theory Test Pro and Ziptales, an online library with interactive stories and activities with voice overs, animations, quizzes, games and more for children.

**3 PERFORMANCE**

3.1. In year performance of the Library & Heritage Service recorded in November 2016 shows that all KPI's are expected to be met. Of the 6 KPI's presented 5 are currently being exceeded by over 10% of the target figure:

Service Plan #	Description of performance measure	Final 2015/16	YTD 2015/16	YTD 2016/17	YTD Target 2016/17	RAG Indicator
SP08	No. of people accessing the library service by borrowing an item or using a People's Network terminal at least once in the previous 12 months.	65,269	66,219	<b>69,923</b>	56,000	<b>BLUE</b>
SP09	Number of visitors accessing the library service online	232,472	151,342	<b>152,834</b>	133,328	<b>BLUE</b>
SP279	Monthly transactions - Staff and Self-service	96%	96%	<b>97%</b>	96%	<b>GREEN</b>
SP280	Active volunteering numbers in libraries	337	320	<b>284</b>	210	<b>BLUE</b>
SP282	Partnership numbers	62	62	<b>62</b>	30	<b>BLUE</b>
SP287	Increase income generation	£361,486	£236,756	<b>£235,469</b>	£210,720	<b>BLUE</b>

3.2.



- 3.3. Based on the recently published CIPFA statistics for 2015/16 Merton has the highest number of active users per head of population of any London library service.

## **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

### **4.1. Merton Library User Survey**

- 4.2. The Library & Heritage Service undertook its first standalone user survey to replace the previously undertaken Public Library User Survey (PLUS) from 3 to 8 October 2016. The changes to the survey were to achieve efficiencies in the way user consultation is undertaken. The new survey will be run every 3 years for both children and adults (16+). The headline statistics show:

- 1,604 library users responded to the survey, which is 14% of customers who visited the library in the survey week.
- Book borrowing was still the primary use as to why customers visited libraries at 67% with the second most used service being the computers and Wi-Fi. Over 17 different reasons were given for visiting libraries.
- 99% of respondents felt that libraries were a safe place.
- 97% of respondents rated the choice of books as very good (36%), good (43%) or satisfactory (18%).
- 99% of respondents rated the information provision in libraries as very good (39%), good (48%) or satisfactory (12%).
- 99% of respondents rated the events in libraries as very good (33%), good (44%) or satisfactory (22%).
- 54% of respondents required staff support with 100% of those requiring support rating staff support as very good (71%), good (25%) or satisfactory (4%).
- Taking everything into account 100% of respondents were satisfied with the service with 60% rating it as very good, 34% as good and 6% as satisfactory.

- 4.3. The results of the Merton Library User Survey demonstrate record levels of customer satisfaction.

## **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The Library & Heritage Service Plan 2017/18 outlines all key projects to be delivered and was presented to the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 12 January 2017.

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The Library & Heritage Service has a controllable budget of £2,191,460. It is currently reporting a £142,000 underspend due to reduced operating costs

whilst the new Colliers Wood Library is developed along with some short term staff vacancies.

- 6.2. Agreed MTFs savings both delivered in 2016/17 and for future years for the Library & Heritage Service are:

<b>Description</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>Total</b>
Deletion of all administrative support	£26,000				<b>£26,000</b>
Reduction in activities program	£2,000				<b>£2,000</b>
Withdrawal from annual CIPFA public library user survey	£3,000				<b>£3,000</b>
Reduction in volunteering contract	£20,000				<b>£20,000</b>
Reduction in Media Fund	£45,000				<b>£45,000</b>
Implementation of self-service libraries at off peak times		£190,000			<b>£190,000</b>
Deletion of Projects & Procurement Manager post		£22,000			<b>£22,000</b>
Reduction in ICT costs		£40,000			<b>£40,000</b>
Shared services with another local authority			£48,000		<b>£48,000</b>
Introduce a coffee shop franchise across libraries			£30,000		<b>£30,000</b>
Increase income at Merton Arts Space				£38,000	<b>£38,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£96,000</b>	<b>£252,000</b>	<b>£78,000</b>	<b>£38,000</b>	<b>£464,000</b>

- 6.3. The Library & Heritage Service has 7 libraries and a Heritage & Local Studies Centre based on the second floor of Morden Library. Proposals to redevelop Colliers Wood library are well underway whilst there is a pause in the West Barnes Library redevelopment to allow for resident consultation to be completed regarding Cross Rail 2.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The Council is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service, addressing the 'needs of adults and children', according to the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964. Local authorities have a statutory duty to make provision for a library service but may decide on how this is to be done.
- 7.2. Certain aspects of the service must be provided for free including free lending of books, free access to information and free library membership.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Libraries hold a unique place within the community as a public space that is open to all. Where customers cannot make it to libraries a Home Visits Library Service provides books and other materials to people's homes.
- 8.2. Residents from BAME backgrounds make the most effective use of libraries with high proportions in particular of Asian and Black British people regularly using libraries.

**9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. None identified.

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. No specific issues identified in this report. A risk register is maintained for projects detailed in the Library & Heritage Service Plan.

**11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

None included.

This page is intentionally left blank