

Title of Report	Hackney's Libraries Strategy 2022 - 2026	
Key Decision No	CHE S124	
For Consideration By	Cabinet	
Meeting Date	24 October 2022	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Chris Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture	
Classification	Open	
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards	
Key Decision & Reason	Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.
Implementation Date if Not Called In	1 November 2022	
Group Director	Ian Williams, Group Director	

1. Cabinet Member's introduction

- 1.1 The Mayor's 2022-26 manifesto makes a commitment to the borough's eight libraries and proposes to retain, and in many instances to improve, Hackney's libraries in order to deliver a fairer, safer and more sustainable Hackney and celebrate the heart of Hackney through our libraries service.
- 1.2 The Council values its library spaces that are part of the cultural infrastructure across the borough. There is strong political commitment to maintain existing library buildings and opening hours across the borough. They are free to access and trusted venues, and overall residents are satisfied with the range and quality of these services that are used by thousands of residents every year.
- 1.3 The Council aims to make sure that our libraries can cater for the changing demands and needs of local people. Therefore a comprehensive Libraries service Review was launched in April 2021. This is the first borough-wide Libraries Review that the Council has led, and it reached 8,500 residents in the form of an extensive

conversation which listened to users and non-users of our libraries who have told us how they would like to see their local library develop into the future.

- 1.4 The Mayoral manifesto pledge is to act on the outcomes of this Review, in which thousands of residents told the Council that they valued libraries. The commitment includes developing a Libraries Plan that will create a great network of library hubs: places of public and open access; places where arts, learning, culture, work and play can come together; libraries that are there for everyone in each neighbourhood of our borough.
- 1.5 Public libraries are a statutory service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act requires library authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for people who live, work or study within the authority area. In Hackney there are eight libraries, situated within a one mile walking distance for all residents, with good opening hours from Monday to Saturday, and Sunday opening in three libraries.
- 1.6 Publicly funded libraries are essential to a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic. They can be places from which to address health inequalities, encourage economic recovery, deliver social mobility and foster a shared sense of place. Hackney Council's Library service is well used by residents of all ages and backgrounds with over 1.5m visits to Hackney's libraries pre-pandemic, being above the London average. Residents are overall satisfied with access to buildings, availability and range of books and the knowledge and friendliness of staff.
- 1.7 The wider context is that nationally library visitor numbers are falling, which can be attributed to the changing user behaviour in society, technological trends and the coronavirus pandemic. The Libraries review identified some key areas that would establish Hackney's library service as forward-looking and outstanding in terms of provision for local people and communities in the future. Fundamentally, there are opportunities to inspire, innovate and encourage more local people to take up a broader service offering as part of a more inclusive approach overall.
- 1.8 The new Library Strategy provides a sound basis for the future development of our libraries and responds directly to what residents told us they wanted for their libraries in the future. It is a clearly stated vision for what the library service is going to achieve in the future and how the library service will work in partnership with residents and local organisations to influence future approaches.
- 1.9 I commend this report to Cabinet.

2. GROUP DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report seeks Cabinet's approval of the Council's new Libraries Strategy for Hackney 2022 - 2026 and the associated service transformation.

2.2 The Libraries Strategy 2022 - 2026 outlines the Council's commitment to a new vision for our libraries. The 'Our Libraries' Strategy sets out the vision that our libraries innovate and succeed in order to:

- Help fulfil the potential of every person in Hackney.
- Put our Libraries Service at the heart of the cultural life in the borough.
- Provide an effective, connected and impactful service that meets the user's individual needs in a timely and relevant way.
- Meet the requirements of our user's needs through investment in technology.
- Encourage more local people to take up a diverse range of our services and support.

2.3 Hackney Library Service's mission is:

- To enable innovation and support literacy and lifelong learning wherever you are on your journey.
- To provide relevant physical and online spaces that give people what they want and need.
- To support the cultural development of individuals and the health and wellbeing of local people.
- To be a home for creativity and ideas that can enrich local economies and employment opportunities and inspire communities.

2.4 The strategy delivers a library service that has long-term outcomes for residents and makes a series of commitments that are underpinned by four ambitions - inspirational and proactive, ambitious and pioneering, relevant and open and nurturing and inclusive.

2.5 The outcomes of the new strategy for residents include:

- To increase reading and literacy.
- To enable cultural and creative enrichment.
- To support the Council's corporate priorities.
- To enable greater prosperity and thriving communities.
- To improve digital access and literacy.
- To help everyone achieve their full potential.
- To support stronger and more resilient communities.
- To encourage healthier and happier lives.

2.6 Residents that use the libraries, and those that have not used the service, have told us that in the future they would like to use the library spaces more in a hybrid

manner, in particular for cultural and community hub activities, digital and lifelong learning, and places that include the community in co-producing what it can offer. The Council will ensure that those views inform the future capital investment into our library spaces so that they are flexible, innovative and inclusive spaces that respond to the needs of our residents.

- 2.7 The library service budget in 2021/22 totals £5.6m and consists of £3m employee costs, followed by premises costs. A financial situation analysis with recommendations has been drawn up by the Council, which includes making the necessary approved savings of at least £250,000 on the overall Libraries revenue budget. The Libraries Service Review identified a new service structure to deliver the savings target while ensuring that the service continues to improve and meet local needs.
- 2.8 To achieve an effective and connected Library service, the Council has to put in place a programme of short, medium and long-term goals. Without front loading digital transformation and workforce redevelopment, it is unlikely that the strategy will achieve its goals to meet current and future customer needs.
- 2.9 Long-term, the new vision will only be achieved if the right conditions, or 'enablers' are put in place. Those conditions might include ideas for new types of service – or simply doing more of what is already being done. They also include new staffing resources and new skills and begin to point to what the borough's libraries must become in the future.
- 2.10 The following conditions will be built into the future service and quality assurance at all library sites:
- 2.11 People & Workforce: Deliver a restructure of the workforce that enables a highly skilled and flexible workforce that can meet the future needs of the service. Encourage leadership and review the roles of library staff at all levels, ensuring that the jobs are relevant to the role of libraries now and in the future, and that they provide opportunities for better pay, training and progression as requested by library staff.
- 2.12 Infrastructure: Provide a core library service and buildings that will retain a very high level of quality and accessibility to all residents. Develop robust processes for monitoring performance and work towards achieving Arts Council's new Libraries Accreditation. Develop safe and creative library spaces as community hubs, particularly the role of libraries as social and cultural centres, learning hubs and economic enablers.
- 2.13 Digital Transformation: Provide upgraded wifi across all sites and access to basic resources such as printers, photocopiers and scanners at all sites. Plan for the effective provision of higher end digital resources that promote skills development, maker space and digital inclusion for those most in need.

- 2.14 Network & Partnership: Map stakeholders and develop effective partnerships with communities, businesses, schools and residents to provide an improved community-led offer of activities. Re-shape the library network to increase opportunities for more internal and external partnerships to connect residents to other Council services and use library buildings for the benefit of the new Libraries Strategy.
- 2.15 Effectiveness and Financial sustainability: Increase income generation from grants or commercial activities to make the service more efficient. Bring expenditure on running costs and staffing in line with comparator authorities by making better use of the resources.
- 2.16 Communication and targeted marketing: Better promotion of the library service by creating a clear, new vision and brand that is widely promoted with residents and partners. To offer more cultural events, celebrating the local heritage of communities and to provide a more targeted service offer in the local branches.
- 2.17 The strategy points towards cross-cutting priorities including environmental sustainability and tackling inequalities.
- 2.18 A review of assets will be followed by a capital investment programme to modernise spaces which will consider relevant refurbishment, redesign and new construction of library spaces across the library estate to deliver the new Libraries strategy. Co-location of services and touchdown space for Council employees will be included under these considerations. Any redesign will need to carefully consider the zoning of quiet spaces and community hub spaces to provide for a wider range of activities and a more comfortable social environment for future users.
- 2.19 Shoreditch and Clapton libraries underwent refurbishment in 2019/20 and are now transformed buildings with modern and flexible library spaces. Hackney Central and Dalston CLR James libraries provide a popular service offer and a suitable space that is used by many residents who travel to those branches from other neighbourhoods.
- 2.20 Libraries in Homerton, Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington are in need of repair and modernisation and will be included in the ambition to deliver a capital improvement programme in the future. A review of the Woodberry Down library which is largely led by volunteers will explore the feasibility of a new library provision as part of the Council's regeneration programme in Woodberry Down which began in 2007.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:

3.1 Approve Hackney's Libraries Strategy 2022-2026 and the associated service transformation which includes the new vision, objectives and service model.

4. Reason(s) for decision

4.1 The new Libraries Strategy directly responds to the engagement with 8,450 residents, a Task and Finish Group of elected members, extensive consultation with library staff and strategic conversations with relevant cross-Council departments.

4.2 Feedback from the 'Our Libraries' public engagement campaign shows that residents want access to good quality reading materials and improved digital access to wifi, IT resources, information and study space, more flexible spaces for community use and better communication about what the library has to offer. While the provision of a wide range of books and digital access should remain at the core of the service, local people take the view that libraries must have a broad remit as community hubs for lifelong learning, arts and creativity and community health and wellbeing.

4.3 The strategy will drive the service forward as a strong collaborator - promoting inclusive, flexible and creative spaces across all libraries that will be utilised by residents as hubs for community wellbeing, cultural development and digital inclusion and will provide access to reading and lifelong learning opportunities. It will explore future options for extended opening hours and study spaces as well as capital investment to renovate and repair library buildings or, in the instance of Woodberry Down, to develop options for a new library provision.

4.4 The financial savings must be seen together with the service transformation and innovation required to deliver the ambitions of the new Libraries Strategy for this administration. The Library Strategy and the approved budget savings will only be achieved by a wholesale service transformation to redesign the service structure for staff and deliver the £250,000 savings approved as part of setting the budget in February 2022.

5. Details of alternative options considered and rejected

5.1 Alternative options considered as part of the Libraries review are a reduction in the whole service or in the opening hours across sites, for example on weekends. However, the new Library strategy advocates for maintaining existing library buildings and opening hours across the borough and therefore the savings will be achieved by a restructuring of the libraries workforce and a new joined up Culture, Heritage and Libraries division that can maximise the benefits for our residents and make the most of our cultural assets.

6. Background

6.1 Policy Context

6.1.1 Since April 2021, the Libraries service review set out to achieve a roadmap that will -

- a) Co-design a vision for the future that answers diverse local needs and draws upon the expert knowledge of library employees.
- b) Provide a long-term strategy that will put libraries at the forefront of the Council's relationship with residents and the cultural life of the borough.
- c) Deliver a service that is sustainable, fit for the modern digital world and accessible to all.

6.1.2 The Libraries service review delivered research into local and national plans relevant to the library service through a series of discussions with Strategic lead officers. The research looks at the Council's main plans and strategies, summarises their key objectives and highlights the potential ways in which a refreshed library service might help achieve them. The work also includes considerations for libraries in relation to the impact of Covid, the financial context, the Cyber attack and new ways of working and leading.

6.1.3 A usage report was produced by public policy organisation Shared Intelligence to look at patterns in library use in Hackney, to make comparisons with other services and national trends and to draw out issues relevant to the strategic review of Hackney Libraries. Data was collected from the Library Management System (LMS), Public Library profiles from CIPFA and the Active Lives Survey, and the analysis is based on data in the majority available in 2019/20.

6.1.4 The Libraries strategy was developed in the context of the following Council policies and priorities - the Corporate Plan 2020 and beyond, the Community Strategy, the Arts and Cultural Strategy and the Mayor of Hackney's manifesto for 2022 - 2026. National policies included the Libraries Connected Universal Offer Framework and Arts Council England priorities for libraries.

6.1.5 The Council produced a user needs assessment with individual library profiles to complement the findings from the Shared Intelligence report. The needs analysis provides an assessment of socio-economic need in the vicinity of each library and for the borough as a whole. It maps relevant local services and suggests considerations for local resident needs in order to inform future directions for the library service.

6.1.6 The overall picture of library use in Hackney is fairly positive and points to a service which is performing above average, both nationally and in comparison with

its statistical neighbours. The library service continues to have significant reach, 43% of the population used the library service in 2019/20 (equivalent to 119,153 residents) said they had used a library in the past year as per the Active Lives Survey in 2017.

6.1.7 The two largest libraries, Hackney Central and Dalston CLR James Library are by far the most used libraries due to their central locations in town centres with high footfall. There is a need to ensure all branches are being utilised and to fully exploit library use, which remains significant in scale, in order to reach more of those who stand to benefit most.

7. Equality impact assessment

7.1 Hackney Council and its decision-makers must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010), which requires us to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by reference to people with protected characteristics.

7.2 This strategy is our overarching vision over the next 5 years. Currently there are no negative impacts on the equality of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council has considered how the new Libraries strategy affects people with different protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

7.3 A Socio-economic needs assessment for the Libraries Strategy has been completed which draws on a wide range of data to establish the demographic composition of our local community, the way that users interact with their local libraries and how non-users view the service. Additional individual borough profiles identify the socio-economic needs around the vicinity of each library.

7.4 The socio-economic needs assessment concluded that:

- There are fewer men than women using libraries.
- The majority of wards have higher than average numbers of over 65 year olds living alone.
- Junior Borrowers are making more frequent use of the libraries than there are in the overall Hackney population/in each individual ward.
- Almost 20% of Hackney residents over 16 years old have no qualification according to the 2011 Census. This is higher than the London average. (18%). Work can be done to improve educational attainment for adults.

7.5 Although many older adults also use libraries, service reach among children and young people is disproportionately high compared to their share of the overall population. Under 18s in Hackney account for less than a quarter of the total population (23%), but total library issues of junior items account for 52 per cent of all loans within the borough. Library loans of junior stock account for 39 per cent of all

lending stock, which is 16 per cent higher than the population make-up for the demographic.

7.6 The number of library card holders and active users in 2019/20 shows that a large proportion of library users in Hackney are from the most deprived areas. Even though the proportion of users currently matches with the deprivation breakdown within the borough, individuals from the more deprived areas are likely to benefit more from library services so there is a need to engage further with users from these areas.

7.7 There is a need to ensure all branches are being utilised and to fully exploit library use which remains significant in scale (113,000 residents) in order to reach more of those who stand to benefit most. One measure of this would be to say that the most deprived areas in Hackney should become the areas with the highest library use.

7.8 The Libraries Review public engagement campaign engaged with disabled residents, older people, ethnically diverse communities, faith groups and residents who are LGBTQIA+, when focus group discussions in 2021 were held to support the review.

7.9 The Libraries Strategy in 2022 - 2026 will not change the current service provision for residents, it will not affect a change to opening hours and will keep all libraries open and accessible within one mile radius of where residents live. The strategy's aim is to enhance the service to create greater impact for residents, invite more people to use the service as part of a more inclusive approach and achieve long-term outcomes for its users.

7.10 The creation of a new engagement and development team will improve access to culture, heritage and libraries activities and increase library use by implementing a hybrid library service that residents can access physically and online and a service that reaches out into the community.

8. Sustainability and climate change

8.1 The Libraries strategy aims to provide a service that strengthens communities, promotes cohesion and celebrates the heritage of local people, and as such will contribute to making Hackney fairer, safer and more sustainable.

8.2 Hackney Libraries are a key part of the circular economy, by their nature allowing residents to reduce consumption of large quantities of new books through its borrowing activity whilst ensuring the extraction of global natural resources is minimised. The Libraries service's environmental policy is in line with the Council's Climate Action Plan to become net zero by 2040.

8.3 All library sites will model good environmental practice through their buildings and supplier choices by following sustainable procurement commitments. Library managers will empower library staff and users to re-think their consumption and

make space for inclusive discussions, education and action around climate emergency issues.

9. Consultations

9.1 On 19th July 2021, Hackney Council launched *Our Libraries*, a review of Hackney library services to facilitate an extensive Libraries conversation with residents and stakeholders to measure the satisfaction levels of the current service provision and identify the local needs and aspirations for the future of the Libraries service.

9.2 The Our Libraries campaign was a non-statutory consultation sought to better understand the way Hackney libraries are currently being used, what residents value from the service, what is missing from the service, to understand the needs of those that don't visit, and to gain a localised understanding of how residents use libraries closest to them and what they want from their library in the future.

9.3 The campaign and surveys were widely publicised in-person through street promotion, focus groups and in libraries as well as through online platforms, social media, the Hackney Matters panel as well as the voluntary and community sector and business networks. The primary way of hearing from Hackney residents has been through responses to surveys hosted on Commonplace and Citizen Space, followed by focus groups and interviews with residents of all ages and backgrounds. Questions about library use were included in the Council's Housing Services full-scale tenant and leaseholder survey, carried out by Kwest Research from July 2021 to October 2021.

9.4 Over 8,500 residents provided feedback and engaged with the Our Libraries public consultation campaign. 7,208 responses were collected from library users and non-users across all ages and backgrounds as well as from businesses, cultural organisations and the voluntary and community sector through four Council surveys. 52 participants engaged in focus groups and qualitative interviews including a wide range of voices from older residents, young people, disabled residents, ethnically diverse communities, Council tenants, LGBTQI+ community and the Orthodox Jewish community. 1,200 children were reached through the Our Libraries schools competition and workshops with Immediate Theatre and the librarians at Clapton Girls Academy led a focus group session with students.

9.5 The top three reasons for all respondents to use Libraries were reading and literacy, creative and cultural enrichment and digital access and study/ workspace.

Residents also wanted a wider range of books, extended opening hours into the evening, more interactive events for young people, skills training and lifelong learning opportunities, access to health and wellbeing resources and more access to community spaces within libraries to hold group meetings and to socialise. Cafes and bookshops were also popular suggestions.

10. Risk assessment

10.1 A risk assessment for the Libraries strategy and the associated service transformation has taken place as part of the full review of the Libraries service and any identified financial and non-financial risks have been mitigated.

10.2 The risks to deliver the new Libraries strategy are low provided that the new vision, workforce proposals and change programme is put in place by the financial year 2023/24.

11. Comments of the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources.

11.1 This report recommends that the Cabinet adopts the Libraries Strategy 2022-2026 and the associated service transformation.

11.2 The Council fully recognises and values its library spaces and there is a strong commitment to maintain and in many cases improve the existing library buildings and retain the current library opening hours across the borough.

11.3 Hackney's Library Service is currently well used and the new Library Strategy aims to build on this by catering for the changing demands and needs of local people. The strategy identifies areas that will be developed and a vision for the library service and how it will be shaped going forward.

11.4 In the longer term delivering the strategy will require resources if many of the proposed activities and developments are to be undertaken. These will need to be factored within service budgets and any additional resources required will need to be secured before any commitment is made.

11.5 Consideration needs to be given to the Council's current financial position and the need to make savings - initially £250,000 by 2023/24 and it should not be assumed that resources that exist in the current year will be available in future years.

12. Comments of the Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services.

12.1 Local Authorities in England are required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. Local Authorities must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users, taking into account the resources available. The meaning of a 'comprehensive and efficient service' will differ between councils, and will depend on the needs of each area.

12.2 The recommendations set out in part 3 of this report fall within the definition of a Key decision under the Councils Constitution.

12.3 The recommendation set out in paragraph 3.1 is for Cabinet to approve the Hackney's Libraries Strategy 2022-2026 and the associated service transformation.

12.4 Currently the Mayor's scheme of delegation reserves to the Mayor and Cabinet, approval of the Library Strategy. In order for Hackney's libraries Strategy 2022-2026 to be approved and implemented, the recommendation set out in Paragraph 3.1 is required to be approved by the Mayor and Cabinet.

13. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Libraries Strategy for Hackney 2022-26

Appendix 2 - Our Libraries Public Engagement Summary

Appendix 3 - [Full Public Engagement Report for Libraries](#)

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