

Appendix G: Partnership Libraries

1. Background

The proposed future model for Barnet's library service seeks to engage more effectively with local residents and to make greater use of community involvement to deliver library services. Partnership libraries (one of three categories of library provision being proposed) are a key component of this aim.

Barnet is not alone in investigating this form of library provision and models of community provision are now a common feature of many public library services throughout the UK. In 2013 Arts Council England (ACE) and the Local Government Association (LGA) published a report into community managed libraries, drawing on the experiences of several local authorities and setting out the benefits of increased community engagement in the delivery of library services.

Proposals for the establishment of four new Partnership libraries in Barnet, along with the principals for their operation, are outlined below. These principles reflect feedback provided by residents in the recent library review consultation and draw upon the increasing body of local and national learning.

2. Partnership Libraries

It is proposed to develop four partnership libraries in Barnet that will remain within the statutory public library network. This model differs from the way in which Barnet's two existing community libraries operate (Friern Barnet and Hampstead Garden Suburb). These two community-led facilities operate independently and are not part of the statutory public library network in Barnet.

Buckinghamshire and Bradford have adopted a similar model for some community facilities to that now proposed in Barnet, developing library sites that are community-delivered but with on-going Council support. The proposal to retain Partnership libraries within the statutory public library network takes account of the views of local residents participating in the 2014-15 library consultation. Respondents were clear in their desire for any community managed library to remain part of the local library network.

There is some emerging evidence that the case studies listed can show positive outcomes from this approach. In Buckinghamshire' Farnham Library has improved its opening hours, providing 14 additional hours per week as a community delivered facility. Buckinghamshire has a growing list of borrowers, a database of 500 volunteers (up from 200), and now receives donations from a range of local organisations. In Bradford, opening hours have increased in all community-managed libraries, one from eight to 17 hours; one from eight to 10 hours and one from seven to eight hours.

3. Principles

The following principles will underpin the delivery of services at Partnership libraries:

- Partnership libraries will remain within the statutory public library network. They will operate to Barnet Libraries policies and procedures and provide a core of library services consistent with those provided elsewhere in the network (see product catalogue);
- Partnership libraries will operate the same library systems for the issuing and return of items and for internet access, enabling residents to retain one library card for all libraries in Barnet;
- LBB will provide each partnership library with a small annual grant and a core collection of resources. These resources and any other equipment provided will remain the property of Barnet Libraries. Stock will be accessible to residents across the borough via the library reservation system;
- Services provided by Partnership libraries will be accessible to all members of the community, with no restriction placed upon access; and

4. Support from the Council

The four new Partnership libraries being proposed will remain part of the borough's statutory library provision and will be underpinned by support from the broader Barnet Libraries network. Whilst there will be no Barnet staff employed in the library, each Partnership library will receive an annual package of support from the Library service to include:

- Set-up support including provision of stock, PCs and furniture;
- 12 core training sessions per year;
- Annual allocation of targeted stock;
- Access to a library community engagement officer;
- Access to corporate IS support; and
- Small annual grant of c.£25,000.

Each Partnership library will be linked to a Core or Core Plus library for day-to-day support and for the referral of complex enquiries. The proposed partnership-sites have been chosen in line with the strategy outlined in the main report and Appendix A and are dispersed geographically across the borough. This means that each Partnership library is located near to other categories of library (core and core plus), operating as part of a mixed economy of local library provision.

5. Expected Outcomes

In return for the support package, Partnership Libraries will deliver services as detailed within the Barnet libraries product catalogue which, as a minimum, will include:

- Targeted resources for loan and reference;

- Wi-Fi internet access;
- PC access;
- Selected literacy, learning and community events;
- Customer reservations; and
- Some space for study.

Communities will be supported to expand the service offer beyond the key product catalogue requirements as dictated by the needs and requirements of local residents. It is likely that communities will be able raise funds and access sources of finance not accessible to the local authority and will be able to use these funds to support any local community aspiration to expand the library offer. Partnership libraries will be well placed to demonstrate their engagement with their local community and how they are responding to local needs.

The arrangement will be managed via a service level agreement and set of key performance indicators (KPIs) clearly establishing the service outcomes residents can expect in return for the support package made available by the council. These KPIs will include:

- Customer satisfaction ratings;
- Membership rates;
- Issue rates;
- Rates of Wi-Fi and PC use;
- Literacy and learning outcomes; and
- Rates of community use and community engagement.

Quarterly meetings will take place with each Partnership library to assess performance against KPIs, with on-going funding dependent upon the community organisation meeting key performance targets. This relationship will be managed by a library-based community engagement team on behalf of the LBB commissioning group.

References:

MLA (2011)

http://libraries.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/sites/default/files/community_manage_libraries_report_-_mla.pdf

Arts Council/ LGA (2013)

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Community_libraries_research_2013_guiding_principles.pdf

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http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Community_libraries_research_2013_case_studies.pdf