

Decisions of the Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee

23 March 2016

Members Present:-

Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman)

Councillor Bridget Perry (Vice-Chairman)

McSharry

Councillor Rebecca Challice

Councillor Alison Cornelius

Councillor Daniel Thomas

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

Councillor Helena Hart

Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Kathy Levine

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

Also in attendance (as Co-opted Members):-

Marilyn Nathan

Darren Warrington

Gladys Vendy

Kevin McSharry

Apologies for Absence:

Simon Clifford

Denis Carey

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – The minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from co-opted members Simon Clifford and Denis Carey.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None were declared.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

Public comments were made by Barbara Jacobson, Bob Jacobson, Theresa Musgrove, Maria Nash, Emily Burnham, Heval Kartal and Keith Martin in relation to Item 7 – Barnet's future Library Service.

Public questions and their corresponding answers were detailed in the item's supplementary paper.

Due to the large volume of public questions received, the Chairman extended the time allocated for public questions and comments by 15 minutes. Answers were given to supplementary questions at the meeting.

6. **DRAFT BARNET CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN 2016-2020**

The Chairman and Commissioning Director, Children and Young People, introduced the item which related to the draft Barnet Children and Young People Plan 2016-2020.

The committee noted the need for children to have healthy and active lifestyles, and that the council take a proactive role to encourage this in the borough.

Following discussion of the item, the Chairman moved to the recommendations outlined in the cover report. Votes were recorded as follows:

For	9
Against	0
Abstain	0

The recommendations were therefore carried, and the following was **RESOLVED**:

- **The Children, Education, Library and Safeguarding Committee considered and commented on the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2016-20 including the revised vision and key outcomes as summarised in 1.1 to 1.11.**
- **That the Children, Education, Library and Safeguarding Committee agreed that the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2016-20 contained in Appendix A and summarised in paragraph's 1.1 to 1.11 be approved for further public consultation.**

7. **BARNET'S FUTURE LIBRARY SERVICE**

The Chairman introduced the item, which related to Barnet's future Library Service.

John Hooton, Chief Operating Officer, provided a statement to the committee which outlined the information provided in Appendix L.

The Programme Director, Education and Learning, informed the committee of the main changes that have been made to the future library service proposal since receiving responses from the residents' consultation:

- That live, monitored CCTV would be installed in libraries where Technology Enabled Opening (TEO) applied to help reassure residents regarding safety and therefore increase confidence in the new system. This would come at a cost of approximately £75,000 per annum.

- That the age for unaccompanied children attending TEO libraries would be lowered to include pupils in Year 11 who were aged 15
- That Partnership Libraries would be given more funding in the first two years of their opening. In year one, funding would be £35,000, in year two it would be £28,000 and then in year three £25,000. Whilst this would have a negative impact on saving proposals, it was considered that additional funding would be appropriate to better support the start-up of Partnership Libraries.

During the course of discussion, Councillor Helena Hart noted that she was pleased that the options before the committee would see the retention of all 14 libraries should the recommendations be approved. She further noted that she had been encouraged by the trial of TEO technology at Edgware Library, which is in her ward.

The IT Director, CSG, proceeded to clarify the failure of the pre-existing library management system, the detail of which was outlined in Appendix L. The committee were informed of the following in relation to this:

- That the failure of this software was unrelated to TEO software, and was due to hardware failure.
- Some hardware parts were up to nine years old.
- The failure of this hardware was compounded by the fact that the backup system was located on the same server as the core hardware. It was noted that it is not uncommon for a hardware failure to take place or for the backup to be on a local mirrored system. However, a corruption of both the main disc and the backup was less common. CSG have taken several actions to mitigate this risk, notably the following:
 - o That an extra, off-site, back-up system has been created which is located a remote, cloud-based location.
 - o Notifications about server limit will now be sent to a shared email address so that all relevant staff will be aware when server space is running out.
 - o That the system is now categorised in the 'Platinum Tier', which adds several more layers of security to the system.
 - o A lot of old hardware will be – or already has been – updated and replaced.
- It was further noted that if a hardware failure takes place in the future, system downtime would now most likely be a matter of hours as opposed to an undetermined period of days, weeks or months.

Councillor Kathy Levine stated that whilst she recognised that the system sits independently of TEO software, she still believed that it underpinned the library system and therefore may not be fit to support the proposed model which depends on TEO software.

Councillor Helena Hart asked how confident CSG were that this failure would not happen again. The IT Director, CSG, stated that they were very confident, and that they had upgraded the infrastructure and taken many steps to improve system resilience.

Councillor Bridget Perry raised concerns about the unavailability of toilets and queried what effect this could have on residents' use of libraries. The Programme Director, Education and Learning set out that that detailed consideration had been given to this issue, the detail of which is outlined in Appendix A. It was clarified that toilets, where currently available in libraries, would still be available during staffed hours, and would only not be available in TEO times. It was noted that officers had considered a wide range of ways of keeping toilets open during TEO times, but couldn't conclude a way of mitigating risks associated with an area that could not be covered by CCTV, which included issues such as misuse and vandalism. It was noted that other local authorities who are using this approach have a similar stance in regard to accessing toilets during TEO times. Should the recommendations be approved, it was said that notices would be put up in libraries about where the nearest facilities are.

Councillor Kathy Levine stated that she was concerned by the issues raised by members of the public regarding the lack of support for those with disabilities and unaccompanied children in unstaffed libraries. She raised further concerns regarding whether the proposals would give children living and studying in the borough the best chance in life and whether getting the necessary numbers of volunteers to run Community Libraries was achievable.

The Programme Director, Education and Learning, clarified that the Equality Impact Assessment lays out how the council would seek to mitigate the impact for residents with disabilities who may require support to use the library and for unaccompanied young people. It was explained that the staffed timetable would be clearly publicised and communicated so that residents requiring support could plan their visits. It was clarified that children would be able to use TEO although younger children will need to be accompanied by an adult and older children will require parental consent (and a school stamp if aged 15 and in Year 11). The Programme Director, Education and Learning, further stated that the council would add to the mitigation plan work to do with carers. It was then stated that for some people with disabilities the extended hours would be useful, although that they will need some support. In addition to this, the committee was informed that there are alternative study spaces in schools in addition to spaces that would be available in libraries under the new system. The Programme Director explained that it was not recommended to timetable all of the proposed staffed hours during afterschool hours, as the needs of other library users needed to be met who may prefer to use libraries in the morning or afternoon.

The Programme Director, Education and Learning also noted that the recruitment of volunteers would be supported by investment, and that a small budget to work with Groundwork and CommUNITY Barnet – the council's Voluntary Sector partners – would be assigned in order to encourage more volunteering. The committee was also informed, in answer to a question, that the table on page 45 of the cover report, which refers to commercial income, indicates that there would be no increase in generated income in 2018/19 from the previous year.

Councillor Ammar Naqvi also asked if there was scope for re-categorisation of libraries as there was quite a difference between Core and Core +. The Programme Director, Education and Learning, informed the committee that the council would continue to take into account the needs of the borough– in particular it was noted that it is proposed that the new Colindale library (currently the Grahame Park Library) would be classified at a Core+ Library to meet the needs arising from the large scale regeneration in that area. The committee noted that libraries could be re-categorised depending on budget.

Councillor Hutton raised concerns over staffing and that the proposals suggested a deduction of half of qualified libraries staff. She was also concerned to maintain an offer of rentable community space and also queried the provision for wheelchair access to TEO dependent libraries. The Programme Director, Education and Learning, clarified that the number of posts that require a professional qualification would stay the same as it is now, although the entire number of staff would decline. The committee were then informed that hourly-let rental community space will be available in some libraries. In addition to this, it was clarified that all libraries will have wheelchair access.

Councillor Anne Hutton expressed concern at reduction in size of libraries as her library was packed when she was in there at 4.00pm.

Councillor Anne Hutton also queried whether enterprise hubs could be in many of the libraries.

Councillor Daniel Thomas said the enterprise hub may want to operate across libraries and could provide commercial space and that projects in the pipeline can allow for co-location.

The committee was informed that the number of fixed desk top computers available in libraries would be likely to decline under the proposals, although it is not possible to say what the number will be until the redesign of libraries has taken place. The committee also heard how library users now make use of wi-fi to study in a variety of ways in libraries and how the introduction of laptops may enable more or the same number of computers to be provided despite a reduction in desk space.

In response to a question from Councillor Thompstone, the committee were informed that classes of students under the age of 15 could attend TEO library sessions with one teacher (and therefore not multiple adults).

During discussion of the item, Councillor Anne Hutton moved a motion, which was seconded by Councillor Rebecca Challice, to change the wording of recommendations 3 and 4 so that they read:

3. *That the decision on the future of Barnet's Library Service is delayed until the library IT problem is completely resolved and a final assessment of the system failure is brought back to CELS for consideration.*
4. *That, if required, reserves are used to fund the Library Service in the interim.*

Votes on the motion were recorded as follows:

For	4
Against	5
Abstain	0

The motion therefore did not carry.

Following discussion of the item, the Chairman moved to the recommendations, with each recommendation voted on in turn. The committee unanimously agreed

recommendations 1 and 2, and votes for recommendations 3 and 4 were recorded as follows:

For	5
Against	4
Abstain	0

Immediately following the vote the Chairman, Councillor Reuben Thompstone, moved to refer the item to the next practicable meeting of Full Council. The reason given for the referral of the item was that there is considerable public interest in the issue, and that it is a key issue affecting the majority of the borough's wards, therefore meaning that Full Council is better placed to make the decision.

The request to refer the item was supported by:

- Councillor Rebecca Challice
- Councillor Alison Cornelius
- Councillor Helena Hart
- Councillor Anne Hutton
- Councillor Kathy Levine
- Councillor Ammar Naqvi
- Councillor Bridget Perry
- Councillor Daniel Thomas

RESOLVED – That having received the requisite number of support for referral, the item will be placed on the agenda for consideration by Full Council.

8. ANNUAL REPORT OF EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

The Chairman welcomed the Education and Skills Director to introduce the item, which related to the Annual Report of Educational Standards.

Following discussion of the report, the Chairman moved to the recommendations outlined in the cover report. Votes were recorded as follows:

For	9
Against	0
Abstain	0

The recommendations were therefore carried, and the following was **RESOLVED**:

- **That the Committee noted the validated results for school performance in Barnet for the academic year 2014/15 as set out in Appendix A: Report on Educational Standards in Barnet (Academic Year 2014/15).**

9. CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND SAFEGUARDING COMMISSIONING PLAN ADDENDUM

The Commissioning Director, Children and Young People, introduced the item which related to the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Commissioning Plan addendum.

Following discussion of the item, the Chairman moved to the recommendations outlined in the cover report. Votes were recorded as follows:

For	5
Against	0
Abstain	4

The recommendations were therefore carried, and the following was **RESOLVED**:

- **That the Committee reviewed and approved the addendum to the CELS Commissioning Plan for 2016/17 (Appendix A).**

10. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

Councillor Anne Hutton introduced her Member's Item, which related to developing cultural activities in the borough.

Following discussion of the item, the committee unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- **That the Commissioning Director, Children and Young People, bring a report back to a future meeting of the committee which details the following:**
 - 1. The possible development of a cultural activities plan which could include: making a dedicated page on the internet for cultural activities, promoting the arts through the council's magazine Barnet First and how the arts can be incorporated in future meeting agendas.**
 - 2. Suggestions of how to involve residents and community groups in cultural activities.**
 - 3. Feasibility of the council appointing an artist-in-residence and/or an 'Arts Champion' to be an ambassador for arts in the borough.**
 - 4. Whether community spaces can be offered at discounted rates across the borough to community groups (for instance spaces in libraries). This will include a definitive view on the current – and any potential future – rates available for community groups.**

11. CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Commissioning Director for Children and Young People introduced the Committee Work Programme.

The Committee unanimously noted the report.

12. ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting finished at 9.50 pm