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 Phase 1 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, alongside a number Core and Core Plus libraries. The four Partnership libraries are proposed at Mill Hill, East Barnet, South Friern and Child's Hill.

The proposed Partnership library 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 emerging evidence to demonstrate 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.

- Partnership libraries will operate Barnet Library service 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 within the Barnet network;

- LBB will provide each Partnership library with an annual grant and a core collection of resources. These resources and any other equipment provided will remain the property of Barnet Library service. Stock will be accessible to residents across the borough via the library reservation system; and

- Services provided by Partnership libraries will be accessible to all members of the community, with no restriction placed upon access;

4. Support from the Council

The four proposed Partnership libraries 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 directly employed within Partnership library, each 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;
- Annual grant of £35k in year 1, £28k in year 2 and £25k thereafter.
- Access to a transition loan of up to £8,000 to help community groups establish themselves as a legal entity and to take on the responsibility of running the Partnership Library.

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 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.

The Council will commission its voluntary sector partners (GroundWorks and CommUNITY Barnet) to help support the establishment of Partnership libraries, helping to support the engagement of volunteers and the establishment of community organisations or groups of residents ready to operate a Partnership Library.

5. Expected Outcomes

In return for the support package, Partnership libraries will deliver services as detailed within the Barnet libraries product catalogue (Appendix C) 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.

6. Establishing Partnership libraries

The council will seek expressions of interest from organisations or resident groups (community bodies) who may wish to run a Partnership library. Community bodies will be required to complete an initial Expression of Interest (EoI) form. Each expression of interest will be considered to assess those applications that are suitable to move forward to the next stage. The next stage will require the community body to prepare and submit a business case. CommUNITY Barnet will be engaged to offer expert guidance and capacity to these organisations as part of the support package.

At the same time as submitting a business case, the community bodies will be able to submit their application for the transition grant. This will allow the grant application to be processed as quickly as possible.

A panel of officers will consider each business case against a pre-defined set of criteria. Successful organisations will be notified and the transfer of the library to the new organisation will begin.

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

Arts Council (2013)

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Community_libaries_research_2013_case_studies.pdf