

	<p align="center"><b>Community Leadership and Libraries Committee</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Date: 5 March 2019</b></p>
<p align="right"><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Independent Evaluation of the Library Service: Report</b></p>
<p align="right"><b>Report of</b></p>	<p>Chairman of Community Leadership and Libraries Committee</p>
<p align="right"><b>Wards</b></p>	<p>All</p>
<p align="right"><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Public</p>
<p align="right"><b>Urgent</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p align="right"><b>Key</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p align="right"><b>Enclosures</b></p>	<p>None</p>
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<p align="center"><b>Summary</b></p>	
<p>Following the determination of the Secretary of State that Barnet Libraries continues to meet its statutory duties, on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019 the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee (CLLC) agreed proposals for an independent evaluation of the new model library service.</p> <p>The following principles were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the review be focussed on recommendations to enhance the future sustainability and effectiveness of the current library offer.</li> </ul>	

- That the review consider the totality of the library offer including digital as well as branch-based services.
- That the review be informed by stakeholder and service user engagement.
- That an independent agency be contracted to undertake the review.

The following scope was agreed:

- Consideration of the overall library offer in Barnet and the range of services available both in branch and online.
- Performance indicators, including usage of self-service and staffed opening hours and uptake of digital services.
- An updated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) with associated recommendations.
- Consideration of the quantity and distribution of opening hours across the borough.
- Consideration of access arrangements during self-service opening, including an assessment of library use by children and young people and older adults.
- Consideration of security arrangements.
- Assessment of the deployment of volunteers.
- Use of libraries and community rooms by local organisations.
- Comparison to other London Borough Library Services and examples of good practice.

Consideration of the commercial spaces within library buildings was not in scope of the evaluation.

The Committee approved the appointment of an outside agency to undertake this evaluation with an estimated contract value of £35,000.

Accordingly, a procurement process was undertaken and independent organisation, Activist Group, were commissioned to conduct the evaluation. Their investigation spanned 6 months from August 2019 until February 2020 and included a mix of desktop research, visits to libraries, stakeholder engagement and a review of a range of performance data sets.

This report sets out their findings and makes recommendations for future action.

## **Recommendations**

1. That the Committee consider the findings of the independent report.

2. That the Committee consider the recommendations of the independent report.

## 1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 On the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019 the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee agreed proposals for an independent evaluation of Barnet's libraries following changes made to the service since 2017.
- 1.2 These changes included a staffing restructure, installation of self-service technology and the introduction of self-service opening hours alongside the reconfiguration of all 14 library sites.
- 1.3 The Committee approved the following principles for the independent evaluation:
  - That the review be focused on recommendations to enhance the future sustainability and effectiveness of the current library offer.
  - That the review consider the totality of the library offer including digital as well as branch-based services.
  - That the review be informed by stakeholder and service user engagement.
  - That an independent agency be contracted to undertake the review.
- 1.4 The following scope was approved by the Committee:
  - Consideration of the overall library offer in Barnet and the range of services available both in branch and online.
  - Performance indicators, including usage of self-service and staffed opening hours and uptake of digital services.
  - An updated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) with associated recommendations.
  - Consideration of the quantity and distribution of opening hours across the borough.
  - Consideration of access arrangements during self-service opening, including an assessment of library use by children and young people and older adults.
  - Consideration of security arrangements.
  - Assessment of the deployment of volunteers.
  - Use of libraries and community rooms by local organisations.
  - Comparison to other London Borough Library Services and examples of good practice.
- 1.5 Consideration of the commercial spaces within library buildings remained outside the scope of the evaluation.
- 1.6 It was agreed that the evaluation would adopt the following methodology:

- Review of a range of data sets including visitors, transaction data, registrations, room hire, PC and wifi use, use of online resources, activity attendance.
  - Review of borough demographic data and patterns of library use.
  - Review of and update to the library service EIA.
  - Desk top research regarding services provided via Barnet Libraries and other London borough library services.
  - Stakeholder and user engagement to include targeted resident focus groups and a general user survey.
- 1.7 An independent evaluator, Activist Group, (Alpine Resourcing) was procured via a mini competition process using Lot 7 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism) of ESPO Consultancy Framework 664. This framework comprises eight providers.
- 1.8 In accordance with the ESPO conditions for running further competition from lot 7, all 8 providers were invited to participate in the procurement process. Five compliant bids were received which were then assessed according to criteria set out in the competition tender documents.
- 1.9 Following contract award, Activist Group commenced their evaluation work in August 2019. Activity was briefly suspended between the 2<sup>nd</sup> November and 12<sup>th</sup> December (inclusive) in line with pre-election period regulations.
- 1.10 The evaluation has comprised the analysis of data, both local transaction volumes and comparative data from other Local Authorities; visits to all Barnet libraries and stakeholder engagement including meetings, surveys, focus groups and interviews.
- 1.11 Activist Group's final report containing findings and recommendations is now presented to the Committee for its consideration.

## **2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Consideration of the findings and recommendations within this report will ensure that the library service continues to develop to meet the challenges of the future and that the Council continues to meet the requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964).

### **3 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 3.1 Further action will be determined following the Committee's consideration of the report and its findings.

### **4 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

#### **4.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 4.1.1 Activist Group's report reflects upon the contribution of the library service to the delivery of key corporate priorities and makes recommendations for greater integration with Corporate Plan objectives.
- 4.1.2 Library service outcomes form part of the Community Leadership and Libraries Delivery Plan. The report includes a proposed set of library service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for inclusion in the 2020-21 plan. These are:
- physical visits to libraries.
  - Issues/renewals of loan items.
  - Issues of digital materials.
  - Accesses to the library web pages
  - Attendance at events and activities.

#### **5.1 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.1.1 On the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the Committee approved an estimated contract value of £35,000 for the completion of the independent evaluation of the library service.
- 5.1.2 In line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and to ensure value for money, a procurement exercise was undertaken in accordance with Rule 5 (Procurement Method) of the Contract Procedure Rules.
- 5.1.3 A mini-competition was advertised to the eight companies listed on ESPO consultancy framework 664 (Lot 7 – Leisure, Culture and Tourism). Bidders were asked to provide a detailed pricing schedule and to respond to a series of method statement questions designed to assess their ability to meet the requirements of the scope and methodology approved by the Committee.
- 5.1.4 Five compliant bids were received which were assessed by a panel according to the criteria set out in the competition tender documents.
- 5.1.5 Providers were ranked based on their overall quality and pricing score. Activist Group (Alpine Resourcing) was ranked in first position and was thus

considered to offer the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT).

5.1.6 The procurement process was competitive, transparent, open and provided equal treatment of bidders.

5.1.7 Additional resources may be required to implement some of the recommendations made within the independent report. Specifically, the report recommends additional capital investment to improve library interiors and signage and revenue to support additional staffed opening hours. It will be important to fully explore and capture both the capital and revenue financial implications and to confirm funding is available to adopt these recommendations.

### 5.3 **Social Value**

5.3.1 The Public Service (Social Value) Act (2012) places a duty upon those commissioning public services to pay due regard to economic, environmental and social well-being in the procurement of public service contracts.

5.3.2 Public libraries deliver significant social value with outcomes related to health and well-being, education and learning and social cohesion. This evaluation report will assist the Council in continuing to deliver social value through its libraries.

### 5.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) provides a general duty for library authorities. Section 7 makes it a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for the borrowing of books and other materials. The duty is owed to all persons desiring to make use of the service whose residence or place of work is within the borough and those who are undergoing full time education within the borough.

5.4.2 On the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017 the Department of Digital Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) informed the Council that it would be considering representations received from the Save Barnet Libraries group as a formal complaint under section 10 (1) (a) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964).

5.4.3 In December 2017 the Council received the DCMS's provisional decision not to order an inquiry into the changes made to the library service. However, they indicated that further representations would be sought before a final judgement could be made.

5.4.4 On the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019 the Secretary of State confirmed that the DCMS would not be proceeding with a formal inquiry. His full response is appended to this report in section 6. In his letter he draws the following conclusion:

*Overall and after considering carefully all the factors and points that have been made by all parties, the Secretary of State does not consider there to be any serious doubt or uncertainty as to whether BC is complying with its legal obligations to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.*

5.4.5 The Council's Constitution (Article 7) sets out the terms of reference for this Committee, which includes: Responsibility for libraries, culture, civic events, the mayoralty, community safety, registration and nationality service.

## 5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 Not receiving this report would present a risk of the Committee not being able to consider its findings and recommendations.

## 5.6 Equalities

5.6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was included in the proposals for the new model library service approved by Council on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2016. This considered the impact of changes to the library service based upon considerations of age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. The EIA also reviewed the potential impact of the changes on the unemployed, people from areas of high deprivation and those in full-time education. An update to the EIA is included in the evaluation report.

5.6.2 Focus groups and interviews were conducted by Activist Group with children and young people and older adults as part of this review alongside interviews with headteachers and a range of organisations representing children and young people, older adults and those with disabilities. In addition to a general resident survey, stakeholder engagement also included a questionnaire specifically aimed at young people aged 11 to 18 years of age.

5.6.3 Further assessment of equalities impacts will be undertaken as required in line with decisions taken by the Committee following their consideration of this report.

## 5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 In 2016 the government developed a set of corporate parenting principles. These are:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children

and young people.

- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.7.2 The library service supports these principles by providing a wide range of resources, services and activities for all children and young people in Barnet as well as specialist library cards for practitioners such as foster carers and social workers. The findings and recommendations in this report will help the Council to better understand how the service to all children can be developed including that provided to care leavers and looked after children.

## 5.8 Consultation and Engagement

5.8.1 In line with the principles agreed by the Committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, Activist Group conducted a range of stakeholder engagement sessions. These included:

- Interviews with representatives of over a dozen voluntary and other organisations.
- Interviews with library managers and staff and a staff workshop.
- Two public meetings, one in Chipping Barnet Library and one at Colindale library with 12-15 attending each meeting.
- A general resident survey with over 1,000 responses and a targeted survey for young people aged 11 to 18 years old.
- Focus groups and interviews with 53 people, including young people and older adults.

## 5.9 Insight

5.9.1 Activist Group's report has been informed by a range of local and national data sets as outlined in the evaluation scope and principles.

## 6. Background Papers

Evaluation of Libraries Transformation – Report by Activist Group

Evaluation of New Library Service Model

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g9961/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Jun->

[2019%2019.00%20Community%20Leadership%20and%20Libraries%20Committee.pdf?T=10](#)

Barnet's Future Library service

[https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b27489/Referral%20from%20Children%20Education%20Libraries%20Safeguarding%20Committee%20-%20Barnets%20Future%20Library%20Serv.pdf?T=9](#)

DCMS Letter 2019

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/793980/Letter\\_to\\_Richard\\_Cornelius\\_Leader\\_of\\_Barnet\\_Council.pdf](#)