

Committee: Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Date: 21 February 2018

Wards: All

Subject: Library & Heritage Service Annual Report 2017/18

Lead officer: Anthony Hopkins - Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Service

Lead member: Councillor Nick Draper – Cabinet Member for Community & Culture

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Recommendations:

1. A. That the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel note progress made with the Library & Heritage Service in the last financial year, review performance and discuss key projects.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Library & Heritage Service annual report sets out the key achievements that have been delivered over the last year and highlights future projects. It also provides a summary of performance against all key performance indicators (KPI's).
- 1.2. Since 2011 Merton has kept all of its libraries open and has extended the opening hours of all of them. The new Colliers Wood Library opened on 5 February 2018 and provides high quality services in a modern and sustainable building.
- 1.3. These achievements have been made whilst delivering efficiencies and the Library & Heritage Service continues to have one of the lowest operational budgets of any London library service.
- 1.4. The Library & Heritage Service continues to perform highly and has the highest ratio per head of population of library usage in London and very high customer satisfaction (*source CIPFA 2016/17 Public Library Statistics*). As per last year's annual report key projects have been summarised under the objectives of the DCMS published 'Libraries Deliver- Ambition for Public Libraries 2016 – 2021' and include:
 - The new library operating model
 - Colliers Wood Library
 - Merton Arts Space
 - Schools and Libraries membership scheme
 - My Library
 - Heritage Strategy
 - Adult Learning integration work
 - Digital information skills

2 DETAILS

Increased Reading and Literacy

2.1. *Reading and literacy are two of the most fundamental skills in life. Libraries give everyone free access to books and literature regardless of age, disability, wealth or education. This access makes libraries a catalyst for improved reading and literacy skills.*

2.2. Schools and Libraries Membership Scheme

2.3. The Reading Agency published research in 2015 that suggests that both children and adults who read for pleasure are healthier, happier and more confident than those who don't. Increasing literacy is vital to increase people's chances in the job market, reducing dependence on benefits and improving quality of life.

2.4. The primary school membership scheme has now been established since 2012 and all 44 primary schools continue to participate in the scheme. A refining of the offer has taken place over the last year as part of the library service reorganisation and focusses more on an annual quality event for school children in their local per library plus regular 'browse and borrow' sessions co-ordinated by the schools.

2.5. The Summer Reading Challenge for 4 to 11 year olds continues to run over the summer holidays and over 3,000 children participated in this 2017's scheme.

2.6. In the last year eight of Merton's nine high schools have signed up to the newly developed high school membership scheme. This scheme works differently to the primary school's scheme and focusses on years 9 to 10 and promoting the public offer more widely to our high schools. A programme of arts and cultural workshops for young people in libraries has also been developed and is covered under the 'My Library' section.

2.7. Increasing Adult Literacy

2.8. The Library Service continues to promote reading for all ages and has a planned calendar of events and promotions in place that ensures that national events and promotions are covered along with local events that are of significant importance. Within the borough's bid for London Borough Culture there are key elements that focus on literacy development including the first proposed 'Merton Read' initiative.

2.9. Library Opening Hours

2.10. All libraries have extended their opening hours since 2011 and the offer is continually reviewed. Customers report high satisfaction levels with the current offer and the last Merton Library User Survey for adults shows that 98% of users rate library opening hours as either very good (59%), good (33%) or adequate (6%).

2.11. New library operating model

2.12. All libraries have remained open with the same opening hours offer. In order to achieve financial efficiencies, the operating model of the Library & Heritage Service has been fully reviewed with the new model going live in May 2017. As part of this new approach in off peak teams branch libraries

(Raynes Park, West Barnes, Colliers Wood and Pollards Hill) have a limited staffing presence and the offer is predominantly self-service. The self-service hours were defined following analysis of all available usage data. From the first 9 months of operating in this new model there has been a slight decline in visitor figures across the service although it should be noted that this is mainly attributable to the reduced services at Colliers Wood Library and that figures are expected to increase for 2018/19.

2.13. **Library Connect**

2.14. Merton's very own pop up library solution has been established for 4 years. During this time pop up libraries have been set up in 20 locations and have received 11,350 visits. Library Connect is designed to engage with people who are not regular users of the library service to showcase the wide range of services available. Library Connect events are usually hosted in places where there is low take up or where underrepresented user groups frequent. The model has recently been showcased by the Libraries Taskforce on their blog on the DCMS web pages.

Cultural and Creative Enrichment

2.15. *Cultural and creative opportunities enrich lives. They are important in developing local quality of life, sense of place and individual wellbeing. Libraries are well placed to extend cultural engagement because of their use by all social groups and their role as inclusive cultural hubs within communities.*

2.16. **Merton Arts Space**

2.17. The Library & Heritage Service received a £65,360 grant from Arts Council England to convert the back space in Wimbledon Library into a multi-use space that can be used for library purposes in the day and converts to a performance space that can be used for theatre, dance, music and other cultural activities in the evening.

2.18. Professional sound and lighting equipment along with a flexible stage and seating have been installed. The space has also been enhanced for regular library users too with increased study space. The main space can host up to 300 people for performances. Two exhibition rooms have also been installed which enable artists to exhibit their works or for smaller activities to take place both during in and outside of library opening hours.

2.19. A professionally delivered programme of events was delivered in partnership with organisations such as Love Wimbledon, Wimbledon College of Art, Attic Theatre Company, Wimbledon Bookfest and ACAVA. The funded part of the project concluded in July 2017 with a capacity crowd performance from London Libraries Ambassador Jah Wobble and his band the Invaders of the Heart.

2.20. The final evaluation for the report was submitted in August 2017 and demonstrated the impact that the project has had:

- Hosted 179 events that have attracted total audience numbers of 86,265 people.
- 3,859 people have participated in artistic activities.

- Of the events delivered so far 504 artists have been used across a range of different artistic disciplines.
- 2.21. A wide range of activities continue to take place in the space including theatre, poetry, music and drama events. An author talk by Eva Schloss, a holocaust survivor and friend of Anne Frank, was particularly well received to coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day.
- 2.22. The model has been extended to the east of the borough at Mitcham Library and is covered in more detail under the 'My Library' section.
- 2.23. **Heritage Strategy**
- 2.24. Now almost midway into implementation the borough's Heritage Strategy focuses around 4 key objectives:
- a) Increasing the profile and public access to the borough's unique and diverse cultural heritage;
 - b) Safeguarding the borough's varied heritage sites and resources;
 - c) Making Merton's heritage provision more inclusive and working collaboratively to widen public engagement and participation;
 - d) Increasing funding and investment in Merton's heritage through partnership work, external funding and sponsorship.
- 2.25. The Heritage Strategy was devised in partnership with historical societies and community organisations from across the borough. Key successes for the Heritage Service over the last year include the completion of the Heritage Lottery funded (HLF) 'Carved in Stone' project that provides an online database of all of Merton's combatants and other information relating to Merton during the Great War. The project has received national attention and was shortlisted for the Team London 'Culture of London' award.
- 2.26. Ongoing work for the Heritage Service focuses on the ongoing development of the Merton Memories website, a resource with over 15,000 images of the borough, and a new HLF bid centred around improvements to the Heritage & Local Studies Centre. The new HLF bid includes more access to digital resources, better storage and more intergenerational activities.
- Improved digital access and literacy**
- 2.27. *Public libraries provide a trusted network of accessible locations with free WiFi, computers, and other technology. As the world becomes more digital, access to technology and the ability to operate confidently and safely are ever more important. Digital gives people the opportunity to access services more easily, to learn, and to interact with others. Digital skills also boost their employability, and the productivity and prosperity of the organisations they work for.*
- 2.28. *Trained library staff, supported by volunteers, help local people use online services covering areas like benefits, business, health and wellbeing. They can also provide the training and support individuals need to become independent users of digital services.*
- 2.29. **Digital Information Skills**

- 2.30. All libraries provide one-to-one ICT support provided by staff and volunteers and the provision of ICT support in libraries is expanding through partnership work.
- 2.31. Staff are able to support people out of work, needing to claim benefits, wanting to open a business or start a career, or concerned about their health. They have the knowledge and skills they need to refer to partners to meet the specific needs of customers and communities. A key area for staff development is in further developing library staffs digital and information skills.
- 2.32. A particular focus for the service is on assisted digital support. On top of partnership work with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other supported work with regards to Universal Credit the service is also exploring paid opportunities around support for visa applications and biometric testing.
- 2.33. **Self-Service Technology**
- 2.34. The libraries self-service technology has recently been upgraded. The new technology provides improved reliability and reduced operating costs. Self-service technology currently accounts for 97% of customer transactions and is an integral part of the new delivery model.
- 2.35. Enhancements to self-service technology also include the ability for customers to be able to pay and release printing and chip and pin devices are now available on all self-service kiosks.
- 2.36. **Library website**
- 2.37. The Library & Heritage Service website was visited a record 233,134 times in 2016/17 and figures are up again this year. More content continues to be added to the website and the e-books service saw a 48% increase in borrowing with the e-magazines service seeing a 17% increase.
- 2.38. In the November 2016 Merton Library User Survey 99% of respondents rated the libraries online resources as very good (39%), good (44%) or satisfactory (15%).
- 2.39. The library website will be overhauled in 2018/19 as part of the procurement of a replacement library management system. The new website is planned to be even more user friendly and will deploy functions more attuned to popular websites such as Amazon. There will be increased functions for customers to interact with the website and improved portals giving customers better information on events running in libraries and personalised recommendations based on their preferences.
- 2.40. **People's Network and Public Wi-Fi**
- 2.41. The public Internet PC's in libraries known as the People's Network are in the process of being upgraded by IT Services and will provide quicker browsing times and new functionality. Half of the library services PC's have already been upgraded with the remainder to be upgraded by the end of the financial year.
- 2.42. In the most recent Merton Library User Survey customers acknowledged the improved reliability and 85% of customers rating access to public computers as good to excellent. Free Wi-Fi continues to be available in all libraries.

2.43. **Healthier and Happier Lives**

2.44. *Councils have a responsibility for their communities' social wellbeing and for public health. They increasingly focus on preventative work, helping people manage their own health to reduce both the burden on the NHS and health inequalities. By extending joint working and sharing resources with health providers, public libraries will become increasingly important partners, leading to users having healthier and happier lives.*

2.45. All of Merton's libraries deliver a range of activities to support healthier lifestyles working in partnership with organisations such as the Alzheimer's Society, Arthritis Care, Terence Higgins Trust and Livewell. Libraries continue to promote a range of both physical and online reading and information materials.

2.46. Collaborative work between libraries and Public Health continues to expand and this includes the recent promotion of the One You Merton health information website and libraries being used more routinely for health and wellbeing activities.

2.47. **Stronger, More Resilient Communities**

2.48. *Libraries are open to everyone. Their staff understand their community's needs and are trusted to provide reliable guidance and support on a wide range of issues when people need help. So they're vital to help public service's reach out into communities. Libraries already bring people together in welcoming community hubs which host local events and provide a shared sense of place for their users – ever more important in an increasingly digital age.*

2.49. *They're uniquely placed to help local government and its partners deliver their strategic objectives, whether linked to community cohesion, health and wellbeing, economic growth, promoting independent living or increasing life chances. They also have an important role in reducing social inequalities; 35.8% of people living in the most disadvantaged areas visit their library (source: Taking Part Survey 2015/16).*

2.50. **Volunteering**

2.51. Merton's nationally recognised volunteering model continues to play an integral role in service delivery. 614 volunteers contributed over 35,151 hours of time in 2016/17.

2.52. With the new operating structure now fully embedded a campaign to further encourage library volunteering will take place over the summer months. The annual volunteer thank you event will be held at Wimbledon Library's Arts Space on 9 March 2018.

2.53. **Colliers Wood Library**

2.54. The new Colliers Wood Library opened on 5 February 2018. Just a minute's walk from Colliers Wood underground station, the state of the art new library has three floors with a wide range of books for all ages, WiFi and free to use computers. There are also study areas, meeting spaces which can be segmented into separate sections or made into one large area, a café, children's area and a living roof. The library is fully accessible for all users with purpose built interiors.

2.55. The design of the library has gone through a number of public consultation stages and residents can see the results of their input in the design and fittings. The Council has also been working with the Alzheimer's Society to make the library dementia-friendly. The new library provides a sustainable library to be enjoyed by generations to come.

2.56. **Coffee Shops**

2.57. In a consultation exercise held in 2015 with residents who do not use libraries one of the top three examples of services that could entice them back into using libraries is a coffee shop. Coffee shops have been installed in both Wimbledon and Colliers Wood libraries and there are plans to rollout to more libraries. Apart from providing a valuable service the coffee shops also support with savings and have been included within MTFs savings for 2018/19.

Greater Prosperity

2.58. *The prosperity of an area is crucial for residents' wellbeing and quality of life. We want everyone to have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from this.*

2.59. *Libraries support business to start up and grow by providing information and working with local economic development organisations to signpost businesses to sources of support and advice. They can also help attract businesses into an area and keep them there by contributing to 'placemaking' and overall quality of life.*

2.60. **Employability and skills support**

2.61. Libraries have established job clubs working with partners such as the Job Centre Plus and Clarion Housing. CV writing workshops and other skills support is also provided. Along with the free ICT support offer this is helping to support in reducing unemployment figures in the borough.

2.62. Libraries are also used by adult learning providers to provide courses in the community that are particularly focussed on improving people's life chances with a significant provision of vocational, ESOL and courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities provided in them.

2.63. **Wimbletech**

2.64. Wimbletech, based in Wimbledon Library is part of the Council's inward investment strategy. Using underutilised space Wimbletech provides advice and support for start-up companies and co-workers. Now well established the Wimbletech brand is now in a growing number of local authorities under the banner of the 'Workary'. Further work will be undertaken with Wimbletech over the next year to look at how we can further develop the partnership including embedding more community activities in libraries and further developing the business support offer.

Helping Everyone Achieve Their Full Potential

2.65. *Libraries raise people's aspirations and promote lifelong learning, supplementing formal education provided through schools, colleges and adult education. This is increasingly important given the accelerated pace of*

change in the workplace and the world more generally, meaning that skills and knowledge need more frequent updating.

2.66. **My Library**

2.67. The Library and Heritage Service has been awarded £142,611 from Arts Council England to further develop its services to young people. Central to the project is the development of a new membership scheme for high school children along with the development of a new programme of cultural activities in libraries for young people.

2.68. Utilising professionally trained artists, musicians, performers and writers a series of workshops have been taking place in libraries. In order to design the programme a consultation exercise was undertaken last summer to gather the views of young people. The workshops have focussed in particular around the newly developed Arts Space at Mitcham Library, which this funding enabled. A culmination event to showcase the work of the young people will take place at Wimbledon Library's Arts Space on 10 March 2018.

2.69. The project has so far engaged with 730 young people with 12 different artist facilitators used who have delivered 46 workshops.

2.70. **Merton Adult Learning Integration Work**

2.71. Libraries are used by a range of adult learning providers to deliver courses in the community. This supports the aims of the adult learning strategy to increase enrolments from residents who live in areas where health, education and employment opportunities are lower than the Merton average.

2.72. A significant proportion of adult learning courses for learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities are delivered in libraries and further opportunities are being explored at the new Colliers Wood Library to develop this along with closer working with MENCAP.

3 **PERFORMANCE**

3.1. In year performance of the Library & Heritage Service recorded in December 2017 shows that all KPI's are expected to be met. Of the 6 KPI's presented 5 are currently being exceeded by over 10% of the target figure:

Service Plan #	Description of performance measure	Final 2016/17	YTD 2016/17	YTD 2017/18	YTD Target 2017/18	RAG Indicator
SP08	No. of people accessing the library service by borrowing an item or using a People's Network terminal at least once in the previous 12 months.	70,268	69,089	64,957	56,000	BLUE
SP09	Number of visitors accessing the library service online	233,134	171,729	186,813	157,500	BLUE
SP279	Monthly transactions - Staff and Self-service	96%	96%	97%	97%	GREEN
SP280	Active volunteering numbers in libraries	336	313	276	220	BLUE
SP282	Partnership numbers	43	62	43	30	BLUE
SP287	Increase income generation	£361,486	£271,535	£334,051	£259,500	BLUE
-	Visitor Numbers (year to date comparison with 2016/17 figures)	1,120,147	832,414	812,598	-	-
-	Issues & Renewals by Item Category (YTD comparison with 2016/17 figures)	707,333	541,374	502,365	-	-

3.2.

- 3.3. Based on the recently published CIPFA statistics for 2016/17 Merton continues to have the highest number of active users per head of population of any London library service.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. Merton Library User Survey

- 4.2. The last Library & Heritage Service customer survey was undertaken in October 2016. The responses showed high levels of customer satisfaction with:

- 99% of respondents feeling that libraries are a safe place.
- 97% of respondents rated the choice of books as very good (36%), good (43%) or satisfactory (18%).
- 99% of respondents rated the information provision in libraries as very good (39%), good (48%) or satisfactory (12%).
- 99% of respondents rated the events in libraries as very good (33%), good (44%) or satisfactory (22%).
- 54% of respondents required staff support with 100% of those requiring support rating staff support as very good (71%), good (25%) or satisfactory (4%).
- Taking everything into account 100% of respondents were satisfied with the service with 60% rating it as very good, 34% as good and 6% as satisfactory.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The Library & Heritage Service Plan 2018/19 outlines all key projects to be delivered and was presented to the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 16 January 2017.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Library & Heritage Service has a controllable budget of £1,673,320. It is currently reporting expenditure to be to budget for 2017/18 financial year.
- 6.2. Agreed MTFs savings both delivered in 2017/18 and for future years for the Library & Heritage Service are:

Description	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Implementation of self-service libraries at off peak times	£190,000			£190,000
Deletion of Projects & Procurement Manager post	£22,000			£22,000
Reduction in ICT costs	£40,000			£40,000
Introduce a coffee shop franchise across libraries		£30,000		£30,000

Deferred Savings			£48,000	£48,000
Increase income at Merton Arts Space			£38,000	£38,000
TOTAL	£252,000	£30,000	£86,000	£368,000

- 6.3. The Library & Heritage Service has 7 libraries and a Heritage & Local Studies Centre based on the second floor of Morden Library. All libraries have either seen significant redevelopment works or new libraries have been built since 2005 apart from West Barnes Library. There is a pause in the West Barnes Library redevelopment proposals to allow for resident consultation to be completed regarding Cross Rail 2 as it has an impact on potential plans to redevelop the site.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Council is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service, addressing the 'needs of adults and children', according to the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964. Local authorities have a statutory duty to make provision for a library service but may decide on how this is to be done.
- 7.2. Certain aspects of the service must be provided for free including free lending of books, free access to information and free library membership.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Libraries hold a unique place within the community as a public space that is open to all. Where customers cannot make it to libraries a Home Visits Library Service provides books and other materials to people's homes.
- 8.2. Residents from BAME backgrounds make the most effective use of libraries with high proportions in particular of Asian and Black British people regularly using libraries.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None identified.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. No specific issues identified in this report. A risk register is maintained for projects detailed in the Library & Heritage Service Plan.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- None included.