

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 8 December 2014

Wards: West Barnes

Subject: West Barnes Library Development Consultation Results

Lead officer: Anthony Hopkins

Lead member: Councillor Nick Draper

Contact officer: Anthony Hopkins

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet review the consultation undertaken in anticipation of a proposed development of the West Barnes Library site.
 - B. That Cabinet agree next steps in the development process as outlined in sections 1.7-1.9 and 5.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Merton Council is seeking to progress plans to develop West Barnes Library. Throughout the initial consultation many positive comments have been received from the local community in support of the development
- 1.2. Public consultation was undertaken between 12 September and 24 October 2014 to ascertain the views of residents on a proposed development of West Barnes Library to build a new and improved library presence with additional housing built above the site. The proposed development would provide a more efficient and sustainable library for the future whilst bringing on stream much needed additional housing to include an affordable element.
- 1.3. A total of 427 people responded to the consultation. The vast majority of respondents provided supportive comments towards the development and are keen to see the site improved. This was also supported with comments at public meetings.
- 1.4. The proposed development is in five stages:
- 1.5. **Stage 1** - Conduct initial consultation on the development proposal and incorporate comments in the Sites and Policies Development Plan. Complete initial building viability work. COMPLETED
- 1.6. **Stage 2** – Undertake more detailed consultation with the local community on what facilities they would like to see in a new library. Incorporate results into the development brief. COMPLETED
- 1.7. **Stage 3** – Undertake a procurement exercise to bring in a developer to undertake the redevelopment works. NEXT STAGE
- 1.8. **Stage 4** – Construction of new development. Temporary library facilities to be available in the local area. Further consultation will be undertaken at this stage on internal library design.

1.9. **Stage 5 – New library opens.**

2 DETAILS

2.1. The consultation recently completed was used to gain detailed information from residents on the kinds of services they would like to see in a new library. The council had already agreed through its initial consultation between 2012 and 2014 as part of the Sites & Policies Development Plan that the library will be larger in floor space with public toilets and a community hall.

2.2. The headline results of this consultation are:

- 89.7% of respondents currently use the library.
- 79.86% of respondents reported that they were more likely to use the library if it was developed.
- Soft seating, activities for adults and books were the things that respondents would like to see more of in the new library.
- The majority of respondents would also like to see the same levels of audio visual stock, computers and Wi-Fi, activities for children and young people and quiet study space.
- The 3 most important things identified in the new library are book stock, public toilets and the children's area.
- In terms of additional facilities not currently provided the highest responses were for coffee shop facilities and public toilets.
- 31.69% of respondents were male and 68.08% female with 0.23% not stating.
- The vast majority of respondents were from the 40-64 years age range with high levels of response from the 25-39 and 65-79 year old age ranges.
- 70.42% of respondents were of White British origin.
- Of the free text comments submitted the vast majority were supportive of the development and the levels of service currently available. 28.42% of the free text comments wanted the development to happen as soon as possible.

2.3. A full summary of the results can be found in Appendix 1.

2.4. It is proposed that the procurement exercise to bring in a developer will begin in January 2015 with the view to appointing a developer by autumn 2015. Once a developer has been procured the current library is likely to be vacated whilst the site is developed. During the development temporary library facilities will be provided in the local area.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. **Do nothing**

3.2. Whilst well regarded by local residents the library is in need of improvement. The current building has not been extensively refurbished since it opened in the 1970's and will require ongoing capital investment as well as essential maintenance repairs. The space does not present itself well to a modern public library and the development would enable a number of improvements to take place that have been requested by local residents (e.g. larger floor space, community hall, public toilets, improved services etc.).

3.3. **Close the library**

3.4. The borough intends to keep West Barnes Library open whilst ensuring that it is run as efficiently as possible. Merton already has the most efficient library service in London and this proposal will help to deliver further efficiencies whilst providing improved space and housing.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. The public have already been consulted in two formal stages and consultation will continue throughout the development. The council is very grateful for the input from local residents. Statutory consultation will also be undertaken through planning once a developer has been appointed.

4.2. The development proposal is included in the annual Library & Heritage Service Plan, which is reviewed by the Sustainable Communities & Transport scrutiny panel. Further updates will be provided through the Library & Heritage Service annual report.

4.3. The recently completed public consultation exercise was issued as a hard copy to all West Barnes ward households. The questionnaire was available in all libraries and other community spaces. The questionnaire was also available online. A number of favourable comments have been received and some of the quotes have been included in Appendix 1.

4.4. Consultation also took place through Friends of West Barnes Library meetings and at recent Raynes Park Community Forum and Raynes Park and West Barnes Residents Association meetings. Ongoing consultation will continue to take place with the Friends of West Barnes Library and other community groups.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. The outline timetable for the next steps in the development is:

Action	Date
Undertake procurement exercise for new developer	January – October 2015
Recommendation to appoint developer	November 2015
Provided planning permission is approved, build the new library with temporary library facilities available in the Motspur Park area. Further consultation on library facilities and	February 2016 – August 2017

design with the community.	
New library opens	Autumn 2017

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The proposed development of the library will improve the space and resources for generations to come. It will enable the library to be sustainable and will clear all backlog maintenance works that currently stand at £75,000. The community hall will provide much needed community space and will also support income. The projected revenue budget without staffing shows how the new library will deliver efficiencies ongoing:

	2014/15 (current)	2015/16 (closed Q3 & Q4)	2016/17 (closed)	2017/18	2018/19
Lease	£0	£0	£0	£1	£1
Utilities	£4,360	£2,180	£0	£3,270	£3,270
Income	-£10,560	-£5,280	£0	-£20,560	-£20,560
Temp Library	£0	£2,500	£5,000	£0	£0
NNDR	£8,050	£4,025	£0	£8,050	£8,050
Contracts	£3,090	£1,545	£0	£3,140	£3,190
TOTAL	£4,940	£4,970	£5,000	-£6,099	-£6,049

- 6.2.
- 6.3. The sale of the land to a property developer will fund the development and will also bring in a capital receipt. The council will be seeking to obtain the best possible value for the land through the procurement process. This project involves a property transaction and will require resource support from all relevant departments.
- 6.4. The council is seeking to obtain a long lease for the library (estimated at 999 years) in a scheme that will be similar to the successful Raynes Park Library development.

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 free and open to all. Usage of West Barnes Library is at its highest amongst children, young families and older people.

- 8.2. The range of services that libraries provide contributes significantly towards resident's sense of community. The library currently provides a suite of activities that include employability, health and ICT support. These initiatives will be enhanced through this development whilst continuing to ensure that the space is used for a wide range of activities for all ages.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None identified.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. A risk management plan will be monitored throughout the completion of this project and includes elements around health and safety. The risk management plan addresses key issues such as temporary facilities, consultation, the procurement process and construction.

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

- Appendix 1 – Detailed consultation results

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