

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
6 MARCH 2018**

**Library Service Review - Progress Report
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the progress with regard to the Library Service review.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Transformation Review of Libraries recommended the retention of all 9 libraries and to make the required £400,000 saving from operational efficiencies particularly in stock management, increased use of volunteers and to introduce Technology Assisted Opening. This report highlights that good progress is being made.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the progress in implementing the outcomes from the Transformation Review of Libraries.**

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has a role in reviewing the progress being made in relevant transformation reviews.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not applicable. The Chairman of ECC Overview and Scrutiny requested the update.

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 6.1 In April 2016 a transformation review of Bracknell Libraries sought to identify £400,000 savings over two years (originally £250,000 in 2017/18 and £150,000 saving in 2018/19). The agreed plan to make this saving was to make substantial efficiency savings mainly from how we manage library stock, to develop a stronger community role within our libraries through the use of volunteers, and to significantly improve access to libraries, something which was identified as needed through public consultation, by introducing Technology Assisted Opening and self-service. Critically all libraries would remain open.
- 6.2 The project is progressing well with the stock efficiency savings being realised, excellent levels of volunteering achieved and a supplier of the technology has been procured. There has been a slight delay in the works needed to install the technology resulting in the £400,000 saving now being profiled as £250,000 in 2017/18, £120,000 in 2018/19, and the final £30,000 in 2019/20. Otherwise the plan following the transformation review is being implemented well although in fact the

potential for project slippage as a consequence of the technological procurement was always identified as a risk.

Technology

- 6.3 The introduction of self-service kiosks and technology enabled opening will bring more flexibility, automate many routine tasks and help to increase opening hours.

Tagging for new RFID tracking technology has been completed in all libraries, however, those books out on loan have not all been tagged. In order to complete the process it will be necessary to install some software on corporate PCs followed by training for the Supervisors.

Building works in preparation for the new technology has started with Great Hollands having been completed, Whitegrove in progress and Binfield to commence in March.

All 9 libraries will be receiving self-service kiosks and technology enabled opening. Binfield library will be the first to have self-service kiosks implemented closely followed by Sandhurst and then Birch Hill.

Volunteering

- 6.4 This programme aims to complement the staffing so that the libraries can retain what customers value so much, knowledgeable library staff, whilst making the required changes.

Over 100 volunteers have been appointed and are working alongside staff to provide the service and enable extended lunchtime opening hours. This has been achieved at Sandhurst, Birch Hill, Great Hollands and Ascot Heath so far.

Recruiting volunteers into Saturday and evening posts still remains more challenging and seemingly of less interest at the present time. Geographical recruitment targeting started mid-January; as community publications are issued, to focus on those areas where volunteer interest has been lower. (Binfield, Crowthorne and Whitegrove libraries)

There will be a celebration event for volunteers in early April to recognition the achievements of our volunteers.

Service Remodeling

- 6.5 Remodelling of roles and responsibilities at all levels is essential to achieve the new vision for the service. A review of staffing levels, roles and responsibilities is being carried out and will create a structure capable of this.

This is a two stage process, with the first phase completed, which focussed on management and supervisors levels, as well as the administrative support and stock management team.

It now focuses on the frontline staff required, following the implementation of new technology and single staffing and will propose to change the way branches are managed across the borough. Planning for this is underway and a final proposal is being agreed with staff consultation likely to begin April 18.

Harmans Water Library

- 6.6 Preparing revised feasibility plans for a new library at Harmans Water. Capital approval should be agreed at the end of February and the project can begin.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 7.1 Not requested

Borough Treasurer

- 7.2 The re-profiled savings target forms part of the council's 2018/19 and 2019/20 budget proposals.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 All libraries other than Bracknell Library will be fully accessible during Technology Assisted Opening. A briefing note was taken to the Bracknell Forest Access Group on Wednesday 21st February regarding the unique circumstances relating to this library and based on the facts that Bracknell Library has the longest staffed hours of all libraries and that access will be available at all other libraries concluded that the council's current approach was reasonable and suitably measured.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.4 Libraries reach out into the heart of our communities and it is important that services remain accessible

8 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 8.1 None relating to this report

Background Papers

Transformation Review of Libraries
Access Group report

Contact for further information

Vincent Paliczka 01344 351750

vincent.paliczka@bracknell-forest.gov.uk