



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	Phase one engagement exercise to inform a proposal for a new Enfield Council Library Strategy
Report to:	Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy
Date of Report:	27 th November 2023
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy
Directors:	Simon Pollock, Executive Director of Environment and Communities Eleanor Brown, Director of Customer and Communications
Report Author:	Harriet Potemkin, Head of Strategy and Policy
Ward(s) affected:	All
Key Decision Number	KD 5685
Classification:	Part I Public

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out proposals to undertake a first phase engagement exercise to help inform the development of a draft proposal for a new library strategy for Enfield. We will then publish and consult on a proposal for a draft strategy in summer 2024.
2. The purpose of this first phase engagement is to help understand why people use our library service, how they use our library service, what they value and stakeholders' suggestions on how we could deliver our library service more efficiently so as to make savings in the library budget. This engagement exercise will take place between December 2023 – February 2024.

Recommendations

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree the commencement of the phase one engagement on Enfield libraries, the results of which will inform the development of a draft proposal for a new library strategy. |
|--|

Background and Options

3. Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 local councils have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it. In providing this service, councils must encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service and lend books and other printed material free of charge.
4. Enfield has 16 public libraries; this includes four hub libraries and 12 community libraries. In addition to these 16 libraries, Angel Raynham library is also classified as a public library. However, it is located inside Raynham Primary School and is not accessible to the general public. It is not staffed by the Council's library service, has its own stock of books and the operating costs of this library are funded by Raynham primary school.
5. Over the past ten years, the context in which our libraries provide services has changed significantly. Our libraries currently provide and host a range of resources, services and support for people living, working or studying in Enfield. This includes books and access to digital resources, quiet spaces for study and reflection, support groups and social activities for all ages, health and wellbeing support, makerspaces, training and employment advice.
6. Like all local authorities, the Council is facing significant funding pressures. The Council has had a 42% reduction in overall funding since 2010. The Council is under a duty to set a balanced budget. The Council must make savings of £39.4 million in 2024/25, and there is a forecasted budget gap of £118.7m for the 5 years through to 2028/29. It is inevitable

that savings will need to be made now and in years to come across the Council in order to set a balanced budget.

Preferred Option and Reasons For Preferred Option

7. The Council is under a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. In light of the Council's funding pressures, we need to consider whether our library service can be delivered in a more efficient way, while ensuring that it continues to meet people's needs and is comprehensive.
8. We want to hear from stakeholders about whether they use our library service and why, how they use the library service, their experience of our libraries, what they value and their suggestions on how we can deliver things differently / more efficiently in light of the Council's financial position and the need to make savings in the library budget.
9. The engagement will be promoted using a range of digital channels, in local printed press and through targeted promotion to resident forums, voluntary and community sector groups, education, health and other statutory partners across the borough. We will review the level of responses 6 weeks into the engagement and target promotion to particular areas and groups as required based on the responses to date, so that we hear the views of people with different protected characteristics and who may not have had a chance to participate in the engagement.
10. We will use stakeholder's feedback and ideas to help us develop a draft proposal for a new library strategy for Enfield. We will then publish and consult on this draft strategy in summer 2024. We will carefully consider any responses to that consultation and anticipate being able to finalise a new library strategy and implement any changes in early 2025.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

11. The Council Plan 2023-2026 sets out our vision and priorities to invest in Enfield to deliver positive outcomes for our communities. Our library service plays a critical part in enabling us to deliver on our priorities, in particular our priority for strong, healthy and safe communities; thriving children and young people; and an economy that works for everyone. Our Council Plan also includes principles for how we will deliver positive outcomes for all, by creating a fairer Enfield, through collaboration and early help, and by ensuring financial resilience for the Council – these principles will underpin our approach to developing the future library strategy.

Financial Implications

12. The Library Service has a gross expenditure budget of £3.8m including premises costs of £0.8m. Like all local authorities, the Council is facing significant funding pressures. The Council has had a 42% reduction in overall funding since 2010. The Council is under a duty to set a balanced

budget. The Council must make savings of £39.4 million in 2024/25, and there is a forecasted budget gap of £118.7m for the 5 years through to 2028/29. It is inevitable that savings will need to be made now and in years to come across the Council in order to set a balanced budget. There are no plans to reduce the libraries services budget until decisions have been taken on any future library strategy. However, given the funding pressures, it is inevitable that savings will need to be considered.

13. The Council is under a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. In light of these funding pressures, we need to consider whether our library service can be delivered in a more efficient way, while ensuring that it continues to meet people's needs and is comprehensive.

Legal Implications

14. The Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 '*to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area*' (section 7). While there is no definition of what 'comprehensive and efficient' library service may mean in practice, one landmark case law confirmed that it did not mean that every resident had to live close to a library but rather that it meant providing a service that is accessible to all using reasonable means including digital technologies.
15. The Department for Culture, Media & Sport has published guidance to assist councils in considering library service provision as a statutory service. The guidance states that a Council is required to meet the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available. What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. It is therefore the role of councillors and officials at a local level to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service. This must be done:
 - (a) in consultation with their communities
 - (b) through analysis of evidence around local need
 - (c) in accordance with their statutory duties

The guidance also states that Councils have the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs. There are no longer prescribed national standards, which risked ignoring the specific circumstances or needs of individual library authorities.

16. While undertaking the phase one engagement, the Council must take into account the Public Sector Equality Duty and the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share certain protected characteristics and those who do not, which will involve an analysis and assessment of the equality implications of the proposals. The 'protected characteristics are:

- Age

- Disability,
- Gender reassignment,
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion and belief
- Sex,
- Sexual orientation.

17. The Council has completed an initial Equality Impact assessment (appendix 1), which assesses the equality implications of the engagement exercise. The assessment has identified and gathered data on the protected characteristics of those who are recorded as using our libraries. It is not possible at the current time to assess the equality impact of any future strategy, as the strategy has not yet been developed. As concrete proposals for a new library strategy are developed, further equality assessments will be carried out.

18. The proposed library strategy is a key decision as it is likely to have a significant impact on the local community in two or more wards. It is an executive decision which needs to be approved by the relevant Cabinet member.

Equalities Implications

19. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is attached as Appendix 1. This assessment identifies that some protected groups currently use our libraries more than others and sets out how we will run an inclusive phase one engagement exercise so that we can further understand differences in usage, experiences and viewpoints.

20. The EqIA only considers active users i.e. those using their library card for books or using the library computers but does not include other visitors to libraries. The engagement exercise should therefore assist in finding out more about the people who may be unrepresented in the assessment. The EqIA sets out how the phase one engagement exercise will be inclusive and accessible to all groups through a comprehensive communications and promotion campaign, providing different ways for stakeholders to respond, including an easy read version, paper copies of the questionnaire on request, and support to complete the questionnaire in-person in libraries across the borough.

21. The information obtained during the EqIA is summarised as follows:

- Age: Almost one quarter of active library users are aged 10-19 (23.6%), whereas this age group make up 14% of the borough population. 15.5% of all active library users are aged 0-9 (15.5%), which is slightly higher than the percentage of residents who are aged 0-9 in Enfield (13.8%). Furthermore, the proportion of active library users who are aged 60 and over is lower than the proportion of those aged 60 and over in the borough population (13%

compared to 17.2%). This suggests that the library is effectively engaging with children, young people and families.

- Disability: Only 0.03% of active library users have declared a disability to the library service, which is considerably lower than the 13.2% of the borough population with a declared disability or long-term health condition according to the Census 2021.
- Gender reassignment: There is very limited data on gender identity of library users, between 2021-23 there were 59,783 active library users of which four active library users declared they identify as transgender.
- Marriage and civil partnership: 30.8% of residents are in a married or in a civil partnership. The library service does not collect data on marital and civil partnership status when signing up for a library card and, therefore, there is no active library user data to compare with the borough population.
- Pregnancy and maternity: the library service does not collect data on pregnancy and maternity when signing up for a library card and therefore there is no active user data regarding to pregnancy or maternity. However, the library service holds a range of targeted events and activities for new parents such as baby clinics, and Bounce and Rhyme for ages 0-18 months.
- Race: The highest proportion of active library users who declared their ethnicity were from Black ethnic backgrounds (28.9%), which is higher than the proportion of the borough population from Black ethnic background (18.5%). The proportion of active users from White British (28.3%) and White Other (18.6%) ethnic backgrounds is lower than the proportion of the borough population from these ethnic groups (31.3% and 28.7% respectively).
- Religion and belief: Almost half of active library users have declared their religion as Christianity (49.9%), following by Buddhist and Muslim (3.4% and 25.9%). The proportion of active library users who declared themselves as having no religion is 13.5%.
- Sex: The percentage of women (52%) is higher than the percentage of men (48%) in Enfield. The number of active library users who are female (60%) is higher than the percentage of the borough population who are female.
- Sexual orientation: the Council does not collect data on sexual orientation when signing up to become an active user. The 2021 census was the first-time residents were asked about sexual orientation and was an optional question for those aged 16+. However, that 9.7% of respondents chose not to answer this question. The percentage of people in Enfield who identified a

sexual orientation, which was other than heterosexual/straight was 2.2%.

- The EqIA has also provided a socio-economic deprivation in Enfield, 10% of households have an annual gross household income of less than £15,000 (as at 2023), and 32% have an income lower than £30,000. There are also higher levels of unemployment than the England and London averages, and 22.5% of Enfield's adults have no formal qualifications.

Report Author: Harriet Potemkin
Head of Strategy and Policy
Harriet.Potemkin@enfield.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – EqIA – Library Review First Phase Engagement