



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	Phase two consultation exercise on a new Enfield Council Library Strategy
Report to:	Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Public Spaces
Date of Report:	22/07/2024
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Public Spaces
Directors:	Perry Scott, Executive Director – Environment and Communities
Report Author:	Lucy Nasby, Policy and Performance Manager
Ward(s) affected:	All
Key Decision Number	KD 5760
Classification:	Part I Public

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out proposals to undertake a phase two consultation on a draft library strategy for Enfield.

Recommendations

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree the commencement of the phase two consultation on the draft library strategy. |
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Background

2. 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.
3. Enfield Council's current statutory library provision consists of 16 public libraries, together with the digital library service and a home library service for housebound residents. In addition to these 16 libraries, Angel Raynham library is also classified as a public library, however, it is located inside Raynham Primary School, is not accessible to the general public, and also is not staffed by the Council's library service. Finally, it has its own stock of books and the operating costs of this library are funded by Raynham Primary School.
4. The way people use and access our libraries has changed over the past 10 years. There is an increased digitalisation of services and new digital opportunities. The number of e-newspapers, e-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines accessed annually through the digital library service increased by 2,046,200 when comparing 2019/20 usage to 2023/24. However, there was a decrease in the number of issues and renewals of physicals books and resources by 181,897, when comparing 2023/24 usage to 2018/19.
5. Furthermore, there is an increasing need for warm public spaces in winter and cool public spaces in summer; and our libraries have become community hubs, offering a breadth of services and support. We have also maintained one of the highest number of libraries of any London borough, and far higher than the average across the capital.
6. The Council also faces budget challenges – we are having to do more with less following over a decade of government underfunding, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, historic inflation and interest rate rises, and the ongoing cost of living crisis resulting in more residents needing our support.

7. To meet the Council's principles to deliver accessible and responsive services and be financially resilient, we have considered how our library service can be delivered in a more efficient way, while ensuring that it continues to meet people's changing needs and is comprehensive.

Phase One Engagement: key findings

8. We ran a phase one engagement between 13th December 2023 and 6th March 2024. In this engagement we wanted to hear from stakeholders about our current library service. We wanted to understand whether they used our library service, their experience of our libraries and their ideas on how we could deliver our library service more efficiently. In total, we had over 1,000 responses to the phase one engagement. This included 912 responses to the questionnaire, 79 responses to the easy read questionnaire, 9 emails and two feedback sessions. The key findings from this engagement have been used to inform our proposals, which we are now consulting on.

Easy read questionnaire and responses:

9. The easy read version of the questionnaire asked a reduced number of questions in an accessible, easy to understand format. We have therefore reported the responses to closed questions on the easy read version separately.
10. 92% of the easy read respondents live in Enfield¹ and 93% had used Enfield library service in the last 2 years². Of the 56 respondents who told us why they go to the library, the majority of respondents used Enfield libraries to borrow books (77%), followed by using computers (48%), to read, study or work (45%), print a document (38%) and to get help and advice (32%).
11. The libraries most visited by easy read respondents in the last two years were Enfield Town (39%), Edmonton Green (28%), Oakwood (18%) and Ponders End (18%).³ In addition, 44% had library books delivered to their home. Of the 52 respondents who told us how they travel to libraries, the most common mode of travel is to walk (50%), followed by bus (31%) and car (18%).

General questionnaire responses:

12. 90% of respondents live in Enfield⁴ and 93% of respondents had used Enfield library service in the last 2 years.⁵ Of the 797 respondents who told us what they use our library service for, the majority used Enfield libraries to borrow books (84%), followed by reading, studying or working (40%), printing documents (33%), and computer use (32%).

¹ Base: 74 responses

² Base: 74 responses

³ Base: 57 responses

⁴ Base: 896 responses

⁵ Base: 864 responses

13. The libraries most used or visited in the last two years were Enfield Town (68%), Palmers Green (32%), Ridge Avenue (21%), and Edmonton Green (21%).⁶ The libraries least used in the last two years were Millfield Theatre (3%), Bullsmoor (3%), Bowes Road (5%) and Enfield Island Village (5%).⁷ Respondents most commonly use or visit libraries either less frequently than every other month (32%) or weekly (20%). Of the 741 respondents who told us how they travel to libraries, the most common mode of travel is to walk (38%), followed by bus (29%) and car (23%), and most respondents used their selected libraries because they were close to home (41%).

Combined responses:

14. The summary below combines responses from open ended questions on the questionnaire, easy read questionnaire, and further feedback we received by email.

15. We asked how we could improve the library service and facilities or make our libraries better and noted the themes across the 643 responses we received. The most common themes are reported below:

- *Suggestions for improving infrastructure or layout of the library* (26%). For example, more work and study spaces, more quiet spaces, more seating, and improved toilets and parking facilities.
- *Enhanced community engagement activities and services* (25%). This included more activities and groups for children and adults, more community/voluntary activities and events to engage and bring people together, and greater promotion of the activities and services on offer in our libraries.
- *Accessibility and diversity* (25%). This included offering a greater selection of books, more copies of popular books and extended opening hours.

16. We asked respondents to share ideas on what we could do differently to deliver our library service more efficiently and make savings to our library budget. We noted the themes across the 584 responses and reported the most common themes below:

- *Increasing commercial income* (29%). For example, through allowing libraries to be used for venue hire, renting library space to businesses and clubs, charging for special events and printing, selling books and stationery or opening a café.
- *Reducing opening hours and premises costs* (19%). This included reduced opening hours and taking steps to reduce operating costs. For example, energy saving measures for heating and lighting and limiting free printing.
- *Increase volunteering, charitable donations, applying for grant funding and lobbying central government* (14%). For example, increased community engagement to encourage more volunteers and formation of

⁶ Base: 797 responses

⁷ Base: 798 responses

friends of libraries groups, holding fundraising events, accepting charitable donations and applying for grant funding.

17. Overall, 20% of responses felt that the library budget should not be reduced. We asked respondents to give further comments or feedback about our library services. Of the 334 responses received, 41% praised the existing library service and staff.

Responses from representatives and organisations:

18. Within the questionnaire responses reported above, 4% (41 respondents) were from representatives and organisations. The libraries most visited among this group were Enfield Town (56%), Edmonton Green (46%) and Palmers Green (21%).⁸ The representatives of organisations who responded most commonly used libraries for visits with their organisation or group to use general library facilities (48%) or to deliver support or training to users of their organisation or group or hold meetings (38%).

Consultation Proposal

19. The Council is proposing to undertake a consultation on a draft library strategy which sets out how we propose to deliver library services, use our library buildings, and support, develop and empower our staff to make a positive impact on people's lives in Enfield.
20. Our vision is for Enfield libraries to be hubs for learning, creativity, information, health and wellbeing, welcoming everyone who lives, works or studies in Enfield. To achieve this, we have identified five priorities and three principles:
21. Our priorities are:
- Support life-long reading and literacy for all
 - Create hubs of activities for communities
 - Support good health and wellbeing
 - Improve skills and access to work
 - Deliver a sustainable service that's fit for purpose
22. Our principles are:
- Focusing resources in areas of greatest need
 - Ensuring an accessible library service for everyone
 - Delivering a financially resilient library service
23. The draft strategy is informed by analysis on the use of libraries; the varying needs of communities in different parts of the borough (population and deprivation data); the accessibility of our library buildings by different travel modes; feedback from the first phase engagement with stakeholders; and the operating and maintenance costs of library buildings.

⁸ Base: 41 respondents

24. To meet the Council's principles to deliver accessible and responsive services and be financially resilient, we have considered how our library service can be delivered in a more efficient way, while ensuring that it continues to meet people's needs and is comprehensive. Therefore, the draft strategy proposes to:
- Improve and enhance the library service at Ordnance Unity Centre, Edmonton Green, Ponders End, Fore Street, Millfield House, Palmers Green, Enfield Town and Ridge Avenue, by increasing opening hours at these libraries by a total of 56 hours per week.
 - Retain the home library service and digital library service.
 - Reduce the number of libraries by closing Bullsmoor, Enfield Highway, Enfield Island Village, Bowes Road, Southgate, Winchmore Hill, Oakwood and John Jackson. This is a reduction of 281 hours per week in available services across the borough.
 - Formally declassify Angel Raynham as a public library.
25. The proposed eight libraries which we will retain represent:
- 85% of visits in 2023/24
 - 78% of active users in 2023/24
 - 80% of ICT time minutes used in 2023/24
26. This shows that they are well used by the communities they serve. Therefore, to support an increase in usage, as a result of the closure of alternative libraries, we will increase the opening hours at the eight remaining libraries by 56 hours per week.
27. In this consultation, we want to gather feedback from stakeholders to further develop and improve our draft proposals. The phase two consultation will also help us raise awareness of the draft library strategy among stakeholders and explain the Council's rationale for the proposed changes, developments and opportunities arising out of the draft strategy. From the consultation, we want to understand how the proposals will impact respondents and their suggestions on how we can mitigate this impact and establish whether stakeholders have any alternative suggestions which make the same level of savings for the library service.
28. The consultation 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.
29. Council officers working on the consultation exercise will be available at libraries across the borough at advertised times for members of the public to come and discuss the consultation in person and receive help in completing the questionnaire if they need it. We will also be running an online drop in-session to discuss the consultation with people who would prefer to attend online.

30. We will review the level of responses 6 weeks into the consultation 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 consultation. To ensure we have a representative sample of respondents, we will also commission a market research company to undertake face to face interviews with 500 residents. These interviews will use quota sampling to ensure representation by protected characteristics and representation by ward.
31. We will carefully consider any responses to the consultation and anticipate being able to finalise the new library strategy and implement any changes in early 2025.
32. This report sets out one preferred proposal for the future shape of the service for the purposes of consultation. Upon conclusion of the consultation and further analysis, proposals will be brought before members for consideration and members will be invited to consider various options.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

33. 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 in developing the draft new library strategy.

Financial Implications

34. A commitment to a financially resilient budget has been a Council priority for a number of years. For 2024/25, it was a significant challenge for the Council to find savings and income to meet the wide gap between borough need and government funding. And that challenge continues, the budget gap for 2025/26 is significant at £30m, with a further gap of £56m in years up until 2028/29. Therefore, there are a number of actions required across the Council to keep in budget, reduce costs and deliver our current saving programmes and develop further proposals to meet the gap in the coming years. It is in this context that the consultation on the proposed Library strategy is set.
35. The proposed strategy of closing eight libraries could generate estimated one-off capital receipts of between £2.43 and £3.25 million and in addition to savings on annual operational property costs and staffing resources if it were to be implemented. It is estimated that the annual saving would be in

the range of £0.57m to £0.63m once fully implemented. This would be a full year saving if the draft strategy is fully implemented and this will be dependent on the timing of any building closures. A full model will be developed dependent on the outcome of the consultation and will consider timing of disposals, current asset values, site preparation costs e.g. survey, onerous occupancy costs whilst sites are prepared for sale e.g. security. In addition, the proposed strategy of providing the library service from fewer buildings, would avoid an estimated £5.3 million in future upkeep and maintenance costs.

36. The strategy highlights the potential for investment in the sites that are proposed to remain but will be dependent on available funding. This again will be dependent on the outcome of the consultation. The financial model will consider the timing and priority of the works required but most importantly will be dependent on funding available. Any capital related work will need to be considered as part of the of the capital programme budget setting cycle and reflected in the 2025/26 10 year Capital Strategy and any revenue will need to be recognised through the Medium Term Financial Plan, though it is expected that grant funding opportunities will be explored rather than adding further pressure to the budget gap.
37. The costs of consultation have already been agreed to be funded by the invest to save reserve, though it is likely that this will be swapped out for flexible use of capital receipts in 2024/25, in order to preserve the Councils reserves.

Legal Implications

38. The Council has a statutory duty under Section 7 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*'. While there is no definition of what 'comprehensive and efficient' library service may mean in practice, 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.
39. 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.

40. Local Authorities have a wide discretion as to how to carry out a consultation, although there are clear guidelines from the authorities as to how a lawful consultation ought to be conducted. The leading authority is *R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning [1985]* which set down the four key principles of a fair consultation, commonly referred to as “the Gunning principles”
41. In summary, to satisfy the Gunning principles any consultation (1) Must be carried out at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage; (2) The proposer must give sufficient information for any proposal to allow for intelligent consideration; (3) Adequate time must be given for consultation and response; and (4) The product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in making the decision.
42. As explained in this report, the Council has prepared a draft strategy following the information gathered during the stage 1 engagement process. We are proposing to consult on it for a period of 12 weeks. We will also use the information obtained during the consultation to develop and improve our draft strategy.
43. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to pay due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
44. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (outlined above) cover the following protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Council also considers the impact on those who are care experienced and those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
45. A detailed Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached to this report. Members should carefully review this document. It is acknowledged that the proposed library strategy will adversely affect some of the protected groups, however the Council has implemented mitigating measures to reduce that impact, which are addressed in this report.

Workforce Implications

46. Any changes to staffing which are required to be made as a result of the final review of libraries will be undertaken in accordance with the Council’s policies and procedures. It is not known at this stage what changes will be

required and the equality implications of those changes, but this will be addressed in the next report to members. Staff and Trade Unions are also being consulted on the draft strategy.

Property Implications

47. The strategic review document attached at Appendix 3 summarises the property implications for each of the existing libraries. The next report to members will set out in detail the various property implications arising from the final proposals.

Equalities Implications

48. A detailed Equality Impact Assessment have been completed and attached as Appendix 3. This assessment will be updated as a result of the information gathered in the phase two consultation.

49. The assessment has identified that some protected groups currently use our libraries more than others and sets out how we will run an inclusive phase two consultation exercise so that we can further understand differences in usage, experiences and viewpoints.

50. The assessments set out how the phase two consultation 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.

51. The table below outlines how the proposed changes to library provision will negatively impact different protected groups and how we propose to mitigate this impact. It is acknowledged that despite the mitigations outlined below, it is likely that the proposed closure of a library will have a negative impact on all users of that library, regardless of their protected characteristics, as it is the loss of a community asset. However, we believe that this negative impact is justified by the need to improve and enhance the library service at the retained 8 libraries, and the need to deliver the library service in a more efficient manner.

Potential negative impact	Action required to mitigate the potential negative impact
<p>The proposed closure of libraries will impact protected groups who are current library users, and any person who wishes to access our library provision.</p> <p>The groups most likely to be disproportionately impacted are disabled people, older people and families with infants, young children or disabled children.</p>	<p>Alternative Libraries There will be a network of 8 libraries across the borough that are available for everyone to access.</p> <p>We will update the library website with bus and train information, as well as local car parking arrangements, for each library.</p> <p>The library service will offer</p>

	<p>familiarisation visits for those who may feel anxious about visiting new libraries. This could help them to feel welcome visiting other libraries, encourage them to attend groups and activities and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.</p> <p>Digital Library Service We have a digital library service, which enables library users to access free e-learning, e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers and e-magazines on their digital devices at home.</p> <p>We will continue to promote awareness of our digital service, providing training for customers on how they can use it access the digital library offer at their convenience.</p> <p>Library Consortium Enfield library users can use their library cards at 22 local authorities' libraries, including neighbouring authorities: Waltham Forest, Haringey and Essex.</p> <p>Home Library Service If a resident has a mobility, disability or caring responsibility that would make it difficult to visit an alternative library, the Royal Volunteer Service can deliver services on our behalf to their home. There is no charge for this service and the Royal Voluntary Service visits our home library users once every two weeks.</p>
<p>The proposed closure of libraries will impact some disabled people, older people and families with infants and young children who will need to travel to different libraries.</p> <p>Some may find it difficult to travel to alternative libraries if they are required to walk certain distances, travel longer distances or take a journey which requires them to change buses or trains to get to a library.</p>	<p>Signposting on the Council website We will update the library website with bus and train information, as well as local car parking arrangements, for each library.</p> <p>Eligibility for free public transport People aged over 60, disabled people, and children under 10 are eligible for a free travel with an Oyster photocard, this enables them to travel for free on TFL services (for people</p>

<p>There may also be financial barriers for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage to travelling to alternative libraries.</p>	<p>aged 60+ this is from 09:00 weekdays and anytime on weekends or bank holidays). This mitigates against the cost of travelling to alternative libraries for children, older people and disabled people who are able to travel.</p> <p>Digital Library Service We have a digital library service, which enables library users to access free e-learning, e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers and e-magazines on their digital devices at home.</p> <p>We will continue to promote awareness of our digital service, providing training for customers on how they can use it to access the digital library offer at their convenience.</p> <p>Home Library Service If a resident has a mobility, disability or caring responsibility that would make it difficult to visit an alternative library, the Royal Voluntary Service can deliver services on our behalf to their home. There is no charge for this service and the Royal Voluntary Service visits our home library users once every two weeks.</p>
<p>Some groups who are more likely to experience social isolation, (such as older people, carers and disabled people), and rely on regular visits to their local library for social connection. This will negatively impact those whose local library is proposed to close.</p>	<p>Alternative Libraries There will be a network of 8 libraries across the borough that are available for everyone to access.</p> <p>The library service will offer familiarisation visits for those who may feel anxious about visiting new libraries. This could help them to feel welcome visiting other libraries, encourage them to attend groups and activities and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.</p> <p>Staff will signpost vulnerable residents to additional support agencies.</p>

<p>Local schools and nurseries will be negatively impacted if the library they visit is proposed to close.</p>	<p>Alternative Libraries We will consult with schools and nurseries to understand how they will be impacted by the proposed closure of libraries and how we can support them to arrange class visits at alternative provision.</p> <p>As part of the delivery of the strategy, we will increase our partnership working and outreach with schools and early years providers to support literacy development in Enfield.</p>
<p>Local voluntary and community sector organisations, partners and businesses which use a library that is proposed to close will be negatively impacted.</p>	<p>Tailored support We will consult with voluntary and community sector organisations, partners and businesses to support them to use alternative libraries across the borough.</p>
<p>The proposed closure of libraries may lead to an increase in users of the Home Library Service.</p>	<p>Home Library Service We will monitor any increases in usage of the home library service and if necessary, target resources to support any increase in demand.</p>
<p>The proposed closure of libraries may lead to an increase in users of the Digital Library Service.</p>	<p>Promote Digital Library Service We have a digital library service, which enables library users to access free e-learning, e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers and e-magazines on their digital devices at home.</p> <p>We will continue to promote awareness of our digital service, providing training for customers on how they can use it to access the digital library offer at their convenience.</p>

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Library Strategy

Appendix 2 – Strategic Review of Library Buildings

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment