



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	<i>Progress of Libraries Project</i>
Report to	<i>Culture and Environment Scrutiny Panel</i>
Date of Meeting	<i>25/11/2024</i>
Cabinet Member	<i>Cllr Ergin Erbil, Leader of the Council</i>
Executive Director / Director	<i>Perry Scott, Environment and Communities</i>
Report Author	<i>Saskia Morris Saskia.morris@enfield.gov.uk</i>
Ward(s) affected	<i>All</i>
Classification	<i>Part 1 Public</i>

Purpose of Report

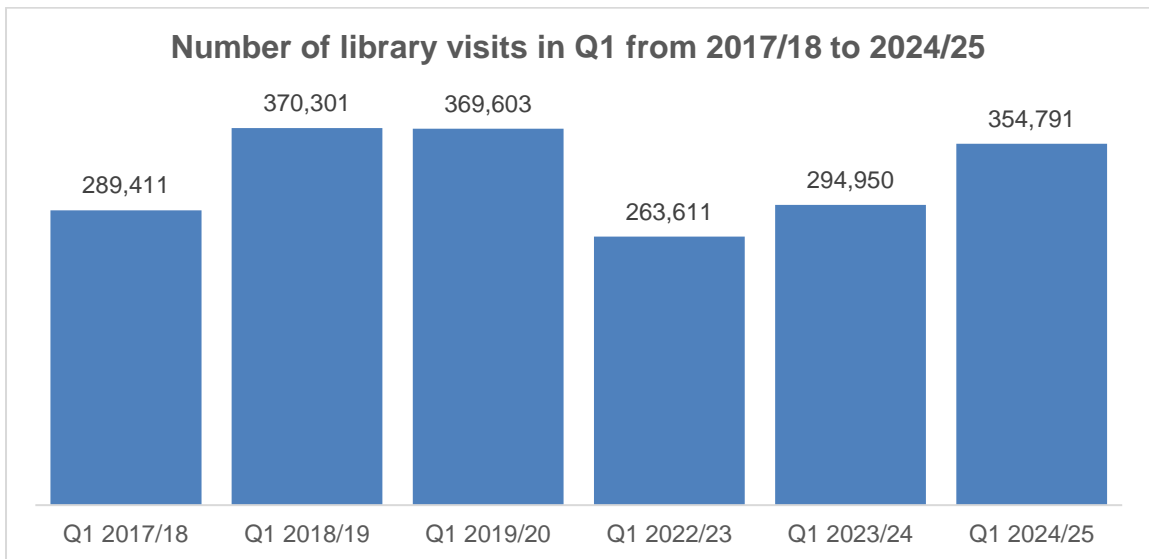
1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Panel on current library usage, future digital plans and the phase two consultation on the draft library strategy.

Main Considerations for the Panel

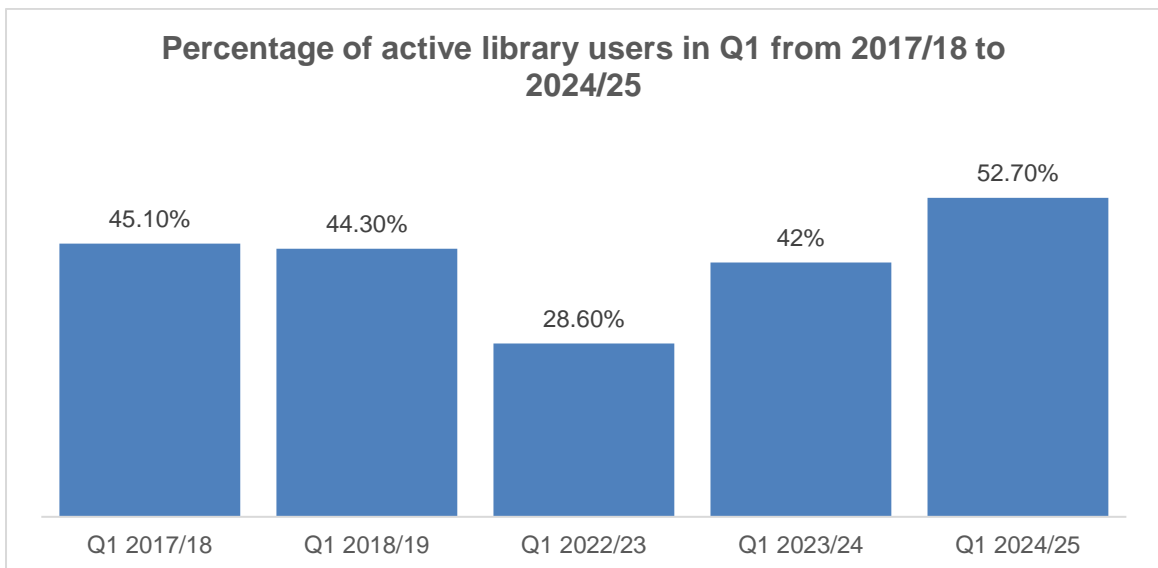
Current Library Usage

2. We have compared the usage of libraries in Q1 (July – September) 2024/25 to usage in Q1 in 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2022/23 and 2023/24. We have not included usage in Q1 in 2020/21 and 2021/23 when the library service was closed during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Usage, as categorised in the strategic review and draft strategy, consists of visits, active library users, issues and renewals and take up of ICT time.
3. The number of visits record the number of times there has been a visit to the library building. This includes anyone coming into the library building, including those who don't take out books or use the ICT equipment, but may be accessing activities like reading clubs, getting help and advice, or using the free Wi-Fi. The graph below shows an increase in the number of visits

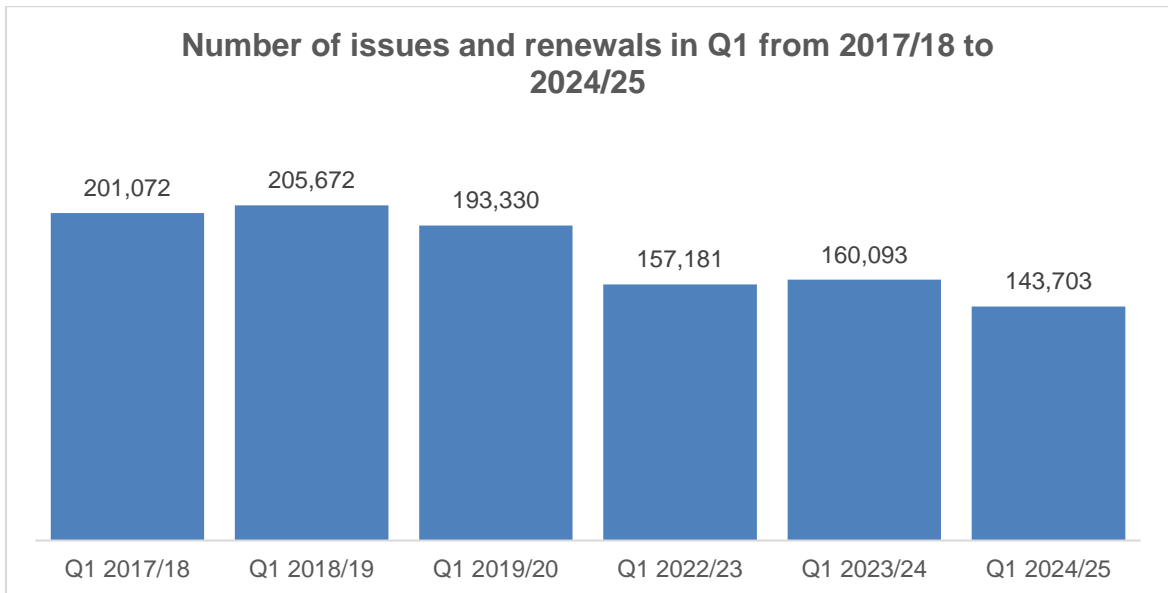
from Q1 2022/23 (263,611) to Q1 2024/25 (354,791), but this has not reached pre-pandemic visitor levels.



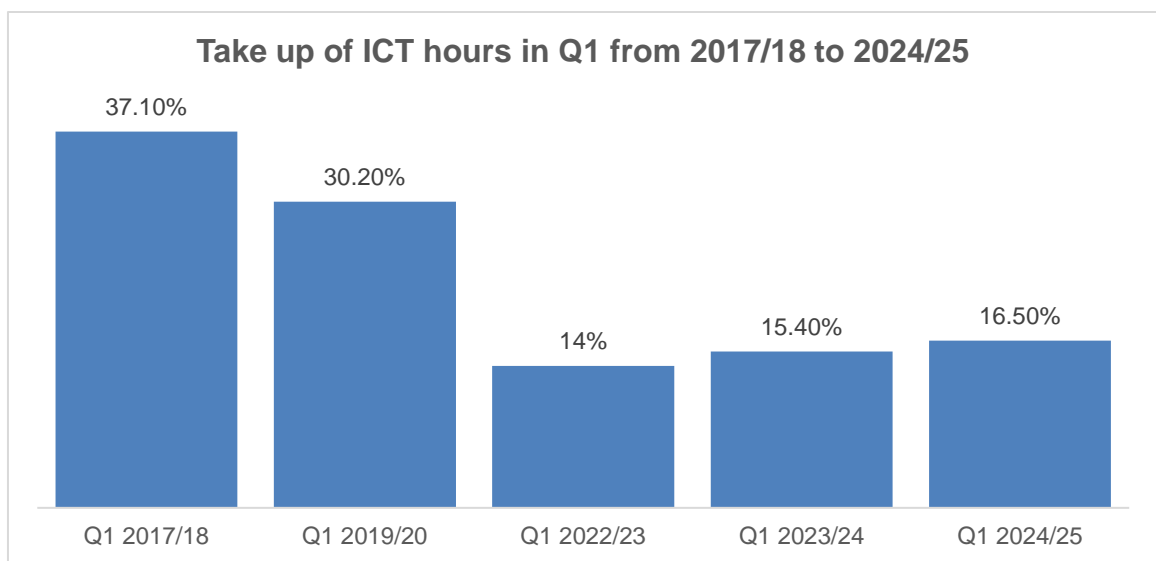
4. The percentage of active users per quarter tells us the number of people with a library card registered at that library who are using it, but it does not pick up usage of other library buildings. The highest percentage of active library users in Q1 was in 2024/25. Data for active users in Q1 2019/20 is unavailable.



5. The number of issues and renewals tracks books being taken out or renewed. This figure those who are not borrowing the books to take away from library. This does not include those using materials in the library, but who are not checking this out. There has been a 57,369 decline in the number of issues and renewals since when comparing Q1 2017/18 (201,072) to Q1 2024/25 (143,703).



6. The percentage of ICT hours used is a record of the number of hours where ICT equipment has been used in the libraries. Although this does not pick up users visiting the library with their own device, it helps to show users who rely on these facilities and who may not have access to a digital device at home. There has been a gradual increase when comparing Q1 2022/23 (14%), Q1 2023/24 (15.4%) and Q1 2024/25 (16.5%). However, this is significantly lower than take up of ICT hours in Q1 2017/18 (37.1%) and Q1 2019/20 (30.2%). Data for 2018/19 is unavailable.



Future Digital Plans

7. People are increasingly using our digital service to access e-newspapers, e-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines. 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 to 2023/24.
8. Libraries continue to support learning for digital literacy through ICT buddies, skills and employment initiatives, online learning and supporting national agenda such as "We are Digital". We want to explore digital solutions that enhance library users' experience both in libraries and remotely.

9. In July 2024, Enfield Council launched its local Business and Intellectual Property (BIPC) hub in Edmonton Green Library. The hub aims to provide a platform for residents to learn, network and unlock free and low-cost business information in a welcoming space that has access to PCs, desks and Wi-Fi. This includes digital subscriptions such as Cobra and Grant Finder, which are well established resources for businesses of all types and can be used at home or at any library, not just Edmonton Green.
10. In the phase one engagement, respondents told us that there should be greater promotion of the activities and services available in our libraries. Therefore, we are investigating the possibility of an online booking system, which will promote events and activities and enable users to pay for bookings for community rooms and activities online. Respondents in the phase one engagement also told us that to generate income for the library service, all community libraries should charge for all printing and photocopying. Therefore, we are also exploring new printing solutions for libraries, including the opportunity to pay for printing remotely and collect from a library.
11. Furthermore, we will be improving the self-serve kiosks in libraries. We are currently in discussion with Digital Services around the next generation of self-serve kiosk to be reviewed in 2025. These kiosks will enable users to manage their library account, make bookings for events and community rooms, and pay for council services using chip and pin.

Phase Two Consultation

12. On 22nd August 2024 a consultation on our draft library strategy was launched. In the second phase consultation, we wanted to gather feedback from stakeholders to further develop and improve our draft proposals. The phase two consultation helped 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 wanted 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. This consultation ran until 14th November 2024.
13. This report provides an overview of work undertaken to encourage participation in the consultation.

Promotion of consultation

14. To promote the consultation, posters with QR codes to the consultation webpage were displayed in all 16 public libraries. This includes posters that have been translated into community languages. We also asked local businesses in the following areas to display posters advertising the consultation in their windows:
 - Enfield Town
 - Southgate
 - Enfield Highway
 - Enfield Island Village
 - Palmers Green

- Oakwood
- Edmonton Green
- Bush Hill Park
- Bullsmoor
- Bowes
- Winchmore Hill

15. The consultation was promoted on the Council's social media pages, including on X, Facebook and the Youth Enfield Instagram page. Alongside this, the consultation has been promoted through the Council's digital newsletters. We displayed Clear Channel adverts across the borough and published adverts for the consultation in the local Turkish and Greek newspapers and the Enfield Independent. We also paid for advertising on Facebook and X.

Library Drop-In Sessions

16. As part of the consultation, we facilitated drop-in sessions at the eight libraries proposed to close and an online session. At these drop-in sessions we have encouraged library users to participate in the consultation and answered any questions about the review.

Engagement with Partner Organisations and Community Groups

17. We promoted the consultation to voluntary sectors organisations and partners through the third sector bulletin and sent emails to all organisations on the Council's third sector database. We individually called all library partner organisations and encouraged them to participate in the consultation. We also directly contacted organisations and community groups attending partnership boards, forums and meetings to promote the consultation. This included:

- Mental Health Partnership Board
- Older People's Partnership Board
- Voluntary Sector Strategy Group
- Carer's Partnership Board
- Kratos
- Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Show People Partnership Board
- Youth Council
- Faith Forum
- Learning Disabilities Partnership Board

Engagement with early years providers, schools and further education colleges

18. The consultation was published on the Schools' Hub and early years providers, schools and further education colleges were asked to respond and share the consultation with pupils, parents and carers. We also promoted the consultation at the Headteachers Forum on 26th September 2024.

Face to face interviews with 500 residents

19. To ensure the consultation responses are representative of those in the borough of Enfield, we have commissioned a market research company who have undertaken face to face interviews with 500 residents. These interviews used quota sampling to ensure representation by sex, age and ward.

Engagement with Enfield Council staff

20. We promoted the consultation to employees at Enfield Council through the Intranet and Staff Matters Newsletter. We also presented the consultation to Trade Unions and asked them to participate in the consultation.

Background and Options

21. This report is presented to the Environment and Culture Scrutiny Panel for discussion.

Background - Draft Library Strategy

22. The 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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

25. 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, 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.

26. 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

27. We will carefully consider all feedback received during the consultation and will outline how this has informed the final proposals in a consultation report, which will be published as part of the next report to members in early 2025.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

28. 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.

Report Author: Saskia Morris
Policy and Performance Officer
Saskia.morris@enfield.gov.uk