Sharing Responsibility for Libraries:
More than a Library

Central Milton Keynes Library

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sharinglibraries

Milton Keynes **Libraries**

MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL

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Introduction

This report sets out the proposals for Milton Keynes Libraries in the context of the Council's budget proposals for 2015/16 to 2017/18. This includes the outcomes from an extensive three month engagement programme on the future of the libraries and sets out a proposed way forward for Central Library.

Milton Keynes Central Library is the HQ for all libraries in Milton Keynes. It is the largest of the Milton Keynes libraries and one of the busiest public libraries in England.

Vision for the Future

Central Library is a vital part of the library network in Milton Keynes. It is the busiest library attracting over 600,000 people per year and is the central hub of stock, support and staffing for the other eight libraries in Milton Keynes. As such, it is the flagship of Milton Keynes Libraries and should remain so.

It is clear that the public value libraries and want to see them develop and grow through the 21st century to become community hubs serving as spaces for education, learning and events as well as somewhere where they can meet, attend activities and from where community groups can operate.

This is a challenge in today's financial climate. It is clear that there will have to be some changes to the way libraries operate for the future. This will mean using technology to allow people to access services for longer. Using the 'open libraries' technology will enable this to be achieved and means that services like loaning books and accessing computers can be delivered without a staff presence. Volunteers will help to support this, so enabling a number of tasks and events to be delivered. Embracing this new technology will allow libraries to be open longer than they are at present.

The concept of a community hub is clear as a way forward. This can be delivered without a continual library staff presence and will allow use of the building to be maximised, enabling income to be generated through rental of space and the introduction of new facilities such as a café/coffee shop.

The building however is not well configured to achieve the idea of a community hub. Certain functions within the library need to be relocated to create a community space, whilst at the same time not jeopardising the long term plans for the building; developing ways to work alongside the University and other partners to increase its use. This will have to be achieved whilst respecting the library's newly acquired status as a Grade 2 Listed building which will restrict changes to both the interior and exterior of the building.

The reconfiguration of the library will release space for more community activities and will allow the library to work in partnership with a number of different organisations. These partnerships and potential co-locations will assist with income generation and management as well as bringing greater footfall and volunteers into the library. One of the key partnerships, and one that was highlighted in the engagement process, was with the Town Council.

The current financial climate means that libraries have to look hard at the way income is generated. Rental of space will be the most successful way of generating income, but Central Library will continue to seek other forms of income through donations, sponsorship and events as well as looking at other ways of reducing costs such as energy reduction.

This vision will be delivered through a Delivery Plan which will look at the libraries overall as well as on an individual basis.

The key themes are:

- Development of "open libraries" – this will allow libraries to be open for longer hours while still reducing costs.

- Maintaining a flexible, professionally staffed library service.

- Developing the role of the library as a 'platform' for community and enterprise use and to enable others to organise and develop it.

- Supporting the development of Friends Groups at all libraries to help shape the use of libraries and develop fundraising initiatives.

- To continue to encourage the valuable role of volunteers in libraries providing support and training as required.

- To provide IT infrastructure, be it through Wi-Fi, PCs or technology, to manage libraries in a timely cost effective manner.

- Developing links with businesses, voluntary, public and education sectors to deliver services and share resources.

- To continue to work towards the development of a sustainable network of libraries that can share and develop services.

- To continue to develop strong partnerships with Town and Parish Councils to provide local services.

- To continue to review stock and space required to ensure that footfall is maintained and services provided meet the needs of local communities.

Key Issues from the Engagement Process

Given that Central Library is the busiest and biggest library in Milton Keynes, a strong engagement from the public was expected. The online survey met that expectation, but the face to face meeting had a very low response with only 14 people attending.

The following themes emerged:

- IT was seen as important.

- There was minimal engagement from young people and people from ethnic minorities.

- There was a strong demand for the traditional view of the library as a place for education and advice.

- Events were seen as important to raise the profile of the library and engage new customers and raise income.

- There was a demand for a coffee shop/café.

Follow Up Work Undertaken Since Engagement

During the engagement process a number of potential leads for the development of partnerships and possible users of the building were identified. Library staff have pursued these leads to investigate their viability.

This has included:

- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – Following meetings to explore options, a trial 'pop up' presence was held in September. CAB confirmed that they would not be pursuing options to rent space to run services.

- MacIntyre – A meeting was held in July to explore volunteering possibilities as well as the options to run a café at the library. This was followed by a site visit by MacIntyre to familiarise themselves with the space available. A subsequent meeting was held in September and a response is still awaited.

- Supplementary Schools – A meeting was held with the EMA Support Staff Advisor who was interested in booking libraries during out of hours periods to run faith schools. There has been some interest from Churches in hiring the space, but no further interest from the schools.

- Arts Gateway MK – Following a series of meetings, AG decided that it was unlikely to be feasible for them to move into the library, but may be interested in taking display space and programming events.

Use of the Building

Maximising the Community Use of the Building

A number of options have been investigated since the engagement exercise, but the majority of these have proven unfeasible for a variety of reasons. Work will continue to bring groups and activities into the library to maximise use of the space available.

Reduction in Library Size and Rental of Released Space

Central Library has a number of areas which are not fully utilised and there are a number of organisations that are interested in sharing the space and maximising its use. This will have the benefit of generating income as well as bringing more people into the library.

With this in mind, it is proposed to rationalise the library, but this will be subject to planning consent as the library is now a Grade 2 Listed building which restricts work that can be undertaken to both the exterior and interior of the building. The proposal at this stage is to switch the children's library (first floor) and the reference library (ground floor). Locating the children's library on the ground floor will make it more accessible.

Partnership Working and Co-located Services

As a result of the community engagement programme a number of potential partners came forward. Of particular note are the following projects:

- *Central Milton Keynes Town Council are interested in renting the exhibition space on the ground floor of the library. This space would be redeveloped to incorporate a flexible community space which would serve a variety of functions.

- *A number of local nurseries have expressed an interest in renting space to develop a childcare facility at the library. The space would be marketed should the Town Council agreement not progress.

- A number of local charities including MacIntyre are interested in operating a catering outlet at the library. The detail of the offer is now being determined.

*Only one of these two projects can be achieved as they require the same space.

An options appraisal has been undertaken to examine which would be the best use of the space. A number of aspects were considered, such as:

- Income potential and when it would be realised.

- Longevity of the tenancy.

- The 'fit' to the library ethos.

The income from the Town Council is likely to be in the region of £30k which is slightly lower than that from a nursery. However, the drawdown from the Town Council would be sooner as the nursery would require a period of grace with regard to rental payments - to compensate for their capital investment. Both would be likely long term tenants. The feeling was that the Town Council option would match the library ethos more readily due to the range of activities they would be able to provide and their appeal to different sectors of the market.

The outcome is very close, but marginally in favour of the Town Council option as it has a closer fit with the library ethos and income will be generated a year earlier.

Parish and Town Council Partnerships

One of the key outcomes from the Community Engagement was for partnerships to be developed with Town and Parish Councils. CMK Town Council have been active in coming forward with proposals for use of the library and will become an important partner with the potential new function for the ground floor area. There is also the potential to hold addition discussions about how they can contribute to other aspects of the library such as developing Friends Groups and supporting events.

Management and Operation of Libraries

Stock

Central Milton Keynes Library is a very busy local and regional library hub. It carries a stock of 125,000 lending and reference items and is one of the busiest libraries in the country.

As such it will continue to provide a depth and breadth of stock suitable for its size and usage. Stock is monitored on a continual basis for condition and relevance.

There are no proposed major changes to the stock at Central Library, with the exception of the removal of DVDs and CDs which have proven not to be cost effective. However, the relocation of sections of the library will allow the space to be rationalised. The layout can be improved to meet modern day standards and allow for more displays and other activities.

"Open Libraries"

Milton Keynes Libraries are being challenged to maintain services while reducing costs at the same time. This is being achieved through the introduction of new technology, known as "open libraries", which would allow the library to operate extended opening times with no staff presence. The alternative is for additional hours to be provided either through funding from partners or through the community becoming more involved through volunteering.

This technology is being adopted by a number of UK Libraries, the nearest being in Peterborough. Through the use of CCTV, swipe card entry systems, automated lighting, self-service machines, PCs and Wi-Fi, customers can use the library without the need for staff to be present.

The proposals for operation under the "open libraries" are:

- Library opening hours extended from 58 hours per week to 80 hours.

- Staffed hours reduced by 3 hours per week.

- Frontline staffing reduced from 21.9 FTE to 18.57 FTE.

- Retention of opening hours on Sundays in "open libraries" mode.

- Hours will be kept under review.

Central Library will be the control centre for other service points when they are in "open libraries" mode.

The proposed new opening hours for Central Library are as follows:

	Current		From 1st April until "open libraries"		Proposed					
	Opening Hours				"open libraries"		Staffed		Total hours open
Mon	09.00 – 18.00	9	9.00-18.00	9	8.00 – 9.00 18.00 – 20.00	3	9.00 - 18.00	9	12
Tues	09.00 – 18.00	9	9.00-18.00	9	8.00 – 9.00 18.00 – 20.00	3	9.00 - 18.00	9	12
Weds	09.00 – 18.00	9	9.00-18.00	9	8.00 – 9.00 18.00 – 20.00	3	9.00 - 18.00	9	12
Thurs	09.00 – 20.00	11	9.00-20.00	11	8.00 – 9.00 20.00 – 22.00	3	9.00 - 20.00	11	14
Fri	09.00 – 18.00	9	9.00-18.00	9	8.00 – 9.00 18.00 – 20.00	3	9.00 - 18.00	9	12
Sat	09.00 – 17.00	8	9.00-17.00	8	8.00 – 9.00 17.00 – 20.00	4	9.00 - 17.00	8	12
Sun	11.00 – 14.00	3			10.00 – 16.00	6			6
Total		58	55			25		55	80

Financial Issues

Income Generation

This has always been a key challenge for the libraries and was a key focus during the engagement. Legally the Council cannot charge for the loan of books. The reliance on fine income is self-defeating and comes at the same time as a hugely declining market in CD and DVD loans which means income generation is a major hurdle for the Council.

The engagement process highlighted many ideas for the use of library spaces and active measures are under way to market rooms for hire where there is a strong demand for this type of activity.

Room rentals from April through to November 2015 have generated over £32,000.

Room rental is not the only way of raising income, the following have already been planned or are in place across Milton Keynes Libraries:

- Charges for visits and provision of services for schools and nurseries.

- Introducing charges for events such as children's hour (from Spring 2016).

Fundraising, Sponsorship and Donations

Raising funds through sponsorship and donations was one of the key areas within the community engagement. Whilst people were quick to point out the potential for sponsorship, experience has shown that this can be a very challenging, time-consuming exercise with little or no reward.

The libraries will continue to be responsive to offers of help and donations.

Friends Groups are vital to help libraries raise income. This can be done through a wide range of activities including:

- fundraising events;

- obtaining sponsorship;

- supporting activities in libraries;

- delivering additional programmes of events;

- activities at local fetes and festivals.

Central Support Costs

Central Library is an important part of the library provision in Milton Keynes as it provides many of the services for the other libraries. The cost of these services are then apportioned to each library.

These services enable all library users to have access to the following:

- Access to nine library buildings and the mobile library which provide space and support infrastructure for people to work, study and research in our libraries.

- A professionally led library service across the Borough led by qualified librarians providing specialist and strategic support, frontline staff (daily staffed hours at each library), management and cover for sickness and leave.

- New books purchased and processed centrally before distribution to all libraries.

- Membership to South East Library Management System which allows access to 6 million items in addition to over a quarter of a million books and other items through Milton Keynes Libraries.

- Access to the Virtual Library. This allows renewals, reservations, online payments, room hire bookings and access to the full range of library facilities 24 hours a day.

- IT related costs including the maintenance and management of the Library Management System, public access to PCs and free Wi-Fi.

- Library development to promote and market the benefits of libraries through outreach activities and social media across all areas of Milton Keynes.

- Access to digital resources including eBooks, eAudio books and digital databases including Ancestry, business databases and online encyclopaedias.

- Management of a volunteer programme supporting council staff at all libraries including the Home Library Service and the development of "Friends" Groups in each of the nine library locations.

- Delivery of the School Library Service to Milton Keynes Primary Schools.

- Health & Safety relating to buildings, staff and customers.

- Cleaning, general maintenance and other building related services.

- HR and other staff related matters.

During the "Sharing Libraries" Review a comprehensive re-assessment of the service function and requirements of all libraries has been undertaken. This has resulted in further efficiencies and savings across the central costs of 35%. This saving is the equivalent of 8.3 FTE equivalent from central staff.

Making the Library More Energy Efficient

Following a meeting with the Council's Senior Enforcement Officer (Environment) it was identified that on average a 10% saving on gas costs could be made if a BMS Server link was installed in the boiler room. This would allow the system to be managed remotely, switching off on days when the library was closed and regulating the temperature more effectively than at present.

Publicity and Promotions

In the past, library promotions have included paper-based marketing with flyers, leaflets and posters distributed throughout the community and within libraries as well as press releases and regular online marketing through the council website and social media sites.

Statistics demonstrate that the future marketing strategy for libraries needs to embrace online promotional opportunities as these are increasingly being used. Visitors to the Council's library website have increased by over 6% in the last year. Similarly, Facebook "likes" and Twitter followers have also increased steadily and posts are viewed over 40,000 times each month. Hits on Google pages for the libraries now reaches 60,000 visitors monthly.

However, the responsibility for promoting libraries does not rest with Milton Keynes Council alone. It is important that partners and communities play their part too by raising the profile of the libraries as a community space.

Staffing and Volunteers

Staffing

With the proposed changes in the operation of Central Library and the introduction of the "open libraries" technology, the staffed hours will change from a current establishment of:

	Frontline (FTE)	HQ (includes ATLs & SLAs) (FTE)	Total (FTE)
Current (including vacancies)	21.9 + casuals	20.83	42.73
"Open libraries"	18.57 + casuals	12.5	31.07

Frontline staff are customer facing staff in the library HQ staff provide support to all libraries across Milton Keynes but are based at Central Library.

Volunteers and Friends

The engagement process highlighted the use of volunteers and Friends of Libraries Groups to help paid staff and support a variety of functions within the library service. This is an area of increasing importance and the last library restructure in 2013 saw the appointment of a Library Volunteer Co-ordinator.

As of July 2015 there were 46 volunteers at Central Library who provided 184 hours of their time per month. This exceeded the target set, but there is still scope for more involvement and the recruitment campaign continues.

A priority has been set for the establishment of a Friends of Central Library Group. All the people who attended the engagement event and provided an email address have been approached, but no interest has yet been shown. Work will continue in this area especially in conjunction with the Town Council.

Information Technology

The current IT infrastructure across Milton Keynes Libraries, which is used by both staff and customers, is based on old technology. Due to lack of investment over the years it is now not fit for purpose and is regularly failing. Current IT problems include:

- Existing IT platforms not designed or configured to be able to support new IT needs such as "open libraries" technology and RFID (Self Service).

- Changes in customer demands are not catered for. This includes the ability to print from Wi-Fi, compatibility issues, up to date software and slow connections on public PCs.

- Greater demands placed on the IT systems due to Milton Keynes Libraries internal needs and systems are limiting working practices.

- Outdated, slow and inadequate servers with old redundant equipment remaining in the server cabinets at each library.

In addition to this, the current IT platform was not designed to support the planned library building reconfigurations which would require changes to the IT infrastructure. This is likely to cause further issues.

Many of the services are delivered on a paid for basis. This provides a useful source of income, but customers need to receive value for money and the service needs to be current and reliable.

IT underpins all the work and operations of the library and without substantial investment in new IT equipment, support and regular upgrades, Milton Keynes Libraries will have difficulty functioning. This is likely to cause major operational issues in the future as libraries become increasingly reliant on IT.

A full review of the current IT infrastructure has started and will examine what IT service is required for the future. It is likely that any IT upgrade work will be costly and capital funding will need to be sought.

Conclusion

Milton Keynes Libraries are entering into a new era which will see them embrace technology and bring them to the forefront of communities as a resource and a service whilst still meeting the Council's financial targets. To achieve this a Delivery Plan has been developed which will allow progress to be monitored.

Delivery Plan

Reference	Actions at Central Milton Keynes Library	Completed by
C1	Develop a design for a reconfigured ground floor. (new community rentable space, lobby and café) with the Council's appointed Design and Build contractor.	1/02/2016
C2	Progress and finalise discussions with CMK Town Council in order to secure an agreed legal tenancy in the newly created rentable space and embed the Town Council's specific facility requirements within the design development (allowing for Grade 2 Listed building status).	1/02/2016
C3	Work with MacIntyre and other local interested charities to develop a hot drinks facility under a partnership agreement and ensure the servery is designed accordingly.	Ongoing
C4	Procure and secure a tenant for the rentable community space in the unlikely event that agreement with the Town Council is not secured.	10/02/2016
C5	Relocate the Children's Library on the first floor in the place of the Reference library on the ground floor and vice versa.	TBC
C6	In line with the chargeable children's hour operating at Kingston Library, implement charges by Spring 2016.	Spring 2016
C7	Develop and implement further energy efficiency measures to reduce running costs.	Ongoing
C8	Open the newly configured ground floor (community space, lobby and café) including the completion of "open libraries" technology to increase and enhance opening hours.	TBC
C9	Develop a stronger partnership with CMK Town Council to encourage a greater role for the Town Council in supporting the library (developing a friends group, volunteers, programming, contribute funding).	Ongoing
C10	Develop and support a friends group for Central Library.	Ongoing

December 2015

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