Sharing Responsibility for Libraries: More than a Library

Newport Pagnell 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 Newport Pagnell Library.

Vision for the Future

Newport Pagnell Library is a vital part of the library network in Milton Keynes. It is a local library providing valuable services to the local community and is in need of refurbishment and updating to allow it to expand its role.

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 is too large for the current library function and there is scope to reconfigure the library to free up space for other uses.

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. Creation of these partnerships is vital to the future success of the library.

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 Newport Pagnell 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 Messages from the Engagement Process

The engagement meeting was well attended for a small library with 25 attendees and 27 people responding to the online questionnaire - both methods of communication provided useful information and the following themes emerged:

- A need to modernise the library space and utilise local developers' contributions to create more useable space on the top floor.

- To meet with Places for People to see if there were linked opportunities.

- A keen interest in volunteering and developing a Friends Group.

- A strong focus on making the library more accessible to young people.

- There was a demand for more events and education in their libraries.

Work Undertaken Following Engagement Process

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:

- Meeting with Places for People (Middleton Pool) but there was little synergy between the two operations.

- Links with Ousedale School to instigate a competition to develop a promotional poster for the library.

- A meeting was held with the Royal British Legion but they do not wish to use the building.

- Library promoted via "Phonebox" magazine.

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.

With the proposed reconfiguration of Newport Pagnell Library, there will be potential for additional use of the building in both the short and long term. The community needs to be encouraged to come forward and make better use of the space in order for it to become the community hub that people are suggesting.

Reduction in Library Size and Rental of Released Space

The proposed reconfiguration of Newport Pagnell Library will transform the space and make it more attractive. It will create a flexible space.

Partnership Working and Co-located Services

There is currently an artist renting space at the library and it is hoped that a relaunch of the space may generate new leads.

Parish and Town Council Partnerships

The Town Council have been approached and have continued to state that they do not wish to take ownership of the building. Further discussions will occur, however, relating to the use and future of the library and how they might contribute.

Management and Operation of Libraries

Stock

The library is well-used but a rather cramped space. The library is holding old stock and it is proposed that stock levels are reduced to around 10,000 books. Children's books are well used and the stock levels will be maintained in this area. Freed up space will help create a more appealing library with more areas provided for other users.

An outline design of the potential layout of the library has been developed and £50k of local developer contributions will be used to create a more attractive and flexible space. The new design could look similar to the illustrations below.

"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" system are:

- Library opening hours will be extended from 39.5 hours to 43 hours per week.

- Staffed hours will be reduced by 8.5 hours per week.

- Frontline staff will be reduced from 3.07 FTE to 1.56 FTE.

- There is the potential to open on Sundays in "open libraries" mode.

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

The proposed new opening hours for Newport Pagnell Library are as follows:

	Current		From 1st April until "open libraries"		Proposed				
	Opening Hours				"open libraries"		Staffed		Total hours open
Mon					9.00-13.00	4			4
Tues	9.00-19.00	10	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8
Weds	9.00-17.30	8.5	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8
Thurs	9.00-17.30	8.5	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00 17.00-20.00	4	10.00-17.00	7	11
Fri	9.00-17.30	8.5	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8
Sat	9.00-13.00	4	10.00-13.00	3	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-13.00	3	4
Sun									
Total		39.5		31		12		31	43

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.

Due to the layout of the current space, there has been no income generated from the library, but looking to the future, the downstairs office has the potential to generate income.

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 April 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

Newport Library is an important part of the library provision in Milton Keynes. As with any service there are shared central costs which are apportioned to each library.

These costs 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

Newport Pagnell Library has the potential to become more energy efficient. Savings could be achieved through improvements to the lighting systems and could be funded through Salix.

The potential for solar panels to be fitted is being explored and the cost effectiveness of this option being investigated.

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 Newport Pagnell Library and the introduction of the "open libraries" technology, the staffed hours will change from a current establishment of 3.18 FTE (of which only 3.07 FTE posts are currently filled) to 1.56 FTE.

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 10 volunteers at Newport Pagnell Library who provided 40 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 Newport Pagnell Library Group. All the people who attended the engagement event and provided an email address have been approached. Two meetings have taken place in the Newport Pagnell area for members to consider the formation of a constituted group with the involvement of local councillors.

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 Newport Pagnell Library	Completed by
N1	Carry out a review of stock in accordance with the level of borrowing to facilitate the release of space for wider library use.	1/05/2016
N2	Procure a supplier for the fitting out the reconfigured top floor of the building (furniture, fittings and soft furnishing).	31/03/2016
N3	Continue to seek an anchor tenant for the ground floor area of the library and secure funding through S106 funding related to the housing growth in Newport Pagnell to further enhance the building in future.	Ongoing
N4	Develop and support a friends group at Newport Pagnell Library.	Ongoing
N5	Develop a stronger partnership with Newport Pagnell Town Council to encourage a greater role for the Town Council in supporting the libraries. (e.g. developing a friends group, volunteers, programming, publicising activities and contributing funding).	Ongoing
N6	Open the newly configured and upgraded library space on the first floor including the removal of the reception desk and the implementation of "open libraries" to extend open hours.	TBC

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| N7 |

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Thurs	9.00-17.30	8.5	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00 17.00-20.00	4	10.00-17.00	7	11
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