LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	Cabinet
DATE OF DECISION	31 January 2024
REPORT TITLE:	Libraries Service Review
CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:	Nick Hibberd, Corporate Director SCRER Kristian Aspinall, Director Culture & Community Safety
LEAD OFFICER:	Stephanie Wilson, Head of Culture, Leisure and Libraries Email: stephanie.wilson@croydon.gov.uk Telephone: 07356104270
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr Andy Stranack, Cabinet Member for Culture & Communities

KEY DECISION?	Yes	Community Impact Criteria – Affects one or more wards in the borough.
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	No	Public
WARDS AFFECTED:		All

1   SUMMARY OF REPORT

1.1   This report outlines the progress made to date on the Library Service Review (Community Hubs) transformation project and the options developed for improvements to the service model and for public consultation.

1.2   The proposals for change have been developed with consideration of the Council's statutory obligations to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service for people who live, work or study in Croydon. The proposed changes outline how improvements to the service can be made by the Council spending less on buildings and more on staff and services. The proposals do not involve any staff redundancies.

1.3   The review has also been undertaken in the context of the Council's current financial position including a debt burden of £1.6 billion. Future proposals for the service have been developed in line with the Executive Mayor's vision for the Council to operate in a financially sustainable and efficient way.

1.4   The project was approved by Cabinet as part of the transformation programme in Autumn 2022 with the intent to review the use of the borough's libraries and other Council and community infrastructure and work with residents and Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) partners to design improved services with a broader offer available to residents in centralised hub locations.

2   Recommendations

For the reasons set out in the report and the appendices, the Executive Mayor in Cabinet is recommended:

2.1   To note the methodology and activity undertaken to review the library service officer and develop proposals for an alternative model, outlined in Section 4

2.2   To agree to consult on the proposals for a new library service model, as outlined in Section 6.

2.3   To approve the commencement of formal public consultation on the proposals as outlined in Section 8

3.   REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1   The Council always intended to undertake a review of the library service model, adopted in 2021, to assess how well it was working in meeting residents' needs. Since implementation in April 2022, the service has received feedback from residents that they are unhappy with the opening hours and service provision, and we are now seeking to undertake further engagement with residents through a consultation process.

3.2   We have also found that the current model is not sustainable during periods of staff absence and service points have unfortunately had to close to the public at times due to insufficient staffing.

3.3   The Council's financial position means it is difficult to justify maintaining so many buildings which aren't well used. There is a limited capital investment fund allocated for library building improvements, but this would not be sufficient to bring all 13 sites up to a good condition or to allow for more flexible uses and income generation opportunities.

3.4   The current library service model does not make best use of the 13 library buildings with most only open to the public two to three days a week. Whilst usage of the libraries is increasing following closures during the pandemic, it is still low when compared with library services in other similar boroughs and as a proportion of the Croydon borough population.

3.5 Footfall into the libraries for the first six months of 2023/24 is only 43% of the same period for 2019/20 whilst Active Users (members who have used their card in the last 12 months) are at 58% of the same point in 2019, amounting to less than 10% of the population. We envisage that the impacts of Covid-19 have contributed to this decline in addition to the reduction in opening hours, but more research is needed to clearly understand the change.

3.6 Whilst the need for library services remains high, as evidenced in levels of educational attainment, health inequality, isolation and digital exclusion, the reduction in opening hours and stretched staff capacity hamper the ability of the library service to reach the people and communities who need it most and to support the future generations for whom a thriving library service is a passport to a better life.

3.7 Without a change in the model and reallocation of the resources available, the service is unlikely to be able to meet the needs of Croydon's residents and in that sense it could be considered to be failing to serve its purpose to deliver services enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to learn, read, work, connect with others in their community and get involved.

3.8 We will continue to develop partnerships and co-location opportunities including with VCFS, education, family support, cultural and health partners to establish the libraries as community hubs within their localities and embed a library service offer alongside other community provision.

3.9 There is an opportunity to deliver an improved service by developing a model which provides a strong core offer for residents of all ages through a smaller number of accessible buildings, open five to six days per week with quality provision of books, Wi-Fi, reading, digital, cultural and health programmes, enabling the libraries to act as local community hubs.

3.10 A wider programme of community outreach and delivery of a library service offer from other community venues will help to reach residents who are not served by the current provision and will allow for flexibility and a locally designed service offer based on community feedback and need.

3.11 The proposals detailed in this report have been developed through engagement with library staff, members, the programme board, independent consultants, cross council services and community groups.

3.12 The Library Review programme has also been developed in alignment with the non-statutory guidance issued by DCMS, titled 'Libraries as a statutory service' (April 2022) This has included:

- Engagement with the DCMS libraries team to inform and update them on the work and seek their views on:
  The approach, during the development of the review project in March 2023

The initial findings during the research phase in August 2023
The emerging outcomes, options and proposals following their development in November and December 2023.

- Development of detailed options for consideration, outlined in Appendices B and C

- Detailed plans for extensive public consultation outlined in Section 8

- An open approach to the consultation welcoming all ideas and suggestions proposed for alternative service models and changes which will be reviewed and considered in detail ahead of any final recommendations for the service

- Analysis of local need and the capacity and performance of the library service in responding to this need in current and future models, detailed in Appendices A and C

- A detailed EQIA which will be reviewed and updated following the consultation period and used to inform any changes to the proposals and final recommendations included at Appendix D.

3.13 Consultation is a legal requirement for proposals to change library services. It is important that a robust and meaningful process is followed in developing and consulting on proposals for a new model to comply with our legal duty. This includes detailed consideration of need, equalities impact analysis, current and alternative provision options and mitigation for the impact of any changes.

4. BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

Current library service offer

4.1 Croydon Council currently delivers its statutory library services from 13 dedicated library buildings across the borough. These are: Croydon Central, Ashburton, Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Coulsdon, New Addington, Norbury, Purley, Sanderstead, Selsdon, Shirley, South Norwood and Thornton Heath.

4.2 The council also jointly owns Upper Norwood Library building with Lambeth Council and provides a small grant to support the provision of library services at that site which is in Lambeth.

4.3 The current staffed library opening hours are: one library open five days a week, one library open four days a week and the remaining 11 open between 2 and 3 days a week.

4.4   Selsdon and Norbury Libraries are additionally open for a further three days each via self-service access. A security guard is currently also present during these hours as a result of site security and fire safety assessments at these sites.

4.5   Self-service access is enabled through a system which requires members to activate their card in advance and enter the library by scanning their library card. It is increasingly being used by libraries across the country to extend opening hours but it doesn't provide access to people without a library card or under 16's who are not able to use the service without an adult.

Previous library service changes

4.6   In 2019 the library service was restructured and a budget reduction of £300k was made. This change did not result in a reduction of library opening hours but did substantially decrease the number of staff employed to deliver those hours, creating pressure in the service capacity.

4.7   On 25th November 2020 Cabinet decided to undertake a review of provision of library services to generate financial savings for the Council. Options were developed and the first public consultation took place between January and March 2021 on proposals to close five libraries or find a cost neutral alternative. Residents were encouraged to make suggestions for alternatives which were considered further in the next phase of consultation.

4.8   Following responses from the public, on 16th May 2021 Cabinet took the decision not to progress with any library closures but to explore alternative revenue saving options. A further period of public consultation was undertaken between June and July 2021 on three further options: a reduction in opening hours of 21%, transfer of five libraries to community operation or outsourcing of the library service.

4.9   On 11th October 2021 the Council took the decision to generate £504k savings by reducing library opening hours by 21% with a combination of fully staffed and self-service only access times and an increase in volunteering and partnerships. This budget saving was achieved with a reduction in staffing and the remaining team working across multiple sites.

4.10   It has not been possible to implement this decision in full as the planned mitigations have been more challenging to implement than anticipated. Due to the budget reduction of £504k from April 2022, the opening hours were reduced by 48%. With the introduction of self-service access at two sites in 2023, the total opening hours are now 39% less than in 2021/22.

4.11   The decision taken in October 2021 had sought to minimise the overall reduction in hours by introducing self-service access at a further three sites and using volunteers and partnerships to extend opening hours.

4.12   The implementation of self-service access hours was delayed due to the need for building adjustments which were more costly and complex than anticipated and saw delays to the procurement and supply of the equipment required. Site security assessments also identified a need for a security presence on site in the event of an emergency evacuation and to provide safe access in the absence of CCTV. This offer was introduced at Selsdon Library in May 2023 and Norbury Library in October 2023.

4.13   Though the service was soft launched, initial take up was disappointing with only 4% of Selsdon Library visits taking place during self-service access hours between May and October 2023. Usage of self-service access is now increasing and this number could likely be improved further through additional marketing of the offer which has been limited to date owing to staff capacity. Nevertheless, current trends indicate a strong preference from library users for face to face services from library staff.

4.14   Whilst deploying self service access with a security guard on site has also provided a basic level of customer service and assistance to library users, the revenue cost limits the extent to which access can be extended. For future self service access provision the Council will seek to implement technological security systems as a way to minimise costs and extend access further.

4.15   The use of volunteers to extend open hours has also been limited. Whilst volunteers have been effective in bringing additional activity and support to the libraries this has been primarily focussed on additional events and activity such as developing library garden spaces, rather than delivering core services. Lunchtime cover roles have been particularly challenging to recruit to, impacting library opening over staff breaks.

4.16   Partnerships such as with Croydon Music and Arts and local schools have introduced activity and enabled use of the libraries outside of core hours but this has failed to extend the offer to the general public.

4.17   As part of the decision to reduce hours, the Council also sought to engage with residents to design the opening offer based on their needs and preferences. However, it has also not been possible to do this as the budget reduction means staff teams have to work between groups of libraries. As a result, library opening hours and days have limited flexibility, particularly in regard to evening and weekend provision. We currently only have the staff capacity to open five libraries on a Saturday which is the most popular day.

4.18   As a result of the limited impact from volunteers, partnerships and self-service access in offsetting the impact of the reduction in staffed hours so far, we feel it is wise to undertake a review of the service model at this stage prior to committing further time and financial resource towards implementing a model which is failing to deliver what was agreed by the Council in October 2021 and failing to meet the needs of Croydon residents.

4.19   As part of the implementation process it was proposed that a review of the new model would be undertaken after a period of time to ascertain the impact and assess the outcome of the approach.

Croydon Library Performance and Benchmarking

4.20   Using the most recent benchmarking data available (21/22) Croydon ranked second lowest in London for book loans and visits. Benchmarking data for 22/23 is expected to be published imminently by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA).

4.21   When considering the number of libraries per head, Croydon currently ranks 22nd out of 33 London boroughs. Croydon also ranks lower when compared with many other metropolitan areas of a similar size outside of London, though these measures do not take into account different models of provision and opening hours.

4.22   With a few exceptions, the overall design and condition of the Croydon library estate is poor with most sites having an outdated fixed design, immovable shelving, a lack of accessibility and flexibility and a substantial maintenance backlog.

4.23   The current trend in the library sector is towards a reduced footprint but longer opening hours and days with more services co-located and self-service technology used to extend access without increasing staffing.

4.24   As outlined at 3.5 above, library performance is low and whilst loans and visits have increased this year, rates of recovery for visits when compared to pre pandemic data are well below average. Without a change in the model it is not clear that the service will be able to develop usage and reach those who need it most.

4.25   It is important to note that this is despite the professional and committed work of the library service staff and volunteers who continue to provide excellent customer care to Croydon residents but are limited in the impact they can have by the service model.

Library Review Process

4.26   The Council has an obligation to develop library services through engagement with residents and analysis of local needs. It is, therefore, important to follow

a robust process of research and meaningful engagement in developing options for the service.

4.27   The project team have commissioned specialist consultants to support this work to identify need, consider options for improvements and develop a proposed library service model to reflect the most impactful and best value service possible within the constraints of current budgets.

4.28   We have used the Library Universal Offers framework (developed by Libraries Connected, the national sector support organisation for public libraries) as a guide to exploring the impact and opportunity for the library service in Croydon. The Universal Offers are: Reading, Information and Digital, Culture and Creativity and Health.

4.29   The project delivery summary is as follows:

Phase	Timeline	Activity	Outputs
Discovery	August-October 23	Desk research of relevant datasets Library and neighbourhood tour and initial asset review	Research highlights report
Development	September-December 23	Interviews, workshops and group discussion with key internal and external partners and staff	Full research report EQIA Development of options for a new library service model Development of consultation document suite
Cabinet: 31st January 2024 – Approval to consult on proposals			
Consultation (10 weeks)	February – April 2024	Formal statutory consultation including surveys, public events and workshops	Consultation responses to surveys and feedback gathered through events
Review	April - May 24	Analysis of consultation responses and revisions to proposed new model	Revised model defining core statutory service for Cabinet decision
Cabinet: June 24 – Seeking decision on final proposals			
Implementation	June 24 – March 25	Review of staff locations and roles and consultation as needed Review of all retained assets and development of capital plan to undertake essential building improvements, enable self-service	Revised staff structure implemented

		access and increase flexibility for space hire and co-location of services	Capital investment programme developed to deliver best value
		Review of any non-retained assets and options for community managed services / community asset transfer or disposal	Assets disposal processes initiated where relevant

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.30   The consultants have undertaken an initial programme of primary research through interviews and group discussions with library staff, colleagues from services across the Council and representatives of community groups who were engaged in the last round of library consultations.

4.31   Common themes across the research discussions included:

•The current model isn't working well. Residents aren't able to access the library when they need to and the limited opening hours are a barrier for people, particularly older people, students and working families.

•Library staff feel unable to deliver a high quality, local service while constantly moving between locations. A lot of staff time goes on managing timetables and stretching resources instead of developing the service.

•The libraries are important local community hubs for wellbeing and support for local families, young people and elders in the community and residents want to see more of this type of activity and closer working between services.

•We need to improve publicity generally, especially communication about opening hours because the community is confused; some think their local library is closed.

•Self-service access can help extend provision but people value the face to face services delivered by library staff the most and this is important for addressing isolation and providing support for the community.

•Many of the library buildings lack fully accessible facilities such as toilets and need investment.

•The library staff are valued by residents and do a good job under difficult circumstances

•More work needs to be done to look at partnerships with other services and for accessing funding

•The Council needs to think about the local need in each area, including deprivation levels, and develop an offer which is responsive to this, there isn't one size to fit all communities of Croydon

•The service model needs to be resourced properly. Volunteers, partnerships and fundraising can all help but they also need resource to be done effectively.

SECONDARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.32 Secondary research was undertaken through review of relevant datasets on library usage and need in the borough with particular consideration to the potential impact and contribution of the library Universal Offers.

4.33 Key findings included:

- There are particular geographic areas of higher deprivation, greater health inequalities, lower literacy and lower educational attainment in the borough and the most effective approach would involve targeted work in these areas.
- Community led approaches have been effective in delivering services and engaging residents and partners to focus on local need and solutions.
- Libraries can play a supporting role within the cultural ecosystem by partnering with grassroots and smaller cultural organisations to build their skills and ability to reach audiences.
- There is an established audience for events in libraries but the current condition and design of the library buildings and opening hours limits the possibilities.
- There are opportunities to deliver a more impactful library service offer by establishing community hubs through closer partnership working with other services including the VCFS, adult education providers and the One Croydon Alliance.

4.34 Detailed analysis of the findings from this research can be found at Appendices A and E.

5   OUTCOMES AND OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

5.1   Our research has informed the development of the following draft outcomes and options for change.

In three years' time, we will be able to say that the library review has achieved the following:

Primary outcome	Supporting outcomes
1. We are reaching more people	- More people are using our library service. - We reach the people who need us most in Croydon. - People know what we're offering.
2. We have improved our service to the public	- We have a wide range of activities on offer. - People enjoy what's available. - Our facilities are welcoming and attractive.
3. Our service is more efficient	- We are delivering better value within the resources we have - We generate more income from events and venue hire. - More people are willing to help.

5.2   A number of options have been identified and explored which would help to realise these outcomes. The options have been considered in the context of an initial cost benefit analysis and have informed the development of proposals based on our assessment of the best value approach. These options are detailed in full at Appendices B and C.

Given the financial circumstances of the Council it has not been possible to implement all the recommended options. The proposed new service is outlined at Section 6.

Details on the costings for the proposed service as a whole are included in section 8.

5.3   The following recommendations have been made, arising from the research findings:

Outcome 1: We are reaching more people

- to explore further the option of evening and Saturday opening if resources can be freed up within the service.
- to undertake a review of the performance of Open+ at Selsdon and Norbury Libraries and lessons learned in advance of further extension.

- to develop a long-term plan for improving library locations to be implemented as opportunities arise in consultation with local communities.
- that the Council consult formally on the option of closing poorer performing and less viable libraries in order to resource remaining libraries for longer hours and improve the overall service.
- to explore and test the option of a 'library link' community-based outreach service provision (see Section 6)
- to explore the resourcing of marketing and outreach if the service in libraries can be improved by other options.

Outcome 2: We have improved our service to the public

- to develop the libraries as community hubs providing an extensive offer of services and extending a programme of improved events, working with partners if resources can be freed up by other changes.
- to explore an increase in community language provision if resources can be freed up by other changes to the service.
- to pursue the option of improving signage, entrances and interiors
- to improve libraries' IT offer if the resources can be freed up.
- to explore the promotion of digital books and materials if resources can be freed up by other options and subject to Croydon's contribution being fair to The Library Consortium's other members.
- to pursue the option of training staff for to deliver a broader information, advice and support offer for residents

Outcome 3: Our service is more efficient

- to explore further co-locating libraries and other services and closer collaboration with other partners
- to pursue increased IT and checkout self-service in order to free up staff for a more interactive support role.
- to continue with in-house management of the library service and membership of The Libraries Consortium
- to consider any emerging opportunities for alternative models of library service delivery including community management
- to invest in increasing the number and scope of volunteers.
- to explore further the introduction of a venue hire service in order to generate income from library spaces and to revisit café provision once attendances have increased at Norbury Library.

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6 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

6.1 To successfully pursue the recommendations outlined at paragraph 5.3 above and to achieve the three outcomes to improve the impact and efficiency of the library offer for residents, a change in the library service framework is needed to allow for the redistribution of funds within existing budgets.

6.2 The emerging library framework provides a model to deliver a comprehensive, efficient and sustainable service which responds to local need and feedback gathered through the research phase and enables delivery of the three project outcomes.

6.3 We are proposing that the new statutory library service offer is delivered over four strands of provision:

- **Library Hubs**

A smaller network of more accessible and welcoming buildings delivering an extensive offer of books, wi-fi, PCs, study space, events and a Library Universal Offers programme. Open 5-6 days a week including every Saturday with the majority of hours staffed and extended hours with self-service access available from at least four sites.

These sites will act as focal points for services in their local areas with a broad service offer of reading, digital, health and culture delivered by the Council and community partners. We anticipate that Library Hub buildings will also host other services and partners aligned to the library Universal Offers, with the library as the primary anchor service.

- **Community Hubs**

A library situated in a shared venue as part of a wider service offer for residents, for example as part of a Family Hub, Adult Learning Hub, Health and Wellbeing Hub or VCFS Hub.

These sites would include dedicated library space to hold a range of book collections for children and adults, provide Wi-Fi and public computer access and host events and activities. The service offer and opening times would be developed in response to local need and would include weekend provision.

We envisage that this model of embedded co-location and partnership would attract more people to engage with the library service offer and would provide a more holistic service for residents. The delivery of this offer could include developing existing library buildings into Community Hubs, relocating a library service into a different building or exploring different models of delivering the library offer through partnership with other services or groups.

- **Library Outreach**

Outreach activity is essential to reach people not currently engaged with the library service offer, to raise awareness of the library offer and to provide access to library services for residents who are not able to physically visit a Library Hub or Community Hub. We propose that this is delivered over three strands:

1. Library Links will provide a regular contact point with the library service in localities without a building based library service. Delivered from other community venues on a weekly basis, the offer would be developed based on local need but could include: an information service, community book collections, children and adults events, digital support sessions and support to access library services online.

   Service provision would be delivered through a combination of library staff, volunteers and grant funded partners to deliver library programmes and events in community settings. We propose commencing with a pilot phase of four initial Library Link services focussed on catering to communities most impacted by any library closures with a second phase of delivery focussed on a further four areas with low library engagement and high need across the borough.

2. Expansion of the Home Library service which delivers books and resources to residents who are housebound, resident in care homes or otherwise unable to access library buildings.

3. Library service visits and activities at other community provision including schools and education services, dementia cafes, health care centres, community events and festivals. This is an established way to promote library services and the benefits of library usage, register new members and support residents to access library services and information.

- **Library Online**

An extensive digital offer including e-books and magazines, online learning and training resources and access to the Museum and Archives collections available 24/7.

6.4 The new model will provide the same number of staffed opening hours in the service as at present but delivered from fewer buildings. This will enable the service to operate sustainably and for staff teams to deliver a more responsive local service. All sites will be open on Saturdays.

6.5 Open hours will be increased further through an extension of self-service access. All retained sites will be assessed for the viability and opportunity to

install self-service access and we plan to offer the service from at least four sites.

6.6 We will seek to use technology such as CCTV to manage self-service access efficiently, enabling library access to be extended further at minimal cost to the Council. This will save the need to invest in security staff at these sites. We will take learning from best practice in other authorities where self service access has been deployed in different ways including through remote CCTV monitoring, use of security guards and volunteers. The Council is currently reviewing and reprocuring it's CCTV provision enabling library provision to be included in an updated system.

6.7 Each site will be assessed considering building safety and security procedures and any potential risks to library users and staff to identify the best model to implement self-service and extend the offer for each library.

6.8 Although we won't be able to return to the level of opening hours from 2021/22, prior to the last budget reduction, all Library Hubs and Community Hubs will be open on Saturdays to maximise the opportunity for residents to be able to visit and we will engage with local users in developing opening hours most responsive to local need. This will be more achievable in the new proposals as core staff teams won't be stretched across multiple libraries.

6.9 We hope that through the new service model Croydon residents will be able to access the libraries at more convenient times and be able to access more services and events at the same time.

6.10 The outreach services will also help us to reach people less confident or able to visit Library and Community Hub buildings and enable them to benefit from the library service offer through access to events, books, information and digital support in other community spaces.

6.11 We will measure the quality and impact of the new service offer through library operation and usage figures and engagement with residents through satisfaction surveys and regular library engagement forums to continue developing the services with local people and partners.

Library Locations

6.12 The proposed map of provision and local offer for each of these strands has been developed based on analysis of the demand, need, demographics and engagement feedback to date. We will further test and explore these proposals through the period of public consultation and make any revisions following detailed consideration of responses.

6.13 We propose to retain and invest in the following existing sites as Library Hubs: Central, Ashburton, Thornton Heath, Norbury, Selsdon and Coulsdon.

6.14 These sites have been proposed as appropriate for Library Hubs based on their current usage by library members and community groups, their location and the condition of the buildings and the catchment area they are able to serve.

6.15 **Central library** is the largest and busiest library in the network accounting for half of all visits and a third of all physical issues. It is situated in the Croydon Clocktower complex alongside the Museum of Croydon and Croydon Archives but needs significant investment to upgrade access facilities such as the escalators, and to increase the flexibility to allow for more events and generate space for hire. The 1st floor of the library is currently being developed for refurbishment through funding from Arts Council England's Libraries Improvement Fund. This work is expected to be completed by summer 2024.

6.16 **Thornton Heath library** is the third largest library in the network and benefited from a substantial refurbishment in 2010. The library has good facilities for hire and delivering a community hub offer and a community garden to the rear but would benefit from some minor reinvestment to improve the condition of the rooms for hire.

6.17 **Ashburton library** is one of the largest and best performing libraries which serves a large catchment area. The library opened in 2013 and is in good condition but would benefit from some minor improvements to enable full delivery of the universal offers and community hub provision.

6.18 **Selsdon library** is part of the local Sainsburys complex and is the second highest performing library. The general condition and design of the library is good but investment in signage in the complex and on the exterior of the site is important to increase visibility of the library.

6.19 **Coulsdon library** is well located for the local high street and benefits from a large garden at the rear which is being developed by a local community group. The library performs well but it is in need of investment to the building to create accessible toilets and generate space for events, community hire and hub type services.

6.20 **Norbury library** is generally in good condition following a major refurbishment in 2020/21 but the library building has underutilised space including the café area and community hall. There is an opportunity to engage with local partners and residents to identify the best approach to activating these spaces and improving the overall offer for residents in this community.

6.21 We propose that **New Addington, South Norwood and Purley** become Community Hubs with a library service delivered as part of a wider offer. We recognise that there is a need for a library in these communities, but low usage

of the current library offer suggests that the service provision in these areas needs to be remodelled and the library buildings as currently configured may not be the most appropriate venues to meet local need.

6.22   We will undertake a programme of engagement and development in each of these areas with local residents, library friends groups, the VCFS, family support services, education and health partners to establish a more impactful library service provision in these areas situated as part of a wider service offer. This may include: collocating services to improve the offer for residents, closer partnership working to embed a library offer alongside other services, relocation to different sites within the localities or implementing different models of service delivery. The most impactful solution for each site will be developed with residents and partners as detailed above in response to feedback and opportunities emerging through the consultation.

6.23   These locations have been selected based on the population density, total population and need in the areas they serve, their accessibility and the opportunity to develop a library offer as part of wider partnership and co-location of services in these localities.

6.24   Library usage at **New Addington** is particularly low but the need for digital, cultural, learning and information services in the area is high. It is not clear that the current library building and service model is the best approach to meet need in the area and more work needs to be done to design a new service offer to reach residents in New Addington and Fieldway. This could include more partnership between the libraries, adult education, VCFS, heath, leisure and community services and a change in venue to better reach local people across the two wards.

6.25   Library usage is also low at **South Norwood library** but there is significant need in the area, high housing density and high levels of deprivation. The current library building and its design over five small levels limits the range of services which can be provided and requires significant investment to upgrade the facilities. The Brutalist Library building is held in high regard locally and has an active friends group but, when considered on its own, the library building has limited potential and viability to deliver the service outcomes and would not justify the investment needed solely for library services.

6.26   We propose a full site review with the library and the adjoining Samuel Coleridge-Taylor youth centre in order to generate a better overall facility, retaining the Brutalist architectural heritage. This facility could include co-located library, education and family services, space for community hire and a model of embedded partnership working with different services and community groups.

6.27   Though **Purley library** serves a catchment area of median deprivation overall, this includes Waddon to the north which does have higher rates of deprivation. It also serves a large catchment area in the South East of the borough and Purley itself has seen significant growth and development in recent years. However, the library building at Purley is not well located for local communities to access and requires significant investment and maintenance.

6.28   There is little value in investing substantially to bring the necessary improvements to the current library site when it is so poorly located and cut off from the main shopping area. However, there are strong community and business networks in the area including Purley Panel and Purley BID, in addition to other VCFS groups and health services. We will engage with these groups, local partners and residents to identify the best options for developing the library service in Purley which may include relocation or a change in delivery model through other local partnerships.

6.29   In order to release resources to extend and develop the offer in the above localities, we propose closing the library buildings in: **Shirley, Sanderstead, Broad Green and Bradmore Green.**

6.30   These sites have been selected based on their usage rates, the size and condition of the buildings, the size and deprivation of the catchment areas and their capacity to provide a more comprehensive library offer through partnerships with other services and events. The rankings given below are taken from the last full year of data (2022/23).

6.31   **Shirley library** is a small site which requires significant investment to improve and is limited in the flexibility and opportunity to deliver a more extensive offer. Library usage was ranked 11/13 for loans and 12/13 for visits. Parts of the catchment area are also catered to by Ashburton Library and West Wickham Library (Bromley).

6.32   **Sanderstead library** is another small site, though it performs better at 5/13 for loans and 6/13 for visits. However, the catchment area of the library is largely covered by the catchment area for Purley and Selsdon libraries and the local population is amongst the least deprived in the country. The library is also lacking in accessible toilet facilities and would require significant investment to expand in size.

6.33   **Bradmore Green library** is Croydon's smallest neighbourhood library serving a relatively small population in an area of low population density. The library performs well proportionate to its size ranking at 10/13 for loans and 7/13 for visits. However, the building is small and is unsuitable to deliver the full range of the library service offer. There is also overlap with Coulsdon's catchment area.

6.34 **Broad Green library** is the second smallest library in the network and ranked 12/13 for book loans and 13/13 for visits. It serves an area of high deprivation but there is significant overlap with the catchment areas for Central and Thornton Heath libraries. Equality impact analysis also suggests that there are significant local communities who are not represented in library usage data currently suggesting a different service model in this area could be needed to reach across the local community.

6.35 Following the outcome of the consultation, any assets no longer required to be retained for delivery of library services will be reviewed for alternative use by other Council services, voluntary sector and community groups subject to a viable operating model without any subsidy from the Council. Any buildings remaining after this process will contribute towards the asset disposal programme generating savings for the Council. Detailed site analysis of all of the libraries can be found at Appendices C and F.

6.36 As part of its joint ownership of the building, the Council currently makes a small financial contribution towards the building management and maintenance of the **Upper Norwood Library Hub**, otherwise resourced and jointly owned by Lambeth Council. Upper Norwood library provides an important service to residents in the north of the borough including areas of high population density and a number of LSOAs in the second highest decile for deprivation. This library service contributes to the Council meeting its statutory obligations. We propose to maintain this contribution in the new model as part of the Council's joint ownership of the building.

6.37 Some of the building operating costs from the facilities proposed to close would be reinvested in the service to support the Library and Community Hubs, and community outreach programmes with a particular focus to reach communities most impacted by the closures.

6.38 Through implementing these changes the library service would seek to mitigate the adverse impact of the closures through developing the outreach offer with local residents to meet local need, delivering focussed work with local schools and developing the home library service for residents with access needs. We will conduct further equality impact assessments to support this work and ensure the service is able to reach those who need it most.

6.39 Through the consultation process alternative options may be proposed to avoid the closure of the four libraries, or to improve the service offer. The Council welcomes all proposals and opportunities to deliver a more impactful library service for residents and all proposals put forward during the consultation will be carefully considered.

6.40 Alternative proposals for service delivery would need to be cost neutral to the Council and demonstrate a viable business and financial model of operation. Any proposals of a change in site management would be assessed by the Council's assets team in line with relevant policies and procedures.

Conclusion

6.41 We feel that this new model provides the opportunity to improve the impact of the service overall through a better offer, improved facilities and with flexibility and capacity to develop a targeted approach in partnership with local communities around the borough.

6.42 The model also establishes sustainability and flexibility to develop the opening hours in response to community need and demand which is not possible in the limitations of the current service.

6.43 Partnerships with other service providers, internally and externally to the council will also be central to achieving this approach with particular synergies and opportunities identified in a better connected offer between libraries and adult learning and family support.

6.44 Though the closure of library buildings can be a difficult loss for those who use and work in them, by reducing the physical footprint of the service we can invest in and improve the condition of the remaining buildings and reallocate resource to improve the effectiveness of the service overall.

6.45 We are now seeking to commence extensive public consultation on the library service model outlined above, the options for change being considered and the best model for delivery.

6.46 Further details on all of these proposals can be found at Appendix A, B and C.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 The Council could seek to increase the library budget to in order to increase the staffed service opening hours. However, the Council is currently in £1.6 billion of debt and as such this is not practical and it would not address the weaknesses in the current library network.

7.2 The Council could choose to do nothing and not undertake this exercise, retaining the current offer and estate. However, this would not be viable economically as the Council would be operating and retaining a large number of buildings which are closed to the public for four to five days a week, which are not designed for alternative or flexible use and which require substantial capital investment.

7.3 This option would also fail to address demands from the public for extended opening hours and improved library services or address the vulnerabilities in the current model for staff absence or vacancy. Doing nothing would prevent the library service from reaching more residents and addressing the significant need and inequality in the borough.

7.4 The Council could also choose to undertake market testing for community operation of libraries and Community Asset Transfer prior to developing and consulting on the core offer. However, this could lead to a library service which was not resourced in line with resident need or designed through engagement with residents in contradiction of our statutory obligations.

7.5 Any emerging proposals are welcome, and the Council is open to the opportunity for community managed libraries should viable proposals come forward from the community during the consultation. However, it is unlikely that such proposals alone would be sufficient to deliver the service improvements required given the need for models to be self-sustaining without Council subsidy and considering the maintenance and site improvement needs across the network. We, therefore, recommend considering any proposals put forward by residents in the context of the wider consultation.

7.6 Outsourcing the library service as an alternative delivery model for the service has also been considered and rejected as not cost effective within Appendix B.

7.7 These proposals are at a formative stage and we remain open to further ideas generation and development through the consultation process.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Engagement activity has taken place in the development of the proposals including:
- A series of individual and group interviews with Council officers across the organisation including properties, adult social care, regeneration, health and children's services.
- Three workshops with library staff.
- Three meetings with 18 community partners who were active in the last library service consultation.

These sessions focussed on gathering reflections and learning from participants' experiences of the current library service model, ideas for improvements to the service and suggestions for key considerations that the Council should be factoring in as part of the review.

8.2 We are now able to commence wider formal consultation on the proposals developed for a period of ten weeks (2nd February to 14th April). We propose to undertake this through:

- An online survey with printed copies available in libraries.
- A series of public events held in libraries.
- A series of online events to gather feedback.
- Engagement with other community groups, partners and organisations such as resident associations including promotion of the survey and attendance at other community meetings to take feedback.
- A digital communications campaign to maximise the reach of the survey and ensure as wide a response as possible.
- Targeted engagement to reach library users and non-library users and to reach residents representative of the borough population and with regard to the Equality Act characteristics.
- Focussed engagement and service development workshops with communities and groups around South Norwood, New Addington and Purley.
- Engagement meetings to understand the impact of the library closures and further develop mitigations.
- Engagement with groups interested to operate libraries or become more involved in their governance.

8.3 The consultation activity will explore:

- Respondents' current library use and use of other community services.
- Their priorities and aspirations for a library service offer and that of other services relevant to the library Universal Offers.
- Their views on the proposals and the service model outlined above
- Ideas and partnership opportunities for the three proposed Community Hubs (New Addington, South Norwood, Purley).
- The views of those affected by the proposed library closures (Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, Shirley) including on potential mitigation measure and alternative options.
- Any other ideas to improve the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of the library service.

8.4 A series of member briefing sessions will be held to ensure all council members and Croydon's three MP's have the opportunity to understand and respond to the proposals and the consultation plan. We will seek to engage closely with members representing wards which are served by libraries proposed to close in order to understand the impact and opportunities for mitigations.

8.5 We will also actively engage with the library friends groups and other local community groups to involve them in the consultation and service development process.

8.6 We will undertake regular equalities reviews on the consultation responses to ensure we are reaching communities and groups across the borough, including people of different ages, ethnicities, disabilities, gender and sexuality. Consultation activity and engagement will evolve in response to these findings to reach as widely and meaningfully as possible.

8.7 A framework has been established to collate all responses and contributions to the consultation which will be analysed and considered in the review of the proposals. The findings of the consultation and this analysis will be presented back to Cabinet alongside the final proposals for the service.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR'S BUSINESS PLAN

This project has the potential to support delivery of many strategic goals and priorities:

9.1 The ***council balances its books, listens to residents and delivers good, sustainable services*** through development of a more impactful, sustainable and efficient library service which reduces the maintenance costs on buildings and targets resource where its most needed following engagement and consultation with residents

9.2 ***Croydon is a place of opportunity for business, earning and learning*** through a modernised library estate and community outreach offer which provides access to space, books, resources and support over six days a week with targeted employment, digital skills and business support programmes

9.3 ***Children and young people in Croydon have the chance to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential*** through open, accessible buildings and outreach programmes which support contextual safeguarding, literacy development, cultural and learning programmes and family support services.

9.4 ***People can lead healthier and more independent lives for longer*** with library hubs that provide health information, advice and programmes to support living well for longer including lifelong learning, physical activity and clubs which

promote social connection and reduce isolation and community-based initiatives to take library services beyond the buildings to reach people where they are

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1.1 The libraries revenue budget was reduced by £300k in 2019 and £504k in April 2022. Following these reductions, the net expenditure budget for the library service is £2.8m.

10.1.2 Croydon's library service is already benchmarked as the lowest cost per head across London and further reductions could risk compromising delivery of our statutory obligations. We need to ensure that the service meets the Council's best value duty of delivering service outcomes in an efficient manner.

10.1.3 Approximately £1.9m of the budget is currently profiled for staff costs with the remainder allocated for buildings, digital infrastructure, soft facilities, transport and materials. The library stock budget is currently funded separately through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with £300k allocated per annum for three years (2022-2025).

10.1.4 Some costs and budgets of the library service building operations are held centrally for some utilities, some business rates, maintenance and repair of library buildings. The total figure for this is estimated at £0.8m.

10.1.5 The Council will look at opportunities to improve income generation (such as through room/venue hire) however this could require capital investment and would not provide significant extra income in the short term to improve or extend the library service offer. Therefore, the proposed model reinvests some premises related savings through closure of library buildings to increase the staffing budget to support the service being viable and sustainable. This total figure is forecast at £0.14m.

10.1.6 A potential saving of £54k could be generated from premises costs held centrally within the Council's facilities management budgets, depending on the final model adopted.

10.1.7 In addition to this revenue saving, the Council would generate further premise related efficiencies overall through a reduction in the asset base, liabilities and long term operating costs for the closed sites, many of which have a significant maintenance backlog. Modernisation of the

retained estate would also generate income generation opportunities for the Council in the medium to long term.

10.1.8 The proposed budget profile of the new service model is detailed below:

Subjective	Budget (£000's)
Staff costs	2,229
Other operating costs	738
Total expenditure	**2,967**
Library Income	**(16)**
Reinvested building costs from library closures to increase staffing, additional to existing budget	**(138)**
Grand total	**2,813**
Library Stock budget (CIL funding)	300

10.1.9 This budget assumes that the Council would continue to staff and manage the Library Hubs and Community Hubs though the latter would include sharing of costs with other co-located services and partners. There is potential for further savings to be generated if viable alternative delivery options such as community management emerge through the consultation. A revised service budget will be developed following consultation to consider the costs and savings implications of any changes to the model.

10.1.10 The income generation forecast above is conservative and based on current hires and general library income through printing and fines. It is likely that this figure would increase following a period of refurbishments and modernisation of the library estate to establish a more extensive offer of space for hire, yielding further savings in future years. Through engagement with neighbouring boroughs, we understand that the greatest contribution to library income streams comes through hires of space, both ad hoc and through leases. The proposals would also seek to maximise current income generation opportunities such as leasing on longer term

operating arrangements the café and community hall spaces at Norbury Library.

10.1.11 These figures also assume that the budget for library stock and reading materials can continue to be funded through CIL. A further proposal for the next funding period will be developed and submitted to the Infrastructure Funding Group in 2024/25.

10.1.12 A capital investment programme will be required to invest in the retained estate of statutory libraries to undertake essential improvements including rewiring, installation of accessible toilets and improvements to heating, cooling and plant equipment. £1.6m is currently allocated in the capital programme from 2024/25 with a further £0.7m allocated specifically to South Norwood Library through the capital programme and Shared Prosperity grant fund. By reducing the number of buildings retained by the libraries service we can ensure that this investment is targeted to locations of highest impact and reduce the need for further capital requests to improve the accessibility and condition of the full estate.

10.1.13 Some additional capital investment will also be required to extend the provision of self service access from more sites. The costs for this vary by site depending on the nature and design of the building, access points and emergency escape routes. There is a small revenue cost of approximately £2k per site for the access system. The Council will otherwise seek to minimise revenue costs spent on security for this provision by utilising CCTV and technological security systems where possible over security guards.

10.1.14 As noted above at 6.35, any assets no longer required to be retained for delivery of library services following the outcome of the consultation will be reviewed for alternative use by other Council services, voluntary sector and community groups subject to a viable operating model without any subsidy from the Council. Any buildings remaining after this process will contribute towards the asset disposal programme generating savings for the Council.

Comments approved by Allister Bannin, Director of Finance (Deputy s151 Officer) on 18/01/2024

11.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1   The report sets out the proposals arising from the Council's review of its library services. Section 7 (1) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (PLMA) provides that it shall be the duty of every library authority, in this case the Council, to

"provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof….".

The duty applies to those who live, work or study full time in the authority's area. Section 7 (2) provides that, in fulfilling this duty, a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability–

"(a) of securing, by keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and

(b) of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and

(c) of securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such and any other authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full co-operation between the persons engaged in carrying out those functions."

11.2   The Act does not define "comprehensive" and "efficient" library service. However, the Courts have interpreted this as:

"A comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library. This has never been the case. Comprehensive has therefore been taken to mean delivering a service that is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources. Decisions about the Service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough".

"The key is reasonable ability to access the service by all residents of the county. This means that distances and time taken to reach a library must be reasonable and any particular problems, whether physical disabilities, or created by age or family considerations, must be capable of being met" (Draper v Lincolnshire County Council in 2014 EWHC 2388 (Admin)

"the availability of resources is highly material to the question of what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service. The section 7 duty cannot be exempt or divorced from resource issues and cannot in law escape the reductions which have been rendered inevitable in the light of the financial crisis engulfing the country." (R (Green) v Gloucestershire City Council [2011] EWHC 2687 (Admin)).[i]

11.3 Library premises are defined as:

"(a) any premises which are occupied by a library authority and are premises where library facilities are made available by the authority, in the course of their provision of a public library service, to members of the public;

(b) any vehicle which is used by a library authority for the purpose of providing such a service [ii][1]and is a vehicle in which facilities are so made available; (Section 8(7)". Therefore, a library service does not have to be provided from fixed premises, commonly called a "library".

11.4 Section 9 of the Act permits a library authority to make contributions towards the expenses of another library authority "or of any other person providing library facilities for members of the public".

11.5 Section 20 of the Act permits library premises to be used for meetings and exhibitions, film shows, concerts and other events of a cultural or educational nature, for which the local authority may charge.

11.6 Under Section 1 of the Act, the Secretary of State (SoS) for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has a duty to

"superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service…and to secure the proper discharge"

by local authorities of their library functions. That is supported by the default power in Section 10 whereby, on complaint to the Secretary of State that a library authority has failed in its duties under the Act, or he is of opinion that an investigation should be made as to whether any such failure by a library authority has occurred, he can cause a public inquiry to be held and, if satisfied as a result that there has been a failure by the library authority in its duties, he can make an order

"declaring it to be in default and directing it for the purpose of removing the default to carry out such of its duties, in such manner and within such time, as may be specified in the order."

11.7 The DCMS has produced a non-statutory guidance for local authorities considering library service provision and titled 'Libraries as a statutory service' (April 2022) available at Libraries as a statutory service - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). The guidance includes the following:

….Every council in England is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service under the Act. It must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available.

The public library service is not a national service, but a local service. 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:

- in consultation with their communities
- through analysis of evidence around local needs
- in accordance with their statutory duties

Councillors need to make decisions about how money is invested in the interests of the whole community. They will have competing priorities across a wide portfolio of local service provision and councillors and officers must reconcile these matters against the background of their legal requirements. Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.

Councils therefore 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...."

11.8 The guidance encourages local authorities considering changes to their library service to: a) inform the DCMS Libraries team about their proposals before public engagement or consultation; b) demonstrate plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including any projections of need), consider range of options (including alternative financing, governance or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area and a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposals; c) evidence that proposals would continue to meet local needs and should engage with the community when designing the library service to meet local needs within the available resources; d) an assessment of the equality impact on all 'protected groups' as specified in the Equality Act 2010 and e) consider the use of the council's scrutiny process to better inform decision making.

11.9 The Council has a duty to consult with library users, residents, communities and other stakeholders that are likely to be affected by the proposals for the provision of library services in the borough. The consultation must take place at a time when the proposals are still at their formative stages. The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposals being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be clear, concise, and accurate. The consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposals and to respond. The Council must give genuine and conscientious consideration to the responses received from the consultees during the consultation before making its final decision on the proposals. The responses to consultation should be taken into account when finalising any proposal and an explanation given of how these responses have informed the proposal.

11.10 As part of its decision-making process on the proposals, the Council must have "due regard" to its equalities duties. Under Section 149 Equality Act 2010, the Council in exercise of its function to provide library service, must have "due regard" to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in order to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. The protected characteristics are age, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council is required to give serious, substantive, and advance consideration of what (if any) the proposals would have on the protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place. This exercise must be carried out with rigour and an open mind and should not be a mere form of box ticking. These are mandatory considerations.

Approved by: the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. (Date 28/12/2023)"

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Council has a statutory duty, when exercising its functions, to comply with the provisions set out in the Sec 149 Equality Act 2010. The Council must, in the performance of its functions, therefore, have due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

12.2 A detailed EQIA has been undertaken to consider the service changes overall and the specific impact of proposals at each of the 13 libraries. The EQIA has also been used to consider mitigating provision to be implemented as part of any service changes.

12.3 The EQIA documentation can be found at Appendix D.

12.4 Comments approved by Naseer Ahmad on behalf of the Equalities Manager, (Date 15/11/2023)

13. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The libraries are currently used or connected to a number of other services within and external to the Council including but not limited to Croydon Music and Arts (CMA), One Croydon Healthy Communities hubs, Asian Resource Centre of Croydon (ARCC), Clear Community Web digital support, health partners, local schools and community groups who all use the library either inside or outside of current public opening hours. Changes to library services will naturally impact on the current reach and delivery of these organisations and services and impact the future capacity of the libraries to deliver a broader community offer and support smaller organisations and services to reach residents.

13.2 However, these proposals have been developed with the aim to transform the library buildings into vibrant community hubs which are designed and equipped to host a broader range of services. The new staffing model also establishes resource for the development and co-ordination of partnerships to strengthen and improve services for residents. Consequently, we anticipate that the new service would enable a growth in partnership working overall.

13.3 The delivery of this project continues to enable opportunities to connect and find shared solutions with other concurrent projects, most notably the Family Hubs development programme and the review of Croydon's adult learning services. Both services have synergies with the library offer and project teams continue to seek opportunities for co-location and a co-ordinated offer, particularly through the Community Hubs strand of the new framework

13.4 Proposals to change library services generally attract a lot of interest from the communities impacted and this was notable during the last period of consultation and change for the service in Croydon in 2021. We expect there to be significant interest in the proposals from resident groups, library friends groups and other VCFS organisations in addition to individual residents. We want to actively engage with and involve these groups in shaping the library service model to ensure it best meets the needs of people who live, work or study in Croydon.

Approved by: Kristian Aspinall, Director of Culture and Community Safety. (Date 27/11/2023)

14. APPENDICES

14.1 **A Library Service Review: Phase 1 and 2 Report - Nov 2023**

B Options for change

C Analysis of closure options

D EQIA

E Engagement findings so far

F Site profiles

15   Background Papers from past library service changes

Cabinet paper 17th May 2021 – Outcome of first libraries consultation

https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=183&MId=2174

Council paper 11th Oct 2021 – Outcome of second libraries consultation

https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=2535

15.   Additional information on URGENCY

15.1 The project delivery timeline is tight but currently on track. Any delays in sign off will result in consequent delays to the consultation period, decision making, implementation and realisation of benefits for residents.

15.2 The libraries review is detailed in the Improvement and Assurance Panel's Exit Plan with the expectation that a new model is approved by September 2024 and implemented by March 2025.