

For general release

REPORT TO:	Scrutiny and Overview Committee 16th July 2019
SUBJECT:	DELIVERY OF THE LIBRARIES PLAN 2019-2028
LEAD OFFICER:	Shifa Mustafa, Executive Director - Place
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Oliver Lewis, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Kirsteen Roe, Interim Director – council homes, districts and regeneration

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

The implementation of the Libraries Plan will contribute to 5 out of 9 of Croydon's outcomes in the 2018-2022 corporate plan ([Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)):

- People live long, healthy, happy and independent lives;
- Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential;
- Everybody has the opportunity to work and build their career;
- Business moves here and invests, our existing businesses grow; and
- We value the arts, culture, sports and activities.

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This report has been included on the agenda to provide an update on the implementation of the Libraries Plan, a draft of which was considered by the Committee in February 2019.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To review progress made to date and future plans for the delivery of the Libraries Plan 2019-2028, including capital investment in Croydon's libraries

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Libraries Plan 2019-2028 was presented to Cabinet on 7th May 2019. The Plan is due to be presented to Full Council for final approval on 15th July 2019. Delivery of the libraries is plan is one of the Delivery Plans that form the Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022. This report presents:

- An overview of the final libraries plan
- The scope of work planned and potential investments
- Next steps and time scales

2. DELIVERY OF THE LIBRARIES PLAN 2019-2028

2.1 Context

- 2.1.1 Croydon Council have thirteen libraries across the borough, as well as a 24/7 on-line library information offer. These are well used with nearly two million visits per year and over 15% of Croydon residents holding a library membership. Croydon's libraries offer a range of services, from book loans, to IT provision, digital and employment support and hosting of cultural events.
- 2.1.2 Croydon libraries are already well used, when compared to outer London in general, with above average visits per capita. The pattern of usage is more akin to inner city areas, with less borrowing per customer but more PC usage, and other usage e.g. studying, attending events.
- 2.1.3 Nationally, borrowing of books is on a decline since the age of the internet and increased online access to information and reading material. With local government finances under continuous pressure during this time, many local authorities have taken this decline in usage as an opportunity to target libraries for savings, and many libraries nationally have closed or been handed over to local charitable organisations.
- 2.1.4 Bucking the national trend, there is a firm commitment by Croydon Council to keep its thirteen libraries open and to invest in the buildings and the book stock. To this end, the council has developed a ten year libraries plan, outlining the priorities for the service, and has committed £5m of capital budget to the refurbishment of libraries over the next two years. This was approved by Full Council on 4 March 2019 and is in addition to the £555k of capital budget committed to enable the provision of a new build library in South Norwood which was approved by Full Council on 27 February 2018. To our knowledge, no other council in London is currently investing in its library service to the extent that Croydon is.

2.2 Overview of the libraries plan 2019-2028

- 2.2.1 Libraries are a statutory service and local authorities have a duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. Local authorities that have managed to preserve the service and in some cases enhance it have adapted to the way libraries are being used by communities, providing innovative technology, more study space and meeting space, cafes and an increased programme of events to attract families and people of all ages and backgrounds. Twenty percent of library services have used technological solutions to increase opening hours and access to library facilities. These authorities have recognised libraries for the opportunity they present to serve a wider purpose and address broader social, cultural and economic outcomes.
- 2.2.2 Croydon Library service operates thirteen libraries within the borough attracting almost two million visits a year. For 4 years until January 2018, delivery of the service was outsourced to Cultural Community Services (CCS), a subsidiary of Carillion Plc. CCS held library service contracts across four boroughs. Following Carillion's collapse on 15th January 2018, Croydon Council immediately took the service back in house, from 17th January 2018.

2.2.3 In the first year of the service being in-house the council:

- **Ensured all staff have been paid the London Living Wage (LLW) as a minimum** from their start date with the council of 17th January 2018 - Carillion paid some library staff significantly below Croydon pay scales and the LLW as a result of the Carillion contract being procured before the council's commitment to LLW for all council staff and contracts;
- **Worked to bring the service back into budget** – the service was operating at approximately 10% over budget when brought in-house. This was mainly due to high IT costs, FM operating below Croydon standards and some staff/functions under Carillion operating over 3 boroughs;
- **Restructured the workforce** – to provide a robust management and development team, area based front line staff structure and improved cover arrangements for annual leave and sickness to ensure service continuity;
- **Developed a comprehensive, integrated programme of events and activities** - the service has been integrated with Croydon museum and archives services and now hosts a range of joint activities with other council departments like Best Start, LiveWell, the Youth Engagement team and Public Health amongst others.
- **Developed a plan for the ongoing investment in and improvement of library services over the next ten years**

2.2.4 The Croydon Libraries Plan 2019-28 vision is to “Inform, involve and inspire” by creating local community spaces where everyone has the opportunity to access council services and information; learn; improve their employability; enjoy the written and spoken word, the arts and cultural events; volunteer and get involved in their local community.

2.2.5 The plan sets out an ambitious programme of work over the next ten years that will transform Croydon's libraries into a modern library service that will meet the ambitions for the service and contribute to Croydon Council's outcomes, priorities and locality based delivery. There is a focus on the delivery of four outcomes:

- A library service designed around the needs of our residents and communities;
- Croydon libraries as the 'Front Door' of the council, enabling services to be delivered locally;
- Libraries at the heart of Croydon's cultural offer, celebrating the written and spoken word in particular;
- Modern, welcoming, inclusive and accessible libraries facilities and buildings

2.2.6 In focusing on these outcomes, the plan addresses three main areas:

- **The service** – develops a service which reflects the needs, interests and diversity of Croydon residents in each location and connects local people to local information, advice, activities and services as well as enhancing the core library offer;

- **The library buildings** - ensures our buildings are efficient and fit for purpose and provide attractive, accessible, modern, flexible community spaces that are both professional and welcoming and make the best use of space for the council and their communities;
- **Technological solutions** – invests in the technology required to deliver a modern library service including modern technology that enables customers to access library services when and where they need them.

2.3 Delivering the plan

- 2.3.1 A political commitment to increase the book stock was given when the library service was brought in-house. This has been achieved in a number of ways:
- Increasing the annual book stock revenue budget by 9% from 1st April 2019
 - Joining the London Libraries Consortium (LLC) in October 2019, providing Croydon customers access to over 6 million books for inter-library loans and hundreds more online books and resources
 - Sourcing book stock suppliers from 1 April 2019 that give the Council better discounts off the RRP of stock – allowing more to be purchased
 - A capital budget commitment to refresh book stock in newly built or refurbished libraries as the capital programme is rolled out.
- 2.3.2 A new ‘pop-up’ library has been purchased to enable increased outreach into other locations, including parks and high streets. This will be used to target communities that are less likely to access library services as well as to provide alternative library services when buildings are closed for refurbishment.
- 2.3.3 The council has developed an operating model that focuses on preventative and locality based services in order to improve outcomes for residents. Libraries are exceptionally well placed to support a locality based approach and, alongside the core focus of libraries on the written and spoken word, the role of libraries is preventative and locality based working also is reflected in the plan. For example, libraries already contribute to the delivery of local services in providing space for engagement and activities, they act as a safe and visible place for advice and information for residents and will also act as a ‘touchdown’ point for staff working in a particular locality and needing temporary desk space, once the appropriate investment has been made in technology.
- 2.3.4 The library service has been working closely with the team leading on the localities work to enable library buildings to provide spaces for other services to offer locality based delivery. The first locality area is in North Croydon and Thornton Heath Library is one of the key sites in the area from where targeted, locality-based services are now being provided.
- 2.3.5 One of the scrutiny recommendations made in the February pre-scrutiny session on the plan was: *That the national outcomes for library usage should be used as a basis for the plan, with the service offered being evaluated against these outcomes.*

- 2.3.6 The Libraries Plan is grounded in the work of the national Libraries Taskforce, which has identified seven key outcomes that libraries are well placed to deliver: cultural and creative enrichment; increased reading and literacy; improved digital access and literacy; achieving potential; greater prosperity; stronger more resilient communities; and healthier and happier lives. As well as contributing to the emerging network of cultural venues in the borough, our libraries will also be recognised as community hubs, facilitating locality based working for Council staff and partners. By providing venues where residents can access the information and services that are most relevant to them, libraries will contribute to the council's prevention and early intervention work. They will also provide spaces where community groups can meet.
- 2.3.7 The service restructure, completed on 1st April 2019, included changes to service development roles in order to ensure that these deliver on Croydon priorities. Specialist roles have been created, aligned to the taskforce outcomes and council priorities. These focus on health & wellbeing, digital & learning and children & young people. They are complemented by a two year post funded through the GLA/ERDF funded programme, Start-ups in Local Libraries (SiLL), a collaboration with the British Library and nine other London library services providing business support to residents who want to start up their own businesses. The service development team are responsible for facilitating relationships with other council services, statutory service providers and the voluntary and community sector in order to deliver more targeted events and activities within libraries that meet local need.
- 2.3.8 An evaluation framework for the impact of our libraries will be developed based on the seven outcomes identified by the Libraries Taskforce. Work is already underway to develop a proposal in conjunction with two other London boroughs and public health colleagues to carry out research into the impact of libraries on health and wellbeing outcomes and funding potential is being explored with Arts Council England and DCMS.

2.4 Capital investment – buildings

- 2.4.1 Our libraries estate consists of 13 libraries. Two of these are co-located with other services within council buildings (Central and New Addington). Ashburton was provided through a PFI arrangement and Selsdon was provided through a development agreement and both are housed in buildings managed by a third party. The remaining 9 are housed in stand-alone library buildings across the borough.
- 2.4.2 Most council owned library buildings were developed for a different type of service predominantly between the 1930s and the 1960s. Norbury opened in 1931; Coulsdon, Purley & Sanderstead all opened in 1936; and Shirley in 1937. Bradmore Green and the current South Norwood are 1960s designs. The oldest building is Thornton Heath, built 1914, but it was reconfigured 2010.
- 2.4.3 Additional investment is needed to update these buildings to be fit for public use in the 21st century. Where the costs of undertaking modernisation are significant, the council may consider redevelopment as a better and more cost effective option to continue to provide a library that meets local needs. The 7th May 2019 cabinet paper clearly states that “any such case would be assessed on the basis of a full options appraisal and

business case which would incorporate the costs of the building as well as the impact for users of the building. Any redevelopment proposal would require a further decision to proceed.”

- 2.4.4 An innovative architectural practice, known as specialists in public libraries, and designers of the idea stores, have been appointed to support Croydon Libraries transformation. They have developed a new ‘look and feel’ for Croydon libraries, creating modern, vibrant, inspirational spaces that meet the changing needs of our customers. This is currently being implemented in Selsdon as a model, pilot library. Selsdon is the main area library in the south and is a relatively simple site to pilot the new ‘look and feel’ as no major building work is needed and it is a good sizeable space situated on one floor. It also ties in with the pilot site for new technology (see section 2.5 below) and therefore will be the first completely modern library in Croydon which can be used as a training site for staff and feedback from customers.
- 2.4.5 This will be followed by two further major refurbishments in the north – Norbury and Thornton Heath – as well as the opening of the new South Norwood Library on Station Road.
- 2.4.6 The programme of refurbishments, which is subject to change based on borough and service needs, aims to minimise library closures. Major building refurbishments can potentially take up to 20 weeks or more depending on the scope and complexity of the construction work involved.
- 2.4.7 The programme aims to keep libraries open during the busy summer months and also not to close two major libraries in one area at the same time. One or more of the following alternative service provision arrangements will be made for each closure:
- Referral to the closest library if within 2 miles, with easy transport links;
 - Regular pop-up library in nearby building e.g. leisure centre, community centre, where possible;
 - Temporary library for longer closures where suitable building or space is available.

2.5 Capital Investment – Technology

- 2.5.1 The libraries house the council's largest public access IT network, providing free and accessible provision of computers, printing and the internet for many residents who do not have these facilities at home. 51.5% of our active users come into our libraries just to use the PCs and/or the Wi-Fi, not to borrow books. Library users are also increasingly using their own devices within libraries. In 2017/18 there were 215,795 PC sessions and 69,535 Wi-Fi sessions.
- 2.5.2 In January 2018 when the library service was brought in-house all CCS IT systems and maintenance contracts were adopted in order to continue providing a library service without disruption. At the time Croydon Council had just embarked on a wider IT procurement programme and it was sensible to wait until new IT providers were procured before migrating the library systems over to the Croydon network. However under the CCS contracts, maintenance costs were high, WiFi connection was poor

and CCS were due to upgrade all the hardware, which is over 5 years old, when they went into liquidation. This arrangement also meant that staff did not have easy access to Croydon staff systems.

- 2.5.3 As outlined in 2.3.3 above, Croydon libraries have been identified as enablers for preventative and locality working to deliver locality based services. In order to do this and provide a modern library service, the libraries need a reliable Wi-Fi connection, access into Croydon systems and up to date modern connectivity for both staff and customers. A project is now underway to install new lines into all libraries, migrate all libraries across to Croydon systems and networks, and install new, modern hardware for staff and the public, by the end of this financial year.
- 2.5.4 This will also assist the wider Council's workforce to be agile, for example, where a Library can be used as a place to 'drop in' for short duration work, before moving onto their next appointment. This project has specified new devices and other equipment for both staff and public, in order to provide a modern, up to date service. These include laptops and tablets as well as plug in points for own devices. The roll out of this will tie in with the refurbishment schedule wherever possible to minimise library closures.
- 2.5.5 As part of joining the London Library Consortium mentioned in 2.3.1 above, Croydon have procured a new Library Management System to be launched in winter 2019 following a mobilisation plan which started in April 2019. The new system was procured by the existing 16 LLC member authorities and is an adaptable platform solution, designed to provide more flexibility than our current system. There will be a library app to make it easier for customers to interact with the service, increased functionality for communications and marketing, and increased visibility of library resources when searching via the internet.
- 2.5.6 In order to make the best use of our buildings they need to be available at the times needed by customers and the community and not limited to current library opening times. Open + technology enables us to extend the times when the buildings can be accessed by allowing library members access into unstaffed library buildings. Entry to the library is via a library card and pin, with CCTV aiding security and self-service machines and computers allowing usage of the library service and the space. The system, which originated in Scandinavia, is now used in 20% of all UK library services. Selsdon library has been chosen as a pilot, with a view to rolling the system out across all of our libraries as they are refurbished.
- 2.5.7 Nine of our thirteen libraries have self-service technology installed. This allows customers to borrow, renew and return items; check their accounts and pay charges. This technology will be updated and also installed in the remaining four libraries. The new machines will also allow for future integration with the computer booking system and printing services. These will be essential during unstaffed opening and also free up staff during busy times to assist customers with queries.

2.6 Overview of timelines for delivery 2019-20

2.6.1 Please see below for a breakdown of delivery timescales in 2019-20.

	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
ICT Upgrade										
Selsdon										
Thornton Heath										
Shirley										
Coulsdon										
Broad Green										
Purley										
Bradmore Green										
New Addington										
Sanderstead										
Ashburton										
Central										
Norbury										
South Norwood										
Libraries Management System										
London Libraries Consortium										
Refurbishments										
Selsdon										
Norbury*										
South Norwood#										
Thornton Heath										

Refurbishment notes:

*Norbury Library will be closed to the public from September 2019 until February 2020

#There will be a closure of approx. two weeks between the current South Norwood library closing and the new library opening

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[The Libraries Plan 2019-2028](#)