

AS PROVIDED FOR UNDER SECTION 100B(4)(b) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, THE CHAIRMAN IS OF THE OPINION THAT THIS ITEM SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THAT THE OSC ARE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER THE DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED NEW LIBRARY, ETC AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER THAT THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION SET OUT IN THE REPORT CAN BE CARRIED OUT AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY

PAPER NO. **16-458**

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
– 21ST NOVEMBER 2016

EXECUTIVE – 28TH NOVEMBER 2016

Report by the Director of Environment and Community Services on proposals to provide a new purpose built library and associated developments at Northcote Road, SW11 (Northcote)

SUMMARY

In accordance with Paper Nos. 14-656 and 16-240 previously approved by the Executive, with the support of this OSC, proposals have been developed for a new library facility in Northcote Road as part of a mixed development opportunity. Consideration has been given to the requirements of the core library service required and whether a community bookshop provision could be included.

It is proposed to undertake a public consultation exercise on the layout proposal for the new library service covering three floors in the new build development. Details of this consultation would be developed in conjunction with the ward Councillors who have been involved with the community bookshop proposal. The outcome of the consultation exercise is to be reported back to this committee and the Executive with recommendations.

The Director of Finance comments that the costs of the feasibility study and future public consultation are met from existing budgets. Should future decisions be made to proceed to implementation then Capital bids for the expenditure will be made at the appropriate time. The development of a new library will be contingent on the development of the existing site for commercial use, with the financial viability being reassessed at the point that final proposals are brought forward for implementation. The proposals will require contractual changes to both the Leisure and Cultural Services contract with Enable, in relation to the temporary closure of Chatham Hall, and the Libraries contract with GLL.

GLOSSARY

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GLL Greenwich Leisure Ltd
NB Northcote Books

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.
2. If the OSC approve any views, comments or additional recommendations on this report these will be submitted to the Executive or to the appropriate regulatory and other committees for consideration.
3. The Executive is recommended to:
 - (a) approve the undertaking of a public consultation exercise on the proposal for a new library as outlined in this paper, based upon the layout proposals shown in Appendix 3; and
 - (b) note that the outcome of the public consultation will be reported to this Committee and the Executive for a decision on the further progression of the project.

BACKGROUND

4. In July 2016, with the support of this OSC, the Executive (Paper No. 16-240) approved outlined proposals for several new build library developments, one of which involves Northcote Library in Northcote Road.
5. The current library was built in 1969 at the site shown edged red on Appendix 1 on the west side of Northcote Road. The library is of its time and by today's standard is inefficient in its use of space and layout. Modern libraries make better use of space and energy, make extensive use of digital equipment and provide opportunities to generate revenue and therefore require different configuration of spaces, such as, a teenager dedicated area computer lounge and public access terminals. The building's age, composition and design make it inflexible and expensive to adapt to modern usage.
6. This paper details the proposals for a new library in Northcote Road with comments from the Assistant Director of Property Services regarding associated developments.

LIBRARY SERVICES

7. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (the Act) makes provision for regulating library services and sets out the duty of every library authority to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof". The Act sets out that, in fulfilling its duties:

"a library authority should have regard to keeping adequate stocks of books, other printed matter, pictures, records, films and other materials in sufficient number,

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range and quality to meet the public's requirements and the special needs of adults and children"; and

"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".

Under the Act, the service to lend books and access to the catalogue is free. All other services can be charged for.

8. The Council is committed to the provision of a comprehensive library service and to at least maintain the same number of operational library buildings across the Borough. In order to ensure the ongoing efficiency of the service, the Council took the decision to outsource the management of its 11 libraries and the Heritage Service. The contract specification is outcomes based and focuses upon:
 - (i) enriching the lives of all residents through the provision of books, newspapers, magazines, CDs, DVDs and other materials covering both leisure and educational needs;
 - (ii) delivery of a range of learning opportunities;
 - (iii) provision of a range of reliable information resources;
 - (iv) delivery of a range of cultural events;
 - (v) provision of support to local business and new start-ups;
 - (vi) fostering an interest in the Borough's history and engendering a feeling of place and belonging;
 - (vii) promoting community awareness, tolerance and cohesion; and
 - (viii) promoting specific Council agendas, e.g. Health and Wellbeing, Green Issues etc.
9. The Contract for the Provision of Library Management Services in Wandsworth was awarded to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) for an eight year term contract, commencing on 1st April 2013. GLL is therefore responsible for the delivery and development of all services at Northcote Library.

SERVICES AT NORTHCOTE LIBRARY

10. GLL currently delivers the following services at Northcote Library:
 - (a) A free book loan service covering all ages from birth. The collection is comprehensive, with wide non-fiction subject coverage and fiction covering all principal genres. This service is delivered using a dedicated Library Management (computer) System, self-issue technology and evidence based stock management software;
 - (b) A charged audio visual loans service, consisting of a wide selection of DVDs for all ages and access to the Borough's CD collection via the reservations service;
 - (c) Public access PCs, providing access to the internet, free of charge;
 - (d) Access to a suite of online databases, both remotely and from the library;
 - (e) Cloud based printing solutions and photocopying;
 - (f) A charged fax service;
 - (g) Hall hire;
 - (h) A range of regular children's activities, including Story Time and Baby Rhyme Time Sessions, homework help sessions, craft sessions;

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- (i) A programme of author based and other reading and service related events aimed at all ages;
 - (j) Reading Groups; and
 - (k) A range of learning activities.
11. Table 1 below provides details of the visitors and issues provided at Northcote Library between 2013/14 and 2015/16. Whilst visitor numbers have dropped significantly since 2013/14 in line with national trends, the actual total book issues has remained relatively steady with adult book issues increasing by 30.8% comparing 2014/15 issues with 2015/16 issues.
- Table 1 – Visitors and Issues at Northcote Library
- | | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Visitors | 120,125 | 70,716 | 63,843 |
| Adult Book Issues | 15,830 | 14,930 | 19,537 |
| Children's Book Issues | 71,913 | 68,153 | 64,831 |
| Total Book Issues | 87,743 | 83,083 | 84,368 |
12. There are many other uses of libraries that are not currently reported through national indicators but which do need to be taken into context of the overall use and provision of the library service. These other uses include people who visit a building to study, make an enquiry, use electronic resources or wi-fi and people who may not visit a library at all but who may borrow eBooks and eAudiobooks. It is therefore a view that you might reasonably expect 'active borrower' figures to decline as more people switch to eServices.
13. There are a number of specific issues that affect both the use of Northcote Library and the efficient management of the property, including:
- (a) Asbestos being present in the building. Although safe, there would be significant additional costs in making any changes to the library that necessitate major building works;
 - (b) The Children's Library is located on the first floor which means that access is reliant on a working lift for many parents and children;
 - (c) There is no dedicated buggy park. This is of particular concern as the library is required to accommodate 50-60 buggies for regular weekly Baby Rhyme Time sessions;
 - (d) There is a first floor mezzanine which does not lend itself to the display of library stock and can only usefully be used for quiet reading and study space;
 - (e) The main adult area is located on the second floor. This makes access dependent on a working lift for any customers with mobility problems;
 - (f) The shelving in the adult library is all wooden and is not moveable, preventing opening out of the space or changing the layout in order to make the space more attractive. Additionally, no books on this level are visible from the foyer area;
 - (g) The adult public access computers are all located on the second floor and there is not sufficient space to provide any PC access on the ground floor;
 - (h) The Library is poorly ventilated and becomes very hot during the summer months;
 - (i) It has only been possible to install one public lavatory/baby changing facility which, at peak times, is not sufficient to meet demand;

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- (j) The space for hire is located in the basement and does not benefit from high levels of natural light;
- (k) There is a bookstore area in the basement that could be cleared to provide additional space for hire. However, this would require significant building work; and
- (l) The layout of the library makes it very staff intensive, with staff required at three separate service points, reducing the opportunity for the contractor to consider extending opening hours.

COMMUNITY BOOKSHOP

- 14. In December 2014, (Paper No. 14-656) the Executive, with the support of the OSC, agreed that officers should investigate the feasibility of co-locating a community bookshop, namely Northcote Books (NB), within the new library, subject to the agreement of GLL. The detail of the investigation and the outcome is provided in Appendix 2.
- 15. The space identified (35 square metres) for the community bookshop will be incorporated into the core library provision on the ground floor.

NEW PROPOSED LIBRARY

- 16. A new library build will allow the opportunity to incorporate the full range of services expected by residents as part of the 21st century library offer all in accordance with the Council's strategies for the provision of the service. The library will consist of adaptable spaces that can be constantly re-thought, refreshed and re-configured to make them interesting and ensuring that they meet demands for new and evolving services. The spaces will be safe, comfortable and inviting and will appeal to visitors of all ages.
- 17. The library will be slightly larger than the existing one and constructed over three floors, each with a range of services, as indicted below. (See layout plans in Appendix 3)

(A) GROUND FLOOR

- (i) Security system - Required as part of the Council's obligation to ensure the safety of its property by detecting and deterring the removal/theft of library stock. This is quite a sizable piece of equipment and must be placed as close to the entrance as possible in order to be effective.
- (ii) Self-issue kiosks - It is necessary to locate the kiosks as close to the entrance of the library so that customers returning library items can cancel their loans upon entry and place returned items on the shelving trolleys, which will be adjacent to the kiosks. Customers wishing to borrow items will complete this action as they leave the library allowing them to go to the staff desk to pay for any charged items.
- (iii) Staff pods/desk - It is important that a staff desk is located as close to the entrance of the library as possible in order to ensure that customers needing assistance can approach staff immediately upon entering the building. Staff at this station will also police the security system, manage use of the buggy area, assist customers' use of the self-issue kiosks and issue charged items to customers. Concentration of staff in the area will

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- reduce the requirement for staff on other floors, allowing remaining staff to focus on other customer facing and development tasks.
- (iv) Public access computers and catalogues - As stock will be spread across two floors, it is desirable that customers have access to the catalogue upon entry to the library, allowing them to make informed use of the library guiding, which will be important in a library of this type of design. Although it is envisaged that the bulk of public access PCs will be concentrated on the first floor, it is necessary to ensure some provision on the ground floor to mitigate against lift failures or customers that, for any reason, are unwilling or unable to access the service on the first floor.
 - (v) Shelving and display pods - Given the very busy lifestyles of many residents, it is necessary to cater to those individuals who want to visit the library to make a quick selection from currently popular and newer titles. It is also considered desirable to be able to display as much popular fiction as possible on the ground floor.
 - (vi) Audio-visual stock – As many residents may not be aware that DVDs can be loaned, it is necessary to locate DVDs on the ground floor in order to increase visibility. Location on the ground floor will maximise exposure of this income generating stock, which will increase the potential for GLL to invest in service development.
 - (vii) Newspapers and periodicals - As a coffee area is included in the design, it is felt that newspapers and periodicals should, at least in part, be located on the ground floor in close proximity to the coffee area. This follows the very successful commercial model obvious in many high-street chains.
 - (viii) Study space and seating -It is necessary to provide some study space and seating on this floor for those who are browsing or wish to study but may not be able or willing to access the upper floors. It will also be advantageous to have additional study spaces at times of peak demand e.g. exam periods.
 - (ix) Children's Library and buggy parking area - As the Children's Library in the existing building is very heavily used, it is necessary to locate it on the ground floor in the new building. This will facilitate access; particularly should the lift ever be out of operation. There will also be a requirement for a large buggy parking area, to cope with the significant numbers of buggies in the library at Rhyme Time sessions, currently an average of 50-60 per session.

(B) FIRST FLOOR

- (i) Adult book collection – It is envisaged that the majority of adult book stock, with the exception of 'quick choice' and the most popular fiction genres and non-fiction categories will be located on the first floor. Effective guiding to, and of this stock, will be an important requirement.
- (ii) Public access PCs – Although there will be some public access PCs on the ground floor, the bulk of the provision will be on the first, and possibly, second floor.
- (iii) Study spaces – It is intended to locate study spaces on the first floor, as this will be a quieter area than the ground floor and will also house the majority of the non-fiction collection. There will be provision for both silent and group study.

(C) SECOND FLOOR

- (i) Business Suite - There is a vast potential market for a Business Suite, particularly from those considering embarking on a new business and those who are self-employed or semi retired. The data below, provided by the Council's Business Development Team, indicates the potential levels of demand.
 - (a) 28,100 self-employed residents representing 16% of the employed workforce of Wandsworth recorded for the period October 2014 to September 2015.
 - (b) 8,605 new enterprises formed during the period 2012 to 2014.
 - (c) The 2015, UK business count for Wandsworth revealed 14,755 micro business (0-9 employees), 895 small (10-49) and 135 Medium (50-249).
- (ii) It is intended that the Business Suite will incorporate the following:
 - (a) IT – state of the art business and communications technologies.
 - (b) Adaptable work spaces.
 - (c) Meeting rooms for hire for seminars, large and small meetings, training sessions etc.
 - (d) Information resources in both printed and electronic format.
 - (e) Supporting library stock.

PROPOSED CONSULTATION

- 18. It is proposed to undertake a consultation exercise principally regarding the provision of the new library building and associated services as outlined in this paper. This consultation will seek the views of key stakeholders and residents and would include various forms of engagement with consultees including proposed walk in sessions during the consultation period. Whilst the focus for the consultation will be on the library service provision, it is acknowledged that there will be reference to the associated developments on each of the sites. Subject to any recommendations being supported and approved; if the developments were to proceed they would be subject to detailed consideration as part of any planning application process. As such, it is proposed that consultation on the development proposal would be on the basis of outline details being provided.
- 19. So that this consultation process is fully inclusive it is proposed that the ward councillors are involved very closely with all aspects of the development of the consultation documentation. Whilst ward councillors will be fully involved and able to contribute, the overarching purpose is to make the process inclusive and ensure that everyone who should be consulted is. The timetable for the consultation, equally to be discussed and determined, in conjunction with the ward Councillors.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 20. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken – see Appendix 4 attached, and it concludes that the proposed change in library service would have no negative impact on any equality groups.

**COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND
REGENERATION (PROPERTY SERVICES)**

21. The feasibility study involved the following two sites as indicated in Appendix 1:
- (a) Phase 1 is the Chatham Hall/Staplehurst Court site which consists of Chatham Hall which is hired to a nursery and other users as well as garages that are let on licences; and
 - (b) Phase 2 is the site of the existing Northcote Library.
22. Both sites are held freehold by the Council and the proposed development meets the objectives of the Corporate Asset Strategy to use assets to support and enhance service delivery, promote user satisfaction and deliver value for money.
23. The close proximity of the development sites is advantageous as they enable continuity of service provision in the existing library whilst the proposed new one is constructed and would support a seamless move of the library from the existing building into the new one across the road.
24. The proposed accommodation over the two sites is as follows:
- (a) On the Chatham Hall/Staplehurst Court site – phase 1:
 - (i) A new three floor library with an overall net floor area of 697 square metres compared to the existing which is approximately 605m square metres. A new community hall and ancillary spaces including a meeting room. The gross area of the community hall is 272 square metres, a little less than the 300 square metres that currently exists.
 - (ii) Nine flats built over the new hall.
 - (b) On the existing library site – phase 2:
 - (i) Two retail units over the basement and ground floors which could be divided.
 - (ii) Eight flats on the upper floors.
- Overall there will be a net increase in floor area within the new library. Both sites must be developed for the scheme to be viable.
25. The redevelopment of Chatham Hall requires the temporary closure of the building whilst the library and new community centre are constructed. This will be an inconvenience to the users of the hall, which include:
- (a) Alphabeth Nursery
 - (b) Fancy Footwork Studio Ltd
 - (c) Hatha Yoga
 - (d) Mei Chuan Academy
 - (e) Rugby Tots SW London Ltd
26. Enable, the Council's leisure and culture services provider, that manages Chatham Hall on behalf of the Council, advise that it is unlikely that users can be temporarily

relocated to other spaces in the area as they are unaware of available suitable venues locally. However, officers will work with the users and provide assistance in identifying suitable alternative premises which will include a review of the Council's own property portfolio as well as a wider search of the area.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

27. The Director of Finance comments that the feasibility costs incurred have been met from within existing budgets. Public consultation costs will also need to be met from within existing approved budgets. Further due diligence will be the subject of a further report alongside the outcome of the consultation exercise.
28. Whilst the main focus of this report relates to the proposed new library to replace the existing Northcote Library, it is important (as made clear in the comments of the Assistant Director of Housing and Regeneration) to recognise that the financial viability of the proposal will be contingent on the associated developments intended for the existing site to underpin the scheme. The phasing of the developments will likely require the risk of the initial investment from developing the Chatham Hall site for the new library to be borne by the Council if private sector partners are to be attracted for the phase 2 commercial development underpinning the overall scheme. Capital bids for the investment would be made at the appropriate time should a future decision be made to proceed with implementation.
29. The management of Chatham Hall is currently included within the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services contract with Enable, the staff mutual established in October 2016. Temporary closure and redevelopment of the site would therefore require an adjustment to remove the site from the contract and/or compensation to be paid for the period of closure, which would be subject to further discussions and negotiation and would be factored into the project costs as part of the financial viability studies. The replacement of the existing library with the new purpose built facility would require variations to the Libraries contract, assessing the core cost of library provision in relation to the new compared with the existing site, and the consequences of the expected increase in income generating potential of the new site, given that income from library facilities is currently retained by GLL.

CONCLUSION

30. The opportunity to provide a purpose built library, providing the full range of modern services and with the adaptability to incorporate future developments, will significantly enhance the lives and opportunities of Northcote residents. This also fits in with the Council's vision regarding the development and enhancement of the library and heritage service.
31. The feasibility study has scoped a mixed use scheme that could deliver a new library and community centre and could be financially viable without interrupting the library service during construction. If the outcome of the consultation exercise is both positive and supportive then seeking and obtaining planning consent would be a key milestone to achieving delivery of this project.

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The Town Hall,
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Paul Chadwick
Director of Environment and Community Services

14th November 2016

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the committee secretary (Martin Newton, 020 8871 6488; email mnewton@wandsworth.gov.uk) can supply if required.