

Community Engagement and Wellbeing

222 Upper Street, London, N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing

Meeting of: Employment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Ward(s): All

---

## Subject: Libraries Quarter 4 2022-23 Performance Report

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The council has in place a suite of corporate performance indicators to help monitor progress in delivering the outcomes set out in the council's Corporate Plan. These indicators are in the process of being refreshed, with a view to more accurately measuring libraries' contribution to strategic council priorities and will be drawn up following the Community Spaces Review, implementing the recommendations from it. Progress on key performance measures is reported through the council's Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability to residents and to enable challenge where necessary.
- 1.2. This report sets out Quarter 4 2022-23 progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Libraries outcome area, for which the Employment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee has responsibility.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To review the performance data for Q4 2022/23 for measures relating to Library Services.

### 3. Background



- 3.1. The performance measures covered by this report are largely based on the Corporate Performance Indicator set, which is refreshed annually. The 21/22 data set for the number of library visits was incomplete; due the libraries reopening in

Q3. The indicators for 22/23 represent the first complete data set since 19/20. The performance indicator of the number of residents engaging with community activities is new.

## 4. Outstanding issues and queries from Q3 2022/23 Performance Report

- 4.1. Q3 report.  
Update on warmer spaces as per presentation to leadership via Cllr O'Halloran's portfolio.

## 5. Quarter 4 2022-23 Performance Update

PI No.	Indicator	Better to be	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Yearly trend-line	2022/23 Q1	2022/23Q2	2022/23 Q3	2022/23 Q4	In-year trend
<b>Corporate objective: Help residents get the skills they need to secure a good job</b>												
CYP17	Number of library visits	↑	1,065,700	1,076,355	Not available due to Covid	342,384 (Q3 & Q4 only)		185,321	367,981	558,737	766,000	
CYP18 (NEW)	Number residents engaging with community activities	↑						9323	18,507	30,320	43,986	

### 5.1. Corporate Indicator: Number of library visits: Q4 cumulative figure 766,000 (target 800,000)

5.2. As resident confidence has increased over the year, visitor figures increased when proportionally compared to last year, where there were 342,384 library visits over two quarters. The libraries service played an important role in supporting the corporate Cost of Living campaign by promoting the buildings as warm and welcome spaces. As part of this co-ordinated council response to the crisis, library staff have had increased involvement with local partners, such as Age UK Islington spaces, promoting the library services as a free means of support at community events and networking sessions. In addition, the service formally abolished licence fees, which received positive media coverage in the BBC and Evening Standard and was also something that users gave compliments about.

#### Factors Affecting Visits

- 5.3. Despite the increase in usage, the service still fell short of the target of 800 000, which is likely to have been for a number of service-related reasons:
- 5.4. Q1 – West Library was closed for the whole of April for building works – although users were redirected to local provision, it is likely that this would have affected visit numbers. All libraries’ opening hours were affected by the additional bank holiday closure for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee
- 5.5. Q2 - This summer period was the first time for two years that many families were able to go away and exceptional summer weather is likely to have impacted on visitor figures, as the public prefer to be outdoors. The summer period was quiet overall and attendance at some of the summer events was lower than anticipated. In addition to this, there was a 3-day closure at Mildmay Library caused by storm damage and all libraries were affected by the additional Bank Holiday for the Queen’s funeral, reducing library opening hours in September.
- 5.6. Q3 and Q4 saw an increase in visitor figures in comparison to the previous quarters as well as an increase in attendance at our events and activities. This is likely to have been due to libraries involvement in the Cost of Living campaign and the abolishing of fines – the service has received positive comments about this move, which has likely resulted in residents returning to the library service.

## User Habits

- 5.7. Over the period of the pandemic, the libraries service promoted online resources and has continued to offer these as an additional aspect of the offer. E-books, e-audio books and a wide selection of newspapers and magazines are available to users via an app on their smartphones. It is likely that for some users, the digital shift has changed their behaviours and how they interact with libraries, impacting upon visitor numbers.
- 5.8. **Corporate Indicator: Number of residents engaging with community activities: Q4 cumulative figure 43,986 (target 32, 000).**
- 5.9. The service performed well in this new performance indicator, overachieving on the target of 32 000 community activities. It engaged residents across the borough with relevant, fun and meaningful activities for free, delivered in all libraries. The activities cut across a range of themes under the library 'read, learn, connect' mission.
- 5.10. The total number of residents engaging with the activities delivered by library services represents 15% of the Islington population, which shows the breadth of the reach of the library service. Management are keen to capitalise on this by aligning activities to the priorities outlined in the upcoming Reading Strategy and by marketing the activities further to attract more residents and showcase the service.
- 5.11. The service's strong performance against this indicator is reflective of the diverse, engaging and relevant activities that are delivered from library spaces. Some of the theme-based events that were delivered over the course of the year include a Rub a Dub event celebrating the King's Coronation; author talks delivered by DJ Daddy Ernie and music producer Dennis Bovell and another by Ben Arronovitch for Black History Month; Eid craft events and many others.
- 5.12. In addition to themed one-off events, the libraries service boasts a broad offer for residents of all ages, including Lego club, games club, gadget support, baby bounce, yoga for older people, chess club and lots more.
- 5.13. The service provided a range of art and craft activities for the half-term break that were well-attended. Some of the activities included making a pop-up bird, creating a lift-the-flap landscape and using pipe-cleaners to make a superhero.
- 5.14. **Capturing Library Performance and Impact going forward**
- 5.15. The Libraries Service collects data on a wide range of performance indicators that are not currently reported on. As a result, the contribution it makes to corporate and political priorities is not reported on in a manner that does it justice. To address this, the management recommend a blend of qualitative and quantitative data, so as to reflect performance and the user experience. The 'hard data' that is collected by libraries that can be used for quarterly performance reporting include:
- Issue figures for all stock, including e-stock
  - The usage of PCs

- The number of active members
- The number of issues and visits per opening hour.

5.16. Qualitative measures will form a vital part of this new reporting, reflecting library performance, the high quality of service delivery and the impact the service has on users' lives. This would include updates on activities delivered over the reporting period, detailing the title of the activity, location and number of users engaged. The locations and themes of the activities will highlight the service's contribution to the equality agenda and how it supports local people through meaningful activity. The service could also report on user feedback, both positive and negative, to highlight the quality of the service.

5.17. Thus, the proposed indicators for the next Libraries E&R scrutiny are as follows:

- The number of active members.
- The issue figures for stock, with subcategories for stock type.
- PC usage.
- Library activities (number and potential break down of categories).
- User feedback.

## 5.18. **Community Spaces Review**

5.19. Leaders within the Community Engagement and Wellbeing directorate commissioned an assessment into community spaces within the borough, with an aim of mapping the current landscape and presenting options for a new model that identifies opportunities for transformation. The review covered Libraries, Community Partnerships and Access Islington.

5.20. The initial assessment has concluded and leaders within Community Engagement are planning a transformation process around this.

# 6. Implications

## 6.1. **Financial Implications**

6.1.1. The cost of providing resources to monitor performance is met within each service's core budget.

## 6.2. **Legal Implications**

6.2.1. There are no legal duties upon local authorities to set targets or monitor performance. However, these enable us to strive for continuous improvement.

## 6.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

6.3.1. The libraries service is committed to contributing towards achieving a net-zero carbon Islington by 2030. One of the outstanding activities that was delivered by

the service, in collaboration with the Reading Agency and All Change arts, was an environmental event that inspired young people to become environmental activists to promote a cleaner, greener world. Students from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School and St Aloysius RC College were invited to the Platform creative youth club for a programme of spoken word performance and an exclusive Q&A with the author panel. The students created their own origami seed packets, completed a 'circle of concern, influence and control' activity about their worries for the planet, and wrote their own pledges for the local environment and Islington Council. One student suggested Islington Council should publish poems or music to encourage people to take action on climate change, while another asked for more events about environmentalism, in their pledge.

#### **6.4. Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 6.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 6.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because this report is looking at historical performance information and does not relate to a new policy, procedure, function, service activity or financial decision. Where a new policy, procedure, function, service activity or financial decision is mentioned in the commentary within this report, there should be a separate Equalities Impact Assessment for that specific development, rather than attached to the reporting on performance for any measures that this would affect.
- 6.4.3. The libraries service continues to offer a service that is inclusive, accessible, welcoming and relevant to all. Addressing inequalities is central to the 'Read, Learn, Connect' mission of libraries, and is reflected in opening hours; the online offer (where e-audiobooks support those who have visual conditions access library materials); the activities offered (such as Eid craft events); thematic displays (such as for Pride month).
- 6.4.4. Operating within the Directorate of Community Engagement and Wellbeing, working alongside the Equalities team and reporting to the Executive member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion, the Library Service is committed to developing

an even stronger offer that addresses inequalities by mapping the offer to need and addressing gaps where they may be identified.

## 7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

7.1. This report has presented a detailed narrative describing the performance of Libraries Services in Quarter 4 2022-23. Where performance is off target, a summary of the actions being undertaken to improve performance has been included.

### Appendices:

- None

### Background papers:

- None

### Final report clearance:

Signed by:

**Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing**

Date: **Date the report received final approval**

Report Author: Akeel Ahmed – co-ordinated by Adam White, Head of Data & Performance, Children's Services and Burak Cingi, Business Intelligence Project Manager, Children's Services

Tel: x2657 and x4116

Email: [adam.white@islington.gov.uk](mailto:adam.white@islington.gov.uk) and [burak.cingi@islington.gov.uk](mailto:burak.cingi@islington.gov.uk)