Report of: Assistant Director of Community Learning and Libraries

Meeting of: Employment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Date:

Ward(s): All

Subject: Libraries Quarter 2 2023-24 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 2 2023-24 progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Library Service outcome area, for which the Employment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee has responsibility.

2. Recommendations

2.1. To review the performance data for Q2 2023/24 for measures relating to Library Services.

3. Background

The performance measures covered by this report are largely based on the Corporate Performance Indicator set, which is refreshed annually. The performance indicators for the library service are:

Number of library visits

Number of library issues (physical and online)

Number of active members – i.e. someone who has used their library ticket in the past 12 months

In addition to these Corporate Performance indicators, this report shall include data/feedback for the following:

PC usage
Library activities – number of attendees at events
User feedback

PI No.	Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Better to be	2023/24 Q1	2023/24 Q2	2023/24 Q3	2023/24 Q4	In-year trend	Notes on measure, targets and benchmarking
Empowering strong and supportive communities										
CEW1	Number of library visits	342,384 (Q3 & Q4 Only)	766,000	↑	202,394	210,045				Target **800,000** per annum
CEW2	Number of Library issues (online)	221,353	253,644	↑	62,469	69,306				Target **256,180** (1% increase on 2022/23) per annum
CEW3	Number of Library issues (physical)	444,146	515,227	↑	125,800	131,654				Target **520,379** (1% increase on 2022/23) per annum
CEW4	Active Library members	17,463	20,516	↑	N/A	N/A				Target **22,346** (5% increase on 2022/23) per annum

3.1. Corporate Indicator CEW1: Number of library visits: Q2 figure 202,394 (target 800,000)

Visits	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
2023/24	202,394	210,045			412,439
2022/23	185,321	182,660	190,756	207,263	766,000

3.2. Visitor figures for Q2 are above the quarterly target of 200,000, an increase that continues the upward trend in visits seen over the majority of 2022/23. In response to the cost of living crisis, the service formally abolished fines and waived outstanding fines which was received with positive feedback from users and media recognition. This decision, and the marketing messages that went around may have resulted in increased visits.

3.3. **Corporate Indicator CEW2: Number of online library issues Q2: 69,396**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
2023/24	62,384	69,306			131,780
2022/23	62,100	61,176	64,470	65,898	253,644

3.4. This is a new corporate indicator that aims to highlight the breadth of the library offer and the uptake of online and e-resources. The issues here show the take-up of a number of resources: e-books; e-audio books; e-newspapers and e-magazines that users can access via Libby, Borrowbox and other library apps.

3.5. **Corporate Indicator CEW3: Number of library issues physical Q2 125,800**

Issues	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
2023/24	125,800	131,654			257,454
2022/23	123,620	128,881	126,756	135,970	515,227

3.6. The library service continues to promote physical and online stock which usually sees usage peak in quarters 3 and 4.

3.7. **Corporate Indicator CEW4: Active library members Q2 20,516**

3.8. Target of 21,541 which is a 5% increase on the figure achieved in 2022/23.

3.9. This data is only available at year end. The trend for the active members for the last four years is as follows:

2022/23 - 20,541
2021/22 – 17,463
2021/21 - 6,954
2019/20 - 26,821.

3.10. **PC Usage**

3.11. All of the libraries offer public computers which are free to use. In addition to using the software on the machines and accessing the internet, users can print and scan from them. There are a total of 123 computers across all of the 10 libraries.

3.12.	Within the digital offer, all libraries offer free Wi-Fi. The last few years have seen user habits change, with a steady reduction in the demand for public computers and an increase in demand for usage of Wi-Fi, enabling users to use their own devices. Several reasons for this are likely to be the affordability of internet-enabled devices, such as tablets and smartphones. In addition, over the course of the pandemic, several partners, including Adult Community Learning launched laptop and tablet grant schemes that gave residents in need of devices something they could use to access the internet. The service has responded to these changes in habits by modernising the layout where possible, increasing the amount of study desking with power for usage and retaining PCs where demands need to be met.

3.13.	The PC booking system provides detailed reports on the uptake of the public PCs, with usage currently standing at circa 50% take up of available sessions. The data below indicate higher usage of PCs in libraries that have more of them and have longer opening hours.

3.14.	In Quarter 2, **18,215** hours of computer usage across all 10 libraries was recorded, broken down as below:

Library	Number of Hours Q1	Number of Hours Q2
Archway	1,509	1,611
Cat & Mouse	360	436
Central	6,125	6,794
Finsbury	2,216	2,165
Lewis Carroll	2	5
Mildmay	851	969
N4	2,580	2,751
North	1,240	1,264
South	1,057	1,244
West	984	976
Total	**16, 924**	**18,215**

4.0

Number of residents attending events and activities in Libraries

4.1   In 2022/23, the service recorded 43,970 attendees to a wide range of events across the library service. This was above the target of 32,000 and represented approx. 15% of the Islington population.

4.2   The free activities on offer cut across a range of themes under the Library Service strapline of Read, Learn, and Connect. They are responsive to community need and support the Universal Library Outcomes identified by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in their strategic ambition for public libraries, 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England'. Uptake of these engaging and creative sessions was positive, with **14,316** attendees attending a wide range of events in Quarter 2. In addition to bespoke and themed activities, some of the regularly timetabled activities include:

- Weekly under-fives and baby bounce sessions
- Chess and games clubs for adults and children
- Reading groups for adults and children
- Gentle exercise class for older adults
- Gadget support sessions
- Knit and natter groups
- Lego clubs for children
- Toy libraries.

Library	Number of Attendees at events Q1	Number of Attendees at events Q2
Archway	1,699	1,697
Cat & Mouse	785	1,376
Central	2,149	2,457
Finsbury	1,292	1,357
Lewis Carroll	811	782
Mildmay	1,367	1,707
N4	931	847
North	1,358	1,520
South	710	943
West	1,481	1,630
Total	**12,583**	**14,316**

4.3   Q2 included the Summer Reading Challenge as well as the summer holiday activities for children and families. Many of these activities linked in with the theme of the Summer Reading Challenge which this year was Get Set, Read and made the link between physical wellbeing and reading.

We had a total of 1,946 children start the challenge with 878 completing it - read 6 books over the summer period. This is approx. 45% of all starters.

In 2022 we had 1,246 children start the challenge with 535 completing it (approx. 42%)

Library	Number of children completing the Summer Reading Challenge 2023	Number of children completing the Summer Reading Challenge 2022
Archway	123	74
Cat & Mouse	49	45
Central	174	111
Finsbury	92	41
Lewis Carroll	61	45
Mildmay	65	31
N4	109	46
North	58	33
South	72	63
West	75	46
Total	**878**	**535**

4.4　In Q2 our events and activities included 68 summer holiday activities for children and families. Highlights of Q2 include:

- Ranger Stu and his animals – at 6 libraries
- Little Angel make a puppet – at 4 libraries
- Institute of Physics - Mimi's rainbow adventure – North Library
- British Library animal sensory story-time event – Archway Library
- Create cheer squad pom poms & megaphone from recycled materials – Finsbury Library
- Come and design and make your badge or fridge magnet – Mildmay Library
- West Library opened on Sunday 2 July for Cally Festival
- Launch of Toy Library at Central Library – 18 September.

In addition to events and activities library staff have carried out a large amount of community outreach in Q2 including:

- Visits to most of the primary schools to promote the Summer Reading Challenge
- Cost of living events
- Jean Stokes summer party
- Stay and play sessions at Children's centres.
- Age UK Staying well conference.

4.5　The library service plays a key role in supporting local priorities and services that deliver on them. Some of the activities that were run in local libraries in Q2 included:

- Voluntary Action Islington at Finsbury, Archway, Central and N4 Library to talk to residents about volunteering opportunities in the borough.
- Targeted Youth Services (Zone youth club) using community Room at C&M while their building is being refurbished July – Nov 2023, Tues, Wed and Thursday evening.
- Central library Gallery used for exhibition of art work from schools competition to encourage girls to become involved in sport and physical activity. July 2023
- Bright Futures running Education Support surgery at North for parents and carers - August.
- Water and sun protection at Libraries for distribution to homeless people during hot weather.
- Bright Futures – lunch bunch registration support F and Mildmay
- Sim cards from Good Things Foundation available at Central
- 2 X engagement events at Mildmay to update residents on refurb plans (18 & 20 July)
- Bookswap started at Brickworks community centre.
- Islington carers hub using West Library hall for a session on memory loss and dementia 21.9.23
- Age UK using North Library hall for session on lasting power of attorney 12.9.23
- Mildmay Library hosting consultation sessions on Liveable neighbourhoods scheme September.

5.0 Feedback from users

5.1 The library service receives a large amount of feedback from users. Some of this is received in libraries via customer talk back forms, some comes in via the website, on Twitter or from contact Islington.

5.2 In Q2 a total of 29 compliments/suggestions, comments and complaints were received.

5.3 Examples include:

- Libraries are fantastic. I have read 4 great e books and 3 physical books are reserved and waiting at the branch around the corner (on Twitter)
- Thank you for all the baby bounce songs and rhymes, It is always a special event during the week. Talk back form West Library
- We have loved the summer events. Today with Ranger Stu was a delight (on Twitter)
- User wants to commend Oby for her outstanding and dedicated service. Talk back from Cat & Mouse Library
- User found the computers very slow. Talk back form N4 Library
- User found the Wi-Fi very slow over the last few weeks. Talk back form Central Library

In addition to these in Q2 we received a large amount of feedback from users about the Summer Reading Challenge. Examples include:

Feedback from children	Feedback from parents/carers

The Summer Reading Challenge has made me feel confident about reading harder books. I enjoy reading books with a twist in it.	A really good way to keep kids engaged and excited about reading, specially in the summer when they are in "no school mode" Its made the passion for reading continue uninterrupted into the new school year.
I liked when we talked about the books with the people at the library.	The Summer Reading Challenge was very good as this led me to read more books along with the kids. Librarians were very friendly when questioning kids as it was a two-way dialogue. Well done!
I am reading longer books and really enjoying it.	My daughter is reluctant to read so that was a great motivator.
I discovered that I love books.	My child really got into the challenge. He was keen to complete it and has been waiting for his medal. He enjoyed talking to the librarians.
I like the Summer Reading Challenge because it gave me a chance to read new books and talk about them.	I really enjoyed the challenge and reading with my daughter. She learnt so much.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

6.2   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. All libraries are collection points for recycling bags and food waste bags.

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 and Black History months).

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 2 2023-24. 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:

**Assistant Director Community Learning & Libraries
Akeel Ahmed**

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