Adults’ Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Beyond The Cover - Novel Ideas for Buckinghamshire Libraries
Executive Summary

Over recent years declining library use nationally and locally has resulted in library cuts and closures and falls in traditional book loans. Libraries have had to change and adapt to meet the needs of their users just to ensure their survival. This review has identified the national situation for libraries and compared it locally. Members went on visits to libraries within Buckinghamshire and other local authorities in the South East that have been recognised as best practice for their innovation and success in reversing the trend of declining use. From these visits Members have gained a picture of the changing demand and requirements of residents for a library service that can remain sustainable for the future.

Members learned that a successful library service needs the involvement of partners to develop well invested modern central libraries with a sustainable branch library network, supported by a combination of community and mobile library services.

The future success of libraries in the County is dependent on a combination of well invested libraries supported by a resourced promotion and marketing strategy to highlight the appeal of County library services. Members identified the importance of increasing the number of complementary activities offered at libraries. By involving partners in the early development of libraries, facilities can be tailored to individual communities to increase usage. Successful models in the County should be replicated, such as Buckingham library where County and District Council services combine with Adult Learning. Also the new High Wycombe library should be emulated, which is forecast to be successful in attracting many new users by making good use of flexible library spaces and the innovative dedicated teenager area ‘headspace’. Increasing the number of activities at these libraries has been successful and they are managing to reverse the trend of declining use seen previously.

The review showed that involving local volunteers in running and supporting libraries is important to ensure future sustainability. Visits to two of the County’s community libraries (CL) and Cambridgeshire’s Library Access Points emphasised to Members that the County Council needed to reward the dedication and devotion of volunteers for making a success of their community libraries. Members have recommended that the County Council enter a new trial service level agreement with two of the CLs in the County to provide a package of assistance in return for meeting agreed targets and standards. If successful this should be repeated with the other CLs in the County and offered as an option to ensure their future viability.

Key to the sustained success of libraries in Buckinghamshire is the securing of increased revenue for improvements. Members highlight the need to increase sales within individual branches and recommend that any monies generated be ring-fenced for that library to reinvest in improvements within. Members believe that securing funds for on site improvements will enthuse staff to be innovative in sales ideas and further create improvements to libraries.

Whilst the committee has made recommendations for improvements in this report, Members recognise that the library service and partners are making huge strides in improving library services across the County for residents. By implementing the recommendations below, Members of the Adults’ Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee believe that further improvements to library services will be achieved.
helping to ensure the future continued success of the service and helping to reverse the decline in library use.

The Adults’ Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommends:

**Recommendation 1:**
Develop a refurbishment and renewal programme for central library facilities in urban areas in Buckinghamshire for commencement when funding allows. (Paragraphs 19 - 27)

**Recommendation 2:**
The library service to actively pursue further opportunities for Buckinghamshire libraries to become multi-agency centres with co-location of partners, providing community services in a one-stop shop facility. (Paragraphs 28 - 34)

**Recommendation 3:**
The County Council to embrace the commitment of volunteers in providing a community library by entering a service level agreement supporting their services in return for meeting agreed criteria. (Paragraphs 35 - 45)

**Recommendation 4:**
Produce a targeted volunteer recruitment and training protocol for increased use of volunteers and ‘Friends of’ groups to provide additional staff and resource to libraries. (Paragraphs 46 - 49)

**Recommendation 5:**
In consultation with stakeholders and residents review the provision of mobile library services timetabling and stop locations especially in areas served by community libraries. (Paragraphs 50 - 51)

**Recommendation 6:**
Revenue generated from sales within each library should be ring-fenced for re-investment back into that library. (Paragraphs 52 - 53)

**Recommendation 7:**
Increase the use of modern promotion and marketing activities to raise the profile of libraries. (Paragraphs 54 - 58)

**Recommendation 8:**
The Cabinet Member to appoint a lead spokesperson to report back to the Adults’ Services Committee in 6 months time.
Introduction

1. The review of future service delivery of Buckinghamshire libraries was taken forward as a topic by the Adults’ Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2008 (see Appendix 1, scoping paper). This review was led by a task group of members who fed back on external visits and meetings to the full committee at the regular monthly meetings.

2. In a background of declining library use, Members aimed to identify options for small and large libraries, looking at the current overall pattern in the County and considering how it can change to meet future needs. The review intended to identify examples of best practice elsewhere in the country to inform how models could be developed to adapt to changing demands locally. The review aimed to improve the quality and access of library services for all current and future library users.

3. The ‘Framework for the Future’ produced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003)\(^1\) is the Government’s vision for the public library service. It concentrates on libraries’ roles in developing reading and learning, digital skills and services, community cohesion and civic values.

4. Over recent years there has been a significant shift in how the public use libraries. The headline figures nationally for library visits and book issues for 2006/07 show a pattern of decline with a drop nationally of 1.4% visits, down to 337.3 million, and book issues falling 2.6% overall to 314.7 million. Although book loans are also declining in Buckinghamshire, the fall is only half the national average at 1.49%.

5. A library’s core business can be summarised as:

   - Lending materials (books, CDs, DVDs etc);
   - Providing information and advice;
   - Providing access to IT; and
   - Providing informal learning.

6. Although national press would suggest otherwise, gone are the days when libraries are used simply for borrowing books, and quiet reading. Libraries have been evolving over recent years to meet the demands of modern users. An article from the Museums, Libraries and Archives agency (January 2008)\(^2\) suggested that:

   ‘changing social trends are a fact, books are cheaper, people are better off…the downward trend of book lending reflects this, but people are actually reading more’

The modern library continues to loan books, but also CDs, DVDs and games, it also provides internet access and can be a community centre for socialising. This review evaluates the effectiveness of Buckinghamshire’s offer compared with national best practice in an attempt to recommend a model sustainable for the future, which will meet the needs of residents.

\(^1\) Framework for the Future – Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003)
\(^2\) Public Libraries Have Massive Support But are Challenged to do Better as Annual Statistics Explode Myths (MLA, January 2008)
7. CIPFA’s Public library statistics 2006/7\textsuperscript{3} report stated that:

‘It is generally recognised that the library environment itself is seen as a key factor in encouraging greater use of libraries, alongside more convenient location, modern surroundings, amenities and increased availability of … facilities’.

8. Significant national guidance and literature has been produced to help local authorities develop a modern sustainable public library service. The report ‘Framework for the Future’ expects local service points to deliver in four related activity areas:

- Books, reading and learning;
- Community and civic values;
- Content development and digitisation and
- Capacity building.

9. Despite being one of the most affluent counties in the country Buckinghamshire County Council is one of the lowest funded local authorities. Services are constrained by low levels of government funding and libraries are no exception. In the present financial climate services are tasked with coming up with innovative ways of adapting in order to remain viable into the future. In collaboration with the library service's appraisal planned for later this year the committee’s review aims to identify options to increase library use into the future. The Council will be asked to adopt strategies to ensure the future sustainability of County library services.

10. Key priorities for Buckinghamshire County Council are the ‘localisation and personalisation’ of services with an increased focus on the user. Local strategic partnerships provide a framework for public, private and voluntary sector organisations to take forward this agenda and the library as a community hub is an ideal venue for this shared service agenda.

11. Buckinghamshire is a County of 4 large towns, a number of small market towns and many villages. Libraries are seen as the cultural and community cornerstone of these settlements. From a recent County Council residents' survey 58% of respondents said they used a library in the last 12 months showing the significant value of local libraries to communities.

Methodology

12. This review was undertaken by Members from the Adults' Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Through the review the committee has formulated ideas and recommendations for Cabinet to consider ahead of the library service’s own review later this year.

13. This review has been informed by existing literature from various sources including national government, journals and press articles. Members have been fortunate to take advantage of information provided from these sources to highlight issues already raised relevant to libraries.

\textsuperscript{3} Public Library Survey (CIPFA, 2006/07)
14. Between January and June 2008, members of the committee undertook a number of visits and meetings to gather information. The review has concentrated on the various models of libraries provided in the southeast which are regarded as best practice in and outside Buckinghamshire. Whilst this review has mainly concentrated on library buildings and facilities Members also explored associated services offered by libraries, such as the information service and home delivery service.

15. The main focus of this review concentrated on finding out what was currently being provided for residents in the County and how this compares to other authorities. Members of the committee visited a variety of libraries in the County to develop an understanding of what libraries currently look like in Buckinghamshire. Visits to both small and large libraries as well as community run libraries provided a useful insight into how services varied and had to adapt to locality and residents’ needs.

16. The review was publicised in the local press and on radio with an invitation to residents to get into contact with their views and ideas for the future of the library service, as well as the opportunity to attend public meetings to contribute.

17. Committee members spoke to representatives, staff and users of a large number of libraries to get feedback on what they thought libraries should look like in ten years time. They also received a presentation from the Friends of High Wycombe Libraries (FOH WL, www.fohwl.plus.com). This is a charity set up to support libraries in High Wycombe by raising funds for the library improvements and supporting staff with activities where they can.

18. A full list of contributors is available in Appendix 2

Findings

Library Facilities and Presentation

19. Members visited both the old and new High Wycombe libraries. The general impression was that the new library was overdue - both time and lack of refurbishment had taken its toll on the old library, making it a dull, dark and unattractive environment. The variety of activities on offer, magazines, DVDs, IT, reference and children’s library were significant, however the building and cramped facilities did not provide an inviting environment. Members were impressed with the variety of media available for black and minority ethnic communities and were pleased to see a commitment to providing resources for visually impaired users, including a large selection of large print and audio books. The transfer of these materials and continued investment in this area is welcomed for the new library.

20. Members were given a tour of the new High Wycombe library, which is centrally located in the new Eden shopping centre. The new library is spread over 4 floors
and is a state of the art facility, combining an enlarged selection of books, study areas, flexible teaching areas and a ‘headspace’ area dedicated to teenagers.

21. The new HW library integrates modern design over four floors as well as traditional features, with the inclusion of the stain glassed window and book of remembrance as reminders of the old library and High Wycombe’s heritage. Up to date technology is in use in the library with a high dependency on self service, including the checking in and out of books.

22. Members’ visits to other authorities further highlighted the importance of providing modern, up to date libraries in attractive surroundings. The Winchester Discovery Centre was an example of a newly refurbished library which was modern and inviting, providing real appeal as a venue to visit and return to on a regular basis. The environment was clean, fresh and light, offering a comfortable spot for regular and new library users.

23. Library representatives from Winchester, Tower Hamlets and Newham agreed that there is no perfect library model that meets the needs of their varying communities and instead they need to be tailored to communities’ requirements. For example, in Winchester, the emphasis was on combining arts, performance and learning in one facility. This library had a very impressive museum and performance hall. By providing a variety of attractions the library is more appealing and people who may not traditionally use a library were encouraged to visit. In contrast 65% of Newham’s residents are from ethnic minorities and so services need to be accessible to this diverse population. Initiatives to improve usage include provision of computer terminals listing weekly social housing availability and facilities for paying bills, as well as classes tailored specifically to different ethnic groups.

24. The addition of a café within a library seemed to be welcomed by all users in both Tower Hamlets and Winchester. The café provided an informal meeting space for regular users of the library and potential users, as well as a reason to visit the library, which in turn could result in new library users.

25. In addition to the options mentioned previously, Members saw examples of where libraries had provided crèches, a diverse range of adult learning sources, dance and complementary therapy studios and various pre-and after school activities, all adding to the library offer. The range of activities challenge the traditional view of libraries simply as places to borrow books.

26. Evidence from successful libraries across the South East indicates that the early involvement of Parish Councils and District Councils in the development of library proposals is important in ensuring that facilities meet local needs. By combining
expertise and local services within a single facility libraries will provide another opportunity for authorities to work more closely.

27. A library is perceived as a place for the community, a link between the local authority and residents, the public face of the Council. It is important to maintain this position and build on each library’s unique status in the heart of their community. By updating libraries, changing their reputation from out dated institutes to exciting modern centres for a variety of activities the tide of decline can be reversed.

**Recommendation 1:**
Develop a refurbishment and renewal programme for central library facilities in urban areas in Buckinghamshire for commencement when funding allows.

This to include consideration of the following proposals:

- Replicate the new High Wycombe model of library design in other large urban areas such as Aylesbury, ensuring that capacity is built in to cope with future expansion.
- Libraries to include the following best practice elements where possible:
  - Light and inviting environment
  - Combination of activities
  - Flexible space
  - Mixture of quiet reading and meeting space
  - Exhibition areas
  - Teaching rooms
  - Café

**Libraries in Partnership**

28. Partnerships are key to the development and ongoing survival of libraries. By combining facilities and services within one building, the extra options complement each other, increasing the number of visitors and custom. Members visited the Buckingham library. This opened in January 2007 and features a refurbished library, customer contact centre, adult learning facilities and community meeting room. Improvements have led to an increase in visitor numbers with over a thousand more visitors and 2,000 more items borrowed in July 2007 compared to the same month in 2006. The statistics for increasing use provide overwhelming support for the success of shared premises. Members reinforce the need to ensure that opportunities are explored to repeat the success of Buckingham elsewhere within the County, working in partnership with other agencies to mutual advantage.
29. Mark Blair, Newham’s Principal Libraries Manager said that:

‘libraries haven’t got a future as stand alone libraries, they need partnerships to survive and be relevant’.

Newham are currently undergoing a large reorganisation and rationalisation of service delivery points in the borough, aiming to reduce council-owned buildings from 19 to 9 over the next 3 years. This process has involved an appraisal of where the council should be delivering its services from and which points across the borough should be public facing. Building on the success of their Gate library they are going to be entering into further partnership arrangements to deliver more services from different agencies all from one building. Newham are actively working with health colleagues, police and job centres to broaden the library offer.

30. The visit to Cambourne library in Cambridgeshire showcased a brand new library in a new housing development of 3,500 homes. The library is a joint venture with a health centre. Combining use increases footfall and allows extended opening hours.

31. The opportunity to provide an access point for council services needs to be investigated and developed where possible. Members were made aware of early investigations that are underway to identify options for library developments in Beaconsfield, Amersham and Chalfont St Peter. The scheme adopted for the Buckingham centre could be followed. It is important to involve partners early on to ensure that as many services and facilities can be included, and the development satisfies the requirements of the community, predicting future demands too. The setting up of commissions or community infrastructure boards is recommended for these locations, to act as steering groups to project manage proposals and development to ensure that the chosen library options meet expectations.

The Role of Members

32. Members highlighted their unique position within local communities to discover information about local planning developments as well as local initiatives and community aspirations. Members have recounted numerous opportunities for agencies to work together to provide improved services in their communities. Improvements to local libraries, or options for co-location of libraries are sometimes only known by people with a local knowledge. Members raised the need for a named contact within the library service, to whom they could highlight their ideas for library locations or improvements in their area.

33. The role of Pathfinder in establishing joint working practices and encouraging greater collaboration between Buckinghamshire local authorities was raised by Members as a possible avenue for the joint development of libraries. Pathfinder is the project to bring together the 5 local authorities in Buckinghamshire to integrate delivery of services to obtain efficiencies. The original pathfinder bid (approved July 07) highlights a number of key areas for a more integrated council approach, including:
a) An integrated front of house approach to simplify contact for customers
b) Integrated frontline service provision where this can deliver improvements and cost savings.
c) Integrated community engagement within an agreed framework at local level.

34. As the focal point and public face of council services libraries are an opportunity to develop a collaborative approach to their development. Members highlight the need to build on the success of the Buckingham Library and the partnership approach adopted to provide a one stop shop for both District and County Council services. Members recommend the consideration of libraries within pathfinder to explore opportunities to simplify the way the public access services.

**Recommendation 2:**
The library service to actively pursue opportunities for Buckinghamshire libraries to become multi-agency centres with co-location of partners, providing community services in a one-stop shop facility.

This is to include consideration of the following proposals:

- Identification of a lead officer contact for Members, so that they can highlight library development opportunities that could be investigated as a result of new planning proposals.
- Encourage the engagement of Parish Councils in the development of library development proposals.
- Raise the profile of libraries as joint service centres within Pathfinder.

**Community Library Arrangements**

35. The last Buckinghamshire review into library services ‘Turning the Page’ identified the following three options for replacing the proposed closed libraries:

- Library links – small collections of books in Post Offices and shops
- Library Access Points – community-run libraries supported by the County Council
- Mobile library services.

After looking at the options the review recommended the replacement of branch libraries with mobile services.

36. After significant local campaigning by residents in the villages of threatened libraries, the communities were offered a lifeline to run the libraries themselves. Residents were encouraged to submit a business case for how they would run and manage their library over a three year period. Eight libraries submitted business cases to become community libraries (CL) and five were accepted.

37. Members of the committee visited two of the more successful community libraries in the county at Chalfont St Giles and Little Chalfont. Members were impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of volunteers in successfully running their
library. Visitor numbers and book loans in each library have stayed similar to the level that was achieved when they were run by the council (80-85% of previous level is being sustained), and the libraries have longer opening hours than the previous Council run libraries.

38. The CLs are still located in County Council buildings and provide many of the same services. According to CL representatives, residents in their villages think that:

“the community library is still run by the council”.

39. Representations from residents highlighted the dissatisfaction with public consultation about library changes. A number of residents felt that genuine consultation was limited and they were not offered alternative options. Residents suggested that by offering an alternative such as the chance to run their library as a community library that they would be more positive. By involving local people in the running and management of their local library the community would benefit from a locally delivered project, and increased community vitality.

40. The community library representatives stated that the support from the County Council library service in helping to set up the CLs had been:

‘excellent’.

The library service helped out by allowing the County library cad to be used at the CLs, training volunteers, allowing trained volunteers access to the library management system and providing the CLS with a cost effective IT system. However, meetings with the CL representatives highlighted that they felt more support would be appreciated and further improvements to the services they offer could be achieved by including more County library features and services such as loan and return of DVDs.

41. Members understand the risks associated with supporting the CLs, especially when the libraries were initially closed, and officers were unaware of how effectively the CLs could organise themselves. At that time there was significant uncertainty of how well they would survive without the County Council support. However, some of the community libraries have proved they can be successful, and have robust structures in place to continue to deliver.

Cambridgeshire Library Access Points

42. Members of the committee visited ‘Library Access Points’ in Cambridgeshire which are the Cambridgeshire equivalent of community libraries. The LAPs arose from public consultations about proposed library closures in 2002. The main difference between LAPs and CLs is that the LAPs are still a part of the Cambridgeshire library service under a service level agreement and are provided with support in return for meeting certain criteria and targets. Support was in the form of a £3000 start up grant, PC supply and access to up to 1000 of the County’s library stock free of charge.
43. Initially 9 out of the 10 of the closing libraries decided to open as LAPs and have been running successfully for the last 5 years. Members were encouraged by the success of the Cambridgeshire LAPs and believe that the combination of council support and community enthusiasm has resulted in the success seen. The model adopted has lead to the sustained visitor numbers and library loans seen in Appendix 3. Initially Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) provided a mobile service to those communities with a LAP, but with the ongoing success it has been possible to withdraw services or reduce hours to these communities.

44. The Buckinghamshire community libraries currently do not receive any financial assistance from the County Council and have to rent the library premises from the Council. They only have access to the County book stock that they pay for, relying on community donations and purchase of new books to increase their stock. Whilst the risks are understood, regarding maintaining levels of service and recruitment of volunteers, Members believe investing in the CLs represents value for money. The added benefits that maintaining a static library as a community facility is not easily measured. It is important to consider more than just monitoring library visitor and loans, but also to consider the added benefits of improving community cohesion and improving the Council image and satisfaction in these areas. Lesley Noblett, Head of Libraries at CCC said LAPs are:

“community facilities that have developed, which also create a kernel of community cohesion”.

45. Members recommend that as a trial a service level agreement be negotiated between the council and the two community libraries of Chalfont St Giles and Little Chalfont. In order to receive an agreed support package from the Council the CLs need to maintain contracted service standards. In order to acknowledge the importance of the community library and its role in each local area as a meeting place and library, for social interaction and information Members recommend that the library service explore opportunities to provide a combination of:

- Financial support (grant);
- Free internet and IT access;
- Access to library stock, especially DVDs/Large Print/Audio books; and
- Renegotiation of library premises rental.

**Recommendation 3:**
The County Council to embrace the commitment of volunteers in providing a community library by entering a service level agreement supporting their services in return for meeting agreed criteria.

This is to include consideration of the following proposals:

- Through a pilot project, enter a trial agreement with the community libraries of Chalfont St Giles and Little Chalfont.
- The agreement to include an element of support and funding in return for the community library meeting agreed targets and objectives.
- The service agreement to be reviewed on an annual basis with an understanding that if the level of use at the library falls below an agreed level then the County Council may withdraw its support.
- The Community libraries to provide performance information as per requirements of the library service.
In consultation with communities, remove competing mobile library services.
Any future community libraries to be supported if they provide a satisfactory business case to the County Council which meets agreed conditions and levels.

Making Greater Use of Community Enthusiasm

46. The use of volunteers in public services is well established, social services and welfare services are well known for their use of this valuable resource. The use of volunteers in many types of services is likely to expand in the future. The trend towards earlier retirement by professional and skilled workers, increased need for wider public services and the limited financial support of many agencies all suggest an increased need and use of volunteers.

47. Members of the committee welcomed a presentation from the Friends of High Wycombe Libraries, a voluntary organisation set up in February 2004 with the purpose of supporting High Wycombe’s libraries by raising funds and helping staff with events. Members were impressed by the enthusiasm of volunteers and the genuine concern an interest in the preservation of Buckinghamshire’s libraries.

48. The use of volunteers for library services such as for home delivery is well established with the WRVS managing the County program, harnessing the enthusiasm and energy of Buckinghamshire’s residents. However, in libraries themselves volunteers are not widely used, and are used on an adhoc basis only. From the example of FOHWL and the successful community libraries it is clear that involving local people in the running and management of their library improves the ownership of that facility by that community.

49. Members recognise that there are obviously constraints on tasks that volunteers can carry out in libraries as well as concerns regarding recruitment and training. However Members are confident that a well developed strategy and guidelines for volunteer management would be beneficial to the service. The recruitment of volunteers could potentially reduce service costs, whilst also increasing service availability, by increasing opening hours and numbers of staff available to help with the day to day running of the library.

Recommendation 4:
Produce a targeted volunteer recruitment and training protocol for increased use of volunteers and ‘Friends of’ groups to provide additional staff and resource to libraries.

This to include consideration of the following proposals:

- Use volunteer staff to increase capacity at libraries, providing the option to consider extending library opening hours.
- Increase local ownership and involvement with the library through volunteer recruitment events and community awareness events.
Mobile Library Services

50. Members realise the financial constraints on the library service and the need to fulfil statutory requirements to provide a level of library service to communities as well as the difficulties that providing support to CLs may create. To mitigate this Members have identified resources that can be drawn from re-organisation of the mobile library service. Comments from CL representatives indicate that if a CL was Council supported and funded it would probably be unnecessary to provide a mobile service as well. The numbers of visitors to the Little Chalfont mobile service are significantly lower than the community library resulting in negative feedback from residents. This is exacerbated when the mobile service’s scheduled stop is in direct competition with the CL. When the branch libraries were first closed in Cambridgeshire a mobile service was provided to ensure that a standard of library service was maintained. However as the Library Access Points proved their success and that they could provide a sustained level of service the mobile services to these communities were withdrawn.

51. Members recommend that a comprehensive assessment of mobile services be undertaken. A survey of users and community libraries users should be carried out to determine public opinion for the mobile service, and satisfaction with timetabling and stop locations. This information should then be used to re-assess the countywide needs and timings for the mobile service. The review should be prioritised in community library locations where there is direct competition to the mobile service.

Recommendation 5:
In consultation with stakeholders and residents review the provision of mobile library services timetabling and stop locations especially in areas served by community libraries.

This to include consideration of the following proposals:

- Develop a user survey to determine the success of the mobile service in satisfying local requirements.
- Priority to be given to areas served by community libraries to address local concerns around duplication of services.

Library Sales

52. Visits to other authorities have highlighted to members the importance of income generation in helping to secure the sustainability of library services. Through the sales of items such as cards, maps and local crafts Winchester Discovery Centre alone had managed to generate income of £20k in only 5 months since it was opened of which £10k was profit, ringfenced for reinvestment back into the library. This compares to overall reinvestable income generated from all Buckinghamshire libraries of £19k for the whole year. Acknowledged is the importance of tourism in Winchester and the potential impact in terms of sales of postcards and tourist maps etc. However, Members believe that by using innovative methods, involving local producers and craftsmen, libraries in Buckinghamshire could increase their sales to a comparable level.
53. To make a success of sales within libraries, Members believe that it is important to enthuse library staff to produce and deliver local strategies. Staff should be tasked with involving local community partners to increase income, and be rewarded with extra income being ring-fenced for their library. Members acknowledge that current library budgets and services are set based on the pooling of income by all County libraries. However, Members recommend that this current level be sustained and shared amongst the branches, and instead any additional income earned using this strategy be ring fenced for that library. Members believe this will further incentivise staff within the service. Improvements produced as a direct result of this income generation will lead to local improvements to libraries, that staff can be proud that they have had a direct input to creating.

Recommendation 6: Revenue generated from sales within each library should be ring-fenced for re-investment back into that library.

Marketing and Promotion

54. Visits to other authorities highlighted to Members the importance of promoting the library offer to residents. The use of word of mouth to recommend library services has lost its impact through time, and the provision of excellent facilities is not enough to increase uptake alone.

55. Members realised much of the success of the Tower Hamlet’s Idea Store concept was the development of a strong brand and significant resource allocated to promotion of the services to residents. The library’s website, branding and promotion showed the difference that concentrated marketing can make.

56. Marketing is an important tool in conveying messages to residents to highlight positive work being carried out by the Council. Currently in Buckinghamshire work and resource allocated to promotion of libraries is limited at only £32,000 with only one full time member of staff. Members recognise the need to do more to promote by reprioritising and refocusing this resource to more effectively convey messages to distinct audiences. By combining promotions with other services, building on the library partnerships being developed Members believe that visitor numbers will increase.

57. Members acknowledge recent improvements, with recent positive articles in the Buckinghamshire Times and local press and the promotion of talks with successful authors such as Barbara Erskine at High Wycombe library. However members believe that the production of a well researched marketing strategy combined with updated library facilities would help reverse recent trends of falling library visitor numbers in the County. The marketing strategy should use a combination of awareness raising campaigns and targeted promotions to distinct audiences. By increasing the profile of library services, together with tailored marketing, residents will become more aware of services on offer resulting in an increased uptake of the service.
58. Members received presentations from the library information service and home library service highlighting the importance of their work and how they support the full library offer. The library information service carry out talks in schools to promote to children the large amount of information available. Members agreed as school governors to promote the service to their schools and raise the profile of the service. The home library service is responsible for supplying books to house bound residents and is provided on behalf of BCC by the WRVS. The difficulty of recruiting volunteers was highlighted to Members and also the pressure of increasing demand with an increasing elderly population in Buckinghamshire. Further promotion of the value of this service is recommended to increase the number of volunteers, as well as investigation of further partnership work with other voluntary organisations to take advantage of other home services that can be combined.

**Recommendation 7:**
Increase the use of modern promotion and marketing activities to raise the profile of libraries.

This is to include consideration of the following proposals:

- Produce a well researched and targeted marketing strategy.
- Increase promotion of the library information service, especially to key audiences, including schools, colleges and adult learning centres.
- Work closer with Adult Social Care to ensure that promotion of the home library service is an important component of the In-Touch service options.

**Conclusion**

59. This review has highlighted the many innovative measures that are being developed across the country to ensure the sustainability of libraries into the future. The overwhelming impression that Members gained from undertaking visits, speaking to users and library representatives was that there is no single library model that is suitable for all areas. It is important to provide a vibrant and dynamic library to an area, tailored to the needs and requirements of that community by involving local people and partners in its development. By doing this it is possible to provide a facility which meets customer needs and takes account of potential changes into the future. Members identified the need to invest into libraries, by providing modern well designed facilities, with a diverse range of complementary activities on offer a library can appeal to existing and potential library users.

60. Members identified examples of very good work being carried out in the County and believe that combining and building on this work using the strategies described in this report will result in successful libraries sustainable for the future.

61. In undertaking this review Members were impressed with residents' sense of community spirit. Hard work and dedication by volunteers has lead to the successful management of a number of community libraries across the County as well as help in running Council run libraries. Visits to Library Access Points in Cambridgeshire and recognising the support their County Council offers to community run libraries provided evidence to Members that Buckinghamshire
should offer a similar sort of arrangement. Members will welcome the trial of County Council support for community libraries with potential roll out to other community libraries in the future.

62. Through this review Members visited a number of libraries that were recognised examples of best practice for their library facilities. Therefore this review mainly concentrated on library services in terms of their building and facilities available within and the way that this affects users’ experience. However, the review highlighted to Members the importance of marketing and promotion in delivering increases in library use. Members recommend further research be carried out in this area to identify other authorities placing an emphasis on promotion to reverse declines in library use.
### Appendix 1: Adults’ Services Overview and Scrutiny
#### Scope and Terms of Reference

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subject of the Review</strong></th>
<th>The future service delivery model for Buckinghamshire libraries</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the Review</strong></td>
<td>To carry out a review of Buckinghamshire’s library service to identify options for future service delivery models in regard to small and large libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Anticipated outcome(s)** | • Recommendations to the library service to inform potential future models.  
• Members will have gained an overall picture of current library provision across the County.  
• An understanding of current best practice nationally regarding future library provision.  
• Identify how successful options can be replicated in Buckinghamshire. |
| **Reasons for undertaking the review, including where the ideas have come from** | The decline in library usage over past 15 years.  
The opportunity to inform the Library Service’s current review of provision. |
| **What is the potential impact of the review on:** | • Improve the quality of access and provision for all library users and potential users.  
• Investigate any issues of particular or specific concern for residents from minority groups.  
• Place libraries in the forefront of the Council’s communications and community-based strategies. |
| **Link to Council Corporate Plan priorities** | **4c** Widen access to transport, culture and learning to improve the mental and physical well being of residents  
**4c** Maintain the current number of library service points  
**4c** increase the number of people receiving an “at home” library service as a percentage of the total number of older people helped to live at home  
**4c** increase online access to the Libraries Information Service throughout the county |
| **Link to Local Area Agreement Targets** | **Healthier Communities & Older People Block:**  
16. Maintain the number of people aged 50+ accessing learning programmes.  
**Economic Development & Enterprise Block:**  
54. Raise the skill base of the population. |
| Key Areas and Issues for The Review to Address | ● Current library provision  
● Best practice  
● Innovation within other authorities and successful library models  
● Library user experience |
|---|---|
| Methodology | Site visits to Buckinghamshire libraries to recognise current provision.  
Task group meetings and discussions with relevant officers.  
Site visits to top performing or innovative/successful library models.  
Desktop research to understand current library provision and options for future provision.  
Library user feedback from customer satisfaction surveys. |
| Press & Publicity | o Press release at beginning of benchmarking to encourage public to contribute  
o Use website and Bucks Times for updates  
o Interim update to press  
o Summary leaflet |
o Buckinghamshire Library Service Review (2005)  
| Evidence to be provided by: | Relevant Officers  
Librarians  
Service users through site visits and customer satisfaction surveys  
Other authorities |
| Resources required | Officer support  
Member engagement  
Library service support |
| Timetable | An overview of the findings will be presented at Adult Services OSC (2nd July 2008) |
| Reporting mechanism | Cabinet |
Appendix 2: List of Contributors

The committee would like to thank the following contributors for their valuable input:

Alan Power  Deputy Reference and Information Librarian  BCC
Amanda Brooke Webb  Head of Service  BCC
Brian Furner  Webmaster  FOHWL
Cathy Marsden  Service Development Librarian  Hampshire CC
Councillor Victor Lucas  Member for Warboys and Upwood  Cambridgeshire CC
David Allanach  Libraries Manager  Cambridgeshire CC
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Elaine Collier  District Manager  BCC
Helen Barnes  Information Specialist  BCC
Judith Curry  Project Manager  BCC
Lesley Noblett  Head of Libraries  Cambridgeshire CC
Mark Blair  Acting Principal Libraries Manager  London Borough of Newham
Mike Dewey  Chairman  FOHWL
Morris Winn  Tower Hamlets Library User  BCC
Neil Cole  Library Director  Hampshire CC
Peter Mussett  Senior Operations Manager  BCC
Sidney Soloman  Tower Hamlets Library User  BCC
Sue Jones  Community Development Coordinator  BCC
Venetia Oakley  Project Manager  WRVS

Little Chalfont Community Library Volunteers
Chalfont St Giles Community Library Volunteers
Castlefield Library Staff
Wendover Library Staff
Ivinghoe Library Staff
Buckingham Library Staff
Winchester Discovery Centre Staff
Idea Store Staff (Tower Hamlets)
The Gate Staff (Newham)
Fulbourn Library Access Point Volunteers
Cambourne Library Staff
Bassingbourn Library Access Point Volunteers
### Appendix 3: Issue and visitor figures for LAPs and small community libraries 2007/8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAP</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Opening Hours Per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Downham</td>
<td>1118</td>
<td>3939</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swavesey</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>5126</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamlingay</td>
<td>2210</td>
<td>3334</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourn</td>
<td>5375</td>
<td>6328</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassingbourn</td>
<td>4940</td>
<td>6353</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbeach</td>
<td>5408</td>
<td>12252</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulbourn</td>
<td>6357</td>
<td>13296</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddenham</td>
<td>6812</td>
<td>11075</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottisham</td>
<td>8567</td>
<td>13542</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somersham</td>
<td>9490</td>
<td>18965</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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