

CONNECTING LIBRARIES

The report of the independent advisory board on libraries to Westminster City Council
APPENDIX 2: Precis of Board Sessions



Following its initial introductory meetings, the Board convened monthly to take forward a structured work programme, exploring one thematic topic each month. At each session the board heard presentations from experts and partners, debated key issues and identified further points for consideration within each field or aspect relevant to developing a vision for the future of Westminster’s libraries and archives. The sessions were scheduled as follows:

Date	Theme Covered
October 2017	Key Issues and Some Examples of Innovation
November 2017	Effective Use of Digital
January 2018	Identity and Impact of Libraries
February 2018	The Westminster Perspective (integration with other services)
March 2018	Delivery Models
April 2018	Culture, Heritage and Cohesion
May 2018	Closed plenary session – review of findings

The following is a precis of the subject matter, substance and findings emerging from each of those thematic sessions.

This information has been used to form the foundations and backbone of the Board’s final report and recommendations. Following publication of the report, many of the issues identified for consideration could also underpin further work by the council on developing its strategy for Westminster’s libraries and archives.

THEME

1

KEY ISSUES AND SOME EXAMPLES OF INNOVATION
(10 OCTOBER 2017)

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Nick Poole, Chartered Institute of Library and Informational Professionals
- Antonio Rizzo, Head of Library Services, London Borough of Lewisham
 - Phil Storey, Citizens Advice Hammersmith and Fulham
 - Sylvia Xuhua Zhan, Friends of Charing Cross Library

KEYS POINTS NOTED

Reflecting and Responding to Needs

- **Libraries should be adaptable** – to respond to what the community wants them to be, and to be able to evolve with those changing needs and preferences over time.
- **Three features underpin the relationship a successful library can have with the community:**
 - » Empowerment – empowering people to be engaged and active in the ‘life’ of their library
 - » Universality – they belong to citizens and offer equality of access
 - » Foundational – people trust the ethics of libraries and see that they rest on important principles

New Ways of Delivering Libraries – Lewisham

- **Community libraries** – Lewisham developed new ways of working by creating community libraries. The service is part of a consortium of 18.
- **Using the building as an asset** – an enabler for local people to develop their presence and aims. Community groups can use libraries to these ends, bringing people together and further civic involvement and providing a focal point where the community can take action on things that matter to them locally.
- **Strong element of self-service** – so the libraries are open for longer hours with a security guard on site. Increased usage by users as a result.

Working With Volunteers

- **Different examples of volunteer involvement** – In 2011 Citizens Advice Hammersmith and Fulham volunteered to run a library which had closed. In May 2012 Avonmore library opened as a self-service library, run by 30 trained volunteers on a rota basis.
- **Benefits to volunteers** – volunteers developed skills in customer service which enabled them to return to employment.

- **Benefits to the community** – the library offers a mixed service for the local community.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Libraries as a Community Space

People value the library as a trusted space where they feel safe and can use the services and feel connected to a trusted civic space. Arguably other public spaces like theatres are competing with libraries and encouraging people to use them as community spaces, although perhaps libraries interact differently as a public space and there are opportunities to build on what can be provided.

The link to health

There is a strong link between libraries and health. How can the NHS play a role in what libraries do? Are there good examples of this from elsewhere? Role of digital in this – Avonmore have used digital solutions to deliver health guidance and advice. This can connect with digital inclusion – engaging older people, and intergenerational work. Meanwhile Lewisham libraries work closely with adult social care and public health. Also, they hold day time lectures by health professionals on specific topics which are filmed and uploaded to the libraries blog and Facebook page as a resource.

Engaging the community

Importance of considering how young people can be engaged, reaching out to those from different backgrounds and overcoming language barriers. In reference to Charing Cross library that the Chinese community feel they have a place which is theirs, which is important. It was asked if initiatives like digital training for older people can apply to those who may not all be English speakers.

Role of volunteers

Need to explore if volunteers are being used to replace paid staff because of spending cuts and think about how their skills can be specifically used to benefit library users. There are clearly considerations here for what the future of library staff is and what implications there could be for partners. Also need to think about the balance between library staff and buildings – this is to be explored further at a future meeting.

THEME 2

EFFECTIVE USE OF DIGITAL
(29 NOVEMBER 2017)

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Sarah Bottle & Lindsay Prestige – Kent Arts and Libraries: Touch A New World project
 - David Fletcher – Wimbletech CIC: The Workary
- Robert Hall, Director of Library Services – King's College London

KEYS POINTS NOTED

Digital Inclusion and the Older Community

- **Libraries need to cater to a rapidly ageing population** – in Westminster we can expect an increase of over 30% in over 65s within 10 years, with the largest increases being among people aged 80-84 and 90+. Digital projects can complement other services for older people, e.g. books on prescription, drop in one stop shops, and home library service etc. The 'Touch A New World' project consists of eight weekly hour long sessions with a dedicated volunteer who provides training and support for older people to learn to use digital technology. Project started in 2012, originally for existing home library service customers but now expanding to widen access (including lending tablet/device or those that don't own one).
- **Wide range of benefits** – increased confidence, greater use of digital tech, decreased social isolation through things like playing online games with others, more independence and easier to keep in touch, especially for the housebound. Projects like this feed into local and national outcomes including supporting to live independently, better care/wellbeing at home, increasing literacy, engagement, helping all reach potential and equality of access.

Providing Space / Digital Support for Local Enterprise

- **Sharing space to maximise utilisation** – businesses, individuals and local service providers. This is important especially in London where rentable work space can be unaffordable for many. 'The Workary' started with one space in Wimbledon library, then expanded more widely in local area. Subsequently came to look at three sites in K&C – all now operational and full. Now, several further sites using various types of under-utilised space (mainly but not exclusively in libraries) in different parts of the country.
- **Enables peer support** – businesses and start-ups can all help and support each other as well as community benefit as the entrepreneurs bring their own interests,

expertise, passions and can do talks, activities etc for the local community. Draws people into libraries where additional services/opportunities can be promoted to them.

- **Keeps things local and affordable** – space at a below market rate and investment feeds directly back into local community. Also limits travel across London etc (other benefits in terms of cost, congestion, air quality).
- **Can be virtual** – if physical space doesn't exist or isn't readily available, can still reap benefits just by connecting business owners.
- **Must be done with staff** – crucial to collaborate really closely with library staff. A big part of why this works is it is a true joint venture between library and the local business community.

Use of Digital in Academic Libraries

- **Significant moves towards greater use of digital in academic libraries** – at King's in particular, including online cataloguing, WiFi throughout the buildings and smart devices. Ambitious '2025 vision' for King's libraries will take this further. Much more self-service for finding, borrowing and returning items. Shifting staff time/resource to higher value activities. New focus on enquiries – more in depth enquiries possible as simplest things taken care of.
- **Flexibility** – more flexible opening hours are possible as need fewer staff doing transactional services. OCLC, their remote enquiry service (by which people can contact an actual librarian in the states), enables enquiry response out of hours. Remote provision (in or outside the country) also avoids London wages. Allows them to respond to pressures on physical space too, through shift to e-books, journals online etc.
- **Widening range** – collaboration with other libraries enables the University to maintain access to wide range of items without relying on physical space. Through digital provision can be possible to actually offer a better collection than before, with more immediate access as several people can sometimes use a single resource at once.

- **Patron Driven Acquisition** – letting service users' activities drive what materials/items the library buys for its collections. In some cases, if a threshold number of people download something the system automatically purchases it. Means collection remains relevant, genuinely reflects demand and hits the mark of what people want. Reduces waste and empowers service users.
- **Online learning environments** – courses and materials available online, plus Lecture Capture is a system whereby filmed lectures can be downloaded and watched later, for revision purposes etc. Slight decrease in people attending physical lectures but not major impact as you might have expected.
- **Data storage** – research is a very large part of what the university does and providing sufficient online data storage on such a huge scale can be a challenge.
- **The future** – looking at how they can respond further to pressures on space. Also recognising challenges around staff perceptions and focusing on ensuring buy in.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Using frontline staff

Potential to use public facing council staff, whatever their core role, as 'ways in' to services. Kent noted that greatest connection with new participants is made when local library staff promote their scheme. Looking to capitalise/expand on this by linking in with council local wardens. Westminster has large team of local wardens - they can be very aware of older vulnerable people in their areas and can be a trusted connection to the council. How could we take advantage of this to deliver future library services (around digital inclusion or more broadly)?

Funding sources

Kent were able to take advantage of Arts Council funding for their Digital Dens project. What opportunities for accessing external funding might be open to Westminster's library service?

WiFi coverage

Public ('on street') WiFi coverage in Westminster very variable – can be difficult to negotiate improvements to this with network providers. Could schemes like this for older, vulnerable people provide a strong argument on those discussions (with BT)?

A hub at the heart of the community

Rental of business space is an established industry but this is a more personal and more community focused way of providing the same sort of service. It engenders strong sense of local ownership and buy in. Could using our own space in this way help place libraries at the heart of local communities? Are there other ways we could repurpose physical space which might achieve the same thing?

Filling an existing gap

The Workary provides business space at a lower rent for those that can't afford market prices, and the resulting demographic is very local, tend to be older and more diverse than traditional start up spaces/innovation hubs. There is a niche and a need for this service locally, which libraries have an opportunity to fill by being innovative. How might this concept apply to library services (business/start-up/entrepreneurship support, and more broadly)?

Use of space

How we use and allocate building space is a big question for the future of libraries. Digital solutions can help free up physical space (fewer physical books/other items, more online). Our use of space could become more 'mixed'. What might this mean for the traditional 'identity' of libraries? What are the risks / opportunities of diversifying?

Wider building use policies

The way the council uses its property portfolio is a wider, and often controversial issue. Voluntary & Community Sector partners (charities) frequently need offices and space to provide their services – they experience many of the same problems in terms of prohibitive cost of rental space on the open market. The council provides a fair amount of space for VCS organisations, often heavily subsidised but this is still cost to the public - the policy on this needs work and will be looked at closely. Any use of library space should be seen in this context. Are there any potential implications for accommodating charities or other community organisations with a Workary-type model?

Complementing not replacing

King's use digital solutions to enhance their offer, providing alternatives and flexibility (e.g. around opening hours) but not to entirely replace existing services. Must recognise people still sometimes want a traditional library space as an environment conducive to learning. They are not stopping buying books, but buying e-books as well – it's a blend.

Using digital to tailor services

Digital offers opportunities to use data about usage to drive what we offer and better target services. Some think increased use of digital means fewer people will use the physical service, but King's found people physically accessing the library buildings has increased year on year alongside greater use of digital. How might we use digital to engage people in the services that ultimately bring them into greater not lesser contact with libraries, and the wider council?

More choice, less space?

King's noted a very small percentage of the physical books are actually in regular circulation – this is likely true for us too. It can be possible to slim down how we store things while not making items inaccessible – it's about good mechanisms for retrieval - people can still get what they need without same dependency on costly central London floor space. How could we do this? Collaboration with other libraries? Scope for shared collections and reduced duplication?

THEME AT A GLANCE

DIGITAL

DIGITAL RESOURCES VS. PHYSICAL MATERIALS

- Perceived threat to traditional purpose of libraries?
- Risks of digital only – alienation / division
- Opportunities for info sharing / 'collective' collections across multiple libraries?
- Decreased reliance on physical space – opportunities to repurpose library buildings?
- More specialised / personalised offer greater range and more niche items can be made available

DIGITAL LITERACY

- Role of libraries in supporting digital literacy (training etc)?
- Priority target groups (e.g. older people)?
- Integrations with other services e.g. employment support, adult education?
- Children / young people – coding clubs etc?

STAFFING IMPACT

- Freeing up staff from routine tasks?
- Implications for customer service element of the role?
- Training, cultural shift and adjusting to new ways of doing things – time and other implications?

SUPPORTING ENTERPRISE

- Provision of physical workspace and or wifi?
- Challenges to traditional role of public library?
- Impact in local economy, generating jobs. Connection with cultural strategy – creative industries?

ENGAGING PEOPLE

- Harder to reach groups – less mobile, language barriers, social isolation?
- Young people, preferred media for engaging with public services?
- Impact on nature / style of service delivery – quick, easy, open 24/7 .. but also transactional, less specialised, impersonal?

THEME

3

IDENTITY AND IMPACT OF LIBRARIES
(16 JANUARY 2018)

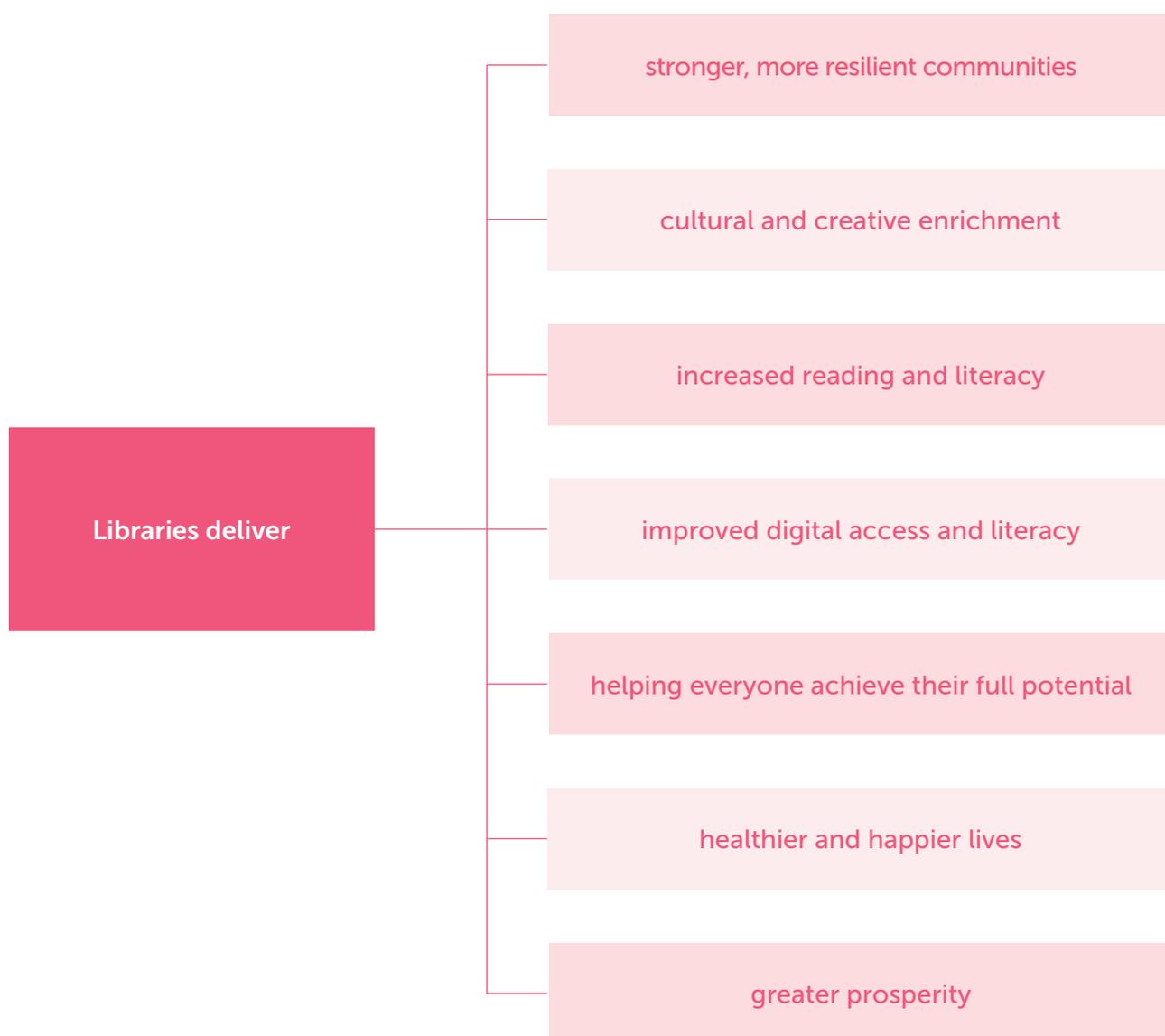
GUEST SPEAKERS

- Kathy Settle – National Libraries Taskforce
- Neil McInnes – Society of Chief Librarians and Manchester Libraries

KEY POINTS NOTED

The Work and Findings of the Libraries Taskforce

- **The Libraries Taskforce** – this group took forward the recommendations of the Independent Library Report for England (gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england) published in December 2014. The Taskforce is commissioned jointly by The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with the Local Government Association (LGA) and works with a wide range of other agencies and partners involved in the delivery of public libraries. Its mission is to “reinvigorate public libraries for the 21st century.” It looked at the issues and implications relating to public libraries in a very broad sense.
- **The taskforce’s findings** – the publication resulting from the Taskforce’s work is ‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021’. This was the first time that across the sector, central government and local government and others had put down in writing what we might collectively be aiming to achieve with public libraries.
- **Articulating the breadth of libraries’ offer** – ‘Libraries Deliver’ emphasises the broad ranging impact of libraries and the role they can have in society as a driver of improved outcomes in many areas of people’s lives. This idea is summarised in the document as follows:



- **Strategic focus** – Libraries Deliver discusses the need for strategic thinking, to connect and integrate libraries with a wide range of other public services, but also the scope for geographic nuance to ensure the specific local needs of any given area are met.
- **With and for the community** – there is also a strong emphasis on engaging and involving the local community, enabling them to have a hand in shaping their own local library services.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Promoting what libraries do / can do.

Libraries (and libraries staff) have tended not to shout about what they deliver and the impact of what they do. This means the power of libraries to drive outcomes and improve the lives of individuals and communities may have been underestimated in the past. High profile events like the London Library Festival can really help but more is needed. Where are the areas of government policy where libraries can demonstrate greatest (established or potential) impact? How can we more actively promote / achieve recognition?

Importance of evidence

Demonstrating breadth and depth of impact libraries have with tangible evidence. Hard facts - ideally we would like to show what the financial effect of libraries is for public services as a whole. The costs that libraries save, for the council and for others.

'Weaving libraries in'

This applies at both a central government and a council departmental level – there can be a tendency to view libraries as a standalone service which supports various outcomes, but nonetheless operates as an entity apart. We should look to stitch what libraries offer into the fabric of other departments' plans and strategies. This better reflects their true contribution to shared outcomes and helps with obtaining buy-in.

Unique service environment

Public libraries have a particular reputation and image as non-judgmental, non-stigmatising spaces where service users can feel comfortable. There is a different, less

formal and more trusting relationship with service users than can be achieved by some other services, and a sense of continuity that comes from accessing library services at various points through life. Also, service users are receptive. Linked to the above, people come to libraries voluntarily and feel they get something out of it – not a 'grudge transaction'. There is a high degree of trust and an equally high degree of accessibility of library services - this is significant in relation to an informed public in an era of "fake news." We must consider how we make best use of all this.

Changing role of libraries

Increasingly libraries are functioning as hubs at centre of neighbourhoods and communities. As part of this we now often co-location with a wide range of other services. Examples include the Hive in Worcester; in other places they combine space with museums, post offices and other services. Commuter hubs and enterprise space are also on the rise. We can and should think creatively about potential options, especially with all services experiencing financial constraints and under pressure to maximise use of resources.

First impressions count

Everything from physical layout (e.g. what service you see first when you come through the door), to the way staff are trained and how they present themselves, can impact on the perceptions of people walking into a public library. How could Westminster be creative in the way it blends different aspects of the service offer? Can services be staggered or 'pop-up' in sequence through the day or week? How can we use space flexibly and ensure our square footage works hard for us?

THEME AT A GLANCE

IDENTITY AND IMPACT OF LIBRARIES

DEVELOPING AND DIVERSIFYING

- Ongoing views and potential tensions – traditional libraries Vs fitness for 21st century and maintaining relevance?
- Perceptions of elitism Vs accessibility for all?
- Is there a core libraries offer? If so what does it include and should it be expected at every site?
- Public perceptions, political views and staff attitudes – any identifiable differences, similarities, themes, trends?
- Shifts that have already taken place – what's the trajectory?
- Risks and notes of caution?
- Existing 'Read Learn Connect' vision – does this still capture it for us?

A UNIQUE SERVICE ENVIRONMENT

- Open, non-stigmatising, trusted – how to maintain this?
- People attend voluntarily and perceive interaction positively – how to use but not abuse this?
- Distinct from other council / public services buildings – how, and why is this beneficial?
- What type of services does this make library buildings suited to?
- Benefits of many services in one place ('incidental' engagement – i.e. engagement that may not have happened otherwise, which may open up access to beneficial services other than other one initially sought)?
- Key risks to all this, and major opportunities?

DIGITAL LITERACY

- Increased expectations around digital?
- Libraries as an 'equalizer' – increasing opportunity, promoting learning and self-enrichment?
- Risk of over diversification, losing the essence of libraries?
- People value libraries but what do they value them for? Do we know / how could we find out?

THEME

4

**THE WESTMINSTER PERSPECTIVE: INTEGRATION WITH
OTHER SERVICES (20 FEBRUARY 2018)**

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Representatives of Westminster City Council service departments

KEY POINTS NOTED

- **Breadth of contribution** – looking at the contribution libraries make to delivery of different services of the council and in so doing support the community in a range of ways and help to achieve a large number of WCC’s strategic outcomes. Hearing directly from service leads, focusing on:
 - » How libraries work with them already, helping to deliver services and drive outcomes
 - » What those services see as current strengths and weaknesses – what works well and where are the challenges?
 - » Executive Director’s’ general perceptions of libraries’ current role and how that role could be defined and developed further in the future to deliver mutual benefits and further shared aims
- **Adult Social Care** – two key priorities: to support and maintain independence and integration with health prevention and care coordination. ASC works with people to support their independence and libraries ought to play a key role in that. It is clear several schemes have been developed in the past, but more can be done working with GPs and others in the community supporting people to find what resources are in the community.
- **Public Health** – libraries have a place as a community asset. They are a trusted environment and are a ‘life course’ service (what used to be referred to as cradle to grave). There are opportunities to engage children within their first 1000 days and give them a good start in life as reading can have a massive impact and libraries can contribute. Particularly around addressing inequalities by encouraging reading and improving older people’s IT skills can produce a positive outcome. Public Health currently funds a health information coordinator who run health events in libraries, including Make Every Contact Count (MECC) and that can be built on.

There are opportunities to think about the library space and knowing what works. Challenging who we are and helping to address that has huge potential.

Co-location is an opportunity to use other community assets like church halls, places of entertainment, and community and sports centres which can also be used. Libraries are seen as a trusted environment where people feel comfortable, and this is a key asset to build on.

- **Children’s Services** – past relationship with libraries has included children’s centre outreach workers going into libraries to deliver music activities and parenting groups. Other organisations like charities may now be providing this service. The preventative agenda is key. Libraries can build relationships with third sector partners, making them a venue where multiple events can take place and have a role to play in enabling community groups to come together. Reading is fundamental – how can we encourage more use of libraries, particularly by non-English speakers? Resources and skills in community languages (books and speakers) would be important in this.

Also consideration should be given to how to engage extended families. The Chair asked about local need and differing demographics. Madhu replied that the local authority cannot provide everything and partnerships are essential.

- **City Management and Communities** – three key areas: service delivery, communication/marketing and co-location. Libraries are part of the City Management and Communities directorate in Westminster, alongside a range of other public-facing and customer services such as parks, sport and leisure, cleansing and public protection. They have always been a way to extend the reach of other council and public services. Currently, they are used to engage non-users in physical activity/exercise, for the sale of parking permits and as a shop window including marketing and communication for other services including recycling. Community engagement - There are opportunities for co-location for back office facilities for staff who are dealing with common issues and priorities around the library vicinity and to extend the reach for people who are isolated. The new Marylebone library will be in the Seymour Leisure Centre.

- **Housing** – homelessness is city wide and we need to ensure referrals are effective. The street population is going down because there is a lot of resource available. Mental health and substance abuse are critical factors. Library floorspace in Westminster equates to 15 floors of City Hall. There are a range of spaces and people in each area should be asked what they want. There are 22,000 social homes in Westminster – not all of their residents are using libraries. We also need to know the age ranges – facts and figures are key. We should also look at good examples of co-location (from other services in Westminster, and libraries elsewhere) and who uses them. Identify where the gaps in provision are.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Libraries are universal

This is a challenge: as a cradle to grave service which is different to other institutions because of this. In Warwickshire, the core offer is difficult to define because of the range of services; they liken it to the Tesco model – Metro, Local, Express – with varying sizes and levels of service offer. Council decided that its approach was ‘one front door’ via libraries. Councillors recognise ‘libraries first’ as a principle, and getting the most out of libraries provides an alternative to digital by default. Makerspaces – providing expensive technology in an accessible way. The medium has changed (less books, more digital). It’s about providing means and opportunities for contact in a digital world. Ayub has recently visited Aarhus, Denmark (a ‘smart city’) where a new library promotes democratic values and citizenship. Newborns in the city are celebrated in the library with the ring of a bell. New arrivals to the city can get all the information required in the library.

Diverse communities

There is huge diversity in Westminster which is a key challenge. For example people not understanding really basic stuff like recycling, can lead to a lack of cohesion. What can libraries do (being free to access/very open/diverse service reach) to help with this?

Building on strengths in the community

The sometimes used, traditional ‘deficit model’ (“we know what’s wrong and we’ll fix it”) needs to be flipped to asset model: i.e. Look at what’s good in a community – and use this to help. Services may need to be prepared to give up detail control to enable this.

Customer service

Libraries have embraced some aspects of self-service/self-help. Libraries are to do with empowerment in a broader sense – the original ethos (Victorian) was around ‘self-improvement’. This needs to evolve a bit for the modern age but the principles remain in terms of libraries being a place people can go to learn, to broaden their horizons or make real their aspirations. This can point to reading/literacy but also to adult education or all kinds, support into employment, cultural opportunities, supporting business enterprise, etc.

Accessibility

Libraries are very ‘ideologically accessible’ (i.e. free to use, anyone is welcome) but some of Westminster’s libraries struggle to provide full physical access (for those with disabilities etc). We need to make sure library buildings are set up in a way that enables everybody to use them and benefit from the facilities. Some existing buildings are not fit for purpose – this needs to be considered as part of the council’s wider property assets management piece. Note that this is not just about physical disability, either. Libraries need to be welcoming places for people with other conditions such as autism or dementia.

Diversification

Libraries are ideally placed for service delivery across a wide range of outcomes that are included in the council’s strategic vision: City for All. They have an especially strong link into the preventative agenda. What more could be commissioned, delivered or provided through libraries? How can they integrate with other services to capitalise on all this? At the same time, what makes libraries distinct and how can we protect this? There may be a risk of libraries losing their speciality and becoming just a collection of services – this could be especially true if library buildings are used simply to host other services, but without true integration.

Resourcing

The issue of diversifying / integrating with other services raises questions around resourcing. What resources can be identified and secured to support libraries in their work to deliver broader outcomes, beyond their traditionally perceived role?

Council-wide support

There is staunch support from senior executive guests across all Council services for collaboration and integration of aspects of their services within Library services and vice versa, to provide a healthier, more positive and socially integrated community throughout Westminster.

THEME AT A GLANCE

IMPACT ON OUTCOMES

LIBRARIES AS A PREVENTITIVE SERVICE

- Reducing future need, especially health and wellbeing
- Implications for funding – mitigating future cost but where do the savings fall?
- Can we quantify the savings / financial impact of libraries?
- Role in 'triage' / early identification of issues – implications for staff training / hybrid roles?
- Placement of non libraries staff in libraries?
- Interplay with Family Hubs?

RANGE OF OUTCOMES

- Our current impact across the range of Libraries Deliver outcomes – strengths and weaknesses?
- Priority areas or all seen as equally important?
- Shifts over time – any future transitions likely to emphasise particular outcomes?
- External context – wider policy agenda; gaps libraries may be filling?
- Alignment with wider council strategy – achieving recognition and libraries taking rightful place as part of core objectives – how to ensure this?

RANGE AND REACH

- 'Cradle to grave' – benefits of reaching across age ranges?
- Non discriminatory, open to all – how do we use this well?
- How do we make best use of libraries' ability to penetrate into communities, especially hard to reach groups?
- Use of libraries' reach to support other services?
- Information provision and advice – a key role for libraries?

RESOURCES AND RECOGNITION

- Funding arrangements and resource implications of delivering on behalf of other services?
- Relationships with other council services or external – different?
- How to achieve recognition for libraries' broad impact – evidencing value added?
- Opportunities for hybrid staff roles; implications of this?
- Implications for commissioning relationships, decision making and governance?

THEME 5

DELIVERY MODELS
(20 MARCH 2018)

GUEST SPEAKERS

- Chris Symons – Deputy Chief Executive, Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)
- Ciara Eastell – Chief Executive, Libraries Unlimited

KEY POINTS NOTED

GLL

- **The GLL model is a social enterprise model** – a staff owned charitable enterprise. Not considered a 'mutual' per se, although should note that the terms 'social enterprise' and 'mutual' are flexible, differently understood and interpreted, and therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some are charitable in nature, some are profit-making.
- **Potential strengths of 'third party provider' models** – Chris sees the key strength of the GLL model as flexibility – sitting between private sector and public/community services, able to draw on advantages from both sides. Also 'whole-service' provision – in addition to delivering the day to day services, GLL manage the buildings, employ the staff and run projects/programmes on specific areas of work. This enables a coherent, consistent and streamlined approach.
- **Importance of effective back office** (HR, legal, member services etc) – Chris felt the value in outsourcing can come from taking cost out of back office and tightening the link/relationship with the front end service. By outsourcing in a hook line and sinker way, with back office included, the back office not only understand how the service works at front end but also the provider is actively invested in the performance of service and all aspects of deliverability etc. It is in their direct interests for the back office and front end to work well individually and together.
- **Results** – demonstrable results since transitioning to GLL include increased in use of libraries (visits, loans) and longer opening hours. The new model has retained the existing staff. A common misconception is that this won't be the case – that people will be removed or replaced. Feedback suggests staff are very satisfied in their work since the change (shown by positive staff survey results).
- **Identifying and assessing delivery model options** – outsourcing is not a model in itself – outsourcing is the outcome but there are various routes/environments

through which that can be done. The model can vary and be tailored to suit the purpose. With this in mind, arguably any model can deliver the outcomes. The key thing is to identify, clarify and commit to those outcomes, then understand the best delivery model approach to achieve them. Size, scope, experience, resilience are some of the key considerations when looking for and selecting appropriate models.

- **Market awareness** – an important practical consideration is how the market might react to councils looking to involve third party providers in library service delivery. Realistically, there isn't a mature market for this currently, which creates challenges with demonstrating value for money as we don't have adequate metrics or frames of reference to demonstrate this.

Libraries Unlimited

- **Model** – Libraries Unlimited operates as a 'company limited by guarantee', a registered charity, and a public service mutual. The Cabinet Office has a formal definition for what constitutes a public service mutual. It is an organisation which:
 1. has left the public sector (also known as 'spinning out')
 2. continues to deliver public services and aims to have a positive social impact
 3. has a significant degree of staff influence or control in the way it is run.
- **One of many examples** – Libraries Unlimited is one of around 110 such mutuals currently delivering a range different of public services in England. There are four libraries mutuals in the country – Nottinghamshire, Suffolk and York are the others. Nottinghamshire and York combine other services with libraries in their mutuals, while Suffolk and LU are solely library operators.

- **Contract** – the mutual holds a five year contract with DCC, with option for another five years, to deliver library services. Two community representatives and two members of staff sit on the board of trustees with the remaining board members as independent trustees. Operates 50 libraries and four mobile libraries across Devon. They also hold a contract with the Home Office to deliver three prison libraries, as well as operating some FabLabs – maker spaces with technology – and a few other facilities. So the mutual holds a broad and growing portfolio. It is currently a £7m business and due to grow to £9m – among other changes, it has been selected to provide Torbay’s library service.
- **Originated due to huge pressure for savings** – effectively a halving of the libraries budget which led to the management of DCC libraries looking at alternative delivery models for at least some of its libraries. Reputationally very difficult when it starts to look like closures are the only option – communities very protective of their libraries and sometimes specifically of the librarians that staff them. An open minded look at options was called for. The team systematically assessed and scored those options to find way forward.
- **Enablers** – setting up Libraries Unlimited was a huge and complex undertaking. They found it was critical to have:
 - » Political support and confidence, ideally cross party
 - » Senior officer support, to galvanise whole-council effort if needed
 - » Strong, clear leadership, with exceptionally clear vision that can be communicated effectively to staff
 - » Ability to bring staff with you – engagement, active involvement, various mechanisms for meaningful feedback
 - » Extremely skilled project management
- **Savings** – within their first 28 months they did achieve the target £1.5m saving. This showed credibility. With time they’ve been able to get ‘into the black’ and begin to build up financial reserves, which lends sustainability and resilience to the service.
- **Performance / service quality** – this is also better than before. Better addressing marginalised communities. They recently undertook research with the University of Exeter Business School, using Arts Council England (ACE) funding, to look into financial benefits of library services. This type of impact within context of the wider public services landscape can be very hard to quantify. Very hard to understand where costs and savings fall, what counterfactual scenarios are, and what true impact if individual changes are when multiple factors are at play. So this focused research could teach us a lot.
- **Other service improvements** – better marketing and promotion – freer of corporate controls on what can say/do. More opportunity for external funding – ACE is now a key stakeholder and has invested £1m; LU is one of its national portfolio organisations (one of a handful of library services to have achieved this since it was launched in 2016). Individual giving is also now much more of a focus.
- **Staff impacts** – biggest change has probably been for staff though. Generally very positive outcomes - empowerment, personal and professional development for them. LU have found it is critical to recognise that the agenda they want to deliver relies on really skilled and motivated workforce.
- **Resilience and economies of scale in the back office** – these have been important in the Devon model. An early decision was to create/develop their own back office functions to be self-supporting (HR, legal etc and fully independent of council (many mutuals still end up very dependent on the local authority). Some changes were somewhat forced but LU say that, since ‘spinning out’, becoming more and more independent was ultimately beneficial.
- **Collaboration** – LU recognises the huge potential of libraries to work jointly with other council services to deliver shared aims. Undeniably the dynamic definitely changes. There is a need to make an explicit transition to being a separate entity from the council. Strong commissioning relationship is so important – it’s here

that the connections can be made and maintained with other council teams like PH, Employment Support, etc. Ciara recognises there may be some things that are missed as result of her/her team not being embedded within the council's core leadership team, but benefits far outweigh the detriments in her view. There are ways to keep connections and linkages live and useful, but it needs to be consciously and consistently worked at.

- **Culture will always beat strategy** – staff and management commitment, and culture is more important than any choice of delivery model. No model will work without it.
- **Scale can be an issue** – a mutual needs to be big enough to be viable. Although bear in mind it needn't necessarily just be libraries alone. Can join up with other services. Other mutuals (e.g. in York) have more of a blend of services within the model. Broadly speaking, would say you need to be £2m+ as an entity in order to support the various resources etc you need.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Financial considerations

How do profit/bonuses for staff-owners (shareholders) work in a set-up like GLL's? GLL is a charitable social enterprise, and although 'staff-owned' it does not pay profit/performance based bonuses. Surplus is generated through the contracts they operate, but this is reinvested in the services. Other mutual/social enterprises can take profit out, but not ones with charitable status like GLL. Movement to a mutual/social enterprise delivery model may not have massive financial upsides in the immediate term, but other benefits in terms of scope for innovation, agility, flexibility, pace of change etc. Also economies of scale, especially in terms of transactional processes and some front end functions. Ability to spread cost across contracts can also reduce 'unit prices'.

Impacts for staff

Culture change is important and having a clear ambition in relation to that which is exemplified, communicated and committed to at senior leadership level, is critical.

How do staff identify themselves in an outsourced model? Can be concerns about increased sickness, departures etc but GLL reported that this in their experience this has not materialised. During initial transition must expect certain churn, but they found staff retention stabilised and there were no significant changes in absenteeism. Other examples also suggest these problems don't necessarily follow with outsourced delivery models. Benefits for staff can include increased training and development opportunities – cross-fertilising learning from other industries, e.g. the Eden Project. Learned from National Trust about membership schemes, incentivising service users and making them feel enfranchised / part of something.

Risks of partnering with large third party organisations

There can be significant unknowns/future changes in ownership, marginalisation and motives which then impact on services and the customer experience. GLL's view is that smaller companies, in more local setting, can be more agile, with better ability to cater to local needs and changing demand. Does the board have specific thoughts on the type of partners WCC may look to partner with, or exercise specific caution around? Does GLL count as a "smaller company" in this context?

Culture of innovation

This is clearly highly relevant to libraries. Any model would need to not only allow for but specifically facilitate / drive this. Library services need to be dynamic, changeable, flexible - it is increasingly important that they keep up with customer trends and needs. Does this make them less ideally suited to direct local authority control? How might third party involvement vs direct local authority control compare when it comes to scope, appetite and readiness to innovate?

Operational control

There is a risk of loss of control, operationally, but also of cost savings. Can end up with benefits landing elsewhere, outside of the local authority. Added to this there can be fear of change – this is a natural thing – exacerbated by understandable caution in wake of collapse of Carillion etc. This is why it's so important to understand who your partner is and what their motivations are. Opportunities for beneficial change, protection of services, meeting local need but any partner's priorities must be in alignment with council's own desired outcomes.

Integration / connectivity

Building in the more strategic aspirations of library services – the link to health services etc, GLL feels aware of these connections and claims ability to cross cut in that way. This may be the case where several areas of council service (or those of partners) are outsourced to one provider. However, is there a risk of library services becoming more 'divorced' from the rest of council delivery – losing some of the key benefits of working together on shared outcomes – if it is operated 'out of house'? On the other hand, what opportunities are presented by more commissioning?

Use of technology

GLL does its own proactive research into how and where councils should be innovating / developing their library services, generating recommendations and practical solutions for driving better use of IT and digital (both hardware and software). Can 'cross fertilise', applying learning and innovations from other areas of service/contracts they provide. This can be an area where LAs can benefit from some help and an outside perspective. Benefits of tech though are not just about library services working well and modernising in isolation. Do technological advancements in library services need to be aligned/ integrated with the systems and tech used in other council / public services? What is the comparative ability of a third party provider Vs the council itself to achieve this?

Marketing/promoting the service

Effective marketing and promoting of library services. LU have found this to especially important. What might Westminster need

to think about in terms of 'branding' library services? What presence do they, or could they, have in the minds of the public? If a 'spun out' model were chosen, how might perceptions be affected (libraries having an identity that is distinct from the council itself)?

Passion is more important than which model

It is clear that in Devon's case success has come from passion. It is not just a process - running these types of services well requires that passion and personal commitment, whatever the model. It is also crucially important to always ensure we're delivering social value. What might Westminster need to do to ensure this passion and commitment is preserved among leadership and staff?

THEME AT A GLANCE

DELIVERY MODELS

MODEL OPTIONS	REPUTATIONAL RISK AND BUY IN				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private contracted provider – potential benefits and risks?• Mutuels – various incarnations, all with pros and cons?• Volunteer involvement?• Learning from others – specific suggestions to help us explore the issues?• Importance of selecting the right partner(s) – alignment of motivations, experience and expertise, etc?• Maturity of the market – who is there we could work with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenge to traditional perceptions about public libraries?• Questions of motivation – perceptions as purely a cost saving initiative?• Political appetite for alternative delivery models?• Specific Westminster considerations (partly political, historical, tri-borough etc)?				
	<table><thead><tr><th>STAFFING IMPACTS</th><th>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retention and attrition – specific risks and opportunities?• Contractual arrangements / terms and conditions?• Buy in – how to take staff with on the journey?</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for savings – real or assumed?• Where savings 'land'?• Cost and resource implications for implementation of a new model?</td></tr></tbody></table>	STAFFING IMPACTS	FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retention and attrition – specific risks and opportunities?• Contractual arrangements / terms and conditions?• Buy in – how to take staff with on the journey?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for savings – real or assumed?• Where savings 'land'?• Cost and resource implications for implementation of a new model?
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INNOVATION AND APPROACH					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater opportunities and / or drive to innovate in 'spun out' models?• Freedom to tailor make back office (not bound to council IT systems etc)?• Independence from local authority governance – any potential for greater freedom to experiment?• Potential for longer term thinking without reference to political terms, elections?					

KEY POINTS NOTED

Arts Council England

- **Background** – ACE is a non departmental body under Department of Culture Media and Sport, which took responsibility for libraries in 2011. Understanding of how libraries fit into wider work of ACE has grown significantly since then and is still taking shape. Most difficult thing for library sector to understand is that ACE can't directly fund/provide library services, in terms of the core buildings and staff, but it can support arts activities in libraries, and help them to innovate and thrive.
- **Funding bids** – ACE set aside some of their arts funding specifically for libraries. Some took them up on this by putting in bids, but some found it daunting and didn't attempt to access the funding. Approaches, attitude etc differed greatly across the 151 different library service authorities across the country. ACE identified five universal offers which all libraries should aspire to deliver, to which a sixth has now been added: Health, Learning, Reading, Digital, Information and now Culture. The board noted how this chimes with Libraries Deliver in terms of outcome areas.

Six library services won National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status in the last funding round, and the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) was adopted as a sector support organisation with NPO status. The library services are being seen as beacon providers and hopefully will help others apply and successfully access the funding in future. The funding gives them some guarantee of resource and stability to plan over a longer frame.

- **The future vision** – in 2020 there will be a fresh ACE strategy (to cover 2020–2030). Not just an update in existing doc – looking to think creatively about what ACE is looking to achieve in the coming years. Want to build consideration of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to libraries firmly into this. This will underpin future funding rounds for libraries.
- **Future Funding Rounds** – next funding round for NPOs will be for 2022–2026.

In its first few years as development body for libraries, ACE ringfenced grant (project) funding within a Grants for the arts – libraries strand, but it will not in future ringfence in this way – this was aimed at getting libraries more accustomed to how the process with ACE works. In future, libraries will apply to the same open funding programme (the National Lottery Project Grants scheme, which replaces Grants for the arts) as all other arts organisations and artists. Applications must make sure they align with the five aims outlined above. ACE funding is only guaranteed by central government until 2020, so although they anticipate being able to fund existing applicants/work until 2022, the amount available for bidders may depend on their settlement post-2020.

- **Link to delivery models** – of the six library services that were successful this time around, three had spun out from the local authority. This high proportion (compared to the overall number of services that have spun out) suggests they have the approach, ethos, appetite and skillset to pursue all opportunities / funding streams very actively.
- **Access versus excellence** – is there a natural equilibrium and what is the place for libraries? Sue said there is a natural fit between libraries and tackling inequalities but there also can be a more 'elite' perspective on arts and culture. The balance between arts and mass provision is key – Sport England have done a good job of that, ACE are looking to learn from them. Re: libraries in particular, they can be a gateway for the arts, especially for those with historically low levels of engagement. Some can feel that concert halls, theatres etc are 'not for them' but libraries successfully navigate this and can draw people who otherwise may not engage. Libraries also push artists to think about how they produce and present their art. Libraries being at heart of communities underlines the opportunity further. MC mentioned example of Church Street library which has run an Improv For Elders theatre group encouraging participation and the library service has been jointly running Create Church Street, commissioning artists and local groups during the current phase of regeneration in the area.

- **Looking ahead** – major future priorities for ACE in relation to libraries are:
 - » Wider digital inclusion agenda
 - » Development of British Library intellectual property platform – aspiration is that every library in the country could act as gateway to information that businesses need
 - » Single sign-on (to library digital resources nationwide)
 - » Development of staff – in partnership with Cilip
 - » Talent plan – led by Darren Henley, ACE chief exec
 - » Libraries’ work with development of young people, access to art and culture
 - » Working with libraries task force to ensure smooth transition of the work they do to ACE responsibility in 2020

Society of Chief Librarians

- **Background** – SCL is in excellent position as a membership body to promote and support development of library services across the country at grass roots level. SCL aims to foster innovation, connect expertise and obtain funding. Universal offers are at the heart of what SCL does. They look at the wide range of things that libraries do but sometimes do not clearly articulate or capitalise on (digital inclusion, health promotion, for example).

This has been important in coming to understand what ‘core’ library services look like, while giving an appreciation of how geographical nuances to meet local need can work in practice.

- **Vision for Archives As Well As Libraries** – archives are a unique facility in themselves, with a special role in society/local communities. Alongside libraries they can provide a connection to the community’s history, a sense of local identity, and learning / engagement opportunities for all.
- **Accessibility** – archives can sometimes be presented as jewel in the crown of some libraries services. Archive collections are displayed and give a sense of uniqueness and specialness, but there can be a risk of

them feeling remote or not very accessible. It doesn’t have to be done in an elite way though – some archives are using really innovative ways to engage and involve people in their collections. In St Helens, a project supported with ACE funding focused on making digitised photograph collections accessible, with local communities providing the information and back stories to complement them. The whole experience was interactive, using the resources in multiple ways for different audiences, age groups etc.

- **Information navigation** – giving the public access to a wealth of information but also, crucially, helping people navigate the flood of information that they are faced with in modern world. Helping individuals to look into issues that really matter to them and, as libraries/archives are sometimes not instinctively viewed by people as part of the council or part of wider government, there is a sort of independence there which feeds into perceptions of honesty and impartiality.
- **Reducing isolation** – Libraries and archives can be a haven for the lonely, they provide a welcoming and accepting environment.
- **Breadth of access** – a vast range of people use them – equality of access, open to all, inclusive. When space is at a premium and costs of many activities and services are high in a place like London / Westminster, that free to access for all is so important.
- **Active involvement** – this is about people exploring their own culture, a sense of ownership/empowerment. It’s self directed learning and on their terms. This generates a real sense of belonging
- **Civic involvement** – sense of involvement, ownership and investment in the local area and community can instigate volunteering etc. ‘Active citizenship’ can be so important for people who might otherwise feel disenfranchised. Also pathways into employment etc.
- **Local roots** – no two libraries are exactly the same, they are grass roots and reflect their community directly. You know broadly what you’ll be getting in terms of services at a library, but each one has individual character.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Existing offer

Libraries already offer a lot which they don't necessarily themselves see or badge as 'culture'. This can be quite simple things like song/music based sessions for very young children, but can develop to bring in much more specifically directed, 'consciously' cultural offers.

Particular challenges in Westminster

Access to arts in London can be expensive. Taster sessions in libraries for some of the big arts/cultural organisations can really encourage people to try things and open up access in an affordable and engaging way. Equally, we can also use the 'prestige factor' - where people have seen we have big names coming into the local library for an event it can have a huge impact on what the community feel about the library and their neighbourhood as a whole – a sense of pride. Westminster probably has particular strength there, as it can get the big names in.

Encouraging access

We can't force arts on people, we can only create the opportunities. Useful to look at the obstacles people experience to engaging with arts. How can libraries can be instrumental in helping them overcoming those obstacles?

Impact of Delivery Models

Is there a difference in degree of opportunity for dynamic and innovative ways of doing things in services that have spun out from Local Authority compared those that remain directly council managed? Ultimately a well-managed service is a well-managed service, and spinning out doesn't necessarily make life easier. That said there can be some constraints on people in local authorities that don't necessarily apply to spun out entities - freedom around practical issues (what IT systems used etc), branding and so on. But these can be overcome with the right backing and buy in at a leadership and political level, and by thinking creatively and focusing on opportunity. There is a certainly a dynamism that can sometimes come with spun out organisations, but it's totally achievable within a local authority context also.

Westminster Archives – existing work

Westminster Archives are the corporate memory of Westminster. The service's quality is recognised through accreditation by the National Archives, one of the few local authority archives to have achieved this. They need to reflect extremely diverse communities of Westminster. AA commented that they always try to include a creative element to the projects they do and specifically work with different groups in community to tell their own unique stories in creative ways. An example is the Cholera On The Thames project. They included a Bangladeshi Womens' Organisation to bring in their perspectives with experience of cholera from that part of the world, bringing that alongside the London story. These could be great foundations on which to build further.

Budgets and Funding

Archive services generally can't apply for ACE funding unless it's for specific arts-based projects. Westminster archives have secured funding from a number of external sources including Heritage Lottery and the Armed Forces Community Covenant, but would welcome further funding opportunities. The archives service is core funded by the Council but all project funding is external, proactively sought out and secured. The board feels it is very important that archives' core funding from the council should be protected regardless of pressures.

Active rather than passive

If they choose to, archives can be really active – proactive – to engage people in their collection. Not just waiting for people to come to them but actively going out and promoting/extending the reach of their collections. This means reaching out to different communities and making them feel "I am part of the city, the city is part of me". People want to tell their story and archives can support them to do that. As keepers of local/ community history, how can Westminster archives reach out to people and help them to feel that, that history belongs to them; that they are personally a part of it?

A role in traumatic events

Incidents like the air show crash in Shoreham, the tram accident last year near Croydon, and terrorist incidents in London. Archives can work with community to, for example, preserve cards, sentiments and pictures that accumulate around these events. Memorialising and paying respects, then preserving those items and capturing the local 'story' can be a vital part of healing and rebuilding trust. How does the board think this role in preserving memories and honouring stories could be applied in Westminster archives?

Local uniqueness

Archives fundamentally lend a sense of place. Uniqueness of place, specific identity. This is important against the homogenisation of high streets across the country etc. How can we capitalise on this in the way we reimagine Westminster libraries?

Celebrating and supporting diversity

Westminster has a remarkably diverse community which can bring its own challenges but also huge opportunities for the way archives can support local knowledge, pride and connection to history among all types of people. There are opportunities for all sections to learn about their own culture and heritage, but also to be exposed the heritage of others, increasing understanding and fuelling community cohesion. Especially in the context of the recent Windrush situation etc, how might Westminster archives be proactive in supporting local diversity, connection across different community groups and a sense of the area as a true 'home' for all?

Connections

There are important links to other strategies and policy work emerging at a national and local level. Especially the Mayor of London's cultural strategy – the role of libraries should be extensive but there is only a limited number of references to it in the strategy as currently drafted. Also note strategic links to the council's own developing Cultural Strategy.

THEME AT A GLANCE

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND COHESION

BINDING PEOPLE TOGETHER

- Open access leads to mixing across potential divides, exposure to other cultures, socio economic groups etc – does this underpin cohesion?
- Inter-generational opportunities – link to the 'cradle to grave' nature of library services?
- Active citizenship – role in supporting community action, volunteering etc?
- Recognising and using library buildings as familiar focal points where people gather?

SUPPORTING ARTS AND CULTURE

- Grass roots Vs elite – keeping the balance in arts and culture offer?
- Connecting into wider arts and culture landscape – what London has to offer, also nationally?
- Support for creative industries locally – physical space for work or performance, promotion, connection to employment services, etc?
- Accessing funding streams, e.g. Arts Council funding?

INCLUSION

- Importance of maintaining accessibility – physical but also opening hours and free of charge?
- Risk of providing specialised services that potentially segment user group or exclude some people?
- Equally, risk of keeping too mainstream / universal and missing whole sections of need?
- Understanding the local community and potential barriers to engagement – language issues, disabilities, social isolation etc?

MAKING GOOD USE OF ARCHIVES

- Active promotion of/engagement in archives – how to make them accessible and appealing?
- Different audiences – age ranges, different backgrounds, etc?
- Role in celebrating diversity – how can we use this positively?
- Shared local history – how archives can contribute to sense of place and sense of community – pride, belonging and ownership?
- Supporting communities through difficult times – link to wellbeing?
- Links to civic responsibility – respect for local area and each other?