

Draft equality impact assessment

1 Service affected

Library Services

2 Relevance to equality

Libraries are relevant to equality. The basis for this is that library services offer a range of targeted services, such as social groups for older residents, specialist groups for dementia sufferers and the visually impaired etc, alongside universal library services.

The Library Service is also working with Adult Social Care colleagues to enhance the libraries offer for people with learning difficulties. Library staff in the back office with information management training also manage elements of the Care Hub system, using professional library skills to manage a system that focusses on those that need care.

Library staff report that libraries are well used by groups such as the elderly and people with learning difficulties.

3 Potential savings

Please detail the proposed savings to budget that you are hoping to make.
How will this be achieved?

The following savings are proposed:

- A) Savings of £30k from the library service resources fund (stock budget) from April 2019;
- B) Savings of £50k from the funding of community managed libraries and
- C) Savings of £50k from the library service DSB (devolved staffing budget) linked to a minor restructure by April 2020 (part year impact in 2019/20)

4 Policy/service proposal

The library service is statutory under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and is funded and provided by the London Borough of Bexley.

Bexley Library Service currently operates libraries across the borough – these libraries provide direct access to books, audio visual material (DVDs, books on tape and CD), IT and information, as well as a wide range of local community events and activities. The service also provides outreach services including those to housebound readers.

There are twelve libraries in Bexley. Six of these libraries are Council managed and form the statutory element of the library service. In 2014/15 it was determined that 98.6% of all residents live within 1.5 miles of one of these Council managed libraries, providing a strong level of access across the borough.

Between 2012 and 2016, the other six libraries became community managed and are not considered part of the statutory library provision in Bexley. These libraries make up an enhanced offer with different operating models:

Bostall Library and Bexley Village Library are operated by the Bostall Library Community Group and are separate from the Council's library systems

Blackfen Library is managed by New Generation Community Trust and is separate from the Council's library systems

North Heath, Upper Belvedere and Slade Green Libraries are all managed by Eco Communities and they utilise the Council's library systems for membership and stock.

It is proposed that a range of relatively small scale savings are achieved across a range of areas:

1 – that £30K will be saved from the Library Service resources fund – this reduction would mean there is less funding available per annum for the purchase of books and other resources in the Council's six core libraries

2 – that £50K is saved from the budget set aside to provide support funding to the organisations that manage the community managed libraries. This reduction would mean that the organisations running these libraries would receive less support funding from the Council. The organisations take their support in different ways, including the provision of stock, seconded staff (except at Blackfen) and some cash. The Council's intention would be to support the community managed libraries to find other ways to generate new revenue, in order to manage this reduction.

3 – that £50K is saved from the library service DSB – this would mean that there is less funding available to pay for library service staff. This is a modest reduction to a larger budget.

These proposals have been developed as a direct response to the need to make savings in light of the challenging financial conditions in which the Council operates.

5 Impact on equalities groups

These proposals do not at this time have an identifiable impact on any specific group – it is not currently envisaged that the proposals will specifically remove, restrict or change any services or programmes that take place in libraries or that are delivered by libraries teams that directly or indirectly impact on the below specific equality groups:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership (but only for aim one of the duty)

This is because:

- A) – the resources budget reduction is minimal and there are mitigating factors outlined below that explain why the impact on customers will be negligible
- B) – the reduction in budget for the community managed libraries at this stage will not specifically result in any specific service change – see below for mitigating factors – this may have to be revised once we know more about how the management companies plan to implement this reduction to their funding – at this stage, this is not clear.
- C) – the reduction to the DSB will be managed via a small restructure process and any staff impact will be dealt with via a separate EQIA developed with HR. In terms of the impact of any specific staff or skills loss - please see mitigating factors below.

6 Evidence of impacts

In order to assess the impact of this proposal, the library service has access to a variety of information from a variety of different sources including

- Census 2011 data
- Bexley Libraries Community Profiles (for core libraries and based on Census 2011 data within a radius of 1.5 miles of each library)
- Library Statistics from the Library Management System – this includes some demographic information that relates to use of specific libraries
- CIPFA Children’s Public Library User Survey (PLUS) 2016/17
- CIPFA Public Library User Survey (PLUS) 2015/16
- Reports from quarterly review meetings with community managed library groups.
- The library service activities programme

The key gap in the information available is that the library service does not specifically engage with equality groups to collect data on their use of library services. However, using the statistical and demographic information available about the borough, in conjunction with library service data and other sources of information about library service activity, it should be possible to draw together a good picture of service usage by equality groups.

7 Possible mitigating actions

- A) The reduction to the resources budget will be mitigated by a number of factors:
- Careful stock selection and purchasing to ensure the stock we buy best meets the needs of customers
 - As we are leaving the London Libraries Consortium, we will cease to lend books to other authorities meaning there is more access to new books for Bexley customers.
 - We will ensure stock management procedures make the most of the stock we have – for example circulating items to a number of libraries more frequently, to ensure a wide range of customers have access to titles.
- B) The reduction to the community libraries budget can be mitigated by:
- The entrepreneurial approaches that community managed libraries are free to take – such as making best use of their assets and commercial approaches such as food and drink retailing alongside their library services.
 - The Council will assist the community management groups with making funding bids
- C) The reduction to the staffing budget can be mitigated by:
- Ensuring that the proposed restructure creates posts and roles that are designed to sustain current services, including those accessed by equality groups.