LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN		WARDS: All	
REPORT TITLE			
Libraries and their neighbourhoods			
REPORT OF Director of Recreation			
FOR SUBMISSION TO		DATE	
Culture and Environment Scrutiny Comm	Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee		
SUMMARY OF REPORT			
Camden Libraries are reaching more people and had the second highest adult engagement rate in England in the year 2023/24. The libraries are developing as neighbourhood spaces through changes to the buildings, improved digital offer, supporting digital inclusion and working with communities, community partners and other stakeholders to develop resident focused spaces, developing reading skills in children, young people and adults to improve wellbeing, and employability.			
Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report:			
Contact Officer:Oliver Jones, Director of Recreation 4th Floor, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AGFiona Tarn, Head of Libraries 4th Floor, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AGOliver.jones@camden.gov.uk 02079746275Fiona.Tarn@camden.gov.uk 07971746089			
RECOMMENDATIONS			
The Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the service update report.			

Signed: Date:

31st October 2024

1. Purpose

1.1 This report sets out a broad update of the development work happening within the library service, setting out thematic changes and neighbourhoods-based connections. The sector is awaiting a new national strategy for the libraries in England. Baroness Sanderson made a series of recommendations¹ which include a national branding campaign, a closer involvement of the British Library, an expanded library membership and a stronger volunteer network, however this initial review was conducted by the previous Government. The new Minister for Libraries has indicated his focus for libraries is likely to be digital inclusion and supporting employability. It is unclear if the Baroness Sanderson recommendations will be taken forward.

2. Background

2.1 Camden Council directly manages 8 libraries and also works with the Friends of Highgate Library to manage Highgate Library. There are a host of other libraries within the borough including three community run libraries (Keats House, Belsize and Primrose Hill) and the British Library.



2.2 Libraries are universal services which nurture neighbourhoods and by their very nature are safe, anonymous, trusted and lifelong. Libraries can connect people, improve digital inclusion, offer refuge and sanctuary, signpost to support, improve our wellbeing, give us purpose through contribution, and refresh our souls through reading and cultural experiences. Libraries can be transactional for some, but for many the conversations and experiences they have in a library can have significant impact on their lives.

¹ <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-independent-review-of-english-public-libraries-report-and-government-reponse/an-independent-review-of-english-public-libraries</u>



Eid party at Queens Crescent Library

- 2.3 Libraries in Camden are transforming both physically and digitally through the work they are doing with partner organisations and other Council teams. The Libraries Team is connecting with the Community Partners and Participation Teams to plug the libraries into the neighbourhood model. To support this a Library Jigsaw framework, visits to other library authorities, a Local Government Association Peer Challenge, and a piece of strategic work with the Reading Agency are driving the direction of the service.
- 2.4 The partnership with the British Library is growing in strength with the Living Knowledge Network, and Camden has been invited to be part of a joint funding bid led by CILIP (the library and information association) and partnering with the British Library to Heritage Lottery Fund and, if successful, funding will be awarded to develop a Green Library Hub in the borough with a staff role that works across the British Library and Camden Libraries. Camden Libraires launched its Summer Reading Challenge with a great event at the British Library this year². The auto enrolment and partnership working with the British Library both echo the recommendations of Baroness Sanderson review of libraries.

² https://living-knowledge-network.co.uk/library/Camden-Libraries-Summer-Reading-Challenge



Summer Reading Challenge 2023 – Football challenge at West Hampstead Library.

2.5 Part of the library service is the Local Studies and Archive Centre located at Holborn Library. We are currently reviewing how storage requirements can be managed to free up space through new roller shelving; generate an income; and provide conditions that meet storage accreditation standards with an additional storage area at Swiss Cottage Library where storage is being reviewed. The Libraries Team has submitted a project form to the Heritage Lottery Fund and been encouraged to submit a full application for Swiss at Sixty, to help celebrate the library's sixtieth year. If successful, the funds would contribute to the digital and physical preservation of the collection.

3. Where Libraires are today

<u>Team</u>

- 3.1 The team is growing in confidence in building connections and having conversations with residents about activities and events. Library Week in October 2023 saw 'What If' sessions take place to shift the balance from service led to resident led. The service badged the drop-in sessions as 'What If' and proactively spoke with residents about libraries and what they would like to see in their local library. A display was created to enable residents to add post it notes with ideas which have been collated and are being acted upon.
- 3.2 The restructure that went live in April 2022 had the positive change of a library manager for each library. The senior manager roles, however, were not functioning well and therefore a limited restructure process was completed in September 2024. This saw the reintroduction of career progression and apprenticeship qualification opportunities.
- 3.3 The Team is sharing with the sector where it is developing innovative offers, for example colleagues presented at an Innovation Conference in Birmingham and also as part of the London Libraries Conference in September 2024. An

all-staff conference took place on 3rd October 2024 at Swiss Cottage Library. The service appreciates the support of our communities whilst we close all libraries for the day to allow the team to reconnect and share learning. The service is developing, with the British Library, staff development sessions built on the outcomes of a staff skills audit conducted by CILIP. Two training dates in January are being planned and two more for May where partial closures will take place.

Library investments

3.4 The nine library buildings managed by Camden Council range from historical sites to modern facilities and are located across the borough, with Holborn Library in the most southern position and Kilburn the furthest west. Swiss Cottage Library fulfils the role of the borough's destination library.

Decarbonisation	£3.7m was invested in Swiss Cottage Library in 2021/22		
	£1.7m investment in Highgate Library due to complete in November 2024		
	West Hampstead works will begin in November 2024		
Bequest and Local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	The library received a bequest of £80k from an individual. Using this as core funding, we have also received Local CIL funding contributions of £180k to support celebrating Swiss Cottage's 60 th anniversary which begins in November 2024 by updating the children's library. An exciting design, with a theme of circus and		
	fairground, is based on the history of St Johns Wood. The design will include a performance area; activities area; a story juke box and helter-skelter display features.		
	A National Heritage Lottery Fund application is also being scoped to celebrate the significance of the library and Hampstead Theatre in the local neighbourhood and would see the entrance area to the library becoming a story centre gathering stories and showcasing objects.		
Library Improvement Fund	A £499k grant application has been successful to the Library Improvement Fund (Arts Council England on behalf of Department of Culture Media and Sport) to improve Kilburn Library. The proposal includes bringing the lower ground floor back into use for a community facility to include a community kitchen. The project begins in 2025.		
	The total investment for Kilburn will be £1.7m and sees the redesign of the two library floors removing dated partitions installation of newly designed shelving units, redesigned and moved children's		

3.5 A variety of investments are currently being made in the library buildings.

	library and introduction of digital offers including a laptop tower; and a recording studio.
S106 and Local CIL	Holborn Library is being refreshed in January and February 2025 and has benefitted from £92k local CIL and £114k Section 106 funding in order to improve ventilation, shelving and furniture. Spaces are being created to support community partners and organisations to deliver new offers in the space.
Social Value	A social value list has been developed and Queens Crescent Library has benefitted from a new living room area and LEGO resources have been funded across libraries through Social Value contributions from Council contracts.

3.6 Timeline of projects are being phased to limit impacts on service offer and local alternative offers sought where practical.

Library Project	Temporary Offer	
Swiss Cottage Children's Library redesign Closed: Monday 4th November - Monday, 24th February 2025	A selection of children's books will be available near the enquiry desk on the first floor. All children's activities will continue in the Glass Room in the entrance area. Rhyme Times for under 5s will continue in the Fiction 1 area on the red carpet.	
West Hampstead Library decarbonisation Closed: Monday 18th Nov 2024 - Monday 10 th March	 Monday, 2nd Dec 2024 to Friday, 21st Feb 2025 Library services will continue at Sidings Community Centre, NW6 2BA Opening hours at Sidings Community Centre will be: Tuesdays: 11am to 6pm Thursdays: 11am to 6pm Fridays: 11am to 5pm 	
	 Services will include: book returns and reservations access to e-books click and collect book service regular activities 	
Highgate Library Decarbonisation Closed: December 2023 –	Pop up offer ended 24 th October 2024	

Tuesday 19 th November	
Holborn Library refresh Closed: Mid- January 2025 – end of March 2025	N/A as relatively short period.
Kilburn Library redesign Closed: April 2025 (tbc) - December 2025 (TBC)	Options currently being explored

3.7 Each of the libraries does have a different ambience based on the neighbourhoods where they are located. To maximise their potential as neighbourhood spaces the service is planning some changes which are outlined below and building connections with community partners.

Service and programming

3.8 The team is growing in confidence to have conversations with library users and develop activities together e.g. Bitesize Music at Camden Town; offering LEGO robotics to meet the needs of Home Educators and the Holiday Activity Food programme; developing French classes; and offering pre-loved clothes, clothes swaps and make and mend; jewellery making workshops; cycle rides visiting the libraries; development of sharing space; weekly sessions with Arts for Dementia; hosting a cargo bike at two libraries and energy savers clubs. Residents are approaching us to work with us to develop an offer for other residents. Partnering in 2023 for the first time with the Bloomsbury Festival, a Discovery Hub for children and families provided performances and activities for adults at Holborn Library. Programming of events and displays is being led by the national Libraries Connected Universal Offers which are Health & Wellbeing; Culture & Creativity; Reading; and Digital & Information. The service has worked hard to develop partnerships, programmes and the promotion of those programmes.



Jewellery making workshops at Pancras Square Library and the Bloomsbury Festival at Holborn Library.

- 3.9 A project to auto enrol all primary aged children into library membership and the Winter Mini Reading Challenge has completed all necessary data compliance checks. The auto enrolment will support children to develop the love of reading.
- 3.10 Promoting libraries through Yammer is supporting new service development, e.g. the Poetry Bus where residents are being bused into West Hampstead Library and this has led to a workshop with Adult Social Care and other teams.
- 3.11 The libraries have signed up for the Telling Tales and SPINE Festival programmes delivered in partnership with Apples and Snakes creating exciting programming to encourage engagement with 8–11-year-olds. This will support more poetry and other workshops with young people.



Neal Zetter poetry workshop at Pancras Square library

3.12 The libraries will also be embarking on a three-year funded reading and writing programme supported by the Mercers Fund and the Reading Agency.

<u>Usage</u>

3.13 Visitors to Camden Libraries have been strongly improving since the pandemic.

	2022/23 (per 1,000 population)	2023/24 (per 1,000 population)	2024/25 (per 1,000 population)
Q1 (Apr-Jun)	453	823	1,000 (Highgate closed)
Q2 (Jul-Sept)	512	772	946 (Highgate closed)
Q3 (Oct-Dec)	565	821	-
Q4 (Jan-Mar)	626	931 (Highgate closed)	-

3.14 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport Participation Survey (May 2023 – March 2024) showed Camden as placed second in terms of adults engaging with a public library in the preceding 12 months³.

	Result	Margin of error
Brighton and Hove	37.95%	33.32%-42.81%
Camden	37.25%	32.32%-42.45%
Hillingdon	37.10%	32.36%-42.09%
Manchester	36.62%	33.18%-40.21%
Cambridge (City)	36.01%	31.02%-41.31%

Peer Review

- 3.15 The service applied for a LGA Peer Challenge in June 2023. With a new Head of Service, Director and Cabinet Portfolio Holder it was ideal timing to review the service with external experts. The challenge found that there was strong political and senior leadership commitment to libraries and a clear awareness of the potential for the service, as well as its current constraints, and a strong vision for its future with some success in terms of investment in capacity building already achieved.
- 3.16 It was identified that key messages about how the modern library service delivers against local priorities was needed and the strategic piece of work the service is now doing with the Reading Agency has facilitated this. There was a concern that expectations might be raised that could not be fulfilled without increased investment and a risk that the capacity of the service may not match

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-survey-2023-24-annual-publication

the level of ambition. Reviewing the structure has assisted with this and there are early plans to obtain funding to boost this.

4. Aspiration

Visiting other libraries

4.1 Visits to places within and outside of London have helped to form ideas about how libraries can function as neighbourhood spaces. These have included the Ameila Scott in Tunbridge Wells; Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery; Storyhouse in Chester; The Wellcome library in Euston; Walworth Library and Heritage Centre in Southwark; The Living Room Library in Enfield; Barking Central Library; The Nest in Bexley and Plumstead Library. They all provided inspiration and some common themes of place-based collections that told the story through art and objects; flexible spaces with meeting rooms and pods; performance spaces; and co-located services but retain the essence of a library and its key characteristics of safe, trusted and anonymous spaces. Images can be seen in the appendix to this report.

We Make Camden and Integrated Neighbourhoods Ambition

- 4.2 The Library Service has collated anonymous data on the enquiries being made in libraries and the websites being accessed via the public computers, to identify the needs of the neighbourhoods surrounding each library. This data can support the neighbourhoods work and inform what the neighbourhoods need help with. The data and insight team are analysing the current library user data to understand those the Library Service is reaching and those it is not, and this analysis will support the service to measure social impact. Libraries can support neighbourhoods' ecosystems by offering staff contact, opportunities to engage with communities; and directly deliver interventions that help meet the needs of residents and reduce the inequalities which are highlighted in the data that the Reading Agency has analysed and discussed in themed focus groups. The themes are:
 - Supporting the early years
 - Engaging young people
 - Lifelong learning, including English for Speakers of other Language (ESOL)
 - Supporting mental health and wellbeing across the life course
- 4.3 The reading strategy is being co-produced through discussions with 27 stakeholders, a mix of internal teams and external stake holders. The Reading Strategy will be drafted shortly and includes a 3-year plan.
- 4.4 By working with the Community Partners team, we can link community groups in each of the five neighbourhoods with the libraries so they can collaborate. A session was held at the October 2024 library staff conference to introduce Area Leads and Library Managers to the Community Partners Team.
- 4.5 The libraries support the We Make Camden missions, ambitions and challenges and therefore help to address inequalities by working with other teams and partners. Some examples of the work under each area:

By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow	Through volunteering in libraries, co- creating events in libraries, volunteering to be a community champion, and attending events in libraries this helps to tackle inequalities.		
	The Reading Agency work has helped understand the inequalities and support the libraries to work with other teams, residents and community partners within the neighbourhoods to address these.		
By 2025, every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure	Project with registrars to provide a pack of leaflets from multiple support services and a library card to be activated when a baby is registered.		
	The libraries are also working with Parent Champions trained by Early Years and Coram Beanstalk to run 'Books Together' sessions for 2–4- year-olds in Queens Crescent.		
	We have distributed 147 SIM cards from Camden Town and Queens Crescent Libraries April 23 to April 24.		
	Libraries offer young people places to study and work experience opportunities and Duke of Edinburgh experience building their confidence and the ambition to shape services with them.		
	Libraries also provide strong support to burgeoning and new businesses through e-resources such as COBRA (Complete Business Reference Advisor) available for free to those planning a business start- up; supporting Grow London sessions; offering entrepreneurs the chance to showcase their ideas and products; free wifi for people to work from libraries or co-working spaces hosted by libraries with pods for adhoc meetings.		

By 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food	The libraries contribute to the Holiday Activities Food Programme (HAF) by delivering LEGO Robotics sessions at Talacre.	
	Life After Hummus have received funding to support the first six months of cafe delivery at Pancras Square using food waste meeting the Food Mission and giving opportunity for free meals and support services supporting residents whilst they are in the cafe space.	
By 2030, Camden's estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity	The library service is also seeking to increase the value of having the building in neighbourhoods by creating an agreement it can share with community groups who wish to use the library spaces out of hours - in the evenings and on Sundays.	

5. Development areas

Library jigsaw

- 5.1 The library jigsaw, graphic in Appendix 2, represents the framework of activities and projects presented as part of the peer review and the structure to drive the service forward.
- 5.2 By developing and blending all the elements of the jigsaw: data; team; infrastructure (buildings and digital); programme and partnerships; funding; and promotion of the service, we will be able to better support communities. The service is discussing enhancing the social media presence for libraries aligned to the other London services with the aim of creating a digital network of library users.
- 5.3 The service has accessed funding to enable projects e.g. local CIL funding for Swiss Cottage children's library; S106 and CIL for Holborn Library and Arts Council England Libraries Improvement funding for Kilburn Library. A social value list has been developed and Queens Crescent Library has benefitted from a new living room area and LEGO resources have been funded across libraries. The Team is benefitting from staff development and training and support from other teams to build their skills including Make Every Contact Count training. Work on data analysis is ongoing the libraries are using the census 2021 data to inform their decisions about events and stock and a new stock management tool is helping them exchange stock and focus stock based on need and demand.



LEGO Robotechs at Camden Town Library

Increasing our knowledge about our users

5.4 Kentish Town Library is currently a focus for Greater London Authority (GLA) research into the power of social infrastructure. It is one of two case studies; the other being a market in Hackney. The library is also the focus of one of the eight funded sharing spaces, with Retrofit Kentish Town working with the Library Team to create a space for residents to come and talk about the environment and what they can do at home to act. Activity will start in the Autumn. There is a resident interested in displaying their artwork in the library and the Arts Team have installed a hanging system to facilitate this. The library team are working with residents, the voluntary and community sector and other teams to deliver support and advice sessions and devise new activities. The space is limited but there are two meeting rooms. The team have been trained by The Reader to deliver shared reading groups to support people's health and wellbeing.





Shared Reading at Camden Town Library and a celebration of a young person's digital artwork for Black History Month at Swiss Cottage Library

6. Challenges to overcome

6.1 Structure

A listen and reflect exercise took place in January and February 2023 which highlighted positives of the service flowing from the restructure in April 2022 and also the areas for improvement. The positive feedback demonstrated that the team are very fulfilled with their role, but that more training is needed on outreach, digital resources, and presenting stock. The structure has been reviewed in 2024 in response to the listen and reflect feedback and the Peer Challenge. Career progression and staff development have been considered in the new structure. Retention of the valued Community Library Manager role and revision of the strategic roles has improved to functionality of the service with an introduction of Area Lead roles and two reader development roles. An aim to introduce an apprenticeship in Library, Information and Archive services assistant (Level 3) will be fulfilled

6.2 Overview of changes in other boroughs

Birmingham City Council

Consultation closed on 17th July 2024 on a proposal to combine the current Library Service and Neighbourhood Advice & Information Service (NAIS) into a single service. Provisional planned saving target of £ 2.3m (Libraries and NAIS) with flexibility for how savings will be achieved depending on the outcome of consultation. In person consultation sessions took place in September 2024 based on the feedback from the digital consultation which highlighted the number of physical spaces could reduce from 35 to 25. In a recent update 7 libraries will require an organisation to step in to fund and run the libraries; 14 libraries will run on part-time hours operating for 14 or 21 hours a week. There will be 10 libraries that will become community hubs which will open 28 hours a week revised from the original proposal of 35 hours per week. The Library of Birmingham will be the only full-time library although the Council have said if internal partners or community groups come forward to support other libraries may be able to open full time. These are revised proposals and have not been agreed.

London Borough of Havering

Consultation closed on 2nd August on a proposal to reduce the number of libraries in the borough by four – from ten libraries to six, with four of the current five branch libraries that open for 24 hours per week closing in order to achieve the savings target the service has been set.

Nottingham City Council

Consultation closed on 15th August on proposals to save £1.5m over the next 2 years within Nottingham City Libraries, as part of the Council's aim to find £36m savings between 2024/25 and 2027/28. This amounts to just over 38% of the library services existing budget requiring a reimagining of how library services are delivered to the citizens of Nottingham. Currently, Nottingham

has 15 library buildings, including the brand-new Central Library. This is still at proposal stage and no decision has been made.

Enfield Libraries

Enfield Council have the highest number of libraries in London and are consulting on closing 8 of its 17 libraries and declassifying another so it will no longer be listed as a public library as it is situated in a Primary School. This will leave 8 Council run libraries which represented 85% of the library network visits in 2023/24. These are still proposals at this stage.

Croydon Council

Croydon's Cabinet discussed the recommendations of a consultation on library closures at a meeting on 24 September 2024. The proposal was to close 4 of the 13 libraries and create 6 library hubs which will extend their opening times across 5 days a week, in 2022, changes to the library opening times were significantly reduced and 3 community hubs were created which are co-located services with a library offer. It is possible the four libraries that will no longer be staffed as Council run libraries will be run as community spaces if the community can organise a solution.

7. Finance Comments

7.1 This report provides an update on the development of the library service and the service offer to the communities of Camden. Currently there are no financial implications to be reported.

8. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

8.1 Legal Services have been consulted and have no specific comments.

9. Environmental Implications

9.1 Kilburn Library saw the addition of a Library of Things in Spring 2023. This is an initiative which is a partnership with the Sustainability Department. There is also a Library of Things at Kentish Town Library.

Since its inception and up to March 2023, Library of Things had enabled 20,000 items to be rented, 10,000 of which were in the last 12 months as Library of Things continue to expand locations across the country and see demand increase. This translates to over 200 tonnes (~17 double decker buses) of CO2 saved, users saving over £600k by not buying equipment and ~50k additional visitors to the locations that host kiosks.

9.2 The decarbonisation programme has seen investment in Swiss Cottage Library. An investment of £3.2m has been made to decarbonise the building with £1.8m from Camden capital and £1.4m PSDS (Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) grant. A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to support low carbon retrofit of Highgate Library and West Hampstead Library has seen an investment of £1.7m in Highgate Library. West Hampstead Library will begin decarbonisation works in November. 9.3 Other environmental initiatives include hosting a cargo bike for public to rent at Kentish Town and Queens Crescent Libraries. A sharing space in collaboration with Retrofit Kentish Town at Kentish Town Library from Autumn 2024 and a funding bid to create a Green Hub in a Camden Library has been submitted by the British Library and CILIP. Green Libraries Week will take place in October.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 Images from libraries visited for inspiration

Appendix 2 The library jigsaw – a framework created by Camden to develop the service

Apendix 3 Plans for redesign and improvement of Swiss Cottage Children's Library; Kilburn Library and Holborn Library and recent improvements to Queens Crescent Library. West Hampstead Library improvements are planned but no visuals available yet.

Appendix 1 Images of libraries visited



Living Room Library, Enfield Jan Kattein Architect



The Wellcome, AOC Architects



The Storyhouse, Chester Ellis Williams and Bennett Associates



Walworth Library and Heritage Centre, Southwark AOC Architecture



Amelia Scott, Tunbridge Wells Willmott Dixon

Appendix 2: Library Jigsaw

The Library Jigsaw helps us support We Make Camden Ambitions, Challenges and Missions

Data – Needs Analysis Knowledge Quarter Camden's demographics - 15 minute walk 2021 census Current Customer analysis – websites and enquiries Stock performance Reading Strategy	Funding IRB Library On PhD Research on power of storytelling Arts Council England Project grant NHLF Swiss at Sixty	Infrastructure Buildings Design Tech Civic spaces An active citizen space to experiment Out of hours use and activation of underutilised space Projects at Kilburn; Swiss; Holborn and public spaces at Pancras Square. Kentish Town and Holmes Road development Digital – Reading App	Team Training & Development with British Library and CILIP Staff Conference Facilitated workshop Opening the Book RNIB Community engagement with Outreach Bus MECC – bespoke after enquiry survey	Programme and Partnerships Universal Offers framework Cultural Calendar and linking with Health & Wellbeing and Corporate Inclusivity Calendars Resident led – We Make Camden and What If Poetry Bus and London Inclusion Sports Academy (LISA) ; AEH Popups Living Knowledge Network	Brand / Perception/ Communication Monthly update to Cllrs E Newsletter Welcome Guide Spydus App Web pac events page Would like to use Instagram for visual impact Under Ss leaflet; Welcome guide; digital resource guide
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Appendix 3: Building improvements

Swiss Cottage Children's Library designs



Kentish Town new community art hanging wall



Queens Crescent new living room area



Kilburn LIF designs

revised layout



cts © | 244 - Kilburn Library | Stage 3 Design Integ

Holborn visuals





REPORT ENDS