

CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 12
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	<i>Libraries Consultation Results</i>		
Date of Meeting:	15 June 2010		
Report of:	<i>Director of Housing, Culture & Enterprise</i>		
Contact Officer:	Name:	<i>Sally McMahon</i>	Tel: 29-6963
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Key Decision:	No	Forward Plan No.	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Cabinet Member on the results of recent library user consultation and to agree the action plans arising from these. Libraries regularly consult with library users in order to find out how well the library service meets their needs and identify how the service might be improved.
- 1.2 This report highlights the main findings from two public library user surveys which are set by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). These are: the CIPFA Public Library User Survey (CIPFA PLUS), and the CIPFA Electronic Public Library User Survey (CIPFA ePLUS).
- 1.3 The surveys show that overall satisfaction with Brighton & Hove City Libraries has increased from 88% to 90% since 2006, and that satisfaction with opening hours in particular has improved significantly from 59% to 86%. Libraries are increasingly supporting people without home internet access (68% of users), and free access is a key factor for most people (69%).
- 1.4 45% of respondents made over 2,000 comments covering varied aspects of services including access, facilities, opening hours, activities, staff and stock. It is the libraries stock that was most commented on, which reflected the 65% satisfaction score for choice of books, up 1% on 2006.
- 1.5 These survey results are in addition to the recently published CIPFA library statistics for 2008-09 in which we achieved the excellent result of 90.3% satisfaction with children's library services, the second highest in the country (Isle of Wight came top with 90.4%).
- 1.6 Other highlights from the recently released CIPFA library statistics include the fact that Jubilee Library remains the fifth most popular library in the country, and it is also the most visited library in the south east.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note the levels of public satisfaction with Libraries Services provided by Brighton & Hove City Council
- 2.2 To approve the actions to improve services as outlined in sections 3.1.11 and 3.2.9

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 CIPFA PLUS Survey

- 3.1.1 This is a national survey carried out every three years to find out how well the library service meets customer needs providing data about each individual library as well as information about Brighton & Hove City Library Service as a whole. The previous CIPFA PLUS survey was carried out in 2006.
- 3.1.2 As well as providing the answers to the twenty-two questions in the survey over 2,000 additional comments were made. The large number of comments demonstrates a high level interest and participation in this consultation exercise.
- 3.1.3 There were a lot of new questions, or questions asked in a different way in the 2009 survey compared to 2006, so it is difficult to compare the data. Where there was a comparable question, the 2009 results were broadly an improvement on those in 2006.
- 3.1.4 The overarching satisfaction question within the survey contributes towards the Local Area Agreement local target L21: Community Engagement in Local Libraries. The results of this show that 90% of library users think Brighton & Hove City Libraries are 'very good/good', which is a 2% increase on 2006 and 4% increase on 2003.
- 3.1.5 There was a significant 15% increase in satisfaction with opening hours, rising to 86% from the 2006 score of 71%. This is a result of the extension of opening hours at Jubilee Library to seven days a week, and at Hove Library to include Mondays. This improvement is on top of a similarly high increase in satisfaction in 2006 over the 2003 score, so that over a period of six years since 2003, performance has improved by 27% from 59% to 86%. However, the comments show that there is still a desire by the public for improved opening hours in all libraries, including Jubilee Library.
- 3.1.6 Overall there was an improvement in satisfaction with library environments:
 - satisfaction with outside appearance up from 75% to 85%
 - satisfaction with internal appearance up from 84% to 87%There were lower levels of satisfaction with the provision of seating and tables, achieving only 71%.
- 3.1.7 The perception of the quality of customer care remains high at 90%. 96% of respondents see libraries as safe places to visit, and 96% feel that the library is an easy place to get to.

- 3.1.8 Satisfaction with the choice of library stock improved from 64% to 65%, but this is the lowest area of satisfaction, and there are high expectations for a greater range and availability of stock that are reflected in the comments.
- 3.1.9 A new question in this survey asked how the library has helped the respondent, listing six areas and people could choose as many as they liked. While leisure use came out on top at 62%, help to study was cited by 52% of respondents, and work cited by 36%. The house and home option was chosen by 28% and 25% of respondents said the library helped them with health issues.
- 3.1.10 The opening of a new library in Coldean in 2008 has been a great success with the public, as evidenced by the results in this survey. Satisfaction levels are up in all of the key questions:
- Attractiveness of outside of the building up from 47% to 90%
 - Attractiveness of inside of the building up from 80% to 96%
 - Choice of books up from 70% to 76%
 - Information provision up from 91% to 98%
 - Computer facilities up from 80% to 98%
- Success in using the new library has also increased:
- Finding information up from 80% to 92%
 - Percentage of visitors using the computers up from 16% to 35%

3.1.11 Actions to Improve Services

Whilst the overall picture is good, there are important aspects of Libraries services on which we could do better. Areas for improvement have been identified from the results:

- Put effective plans in place to improve the number, range, layout and availability of stock, books and audiovisual materials. This will include the regular market testing of the Bibliographic Services contract through the PFI arrangements for Jubilee Library, and the better use of data generated by the Spydus, the Library Management System.
- Continue with the review of opening hours of community libraries linked to any development, refurbishment or improvement plans
- Review effectiveness of reservations system and make necessary improvements
- Review noise levels in Jubilee Library and empower staff to take action to keep noise to an acceptable level
- Review the service desks in Jubilee Library and make necessary changes to improve the customer experience
- Task the managers and staff in each library with identifying and addressing any specific areas for improvement in their library, as identified in the responses to the survey
- Comments made about the toilet facilities in Jubilee Library have already been addressed by the Facilities Management company who have made improvements since the survey took place.

3.2 CIPFA E-PLUS Survey

- 3.2.1 This is a national survey carried out every three years to find out how well the library service meets customer needs, providing data about each individual library as well as information about Brighton & Hove City Libraries Service as a whole. The previous CIPFA E-PLUS survey was carried out in 2006.
- 3.2.2 A significant result from this survey is the increase in the percentage of computer users who have no internet access at home. This has increased from 48% in 2006, to 68% in this latest survey. This indicates the increasing importance of online access in today's society, so that those without access at home increasingly need to use public access points such as libraries.
- 3.2.3 The results show that the computer facilities are attracting a higher percentage of unemployed people (15%) and black British or Asian British people (5.7%) compared with the profile for the city (3.6% and 2.6% respectively). Another interesting result is that over 35% of respondents use library computers more than once a week and 15% said they used them daily.
- 3.2.4 90% of respondents said that the library computers were 'fit for purpose' and there was high satisfaction with staff helpfulness (91%) and customer care (92%). In the CIPFA PLUS survey carried out in October 2009 only 70% of respondents thought library computer facilities were good or very good. Since then we have had a programme of replacing all the public PC base units, and we are starting a programme of replacing the monitors this year.
- 3.2.5 There were many reasons cited for the use of computers in libraries and the positive effects this brought to people's lives. It provides access to information technology that people wouldn't have without the libraries' free facilities and it has encouraged non-users to come into libraries.
- 3.2.6 The main use of the computers was communication, with 68% of respondents using email, and 51% of users finding information for a whole range of purposes, learning, leisure, work, news, health, rights. Keeping in touch with family and friends was often mentioned in the comments. Social networking has started to grow, especially in Jubilee, Coldean and Moulsecoomb Libraries.
- 3.2.7 Job hunting was cited by 19% of people and 14% used the computers for work. 18% of people used the computers for education or learning. There were many comments that showed how vital a role that the free library access to computers in helping them find jobs, work remotely, study themselves or support their children learning.
- 3.2.8 The economic benefit brought through access to library computer facilities was identified by some respondents. The fact that the facilities are free was seen as important to unemployed people and those on low incomes, and the opportunity to compare prices and manage money online was also mentioned.
- 3.2.9 Actions to Improve Services

Many of the actions proposed are already included in the current Libraries Plan, and the results of the consultation reinforce those plans, and help focus on some specific areas for improvement:

- Maintain the free nature of the access to computer facilities and the internet
- Enable longer access to the internet where demand allows
- Introduce WiFi into libraries as soon as possible
- Continue to invest in maintaining and improving the quality and effectiveness of the computer equipment and software in all libraries
- Review and improve related facilities such as the space provided, the seating and tables, headphones and lighting
- Develop staff skills and confidence to support people using computer facilities in libraries

3.3 Future Consultation Plans

- 3.3.1 Since the change from Public Library Service standards to the new National Indicator targets, the CIPFA surveys have become optional. Many library authorities have changed over to more tailored surveys, so there is less opportunity for benchmarking authorities against each other using the CIPFA survey data. The CIPFA surveys are very expensive to run as they involve hard copy survey forms, and the information is quickly out of date as each of the surveys (adults', children's and e-plus) are only carried out every three years.
- 3.3.2 Our intention is to stop using the CIPFA surveys and replace them with permanent electronic survey installations in Jubilee and Hove Libraries, and mobile versions that can be used in the community libraries on a rolling programme. These will be very similar to the installations currently used in the Royal Pavilion and Museums. This will provide regularly updated information on library users' views about our services, and enable us to more quickly respond to issues that are raised.
- 3.3.3 In addition to the library user surveys, we intend to carry out regular online surveys in order to capture non-user views. This will be done through the newly developed Consultation Portal, which is bringing together consultation activity of city-wide organisations and agencies, under the auspices of the Local Strategic Partnership.

4. **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The CIPFA PLUS Survey was carried out in October 2009 in all libraries across the city including the mobile library and the Brighton History Centre. Adult visitors (aged 16 and over) were targeted, and 2,449 returns were received. The questionnaire template comprising 22 questions is supplied by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / Institute of Public Finance and the results are collected nationally to provide benchmarking data for library authorities.
- 4.2 The CIPFA e-Plus Survey was carried out in November 2008 in all libraries across the city, excluding Brighton History Centre. Adult visitors (aged 16 and over) were targeted, and 873 returns were received. The questionnaire was supplied by the Institute of Public Finance and the results are collected nationally to provide benchmarking data for library authorities.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Any actions undertaken as a result of recent findings and comments from the libraries consultation will need to be funded from within existing budgets, or else additional funding will need to be sought. However, it is possible that improved value for money re the book fund can continue to be found via further market testing by the contractor under the PFI arrangement.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis Date: 2 June 2010

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no adverse legal implications to this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce Principal Solicitor Date: 2 June 2010

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Programme of consultation and improving Libraries Services is part of a wider strategy to widen access for all, and in particular to target services to the priority groups identified by the council. The surveys have identified some specific disadvantaged people, such as the unemployed, who can be better supported through the provision of effective library services and computer facilities.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 *Sustainable Consumption and Production* : No implications
Climate Change and Energy: No implications.
Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement: No implications.
Sustainable Communities: The involvement of local people in identifying improvements in services is one way libraries engage the community. The improvements in services enable more people to make use of Libraries facilities and services, and so contribute to the development of more sustainable communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There is a risk that regular surveys may raise expectations which cannot be delivered within the current economic climate.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Consulting with library users supports the corporate priority to have 'Open and Effective Leadership' as it helps involve and engage local people in decisions about their local library services.
- 5.8 Improving Library Services will support the corporate priority to 'Reducing inequality by increasing opportunity', as they help increase opportunities through access to information and computer facilities, supporting learning and skills development, and broadening cultural understanding in the community.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

No other options considered.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To improve the quality of libraries services, increase library use and to deliver better value for money.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

1. Appendices:

2. Documents In Members' Rooms

Summary of CIPFA PLUS survey results
Summary of CIPFA E-PLUS survey results

3. Background Documents

None

