Report to the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee

Title:	Buckinghamshire Library service: An Overview
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Author:	David Jones, Service Delivery Manager
Contact officer:	David Jones, x 2254,
	c-dajones@buckscc.gov.uk
Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Martin Phillips,
	Community Engagement
Electoral divisions affected:	All divisions

Purpose of Agenda Item

1. This report provides an overview of Buckinghamshire library service and lists some key facts and figures for the service. The report describes service priorities and developments, summarises key issues in terms of efficiency and financial challenges and identifies a number of opportunities going forward.

Background and Overview

2. The library service in Buckinghamshire is delivered through a county and community model. This is an innovative model of partnership working whereby there is a mixed economy of delivery for library services in Buckinghamshire. The breadth, scope and expertise of the county support the dynamic and responsive delivery of community based local library services.

3. Reading and literacy are at the heart of our service but we also recognise that library services can make important contributions to local and national agendas relating to business, health and wellbeing, advise and welfare, digital inclusion and supporting the elderly. The library service has also developed a successful digital services offer.

County

4. The county service is delivered through the nine largest libraries in the county. These libraries deliver professional, high quality and co-ordinated services that are planned and delivered to make a real contribution to local and national agendas.

Amersham	Aylesbury	Beaconsfield	Buckingham	Chesham
Hazlemere	High Wycombe	Marlow	Princes Risborough	

The county service also includes important support and development functions including the library computer system, stock procurement, book reservations and the county reserve collection. Mobile services and our home visit service ensure that residents who struggle to physically visit a library are not excluded. Most importantly, the county service has a key role in supporting the community library partnerships. County staff provide training, support in stock selection and day to day 'buddying'.

Community

5. There are sixteen community library partnerships up and running in Buckinghamshire. Eleven of these partnerships are self-managed community libraries where residents form an organisation and deliver library services in partnership with the council. The relationship is defined through a lease on the premises and a service level agreement. Although managed by local community organisations, they remain part of the library network, supported by the county in terms of book stock, links with the library computer system and training and development.

Beacon Villages	*Chalfont St Giles*	*Chalfont St Peter*	*Farnham Common*
Flackwell Heath	*Haddenham*	*Little Chalfont*	*Long Crendon*
Stokenchurch	*West Wycombe*	*Wing*	

6. There are five community supported library partnerships. With these models the council retains the management of the building and provides a reduced staff presence. Local friends groups or library committees recruit volunteers, fund raise and work in partnership to raise money to maintain and extend opening hours and service provision. This is a partnership model of jointly managing and jointly delivering library services.

Gerrards Cross   Great Missenden   Iver Heath   Wendover   Winslow

Work is underway to deliver four more community library partnerships by the end of 2014.

Bourne End, Burnham, Castlefield, Micklefield

7. **Key facts**   **2013/14**
   Physical visits   1.7 million
   Book issues   2.563 million
   Active members   75,800
   New members   18.500
   Visits to library catalogue page   1,135,000
   Access to online reference materials   44,000
   Online issues (e-books)   78,000
   Public Computer sessions   130,000

8. Service development and priorities

Reading and literacy
- All of our libraries promote reading with displays, class visits, bounce and rhyme and author events. We also deliver co-ordinated programmes and specific initiatives for disabled residents.
- Over 270 reading groups are supported including groups for visually impaired residents.
- National government reading initiatives to encourage reading for all ages delivered across the county e.g. Bookstart, Summer Reading Challenge, World Book Day & Book Night.
- National Libraries Annual multi-sensory story telling event to families with disabled children to promote library resources i.e. Boardmaker, BagBook stories, Sign and Rhyme sessions.

Business
- All libraries provide free online access to business information including advice on start-ups.
- Bucks Business First has opened a Business Hub in Chesham to develop and support local business innovation.

Health and well being
- Free NHS Health Checks have been delivered in three BCC target areas in partnership with Public Health
- Health Minds have funded an increase in self-help stock (Books on Prescription) as part of our Health & Wellbeing initiative.
- Health events are delivered across county libraries with invited partners to deliver BCC's Five Ways to Wellbeing strategy.

Advice and welfare
- With 1.7 million visits a year and a safe and welcoming environment, libraries are well placed to develop partnerships to deliver advice sessions.
- Credit Union volunteers are now delivering weekly advice sessions in library locations.
- Bucks Floating Support – housing and financial service – delivering weekly drop in and 1-1 sessions in four county libraries.
- Bucks Vision and Action for Hearing Loss delivering regular information sessions from libraries.
- Bucks Disability Service delivered 14 information and advice sessions to over 120 people to highlight recent changes to the Welfare Benefits System.

Modernising the mobile service
- Our mobile library service offer has been broadened to help rural communities stay in touch with council services and the voluntary sector.
- Visiting over 140 villages and communities in Buckinghamshire, with access to discrete meeting rooms, the mobile service offers a unique and safe space to partners, in addition to core library services.
- Currently we are in talks with the Districts, the CAB, Trading Standards, Bucks Credit Unions, Bucks Floating Support and the Police to offer a variety of opportunities for partners to deliver key messages or 1-1 help in a community setting.

Digital inclusion
- Access to government information and services will shift to online access. By 2015 government services will only be available online. Residents who do not have computers or don't know how to use them will be disadvantaged. With free access to ICT and trained staff, libraries have an important role in supporting digital inclusion.

- All county libraries use volunteers to deliver free sessions for the <u>Learn My Way</u> online training packages to connect residents to county council and government services.
- We are working with Paradigm Housing Association to deliver IT training to their residents in Chesham.
- Libraries are part of a pilot project with BCC and Bucks Adult Learning to help support benefit applications and deliver budgeting skills training.
- Aylesbury Study Centre is working with partners from Aylesbury Job Centre to deliver support sessions to job seekers. The sessions focus on helping people use universal job match and other job seeking websites.

Supporting the elderly

- For many communities the social impact of the library is significant given the absence of other accessible community venues. In particular, the provision of free, safe 'open door' social space and activity can reduce the isolation of elderly people and reduce the need for social services to address this.
- Reminiscence collections – used by over 40 residential homes, dementia support groups, community groups.
- Regular chess, quiz, coffee, singing/reminiscence sessions for elderly, isolated groups – working with Prevention Matters and Community workers to signpost residents to these events.

Digital services

- Libraries have an important role in ensuring that everyone has access to the digital world.
- All libraries offer free access to ICT (including Wi-Fi) and deliver over 11,000 computer sessions a month.
- New digital services allow access to eBooks, e.audio books and e.magazines.
- Compared with 15 comparator county councils, BCC has the 2nd highest number of eBook loans, second highest eBook acquisition and fourth highest web site visits.
- Buckinghamshire libraries enable free online access to the catalogue, book renewals, enquiries, reservations and events booking and payment.
- Libraries deliver regular gadget days where staff demonstrate the use of new technology.

9. Efficiency

Since 2009/10 the library service has succeeded in reducing costs by over £1 million without closing libraries or reducing opening hours.

Savings 2009 – 2014
- In 2011/12 a review of our library support services resulted in savings of close to £200,000 with an additional £178,000 generated as we began implementation of our Community Library Strategy.
- During 2012/13 a review of courier and information services generated savings of £50,000 and £40,000 respectively and a combination of savings from the community library strategy and county library staff reductions generated a saving of £316,000.
- Throughout 2013/14 we have continued to generate savings by re-modelling our mobile library services , reviewing our reading development team and by introducing self-service technology where appropriate

Year	Total cost	change on previous year
2009/10	£6,134,267	
2010/11	£5,832,162	- 4.9%
2011/12	£5,763,420	-1.2%
2012/13	£5,310,630	-7.9%
2013/14	£5,069,800	-4.53%

10. Future challenge

MTP for the next four years require efficiencies of £595,000 from the library service and plans are being developed to deliver savings as follows;

• Increased income	£40,000
• Improved management of book stock	£30,000
• Self- service , organisational change and additional volunteering	£450,000
• Community libraries	£65,000
• Review of Home Library service	£10,000

11. Opportunities and issues going forward

- **Partnerships and impact**
  Visits and issues to libraries have been in decline year on year since 2006 (nationally and locally). In Buckinghamshire it will be important for us to continue to develop partnerships and demonstrate wider impact.

- **Digital shift**
  The shift to digital channels will reduce the number of physical visits but also offer an important opportunity for the library service to position as the provider of free and supported digital access.

- **Face of the council?**
  With a network of safe and welcoming community venues, over 1.7 million visits and access to phone, web and face to face service – Buckinghamshire libraries could help bring the council closer to communities and help generate efficiencies.

- **'Future shape'**
  The council's transformation programme will challenge all council services to look critically at existing delivery models. Work has already started to identify options including private sector delivery, cultural trusts, staff mutual and co-operatives.

- **eBook services**
  The library service has responded to the demand for new eBook services. EBook loans are currently a small percentage of total loans but the service is relatively new, usage has more than doubled in a year and is set to increase sharply. However the management information available cannot determine whether eBook loans represent new customer or a channel shift for existing customers.