

Review of properties used for provision of libraries services.

Introduction

This paper considers the libraries property portfolio. Its purpose is to support the Council in its operational decision taking. Key property decisions relate to planning for maintenance, acquisition, closure, disposal, building adaptations and refurbishments to accommodate changes in operational service needs.

No judgements are made about the need or community value of any library. These are matters for the service provider and communities served. In establishing the libraries strategy however, visitor numbers, community need and levels of satisfaction can be considered against harder property measures of size, utilisation, cost and maintenance investment needs; and refined against Asset Management considerations of consequences for closure of individual library sites.

Space utilisation:

In common with most public libraries, Bury Council libraries do not provide an across the board 7 day opening. Bury Library provides the longest 'staffed' service, 6 days a week open for 55 hours. Ainsworth the fewest, 3 days and open 10 ½ hours a week.

Table 1 provides a summary of library floor space, days open and frequency open and available to the public. It then compares as a percentage the opening hours of each by comparison with Bury library that is open 55 hours a week.

Table 1:				
Property	Net floor area(sq.m)	Open days per week	Open hours per week	% open compared to Bury library
Ainsworth Library	29	3	10hrs 30mins	19%
Brandlesholme	109	5	16hrs 30mins.	30%
Bury	464	6	55hrs	100%
Castle Leisure (self service library)	94	7	96hrs	174%
Coronation Road	106	5	16hrs 30mins.	30%
Dumers Lane	54	4	13hrs	23%
Moorside	315	5	16hrs 30mins.	30%
Prestwich	710	7	46hrs	97%
Radcliffe Library	516	5	37hrs 30mins.	68%
Ramsbottom	588	5	39hrs 30mins.	71%
Topping Fold	198	4	13hrs	23%
Tottington	365	5	33hrs 30mins.	60%
Unsworth	333	5	33hrs 30mins	60%
Whitefield	588	5	39hrs 30 mins.	71%
Totals	4,469		466 ½ hrs	60%

Under utilisation is an opportunity lost to provide services from space that is paid for. Shortening hour's cuts wage costs but has little impact on the cost of property.

Cost of occupancy:

Property costs (rates, utilities, repairs etc) are the second highest to the libraries service, only staff costs are higher. The cost of property occupancy considered in the context of how well space is used and the services it supports should help with strategy formulation. The comparative property cost per hour open may have a correlation with the value of the services to the community served.

Table 2 summarises net floor areas of Bury libraries, open hours and calculation of annual library property costs per sqm and cost per hour open (figures for 15/16).

Table 2				
Property	Net floor area (sqm)	Property revenue cost pa (£) inc caretaking/cleaning	Property cost per sqm (£)	Property cost per hour open (£)
Ainsworth Library	29	2,723	93.90	259.33
Brandlesholme	109	12,130	111.28	735.15
Bury	464	*74,947	161.52	1,362.67
Castle Leisure	94	*373	3.97	3.89
Coronation Road	106	5,925	55.90	359.09
Dummers Lane	54	8,508	157.56	654.46
Moorside	315	6,988	22.18	423.52
Prestwich	710	53,970	76.01	1173.26
Radcliffe Library	516	51,910	100.60	1384.26
Ramsbottom	588	49,810	84.71	1261.01
Topping Fold	198	14,724	74.36	1132.62
Tottington	365	27,104	74.26	809.07
Unsworth	333	31,293	93.97	934.12
Whitefield	588	44,951	76.45	1138.00
Totals	4,469	385,356		

The large libraries and libraries that have short open hours are the ones with the highest unit cost per hour. * care required with some of the reported costs and areas due to interpretation of used areas and account recharging.

Safe, comfortable and compliant:

Library buildings need to be both physically safe and secure, with clear circulation spaces, common areas and secure entrances, as well as complying with relevant regulations. Effectively maintained buildings tend to perform well in terms of energy use, while high levels of backlog maintenance typically indicate poor energy performance, irrespective of age. Cleaning can be seen as the first line of maintenance and while Bury libraries are all well loved by staff, many appear tired and 'shabby'. This can directly affect the satisfaction of staff and visitors. It also impacts on the perception of services provided.

A poorly maintained building can be a barrier to service development and is evidence of lack of long term commitment leading to potential loss of reputation.

The Councils Architectural Practice has provided a desktop view of each library to estimate future maintenance costs (building, electrical and mechanical elements), prioritised over the next 5 years. These are summarised in Table 3 below.

It shows:

- There is a legacy of good management and investment in maintenance and repair. All libraries are rated as condition A or B (good or satisfactory).
- Required maintenance investment need is £1,307,299 over 5 years.
- Priority 1 urgent works, to prevent risk of building failure or to health and safety, have a cost estimate of £315,887.

(Investigation of and attention to priority 1 issues advised as a matter of urgency)

The estimates provided are to put and keep existing building elements into acceptable condition. They do not consider suitability for purpose or envisage refurbishment to reflect changed service needs.

The estimates range from Prestwich library and Adult Learning Centre as the highest at £424,200 to Ainsworth library £70,732. Once again, it may be revealing to compare these costs to service judgements about the value of individual libraries to the communities served.

Opportunities to achieve savings

The overall strategy for libraries should be informed by an awareness of the commercial and legal constraints of its property. An Asset Management view of prospects of being able to release or sell library buildings were they to be closed as libraries is reported in Table 4. This is an important consideration since closure of a library building that can not be brought into an alternative use or disposed of would mean the Council retaining long term liabilities and associated costs.

The views presented are based on site constraints, alternative third party or private uses and alternative or additional Council uses.

The main issues identified are:

- Opportunities for easy / quick savings are limited.
- To achieve savings through sales of buildings / the site will need a run up period for pre sale preparation and marketing.
- Review needs to be aware that most of the libraries accommodate and share spaces with other services, e.g. Adult Learning and 3rd sector organisations that need to be considered in strategy development.

In the vicinity of virtually all Bury libraries there are other public providers of services. All providers of public services are facing similar financial and service pressures. For example in most of the towns where there is a library under challenge there is also a health centre with similar concerns. At a Greater Manchester level under the One Public Estate agenda, efforts are being made to understand and find opportunities out of these challenges. The Council is developing its own vision for hubs. These are areas of strategy development that may reveal unexpected opportunities' for a future libraries service.

This also represents an opportunity to transform the way the library service is provided.

Additional supporting information

- i) A Borough plan showing the location of each of the libraries.
- ii) A property fact sheet for each Library.

For information, clarification or assistance, for example in helping to consider the suitability of each building or to investigate sharing or merging facilities with other nearby service providers please contact me.

Options:

- Straight closures, possibly with retained libraries extending area coverage.
- Extend use of libraries so savings are created by sharing costs with services who share facilities', e.g. health centres, community hubs, offices, nurseries etc. This will mean closure of other service facilities to create the revenue savings – better knowledge needed across the portfolios.
- Community asset transfers. A policy for this is to be created – depends on presence of suitable community organisations.

Next steps

- i. Obtain advice on lottery grant position.
- ii. Follow up on position with Unsworth Health Centre.



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Table 3: Summary of Required Maintenance Costs – Library Buildings

BUILDING	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Total required maintenance	Condition Rating
Bury Library	14,150	16,800	41,890	72,840	A
Ramsbottom Library and Adult Learning Centre	-	5,100	11,300	16,400	B
Tottington Library	24,850	9,600	81,650	116,100	B
Prestwich Library & Adult Learning Centre	-	411,200	13,000	424,200	A
Whitefield Library and Adult Learning Centre	151,830	101,300	10,800	263,930	B
Radcliffe Library	53,570	17,450	69,990	141,010	B
South Cross St Library	926	29,130	5,110	35,166	B
Moorside Library	-	6,750	7,100	13,850	B
Castle Sport and Leisure Library	1,065	6,150	7,950	15,165	B
Topping Fold Library	8,710	3,550	7,100	19,360	A
Dumers Lane Library	-	9,175	3,550	12,725	B
Brandlesholme Library	5,000	4,150	7,100	16,250	B
Ainsworth Library	1,426	9,152	4,260	14,838	B
Coronation Road Library	-	2,375	10,550	12,925	A
Unsworth Library	54,360	53,730	24,450	132,540	B
Total	315,887	685,612	305,800	1,307,299	

Maintenance costs are prioritised in levels 1 to 3 where:

- Priority 1 = Urgent works that will prevent immediate closure and / or address an immediate high risk to the health and safety of the occupants and / or to remedy a serious breach of legislation.
- 2 = Essential work required within 2 years that will prevent serious deterioration of the fabric or service and / or address a medium risk to the health and safety of the occupants and / or remedy a minor breach of legislation.
- 3 = Desirable work required within 3 to 5 years that will prevent deterioration of the fabric or service and / or address a low risk to the health and safety of the occupants and / or a minor breach of the legislation.

Table 4: Asset Management view of opportunity to achieve savings.

Building	Comment	Property Rev Costs (£) (2015/16)
High Opportunity		
Dumers Lane Community Centre and Library, Radcliffe. M26 2GN	Potentially could be sold or alternatively let as a dwelling. Receipt net of Big lottery grant repayment used for building acquisition and conversion.	8,508
Ramsbottom Library and Adult Learning Centre, Carr St, BL0 9DD	Potentially could be incorporated with adjoining Council owned land that is surplus and sold. Receipt, net of Heritage Lottery and Skills Funding Agency grant repayment used for extending the building.	49,810
Whitefield Library and Adult Learning Centre, Pinfold Lane, M45 7NY	Would present an opportunity for redevelopment. Receipt, net of Skills Funding Agency grant for building improvements for Adult Learning.	44,951
Brandlesholme Community Centre and Library, BL8 1HR	Potential site for disposal (shared with a children's nursery). Receipt net of lottery grant for building extension and conversion.	12,130
Unsworth Library, Sunny Bank Rd, BL9 8ES	Potential is tied up with adjoining NHS facility.	31,293
Medium Opportunity		
Radcliffe Library, Stand Ln, M26 1WR	This may have potential for alternative use	51,910
Ainsworth Library, Church St, BL2 5RT	Lease could be given up – holding over rent of £1,100 pa.	2,723
Tottington Library, Market St, BL8 3LN	Potential for third party or private use.	27,104
Coronation Road, Radcliffe	Site shared with ROC Community Group – opportunity for community asset transfer? Receipt net of lottery grant.	5,925
Bury Central Library, Moss Street, BL9 0DF	This may have potential for alternative use.	74,947
Moorside Library, Parkinson St, BL9 6NY	This could be given up. Owned by Church and lease is not signed.	6,988
Low Opportunity		
Prestwich Library, Longfield Centre, M45 7QJ	Potential is tied with adjoining facilities and Town Centre plans.	53,970
Topping Fold, BL9 7NG	Alternative use is likely to need Council sponsorship.	14,724
Castle Leisure Centre, Bolton St, BL9 0EY	Tied up with leisure centre.	373
	Total	£385,356

(Larger scale plan available in paper)

