

Report to: Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee

Date: 20 August 2007

Report of: Director of Adult Services

Report No: 12

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Report Title: **Brightmet Library Big Lottery Bid: rationale for retrospective permission**

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Non Confidential:**
(delete as approp)

Non-Confidential. This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

To inform Members of the rationale for seeking retrospective permission to bid to the national Big Lottery Fund for a new library for Brightmet

Recommendations:

That the report be noted and comments sought from Members to take forward to the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance.

Decision:

Background Doc(s):

Summary:

(on its own page

Following the approach taken to developing the new library at High Street, Bolton Libraries has a growing reputation nationally for excellence and innovation. The project will re-invigorate the library service in Breightmet by relocating and rebuilding an ageing stand-alone library. The existing library has declining usage; attributable to its poor location, inappropriate facilities and poor image.

Big Lottery fund criteria for the bid are very specific and the timescales very tight. Consultation with customers and Members was extensive in the period leading to the bid. It became clear that some current customers and some elected Members had concerns about the proposed relocation to the Leverhulme Park site which could not be overcome. Following Members' suggestions other sites were considered and rejected as unsuitable. The achievability of being part of the new development at the Alistair Ross Primary Care Resource Centre came within days of the closing deadline for bids (30th March 2007). Permission to submit was given verbally on the understanding a written report would be submitted to the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance at his next meeting on 11th of April 2007.

with background docs)

Background Information

- 1.1 The BIG Lottery fund criteria for the bid are very specific: to fund libraries who will work with their communities to:
 - Invigorate libraries as centres of wider community learning and development and learning based activities
 - Create improve and develop library spaces that meet the needs of the whole community
 - Be innovative and promote good practice in the ways libraries are designed and run.
- 1.2 Following the approach taken to developing the new library at High Street, Bolton Libraries has a growing reputation nationally for excellence and innovation. We believe the bid detailed below will confirm Bolton's reputation and deliver an excellent facility which will continue to deliver 'traditional' services within the wider context presented by the opportunity to be part of the Alistair Ross centre, whilst fulfilling the criteria for innovation and engagement with communities which are essential to secure BIG Lottery funding.
- 1.3 The Alistair Ross centre is the local health centre in Brightmet and it is undergoing a programme of redevelopment to incorporate a wide range of services across the Health and Social Care sectors and become a Primary Care Resource Centre (PCRC). This large site has potential to accommodate a community library as part of the building.
- 1.4.1 The project will re-invigorate the library service in Brightmet by relocating and rebuilding an ageing stand-alone library. The existing library has declining usage; attributable to its poor location, inappropriate facilities and poor image.

2. Consultation. (Full details at appendix 1.)

- 2.1 BIG Lottery Community Libraries programme was announced in October 2006. Given the strict timeframe it was apparent that a focus in the Brightmet area would offer Bolton the best opportunity to have any success with this funding stream as there were several developmental opportunities in the Brightmet area. Other on going library development proposals in other areas of the borough were not sufficiently advanced at this time to support the desired outcomes.
- 2.2 Initial public consultation in October 2006 through the national Public Library User Survey (PLUS) highlighted the problems Brightmet Library is currently facing (see 1.4). These findings fed into the decision to focus the bid on the Brightmet area.
- 2.3 In order to achieve the extended opening hours and variety of services requested by local residents within the existing revenue budget it became apparent that the library would need to co-locate with significant partners to support an enhanced offer through joint working.
- 2.4 Further consultation around the possibility of relocating Brightmet Library to the Leverhulme Centre began in January and February 2007. This included one to one meetings with ward members. It became clear that some current customers and elected members had concerns about this proposed relocation due to access difficulties.

3. **Alternative locations to the Leverhulme Centre.**

- 3.1 Clarification was sought through Museum, Libraries and Archives (MLA) officers, who are supporting the BIG Lottery programme, around the potential for this funding to be used to refurbish existing facilities and the library to remain on its existing site. The following response was received:-

*'BIG is an outcomes funder and will very much want to see imaginative proposals that make a difference in communities, through attracting more people and a diverse range of people to use libraries for activities that go beyond what is currently provided. The 'additionality' aspect of the programme is key – **BIG will not fund 'stand alone' elements that it feels that the library service should be doing anyway e.g. refurbishing a library.** Any refurbishment would need to be linked to a wider project that as a minimum fulfils BIG's requirements in terms of outcomes.'*

- 3.2 In addition, at the suggestion of elected members, other alternative sites were considered. These were the new Children's Centre site on Greenroyd Avenue and the new location of St Osmunds School which was formerly the location of The Moss CP. Both these sites were unsuitable because of accessibility and site problems.

4. **Alistair Ross.**

- 4.1 This location was suggested through the public consultation but initial development plans for the site did not include a library. After a visit, in mid March, by officers to a LIFT project in a neighbouring authority which incorporated a library facility this option became a viable alternative.
- 4.2 Bids had to be submitted to BIG Lottery by Friday 30th March 2007. Urgent discussions were held with the PCT on Monday 26th March and the Library Service received verbal permission to pursue Alistair Ross site as the preferred alternative on Tuesday 27th.
- 4.3 Library officers then revised and further developed the bid to meet the tight submission deadline on Friday 30th. Again we sought advice from MLA to see if we could extend the deadline. It was made clear that the deadline had to be adhered to or the bid would automatically fail. The bid was delivered on Friday 30th March 2007.
- 4.4 Formal retrospective permission was sought through Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance on the 11th April 2007.

5. **Proposed site.**

- 5.1 The proposed location is ideal for a library facility. It offers access for a wide range of age groups, ability levels and social backgrounds. The PCRC will give access to an audience that may have negative image of libraries and negative experiences of learning.
- 5.2 The modular design of the building lends itself to extra elements being added as required. This flexibility will accommodate library requirements if the lottery bid is successful and equally, if it is not, it can be utilised differently. Currently we are not expecting any outlay of budget; this will only become necessary if there are preparatory design requirements. The aim is to keep activity to a minimum until the decision is known.
- 5.3 Anecdotal evidence shows that people with negative experiences of learning are reluctant to use a stand-alone library or learning facility. Co-location within a health and social care setting will increase the visibility of library and learning facilities encourage casual browsing

and offer the opportunity to link strongly with a package of health and social care services. There is significant potential for the library service to promote library facilities through healthcare waiting areas, innovative take-up schemes and cross service promotion.

- 5.3 The present Brightmet Library has no car park and on-street car parking is restricted. Transport links to the existing library are poor, bus provision is under threat and the potential for casual or opportunistic library visits is extremely limited.
- 5.4 The new library will be located at the heart of the community, within easy reach of local schools, in close proximity to a supermarket and a variety of local retail outlets. There are regular buses along the road on which the library will be located and the PCRC will have substantial parking facilities, including dedicated disabled spaces.

6. Current status of Bid.

- 6.1 Officers have taken part in a telephone interview as part of the assessment process.
- 6.2 Further details, as requested, have been provided.
- 6.3 Successful applications will be announced on 28th September 2007.

Public Consultation in the Brightmet Area.

The East Bolton Health and Well Being Consultation May 2002

Although this report is nearly 5 years old it is the most comprehensive and up to date source of information about local people's perceptions of their health and wellbeing. Amongst the recommendations arising from the consultation was the need for a "Community base with: I.T. library, toy library, café, meeting rooms, advice centre, confidential drop in surgery similar to citizens advice, children's space - crèche, sport, play and space for a community office (p116)". By building a new library onto the PCRC, this would meet the need for an IT library and add to the existing facilities for information provision and children.

The East Bolton Accessing Services and Information Consultation August 2002

This report carried out for East Bolton Regeneration highlighted that anyone who had used a library recently in the east Bolton area had had a very positive experience. The report (page 45) then went on to state "However, we know from the consultation that there are specific groups of people who don't use them much at all. Teenagers told us they feel that libraries can't offer them anything. Many young people that we talked to, told us that the last time they went into a library was when they were six or seven years old and if they have used a library since then it has been their school library. It seems that many young people don't become library users again, if at all, until they have children themselves. Working people in the area also don't use the local libraries because the opening hours are restricted: Brightmet and Tonge Moor libraries are only open one evening a week and then only until 7.30pm".

Since the report was published Brightmet Library now opens two nights a week until 7.30pm but due to disruptive incidents in the evening, take up has been low.

Adult Public Library Users Survey (PLUS) September 2006

In the PLUS survey there was serious concern about anti-social behaviour and vandalism at the existing library, carried out by a small minority of young people.

Despite work with local youth organisations and the police this problem still persists. Local people and groups perceive this as being the result of the limited range of activities that can be offered at the current library site. One respondent commented "Vandalism outside is a problem so [there is need] for security." Another commented "the only problems I've ever encountered in this library is youths seem to cause problems but the staff deal with it well, it is off putting and intimidating though". One respondent spoke about "...the trying situations [which] arise following window breakages when closed etc". All this contributed to a low scoring rate in PLUS for the attractiveness of the exterior of the library with 51% of respondents scoring it as adequate to very poor.

Quaternion Report to East Bolton Regeneration on Changes to East Bolton Baseline November 2006

This report updated a baseline report on residents' views in the area carried out in 2000. 603 residents were interviewed. Residents were particularly concerned about the lack of volunteering opportunities available locally, the apparent lack of local groups meeting in the area and the lack of adequate non-school-based educational facilities that were easy to access.

Comments and suggestions from an Open Evening at Brightmet Library February 2007

This was attended by 50 people including 2 ward councillors and representatives from organisations such as church ministers. The majority of people who attended were current library users and were mainly aged 40+. A follow-up session was held in March. 8 people including the 3 local councillors attended. Further one to one meetings with the Head of Libraries were held at the request of ward members. A further 7 people filled in the questionnaire whilst using the library. An information sheet in response to queries raised at the meeting was subsequently posted to all attendees, and was sent out to a further 124 people who requested to be on the mailing list for updates. The majority of respondents offered the view that the existing library facilities were in a very poor condition and in significant need of repair. Concern was expressed about vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The Hut Youth Centre March 2007

Consultation exercise led by library staff whereby young people designed a CD cover that would reflect their ideal library service. 10 young people at The Hut Youth Centre participated. Comments mainly centred on the need for a library facility to be different in terms of colour and ambience.

Disposable camera consultation exercise - March 2007

4 pupils from St Osmund's and St Andrew's primary schools participated. There was a child from each Year Group between Years 3 and 6. Three of the children commented on the poor state of repair of the present building. One specifically mentioned the graffiti and gum on the exterior of the library.