

Bolton Council

Report to: The Executive Cabinet Member –
Leader's Portfolio

Date:

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

Report No:

Contact Officer: John Rowlands. Assistant Director
(Customer Services).
Julie Spencer. Head of Library and
Museum Services.

Tele No:
01204
332276

Report Title: **Six monthly review of the new Library Network.**

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

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to review the performance of Bolton's Public
Library Service over the previous six months, April to September 2012,
since the implementation of the recent Library Network Review.

Recommendations: The Executive Cabinet Member is asked to:

- Note the progress made to establish and develop the new public
library network in Bolton as a dynamic platform from which a
'comprehensive and efficient library' service continues to be
delivered
- Agree the priority actions listed
- Await the 12 monthly progress report which will give a full CIPFA
comparator appraisal

Decision:

Signed:

Leader / Executive Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

Summary

In November 2011 the Executive Member for Adult and Community Services and the Executive Member for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Diversity approved a report which proposed a new operating structure for Library and Museum Services. It was agreed that all changes implemented to the public library network would be subject to on-going review at six, twelve and eighteen month intervals.

This report details the performance of the revised network over the first six months from April to September 2012.

Background Documents

Report to the Executive Member Adult Services and Executive Member Human Resources Organisational Development and Diversity 23rd November 2011. **Proposed new operational structure for Library and Museum Services.**

Report to the Executive 12th October 2011. **A new model for Bolton Library Service: consultation results and implementation of a new service model.**

Report to the Executive Member Adult Services and Executive Member Human Resources Organisational Development and Diversity 23 February 2011. **Review of Bolton Library Network.**

Report to the Executive Member Adult Services and Executive Member Human Resources Organisational Development and Diversity 24th November 2010. **New Structure for Library and Museum Services.**

1. Background and Context

- 1.1** In 2011 the Council took the decision to review the public library service in Bolton. Libraries are very valuable community resources and provide an important service for many local people. However, in the context of the Council's own philosophy for delivering savings, especially prioritising services for the most vulnerable children and adults, it is not realistic to completely exempt a 'universal service' from savings. After two rounds of consultation the preferred option adopted included reducing the number of libraries within the borough from 15 to 10, resulting in a saving of £407,000. The Council believes that the reconfigured network resulting from the review gives Bolton a strong, realigned public library service which more than delivers the Council's statutory duty.
- 1.2** In September 2012 the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, Ed Vaizey MP wrote to the Leader of Bolton Council. The letter indicated that the Secretary of State, under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, was not currently minded to direct a local inquiry into the revision of the public library network in Bolton. The letter did ask for updated information on the new network, particularly relating to the effect of the library closures through the latest performance data, to be sent to the DCMS by the 26th October 2012. A further extension has since been agreed until the 23rd November 2012.
- 1.3** Prior to 11/12 the library service has consistently reviewed its processes; this has resulted in significant savings and improvements in delivery. Many of these savings have come about through a sharing and partnership approach to review and delivery following direction from an extensive PDG process in 2008. In the financial year 2011/2012 the Libraries, Museums and Archives Service delivered £530k of savings for 2011/12 by merging, cutting duplication in staff roles. That reorganisation focused on management, professional roles and streamlining procedures in order to minimise the impact on frontline service delivery. In addition, £200k has been taken from the Library Service Materials Fund over 11/12 and 12/13.
- 1.4** As part of the consultation processes in 2011 a statistically reliable random sample showed that around two-thirds of the Borough's population supported the Council's preferred option to remodel the library network, and that the majority of the Borough's residents acknowledged the appropriateness of the proposals.
- 1.5** The Council understands that the decision to reduce the number of libraries from 15 to 10 has been controversial, particularly for those most affected, but implementation plans have also included retaining a good quality of service across the Borough, including extra elements of service development around opening hours and use of technology.
- 1.6** The Council believes that through a range of measures that the impact of the closures can be mitigated. The following measures have been implemented and / or further developed as part of the Library Review in order to help address these concerns and to support the sustainability of the library network in the future:
- Introduction of extra opening hours, namely at the Central Library and Museum building
 - Development and continuation of specific service initiatives to children and young people
 - Promotion of Library Link (at home service)
 - Providing better access to specialist services at Central Library
 - Free requests for stock holdings in Bolton with delivery to nearest library or Neighbourhood Collection
 - Increased use of technology and digital services
 - Establishment of Neighbourhood Book Collections in the proximity of a closed library with partners already operating in those communities

1.7 Five libraries were closed between January and April 2012:

Highfield Library	12.01.12
Oxford Grove Library	24.02.12
Castle Hill Library	02.03.12
Heaton Library	09.03.12
Astley Bridge Library	05.04.12

1.8 With the exception of Heaton, the Neighbourhood Book Collections opened in the locality on the following working day. The retention of the library building as a Children's Centre and community facility at Heaton incurred extensive enabling works which resulted in the Neighbourhood Book Collection opening 2 weeks after the library had closed.

1.9 This report details how the measures listed above have been established and received over the last six months, and puts this in the context of service delivery across the wider network. An outline of priorities and next steps going forward is included.

2. Additional Opening at the Central Library and Museum

2.1 Prior to April 2012 the Central Library and Museum building was open Mondays to Saturdays, it did not open on Sundays. The Central Library was open a total of 60.5 hours per week and the Museum and Aquarium was open 48 hours per week. From 15 April 2012 the Central Library & Museum building has been open to the public on Sundays between 10.00am and 4.00pm, giving the Central Library a total of 65 opening hours per week and the Museum and Aquarium 53.5 hours. The Central Library & Museum building has also been open to the public on each of the 5 bank holidays since April 2012 between 10.00am and 4.00pm.

2.2 These extra hours have enabled more people to enjoy all of the services offered from this flagship building whilst adding to the Town Centre offer. Given changing workforce patterns, the extra day is proving popular especially with families. Visitor numbers on Sundays and bank holidays are increasing as people become aware that this facility is now available. The Museum and Aquarium is particularly popular on bank holidays, as a specific destination. Organised activities, when linked with other Town Centre events such as during the Food and Drink Festival and Iron Man Challenge, are also improving visitor figures. This cultural complex provides a variety of activity at little or no cost to users during difficult economic times.

2.3 During the first month of Sunday opening a visitor survey was carried out on Sundays in order to understand the interest in these extra hours. This found that the majority of visitors (85%) to the Crescent building intended to visit the library and had visited the building before. Visitors to the library intended to use a computer (41%), borrow or return books (31%), study (18%), use a photocopier or fax (6%). The remaining visitors (4%) intended to read or had some other purpose for visiting the Library that day. At this early stage fewer people intended to visit the Museum (29%).

2.4 The majority of comments were positive with most people agreeing that Sunday opening was a good idea. Some of the comments include:

- *It's better for me as I work Mon - Fri 9 – 5*
- *It's a great idea. Hopefully more people will pop in while Sunday shopping*

- *Very glad it's open on Sundays - this is very necessary for families to foster a love of libraries and museums*
- *Sunday is the only day some people can visit the library or museum*
- *I think it's excellent because I can't come on any other day*
- *I'm disabled and get through a lot of books. Sunday is better for me and my sons to go there together*
- *Could and should be a good opportunity for families to explore what an excellent facility the place is*
- *It should have started a long time ago and I do hope it will continue to do so in the future existence of library and museum*
- *Please stay open, it helps the boy I care for complete his homework*
- *Its good as other libraries may be shut and I need to revise*

2.5 The table below breaks down the number of visitors who have made use of the facilities on Sundays and bank holidays between 15 April and 30 September 2012 (inclusive).

	Sunday visitor totals	Average Sunday visitor count	Bank Holiday visitor totals	Average bank Holiday visitor count
Library	10,045	402	3,199	640
Museum	5,317	213	3,298	660
Aquarium	2,409	96	1,390	278

2.6 The total number of loans and the total number of hours the computers were used during these additional opening hours was as follows:

	Sundays	Bank Holidays
Loans	6,460	1,458
ICT Use (hours)	2,194	532

2.7 Library and Museum Services will continue to promote Sunday and bank holiday opening, developing a family plan of activities that combines with Town Centre events. A repeat of the visitor survey is also scheduled early in 2013.

3. Services to Schools, Children and Young People

3.1 Access to library services for children is managed through the public library network and the Schools' Library and Museum Service (SLMS).

3.2 The following events and activities for children and young people have been provided through the public library network over the last six months:

- **Bookstart** Free gifting of books to babies via Health visitors and childcare settings. In 2011/12, 3640 baby packs were distributed by libraries to health centres and 4,462 treasure packs were picked up by nurseries and other childcare settings from their local library. Between April to Sept 2012, 1,815 baby packs and 2,382 treasure bags were gifted in a similar way
- **Summer Reading Challenge** Available to 4 to 11 year olds over the holiday period. In 2011, 1,779 children participated at 15 libraries with 714 (40% completing). In 2012, 1,379 children participated at 10 libraries with 741 reading the 6 books required to complete (53%). This

- Toddler Tales
 - Book Collections in Children's Centres
 - Young Volunteers

was an increase in the overall number of finishers and a higher percentage completion rate as libraries actively promoted the challenge to tie in with the Cultural Olympiad

Regular story and rhyme sessions held in all libraries, Toddler Tales is a fun, free activity for children and their carers.

Aimed at Under 5s and their parents and carers the collections are sourced and procured through the public library service.

An accredited scheme
- Homework Support

1 to 1 support offered either face to face or virtually via the Crescent Activity Bank.
- Class Visits

During the first half of 2010-11 the 15 libraries in the network hosted a total of 281 class visits which were attended by 8,318 children. From April to September 2012 a total of 210 sessions which were attended by 5,650 children.

3.3 All primary schools in Bolton use the Schools' Library and Museum Service (SLMS). The value of the SLMS has been recognised by the Schools' Forum which in September 2012 recommended that funding for primary schools should remain centrally funded as should museum funding for secondary schools until the next review period. Funding for secondary school library services has been delegated for several years as this was a government requirement. Future funding for SLMS services for academies and special schools has had to be delegated as they cannot be centrally funded, but schools have the option to buy back in. All primary academies have bought back into the service.

3.4 Schools value the expertise of staff in choosing resources that link to the curriculum, plus the advice and support that they can give in promoting reading and information skills. By combining library and museum resources including workshops and online sessions, pupils and teachers can experience a 'wrap around' holistic approach to a subject that is creative, informative and enjoyable. Value for money is achieved by economies of scale and the SLMS can ensure schools have up to date resources on what they want, when they want it.

3.5 The service offers:

- Project loans

Collections of 25 books on themed topics. The service provided 3042 project loans in 2011/12
- English resource Loans

Boxed collections of 20 copies of the same title to allow classes to read together. The service provided 487 English Resource Loans in 2011/12
- Wider Reading Loans

Annual loan of books on a pro rata basis dependent on the size of the school (approx. 20 per class) to supplement the schools' own collection and provide reading for pleasure.
- Additions to stock

The service added 4,757 items to stock in 2011/12
- Enquiries

The service dealt with 5,544 enquiries in 2011/12

3.6 In addition to resources the service offers a consultancy service in regard to setting up and running school libraries, and advice on all matters relating to stock. In 2011/12 it helped co-ordinate the Bolton Book Award in partnership with secondary schools and the University and in 2012 it helped develop and deliver a Children's Book Festival with Bolton University aimed at primary and secondary schools.

4. Library Link

- 4.1** Library Link is the free delivery service to Bolton residents unable to visit libraries and do not have friends or relatives who are able to collect books for them. Customers can borrow standard, large print and talking books which are delivered to their homes by staff and volunteers every two weeks.
- 4.2** There are currently 393 Library Link customers, 5 of whom joined after the new Libraries and Museums operational structure came into effect. This figure is less than anticipated; however there is further capacity to recruit additional housebound customers onto the Library Link Service.
- 4.3** Staff will work with partners such as the NHS, Age UK Bolton and other community organisations to disseminate the good practice that the Library Link service offers as well as work in partnership to ensure that those in greatest need can access it.
- 4.4** Support for the Library Link service is provided by 1.38 FTE Library and Museum Assistants (Grade 3) who deliver to 231 housebound customers on a fortnightly basis. In addition there are 25 active Library Link volunteers delivering books to a further 162 housebound customers on a fortnightly basis.

5. Requests

- 5.1** The library service offers a free facility which enables customers to request books not currently held at their local library for collection from their nearest library.
- 5.2** Customers are able to reserve items which are already part of the public library collection online via the library's Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Those using the Neighbourhood Book Collections are also able to reserve items from the public library network which can be collected at the Neighbourhood Book Collection site. From April to September 2011 the number of reservations placed in this way was 11,981, 39% of all reservations placed. This increased to 12,803, or 42%, from April to September 2012.
- 5.3** Items which are not in stock, or on order, at the time a customer request is made will be considered for purchase where those items are still in print and are likely to be borrowed by other users. Where items are out of print, or the service does not wish to purchase an item, customers have the opportunity to borrow the item from another library service in the UK for a small charge towards the administrative costs incurred.

6. Use of technology

- 6.1** During the summer of 2012 the Library and Museums Services continued to introduce new RFID (Radio-frequency Identification) technology which enables customers to carry out basic transactions such as loans and renewals themselves. This allows staff to spend more time with customers answering enquiries and promoting the services.
- 6.2** As part of an on-going project to streamline self-service across the public library network three new self-issue kiosks using RFID technology and two new enquiry points were introduced into the Central Library over the summer. A sortation unit facilitating self-service returns will be installed during the autumn.
- 6.3** In addition to Central Library, four other libraries in the new network, High Street, Blackrod, Bromley Cross and Breightmet, have RFID self service technology. The remaining libraries at Westhoughton, Horwich, Harwood, Farnworth and Little Lever will be

converted to RFID technology by June 2013. This work has been planned in line with the Council's drive to automate business transactions, and one off set up costs have been identified previously.

6.4 As of September 2012 63.4% of all issues in the public library network were transacted using self-service, compared with 54.8% in 2011. The 8.6% increase this year as a percentage of the 2011 figure is 13.6%.

6.5 The five Neighbourhood Book Collections have RFID technology, therefore, all transactions at the Neighbourhood Book Collection locations are done through self-service.

7. Digital Services

7.1 The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act is still in force but the landscape within which it operates has been completely transformed by the rapid developments in electronic media. Individuals read, find information, contribute to, publish and share content in a way that could never have been envisaged in the early 1960's when the Act was drafted.

7.2 State of the art digital resources are an essential part of the modern library offer and as a standard of nationally agreed good practice, the service is delivering the Society of Chief Librarians core digital offer of:

- Free access to the Internet for every customer (for a minimum period of time)
- Clear and accessible online information about library services
- Staff trained to help customers access digital information
- Ability for customers to join online
- Ability to be contacted online/via email for answers to customer enquiries
- 24/7 access to services through a virtual library presence
- Ability to reserve and renew items remotely via an online catalogue

7.3 Bolton Library Service has provided digital services for several years and continues to review and develop the ways in which it offers access to digital content, especially to those who have limited or no access to the internet.

7.4 The Race Online and related Go On UK projects focus on the needs of people who are 'digitally excluded' because they do not have access to the internet and/or lack the skills or confidence to use ICT. In October 2010, as part of the Race Online initiative to demonstrate how libraries help people get access to digital information, Bolton Library Service began recording statistics around computer use. Since then staff have assisted an estimated 40,521 people to gain access to digital resources via the library service's computers.

7.5 Between April and September 2012, computers in Bolton's libraries were used for 70,044 hours. At the Central Library there has been an increase of 27% helped by Sunday and Bank Holiday opening which was introduced in this period. Compared with the same period across 15 libraries last year, there has been an overall decrease of 3%. However, computer usage at the Neighbourhood Book Collection sites is not factored into this comparison.

7.6 Staff assist library users to go online, and build skills and confidence where required through matching them to volunteer computer mentors or signing them up to basic ICT courses run in libraries by partner organisations such as Bolton College and Age UK Bolton.

7.7 All Bolton's libraries are registered as UK Online Centres and our college courses are advertised via BBC First Click. Bolton Central Library and its computer mentors featured

prominently in several programmes promoting BBC First Click as a way of accessing best shopping deals online in the consumer information series “Rip Off Britain” hosted by Gloria Hunniford, Angela Rippon and Jennie Bond.

7.8 Targeted ICT training sessions looking at building your CV, applying for jobs online and searching for health information, have been organised either by library staff or in conjunction with partner organisations, such as Next Step. Ask Bolton Libraries, our information enquiry service, is looking to expand these sessions to develop targeted ICT training and support sessions to reflect the local authority’s and the Government’s drive to digital channels.

7.9 The library service also offers links on its web pages to online learning resources which include:

- Intro to Computers
- Go On
- BBC Learning - a large range of courses are available including:
- OpenLearn Learning Space

7.10 In addition the Library Service subscribes to a wide range of online resources to help support individuals and local businesses including:

- British Standards Online
- COBRA - information on starting and running a business
- Credo Reference - over 500 electronic books covering a variety of subjects
- Encyclopaedia Britannica
- Go Citizen – support for the Study for Life in the UK citizenship test
- NewsStand – articles from approximately 300 newspapers
- Oxford Reference Online
- Public Information Online – access to Parliamentary papers from 2006/7 onwards
- Theory Test Pro – online simulation of the driving theory test

7.11 Bolton Library Service will continue to work with the Society of Chief Librarians and other parties to help deliver:

- A single point of digital contact for all public libraries in the UK
- A portal or landing page for common access to national digital services
- A national catalogue of resources for loan, referring to online or to be accessed in a designated location
- Single standard of library customer authentication adopted nationally to allow collaborative access to digital resources
- Local delivery of resources to the customer including e-lending

8. Ask Bolton Libraries

8.1 The Ask Bolton Libraries service was created to provide a modern, enhanced information and enquiry service for customers. It is a specialist service which opens up expertise and resources to the whole borough by email and phone. It maximises the use of resources, including staff skills and expertise, and standardises the way in which all enquiries are handled and recorded.

8.2 The Ask Bolton Libraries team possesses a wide range of knowledge and expertise in providing answers to queries from the public, corporate colleagues, and the wider business community. The variety of their knowledge base and the years’ worth of experience in information handling have proved a firm foundation to develop an ever-changing service.

8.3 Prior to April 2011 the information and enquiry service operated from a desk within the Central Library where staff answered a range of enquiries. Since June 2011 the

Information and Enquiry Officers have been located in an Enquiry Centre away from the library floor.

- 8.4** The relocation of the Information and Enquiry service has seen library staff on duty within the library handling more of the general directional and operational enquiries from customers, whilst referring the more in depth requests for information to the Ask Bolton Libraries team within the Enquiry Centre.
- 8.5** The new enquiry service allows customers to contact the Ask Bolton Libraries team by phone, fax, email, letter, Twitter or in person and is available during the Central Library's opening hours. However, online customers can also use the national 24/7 service, Enquire.
- 8.6** The Ask Bolton Libraries team has worked with the corporate marketing and communications team to produce promotional material for distribution within libraries, at events and with information provided to customers via the postal service.
- 8.7** The number of enquiries received by Ask Bolton Libraries is rising steadily month by month. Since April 2012 the team is handling an average of 600 enquiries per month and currently providing answers to 88% of those enquiries within one working day. The remaining 12% are answered within the Bolton Council target of 14 days.
- 8.8** Examples of enquiries handled by the Ask Bolton Libraries team are:
- *Can you provide a list of businesses in the Bolton West Constituency*
 - *What do I need to do to set up business as a wine merchant?*
 - *Have you a financial breakdown of the top 100 businesses in Bolton by turnover?*
 - *Can you find information to help me train as a paralegal?*
 - *Can you give me access to the British and international standards for construction-grade timber?*
 - *Can you help me find exercise classes for people with arthritis?*
 - *Are there any reading schemes for people who have suffered strokes?*
 - *How do I change my GP?*
 - *What is Giant Cell Arteritis?*
 - *How does the 'Books on Prescription' programme work?*
 - *Is there a local toy library?*
 - *What activities are available for Under 5's in libraries?*
 - *Can you give me the Ofsted reports for all the secondary schools in Bolton Council?*
 - *Where can my teenager find boxing facilities in Bolton this summer?*
 - *Can you help me find information on the appeals process for school admissions?*
 - *Where can I recycle mobile phones and batteries in the borough?*
 - *My children would like to do a nature study on wild flower meadows: where are they in Bolton?*
 - *Can we provide the guidelines for sentencing and payments for Magistrates Courts?*
 - *Can we provide current legal information on land covenants to help resolve a dispute between neighbours?*
 - *Where can I find out about volunteering in the Bolton area?*
 - *Where can I get access to ESOL classes in Bolton?*
- 8.9** It is not clear how many customers who used to use the five closed libraries are using Ask Bolton Libraries as their information and enquiry service. It is also not possible to compare in depth enquiry figures between April and September 2011 and April to September 2012 because the service was not introduced until June 2011.
- 8.10** The Ask Bolton Libraries team regularly receives feedback from those using the service and a sample of customer comments is below:

- *To-day I found your customer care talents were excellent, you listened and responded perfectly, I am so pleased with your help, keep up the good work. Thank you very much, kind regards*
- *Mrs X was delighted to receive information, including bus/train times, about the Fred Dibnah Heritage Centre and although she hadn't visited the centre at the time of writing thought Ask Bolton Libraries deserved a call to say thank you for the in depth information provided.*
- *Many thanks for your assistance in obtaining the information on X for me. I have now managed to make contact with my long lost relative owing to the help I received from yourself! I must say that the Bolton Library staff were 'superb' in the way they helped with this enquiry and their efforts are much appreciated. Please communicate my gratitude to them on my behalf.*
- *Thank you for your time and trouble today helping me find information about Wenlock and Mandeville. The first website you gave me got me straight onto the animation which is what I really wanted.*

9. Neighbourhood Book Collections

9.1 Neighbourhood Book Collections have been developed as part of the Council's proposals to mitigate the impact of closing libraries by providing a small collection of library materials in the neighbourhood where a library closed. They have been established in partnership, in partners' buildings, to act as a gateway to the wider range of services offered by the Library Service. They are not replacement libraries and are additional to the Council's statutory public library offer.

9.2 Whilst open to suggestions for suitable sites for Neighbourhood Book Collections the Council wished to ensure that potential partners could provide a high quality service to members of the public and a location which had space for materials, as well as ICT connectivity for access to the Internet. The Library and Museum Service's own computerised management system would be used to facilitate the loan and return of books.

9.3 Ultimately, the five sites chosen were the Oldhams, Heaton and Orchards children's centres, a community facility run by the local authority Area Working Team at Halliwell UCAN and a community facility run by 'Bolton at Home' (a local housing provider) at Tonge UCAN. Following concerns raised through the consultation process about the lack of community facilities in the Heaton area, the building which housed Heaton Library has been retained as a children's centre, with a community and a Neighbourhood Book Collection which is overseen by children's Centre staff.

9.4 The Council has redirected resources from closed libraries for short term 'pump priming' to establish the Neighbourhood Book Collections. Book stock, appropriate shelving, furniture and additional PCs have been provided from closed libraries and self-service equipment has been installed to manage the loan and return of books.

9.5 A member of Library and Museum staff was appointed on a temporary basis to establish the new Neighbourhood Book Collections and to develop partnership working. Other staff have been employed on a casual basis in order to redistribute the book stock from closed libraries which was not allocated to the Neighbourhood Book Collections.

9.6 Neighbourhood Book Collections are supported by a staffing resource provided by the partner and there is an element of managerial oversight from the library service to ensure the collections remain a part of the wider network. Each Neighbourhood Book Collection has been linked with its closest local library and these "buddy" libraries provide support where needed to partners managing Neighbourhood Book Collections. Further on-going permanent resource has been made available through the equivalent of one permanent

full-time Library and Museum Assistant on a one day per week per collection basis. Some partners have chosen to use the staff support from the “buddy” library and others have chosen to ‘convert’ this support to monetary resource in order to appoint their own staff in a ‘meet and greet’ capacity at the venue.

- 9.7** Neighbourhood Book Collections provide a collection of library materials tailored to the community in the neighbourhood where a library closed. Their size depends on the space available within the partner building and currently house between 1,000 and 2,000 items. A small amount of budget has been allocated to refresh materials regularly using performance management data from the library management system to ensure relevance and quality of the stock selected.
- 9.8** Collections are available during the opening hours determined by the partner and, with the exception of Tonge, the opening hours are longer than those offered by the public library which was situated in that neighbourhood.
- 9.9** Customers are able to borrow and request items, make enquiries and access ICT. All of these services continue to be free. Access to computers is managed through the Library and Museum Services’ PC management system making it easier for Neighbourhood Book Collections staff to administer and monitor usage. **See Appendix A - Neighbourhood Book Collections** - for statistics regarding customers’ use of stock and ICT facilities.
- 9.10** Neighbourhood Book Collections are subject to a Working Together Agreement drawn up between the partner organisation and the Library and Museum Service. Review meetings have been held between the named representatives from the partner organisations and the Library and Museum Services to monitor and review the service at Neighbourhood Book Collection. The most recent meetings have identified signage of the Collections to be an issue and this is being addressed.
- 9.11** A range of events and activities have been organised at the Neighbourhood Book Collections venues, including daily homework clubs, twice-weekly story times on Tuesday and Friday mornings and weekly toddler tales at Oldhams Children’s Centre, ‘Craft a Story’ sessions which began at Castle Hill Library have continued at the Tonge UCAN and the Heaton Children’s Centre has hosted ‘Drama Bugs’ activities. In autumn 2012 both Tonge UCAN and Halliwell UCAN are planning healthy living sessions at which they will promote the Neighbourhood Book Collection stock to support the activities delivered during those sessions. Staff at the Orchards Children’s Centre have plans to promote the Neighbourhood Book Collection to the Big Kids Clubs (over 3s) when the new school term starts. Halliwell UCAN staff hope to begin reading groups for adults and children, again using the Neighbourhood Book Collections to support this initiative.
- 9.12** Recent comments from customers using the Neighbourhood Book Collections include:
- *“I didn’t really know what to expect, but the collection is very nice and the opening hours suit me.”*
 - *“The large print book selection is good, I have not been in for a while, as I am an elderly resident I find it hard to get out and didn’t really know what was going on, but I am really pleased and pleasantly surprised.”*
 - *“It looks really nice now all the work is completed and I am proud that the area still has a public building, it would have been a real shame to lose it.”*
 - *“I’m not happy that my request has taken so long (11 Days).”*
 - *“The shelves are far too close together and it’s senseless that the library has closed” Staff at the location explained that the proximity of the shelving was just temporary, and explained that the building will be used in different ways, however, the customer response was “I still don’t have to be happy with it and I’m not.”- The customer left with 4 books that they had not seen before at the venue.*
 - *“So pleased to see that you have the computers! I was worried we would lose them.”*

- *"I have just moved to the area and I am glad that there is somewhere I can bring my baby and that there are services for me as well!"*
- *"Really glad that you are open every day."*
- *"This is much better than central Library, it's not overwhelming and I don't have to wait for a computer here like I do there."*
- *"WOW, this looks really good-can we come and look at books ever day?" The reaction of 7 year olds passing as they left school*
- *"I would like to return CD's and DVD's here and not have to go to a library to do it." – The DVD's and CD's were borrowed from Central and staff explained that the location was not able to take cash for the charges incurred by items and that the self-issue machine would damage the items if they had magnetic tags like the books.*
- *"Really like it, I just wanted to call in to see what's going on and have a nosey. I only live around the corner so it's fantastic that my children can call in to use the computer for homework as we don't have one."*
- *"Not enough Large Print and M&B books, they should be on a designated stand. The large print is in a corner when there is plenty of shelf space- why not fill the space?." – Staff explained that the proximity of shelves temporary and that shelf space makes it easier to move books as you look.*
- *"Really good selection of books, much better than I thought it would be and really handy. I have managed to find some books to take out today and I didn't think that I would."*
- *"Better than nothing. The selection of books is good and I hope it will be updated from time to time. I am pleasantly surprised but a little sceptical that we will actually get community activities."*
- *"There is a nice selection of children's books and board books. The opening hours are great, I am very pleased."*
- *"As far as I am concerned your library is rubbish! Who will use it?" – Staff tried to explain about the Neighbourhood Collection and the intention not to leave the community without any services so that the area not only has the Collection but also other community focused spaces. The customer shook their head and held up their hand as this was explained not wanting to know any more.*
- *Just after the above customer left another returned 2 books and took out 2 more. This customer said they easily found something every time they had been in and was quite happy with the changes so long as the building remained open for the public.*
- *I am pleasantly surprised, the book selection is very good, and I'm glad that we can access it every day. So glad we didn't lose the building all together. I have also been using Halliwell UCAN- I can even have a "cupper" there!."*
- *"Really nice and spacious, light and airy. I can easily choose books because there is a smaller selection that is not overwhelming. I am pleased on the whole."*
- *"I think that is fabulous for the area. I don't live in this area but I look after my grandchildren who do. We will be sure to pop in before we pick the other children up from school and I will pass on how good it is to mums in the school yard. I'm a little bit jealous that there isn't this in my area."*
- *"O' I can still use the computers. That's good; I thought I would have to go to Horwich to do that. I use to use Oxford Grove."- Staff explained that the customer could now also use the UCAN at Halliwell and she said she would leave a happy lady now knowing that she can still access a computer in Halliwell.*
- *"Oh there are still books here. I thought it had closed altogether. I'm pleased now I know I can access some services still and the opening hours are much better."*
- *"I didn't really know what was going on and my daughter has been taking me to Horwich to get books out. It looks really good and the plans to use the building as a neighbourhood space sounds really appealing to me."*
- *"I am an ex-head teacher and it's a terrible shame to close any library, children are not at the right level of education these days and discipline is terrible so why use the space for children!"- After a discussion with this person, explaining that the space is*

not just for children and that the facilities for children were for the parents as well and address things such as discipline and behaviour management as well as the 5 outcomes of ECM the customer responded "I'm pleased that the building now has more functions and I really hope it will do well."

- "I was just passing and just wanted a snoop really, is it ok if I have a look around?.....Excellent I am really happy that I can still loan books from here and that my daughter can come after school every day."- This customer, calling in after picking their daughter up from school, had a library membership but had never used the library before and left with 3 books.*
- "I visit a friend in the area every Thursday and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to call in with her like we always did, I'm thrilled I can still borrow books and hope once it's all up and running me and my friend can spend more time here together."*
- "I only came in today to vote, I am very impressed it is much more than what I was expecting. I feel there is nothing for the elderly in this area and I have tried many times before to change that. I think it would be wonderful if there were some activities focused on the elderly community taking place here now."- This customer suggested exercise groups and age concern drop-in session.*
- "Before you either used the library or you didn't, now I think if you didn't use the library there will hopefully be some other service here you will be inclined to use".*

9.13 As stated previously these Collections should not be viewed as replacement libraries. It is not, therefore, appropriate to compare their performance with the library previously located within the locality. The performance data now being collected will be the comparator going forward.

9.14 Neighbourhood Book Collections are attracting new borrowers, and the facility to reserve books has been popular. Book borrowing trends over the initial six months appear mixed with stronger numbers being recorded at Heaton and Oldhams. The collections at Orchards and Tonge have had a less successful take up. However, partners at Tonge relate that their stock is being used well within the building, particularly during specific sessions which link to stock content such as CV writing etc. Computer usage has been steady across all sites and partners are finding that PC management through library servers enable better monitoring and timing of sessions. Use of computers has been particularly popular at some centres during the summer holiday period. All centres are promoting Ask Bolton Libraries, the virtual enquiry centre.

9.15 During the first six months efforts have been concentrated in the setup of these collections. Plans are now in hand for further promotional activity either through the priorities of the individual centre or through extension of specific library activities such as 'Six Book Challenge' and 'Summer Reading Challenge'.

10. The New Network – 6 Monthly Performance Data

10.1 The traditional performance measures of public libraries are numbers of loans and active borrowers. These measures no longer suffice for a modern service as customers increasingly access the service in different ways. This shift is reflected in the decline and increase of the various measures. The accompanying Trends information illustrates these shifts in four key performance areas over the last 5 years, comparing data collected in Bolton with that available for all library services in England and Wales.

10.2 The comparisons below are between the current ten libraries and the previous fifteen unless stated. The transactions taking place at the Neighbourhood Book Collection sites are not included in the comparators, these should be viewed as additional to the new public library network.

- 10.3** Visitor figures for April to September 2012 compared to the same period in 2011 across 15 libraries show an overall decrease of 14%. If the numbers are compared across the present network i.e. 10 to 10 there has been a decrease of 1%.
- 10.4** Between April and September 2012, computers in Bolton's libraries were used for 70,044 hours. At the Central Library there has been an increase of 27% helped by Sunday and Bank Holiday opening which was introduced in this period. Compared with the same period across 15 libraries last year, there has been an overall decrease of 3%. If the comparison is made across the present network i.e. 10 to 10 there has been an increase of 9%. When the data for the current library network and the Neighbourhood Book Collections is combined the total number of computer use hours for April to September 2012 is 81,129. This is an increase of 12% in usage for the same period in 2011.
- 10.5** Numbers of items borrowed from libraries have been in decline locally and nationally over several years. Loans during 2011–2012 across 15 libraries in Bolton decreased by 11% when compared to 2010-11. From April to September 2012 compared to the same period in 2011 across 15 libraries there has been an overall decrease of 19%. If the comparison is made across the present network i.e. 10 to 10 there has been a decrease of 3%. However, at the Central Library from April through to September 2012 there has been an increase of 17% in the number of loans of children's resources.
- 10.6** Active borrowers are those customers who have borrowed at least once during a 12 month period. Numbers of active borrowers have also been in decline both locally and nationally over several years. The number of active borrowers at 31st March 2012 was 37,248, this was 9% less than the figure at 31st March 2011. It is not possible to make an accurate comparison until a full 12 month period has elapsed. However, the library management system shows that the number of active borrowers registered at the closed library sites who have not used the service between 1st April and 30 September 2012 is 1,806 or 5% of active borrowers at 31st March 2012. Therefore, it could be said that 95% of customers are still actively borrowing from the service.
- 10.7** During this sixth month period there has been a minor increase in the total number of items requested of 0.7%. Within this total there has been a 3% increase of the number of items reserved online.
- 10.8** New methods of delivering information and enquiry services has meant that a new baseline is being created when reporting enquiries received across the network, this includes the use of the Council's Lagan system to record enquiries. As a result there is currently no direct comparison to previous years
- 10.9** From 1st April 2011 to 30th September 2011 there were 24,556 visits to the Library webpage of the Council's website accessing the library services' on line resources. For the same period in 2012 there were 29,033 visits. This represents an increase of 18%.
- 10.10** Figures for visits, loans & computer use for April-September 2012 for 10 libraries in the new network, and comparison data for 15 libraries the same period in 2011 can be found at **Appendices B – D**.

11. Decommissioning

- 11.1** It is estimated that the total stock of the five libraries that closed between January and March 2012 was 60,000 items. This stock has been dealt with in line with Bolton Library Service's stock management procedures to ensure good practice in terms of reallocation and disposal. Approximately 10,000 items were transferred to Neighbourhood Collections. Books which were not transferred to the Neighbourhood Book Collections were stored in a central location, the Central Book Store, to allow time for editing and re-allocation.

- 11.2** Stock has been re-allocated to Bolton's remaining libraries using an application called SmartSM which enables staff to select items which are in good condition but are no longer being read in one location and transfer to another location to meet demand there. Approximately 3,800 items were transferred in this way gaining an additional average of 2.6 loans per item since the transfer. Approximately 9,850 items of stock previously held in junior collections and transferred to the Central Book Store are being re-allocated to primary, secondary and nursery schools in Bolton this month.
- 11.3** Items which were no longer in demand and for which the library management system displayed a 'Last Copy' alert, at the point of withdrawal from stock, were reviewed by staff to ascertain whether they should be transferred to the library service's Reserve Collection at the Central Library. Titles with a Bolton interest, either the content referred to Bolton or the title was written by a Bolton author, were transferred to the Local Author collection maintained by the History Centre in the Museum at the Crescent.
- 11.4** Items of stock which were ultimately withdrawn because they are no longer in demand but were in good condition were collected by a company called Better World Books. Better World Books sells and donates books to support literacy initiatives worldwide. It describes itself as a social enterprise, triple-bottom-line company (people, planet, profit) that creates social, economic and environmental value, from helping to build a nursing library in Somaliland to offering customers carbon neutral shipping on every book they buy. Better World Books launched in the UK in 2008 and currently has over 600 clients which include 45% public libraries and 57% university and college libraries. To date the UK-based company has generated over £200,000 for client and charity partners, whilst keeping 2,000,000 books from landfill and planting 110 trees for carbon offsets. On every Bolton Libraries book sold by Better World Books the service receives a net percentage of 10% and donates a further 5% to the National Literacy Trust. Items which are in poor condition are sent for recycling through the Council waste disposal service.
- 11.5** The majority of PCs from closed libraries have been reallocated throughout the Library and Museum service. A number of PCs were transferred to Neighbourhood Collection sites. Any remaining PCs which are out of warranty will be decommissioned using the usual protocols.
- 11.6** The majority of the furniture from closed libraries has been reused within remaining libraries. Any remaining furniture has been offered to other council departments and schools before being disposed of through recycling sites and community transport. A small amount of furniture regarded as not fit for purpose has been disposed of using the Council's waste disposal service.
- 11.7** The majority of the shelving from closed libraries has been reused where appropriate in Neighbourhood Book Collections and remaining libraries before being offered to schools. Any surplus/redundant shelving will be sold as scrap metal.
- 11.8** This decommissioning work will be completed by the end of November 2012.

12. Summary

- 12.1** The first six months of the new public library network has been a time for establishing and developing new streamlined processes which reflect new ways of working. This has been a continuation of work already started in the previous twelve months through the merger of Library and Museum Services. Declining resources, advances in technology and changes in customer demand have meant it is no longer possible or necessary to deliver services in the same way. Public library services need to adjust delivery to remain relevant to customers and to support local and national government priorities.

- 12.2** From the customers' perspective, performance data tracking would indicate that this period has been a time of adjustment to new opening patterns as well as changes to delivery methods. Although figures for quarter 1 to quarter 2 show an increase in the use of the revised network more detailed analysis of user engagement will allow targeted activity, including a membership drive in identified areas of the borough where take up of services could be increased.
- 12.3** Traditional functions of the service, namely book loans through active borrowers are in a decline overall. But this must be viewed in the context of year on year decline nationally and locally, not just because the network has been reduced. Children's borrowing can be seen in a more positive light. Specific promotions for children such as Bookstart and the Summer Reading Challenge have been particularly well received during this period. It is also pleasing to have retained the endorsement of head teachers through core funding for the Schools' Library and Museum Service.
- 12.4** Self -service and access to digital resource through the website enables the customer to interact with the service in a different way and these areas of delivery are showing strong increases in uptake. Digital inclusion is a significant challenge for society and the modern public library has a key role to play in helping customers get online. Significant numbers have already been recorded through the work with Race Online, but the service needs to prioritise customer support as demand for this help continues to rise. Ask Bolton Libraries is a good example of modernising and streamlining the traditional reference offer, but it should not be seen in just a passive role waiting for customer contact. It also has an important role to play in disseminating information quickly, accurately and cheaply to users through appropriate digital channels. A baseline for the performance of this area of service delivery has only just been established.
- 12.5** Extra opening hours, namely Sundays and bank holidays providing access to a whole cultural offer across Library and Museum Services, when linked to a relevant activity programme appear to be popular with customers.
- 12.6** Neighbourhood Book Collections delivered through partners, as an addition to the statutory offer, have had a good initial take up. Again much of this initial period has been taken up with the set-up of the facilities. Over the next six months as these collections become more established and promoted within the local neighbourhoods, a clearer picture should emerge about their suitability.
- 12.7** Six months' worth of data can only provide an indication of 'direction of travel'. This early analysis shows that the new network, in the current financial climate, is providing a sustainable platform to deliver and develop a modern public library service in Bolton.

13. Priorities and Next Steps

13.1 The priorities for the new network over the next six months are:

- Additional Opening at the Central Library & Museum
 - Continue to promote the services available on Sundays and Bank Holidays as part of the Bolton Town Centre offer
 - Repeat visitor survey by March 2013
- Services to Schools, Children and Young People
 - Develop a joined up offer for families at the Crescent which links library and museum resources through activities and trails including holiday and Super Saturday events.
 - Continue to develop and promote the school library and museum offer to create a 'wraparound' experience whereby teachers and pupils can borrow a project loan, participate in a museum workshop, handle objects from a

museum loan box and use online resources to enhance their knowledge and enjoyment of different subject areas.

- Library Link
 - Promote with partners such as the NHS, Age UK Bolton and other community organisations the good practice that the Library Link service offers in order to ensure that those in greatest need can access it.
- Use of Technology
 - Standardise RFID self-service system across the network by June 2013
- Digital Services
 - Continue to promote public library role in digital inclusion.
 - Develop targeted ICT training and support sessions to reflect the local authority's and the Government's drive to digital channels.
- Ask Bolton Libraries
 - Continue to deliver and promote information and enquiry services across the Library and Museum Services via a range of channels, including social media
 - Standardise the way in which enquiries are handled by all library staff and establish service standards and performance indicators
 - Utilise Lagan, the Council's CRM system, to record enquiries received by Ask Bolton Libraries
 - Establish contacts with council colleagues and external partners to promote the service and seek ways to assist with delivery of information to their service users
 - Participate in the regional shared information services agenda
- Neighbourhood Book Collections
 - Install exterior and interior signage
 - Continue with regular partner review meetings
 - Extend library promotional activity with partners in Neighbourhood Book Collections such as 'Six book challenge' and 'Summer Reading Challenge'
 - Monitor usage and gather customer feedback
- Decommissioning
 - Complete decommissioning process by end of November 2012
- Library Network Services
 - Carry out targeted activity and membership drive in identified areas of the borough where take up of services could be increased.
 - Develop a plan / programme to review offer to customers with regard to information, advice and support
 - Carry out PLUS (Public Library User Survey) by end of March 2013

14. Financial implications

14.1 Revenue costs incurred to deliver the extra developments to the library network namely Sunday and Bank Holiday opening at the Central building and on-going support to the Neighbourhood Book Collections have been achieved through budget efficiencies derived in the main from the closure of the 5 libraries. These elements have not been factored into the 407k budget reduction and come, in the main, from supplies and services

14.2 The one off capital costs of the establishment of the Neighbourhood Book Collections have totalled £106,000 and this has been met from a combination of part of the neighbourhood collections budget of £111,000 in the capital programme, part from the existing budget for backlog maintenance and a contribution from Health towards the location of the Health Visitors who will be operating from the Heaton Neighbourhood Book Collection and Children's Centre.

15. EIA

See Appendix E

16. Recommendations

The Executive Cabinet Member is asked to note the progress made to establish and develop the new public library network in Bolton as a dynamic platform from which a 'comprehensive and efficient library' service continues to be delivered. To agree the priority actions listed and to await the 12 monthly progress report which will give a full CIPFA comparator appraisal.