

Committees:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services – For Information Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information	25/04/2022 16/05/2022
Subject: Artizan Street Library Transformation Project	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,2,3,4,8,9,10,12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	Grant funding
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Rachel Levy, Development Manager, Barbican and Community Libraries	

Summary

Barbican and Community Libraries has been awarded a £226,575 grant through Arts Council England's Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF). It is one of only three library services in London and 25 library services nationally to have had a successful bid. The grant will fund improvement works to Artizan Street Library and Community Centre. The library space will be opened up to create a brighter, more vibrant and welcoming library and incorporate a community 'makerspace' with digital technology such as 3D printing and computerised sewing machines.

The bid was developed following consultation to explore barriers to library use with residents from the Middlesex and Mansell Street estates. The lack of current opportunities for communities in Central London to easily access digital creative technologies was also taken into consideration.

The refurbishment work is expected to commence in July 2022 and to last for approximately five months. There will be library provision throughout the majority of the project and access to the Estate team will not be affected.

Partnerships are being sought with the Adult Education service and local fashion colleges to develop the range of activities offered. There will also be the opportunity for people to share their skills within the local community through volunteering.

The expected benefits of this transformation project to local people and other users are:

- increased confidence in using digital creative technologies
- greater opportunities for developing digital and creative skills

- increased employability for local people
- increased participation and connection within the local community
- a greater satisfaction with their local library.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London has a statutory duty to provide “a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof” (Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964). When Camomile Street Library closed in 2011 for site redevelopment, the original plan was to move the library for the duration of the work. However, a number of factors made this option unviable. Instead, the library was co-located with the Estate Office in a new build under the Middlesex Street Estate and renamed Artizan Street Library and Community Centre. There was a very limited budget for the library development and the work had to be done quickly. It was opened by the Lord Mayor in December 2012.
2. The existing building has very little natural light and most of the library forms a narrow L-shape and is hidden from view. The ceiling is low, with poor quality strip lighting hanging from it, and the carpet and flooring are grey. The front of the library has an open space with comfortable seating and a quick choice display, but just beyond that is a disused IT suite, which dominates the space prior to the main library area. The combination of these factors gives the library an oppressive and unwelcoming feel.
3. Artizan Street Library and Community Centre is a key community resource for the Portsoken ward. It has an excellent provision of books, DVDs and CDs, free public-use computers and WiFi, and hosts popular events and activities for families and adults. The hireable community rooms provide activities and events for local residents and city workers, and are free for residents to hire for any (non-profit) activity that engages other local residents. The library staff at Artizan Street also provide valuable frontline housing services, responding to Middlesex Street residents’ enquiries about repairs, car parking, payments and many other day-to-day housing needs.
4. However, Barbican and Community Libraries’ senior management team has been aware that there are still some barriers preventing local people from engaging with library services. This is particularly true of those from the Bengali and South American communities. In April 2021, therefore, a focus group consultation with residents from both the Middlesex Street and Mansell Street estates was held to explore these barriers to use and listen to what the

community want from their local library. The strong messages from the residents were that the library currently feels unwelcoming, particularly for people for whom English is a second language, and that they need space to study and work, and support to learn new skills.

5. Alongside the community engagement work with Portsoken residents, the senior management team had been scoping the potential for a 'makerspace' in one of the lending libraries. 'Makerspaces' are community hubs that democratise access to the new technologies, allowing anyone to learn to use equipment like 3D printers and computerised sewing machines. They are places where local people gather to develop their creative and digital skills, collaborate and network. Nationally there is a growing movement to incorporate makerspaces within libraries, making them accessible to all. However, there are currently only two makerspaces in libraries in Greater London and no provision in libraries in Central London.
6. In May 2021, Arts Council England invited expressions of interest for an LIF grant, which is part of a new Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) funded programme. The LIF aims to "enable library services across England to invest in a range of projects to upgrade buildings and technology so they are better placed to respond to the changing ways people are using them". This was recognised as a unique opportunity to redevelop Artizan Street Library to better meet the social and economic mobility needs of the local community and to build on the previous exploratory work around the creation of a makerspace in the City's lending libraries.
7. In September 2021, following a successful Expression of Interest round and a considerable amount of work to cost the proposed changes, Barbican and Community Libraries submitted a bid for £226,575 to Arts Council England for the LIF. The aim of the bid was to transform Artizan Street Library into a bright, welcoming, vibrant, modern, well-designed space which can act as a hub for residents and local small businesses to develop new ideas, new skills and new connections in order to enable local people to 'level up' and increase their life chances and mental wellbeing.
8. An architect and a library designer were commissioned to draft plans for the bid. The brief for the design was to open up the space to make it more vibrant and welcoming and incorporating a makerspace – see Appendix 1. This is based on similar library makerspace developments – such as in Redbridge and Gateshead libraries – but the design also reflects the unique textiles heritage of Middlesex Street and the surrounding area, particularly the Huguenot artisans who settled there. The design is also flexible enough to allow the area to be used for other activities when the makerspace equipment is not in use, such as a study area or work space.
9. Other partners, including the City of London's Adult Education service and local fashion colleges, were also approached to explore the potential for future partnership working if the bid was successful. This would include students volunteering in the makerspace to share skills with local people, and tutors running workshops on craft and computer skills.

Current Position

10. On 12 March 2022, it was announced that the City of London's Barbican and Community Libraries was one of only 25 library services nationally and one of only three library services in London to receive funding through the LIF. This grant is for the full requested amount of £226,575.

11. The £226,575 will fund the following:

- Removal of two walls within the library to open up the space
- New, bright and attractive flooring throughout
- A new children's library space with colourful shelving and furniture
- Improved lighting to make the library brighter
- Improved public computing facilities, including more flexibility for the public to bring in their own devices
- A new shelving design to ensure that the stock is visible and well used
- The creation of flexible maker/learning/work space
- Equipment for makerspace activities, including a 3D printer, laptops and computerised sewing machines
- The installation of an electronic access system for out-of-hours use by tutors and community groups.

12. As the library is located in a housing estate, the project is being led by the Barbican and Community Libraries team, supported by the Barbican and Property team.

13. Prior to the commencement of any building work, a full public consultation will be held to engage local people with the project. They will be invited to collaborate on the design and within the parameters of the funding to give "greater access to technology, both basic IT provision and also to new technologies and the development of new IT skills", they will also be involved in the creation of the makerspace.

Proposals

14. It is envisaged that the work will commence in July 2022 and take approximately five months to complete. To minimise the impact on library users, the work will be carried out in two phases. During the first phase, which is expected to last four months, there will be no access to the main area of the library. A temporary library service will be set up in the ground floor multi-hall, with access through the main library entrance. Access to the Estate office will be unaffected.

15. The second phase will last approximately six weeks. The main library area will be accessible to the public while the reception area is closed for refurbishment. The Estate team will temporarily relocate to the library office. A brief period of closure at the end of this time, approximately one week, may be required to complete the work to the reception area in front of the entrance doors. The upstairs of the building will still be accessible, including the Main Hall and the office.

16. The Artizan Street Library and Community Centre staff will receive training in how to facilitate all the makerspace equipment supplied. There will also be volunteering opportunities for the local community and students from nearby fashion and textiles courses to help facilitate the space. An apprenticeship option will also be explored.
17. It is expected that people in the local communities, residents and workers, will be able to take part in makerspace activities in a number of ways: as an individual using the equipment for hobbies or personal business development; taking part in community group sessions; and/or by participating in workshops and classes run by the Adult Education service. It is anticipated that there will be no cost for the majority of activities, except the cost of materials used, such as 3D printing filament. There will also be the opportunity for private hire of the makerspace for people wanting to run their own workshops, particularly outside of library opening hours.

Key Data

18. Arts Council England has commissioned an external research consultancy to evaluate all its LIF projects. This is expected to measure increases in the following outputs:

- number of visits
- number of visits by users for whom English is a second language
- book issues
- IT use
- participation in learning activities
- number of partnerships.

19. The aim is to achieve higher level outcomes in:

- customer satisfaction
- ratings for the role of libraries
- participation in learning activities
- employment skills for users
- digital creative skills for users
- partner collaborations.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

20. The redesign of Artizan Street Library is aligned to the three core aims of the City of London's Corporate Plan (2018–23) which are also reflected in the Barbican and Community Libraries' Strategy (2021–23):

a) Contribute to a Flourishing Society

- "People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential" – through access to lifelong learning and resources to

support skills development, social and digital inclusion and social mobility.

- “Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need” – making our libraries friendly, welcoming spaces with trained staff, and well equipped for the needs of all our communities.

b) Shape outstanding environments

- “Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible” – through giving local residents and businesses volunteering opportunities and also through supporting better environmental practices in the local community, such as making and mending their own clothes.

c) Support a thriving economy

- “We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive” – giving access to good quality IT resources and new technologies.
- “We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration” – through encouraging local people to gain new skills and share them with others in their community.

20. Financial Implications

The Chamberlain has confirmed that the £226,575 capital grant will enable key works to take place at the library and community centre. This will lead to an increase in visitors and issues and in turn should see an increase in income for the library to help meet its income targets. As the works are fully funded by the grant, there is no impact on local risk budgets, save for costs of materials used, such as 3D printing filament.

21. There are no other strategic implications directly related to this report.

- Resource implications – N/A
- Legal implications – N/A
- Risk implications – N/A
- Equalities implications – a Test of Relevance has been carried out and the conclusion is that a full Equality Analysis is not required.
- Climate implications – N/A
- Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

22. The £226,575 grant from Arts Council England will ensure that the Artizan Street Library and Community Centre is transformed into a bright, welcoming, vibrant, modern, well-designed space, which will act as a hub for local residents and local small businesses to develop new ideas, new skills and new connections.

23. The flexible design of both the library and the maker/work/study provision will ensure that the Artizan Street Library is ready to adapt to evolving patterns of use and remain modern and relevant.

24. There will also be a greater opportunity to increase partnership working across the local area, enhancing the offer to library users. This will attract new customers to the library, increasing the number of visits, particularly from people for whom English is a second language.

25. There will be a greater opportunity for people to develop digital creative skills, both for leisure and for employment. People will be able to share these skills within a local community that has always welcomed creativity and been an important area for people who want to be socially mobile, develop new skills and form a strong sense of local identity and togetherness.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Artizan Street design and specifications.

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