

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information Community and Children’s Services- For Information	Dated: 17/7/23 17/7/23
Subject: Barbican Library Community Room	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3,4,10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Judith Finlay, Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
Report author: Rachel Levy, Head of Barbican and Community Libraries	

Summary

The Barbican Association and the Department of Community and Children’s Services have been awarded £449,550 from the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund in order to construct a community meeting room in Barbican Library.

The room will be self-contained within the library space. It will be acoustically protected and have an external entrance to enable access outside of library hours. Groups will be able to hire the room, with local community groups able to pay a lower hire charge. The library service will also use the room to enhance its programme of events and activities for library users, as well as for study/reading space when the room is not hired out.

The work is expected to begin in September 2023 and take 12 weeks. The Barbican Library Team and the Barbican Association will work together to promote the room to local community groups and other potential hirers.

It is anticipated that the hire fees for the room will significantly contribute towards eliminating the need to charge late return fines across all three City of London lending libraries.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Barbican Library is situated on level two of the Barbican Centre. It is a major London public library with special collections in art, music, classic crime and books about London. The library contains separate Children's and Music libraries and produces two major exhibition programmes every year. It also hosts the collection of the Society of Technical Analysts. Customers include City of London residents, City workers, students, researchers, visitors to the Barbican Centre and more. In 2022–2023, 218044 people visited the library. This is nearly a return to pre-pandemic levels.
2. When the library opened in 1982, it was seen as the epitome of a modern public library. However, since that time, public library use has radically changed, from only providing books and other loan items and answering enquiries, to a much more diverse offering as a 'community hub'.
3. Barbican Library was designed to be open-planned and, unlike modern public library buildings, it has no enclosed spaces for library events, private hire and meetings. The *Barbican Listed Building Management Guidelines* exist to preserve the integrity of the original architecture and this constantly presents library staff with a number of creative challenges: talks, adult education classes and health checks take place in the open library space; staff meetings and reading groups take place in the staffroom and the Head of Barbican and Community Libraries' office is the only suitable space for recruitment interviews.
4. In 2018, building on the success of the hireable rooms at Artizan Street Library and Community Centre, the Community and Children's Services Departmental Leadership Team agreed to scope the feasibility of building a room in the Barbican Library, similar to the Artizan Street multi-hall. This room would be available for hire and provide flexible space to house known needs, including meetings, events, activities and rehearsal space. Working with colleagues from Barbican and Property Services, a brief for the architects was produced. The design had to address sufficient soundproofing, primarily to cope with noise ingress from Barbican Centre activities, especially amplified music from level one events such as graduation ceremonies. The design would also have to prevent noise egress from the room into the general library space.
5. Following a procurement exercise, Evolution Architects was appointed to produce a feasibility report. They addressed the soundproofing issue by subcontracting Anderson Acoustics personnel to carry out acoustic tests at times of loud activity

with the Barbican Centre and provide appropriate advice. At this time, though, it was not possible to secure any local authority funding to build a new room.

6. In 2020, the Department of Community and Children's Services partnered with the Barbican Association to apply for funding from the Central Grants Unit's Stronger Communities strand for preparatory design/costing work for the community room and to support the development of a larger bid to the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF). Only charity, resident or community organisations are able to bid to this fund.
7. The partnership with the Barbican Association also had the benefit of ensuring that there would be pre-existing groups that could already potentially benefit from using the room, such as the residential house groups, mothers' groups, the Barbican Tuesday club.
8. The Barbican is the City's largest residential estate, but has always had limited community space provision. Social isolation has been identified as a problem on the estate because of this lack of provision that could enable residents of all ages to come together. (Green R, Stacey T (2015). The Voices of Older People: Exploring Social Isolation and Loneliness in the City of London).
9. Using the Stronger Communities fund, Evolution Architects were commissioned to draw up detailed plans for the room (Appendix 1) and planning permission (listed building consent) was granted on 2nd December 2022. The proposed cost to build the room to this specification was £449,550.
10. The new design included the creation of a separate entrance for the community room, to allow for out of hours use. This was done in consultation with the Barbican Centre.
11. Whilst planning permission was being sought, the Barbican & Community Libraries Senior Management team carried out a public consultation, inviting library users and local residents to view the proposed plans. Two information sessions were offered, in order to address any concerns library users might have with the proposals. This included addressing the issue of a reduction in stock, which will only be removed in accordance with the library's existing stock maintenance policy, and a reduction in space to read/study. The room will be made available for this purpose when there are no hire bookings.

Current Position

12. In March 2023, with support from the Department of Community and Children's Services, the Barbican Association submitted a bid to the CILNF to request the full amount of £449,550 to cover the construction of the community meeting room.
13. The CILNF bid was taken to the Resource Allocation Sub Committee in May 2023 and it has been agreed to fully fund the project.

Proposals

14. Work is expected to begin in September 2023. It is estimated that the work should take around 12 weeks and can be carried out without disrupting usual library functions, although some changes will need to be made to the main entrance way to accommodate the construction.
15. Building project management support is being provided by the Barbican and Property Services Major Works team, who will ensure it goes through all appropriate Gateway stages and procurement protocols.
16. The library service and the Barbican Association will work together to share up to date information regarding the construction of the room both with library users and local residents. Once a finalisation date is confirmed, they will also begin marketing the room to community groups and other potential hirers.
17. The hire model for the room will be based on the current community meeting rooms booking system at Artizan Street Library & Community Centre. This includes lower hire charges for community groups and charities. This will ensure that there is an appropriate mixed use of the space that reflects the needs and interests of local communities, including library users, as well as benefitting the service through income generation. It is anticipated that the hire fees for the room will significantly contribute towards eliminating the need to charge library late return fines.

Key Data

18. £449,550 to be received from the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund.
19. The room will hold 50 people seated and 90 standing.
20. Construction of the room will take approximately 12 weeks.
21. Barbican & Community Libraries annual fines income target: £41,000
22. Artizan Street Library & Community Centre income from community room hire 2022-23: £46,000

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

20. The creation of a community meeting room in Barbican Library is aligned to two of the 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.

c) Support a thriving economy

- “We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration” – through encouraging local people to gain new skills and share them with others in their community.

Financial implications- As the works are fully funded by the CILNF, there is no impact on local risk budgets. The income generated will help to offset income targets related to fines.

Resource implications- none

Legal implications- none

Risk implications- none

Equalities implications – a Test of Relevance has been carried out and the conclusion is that a full Equality Analysis is not required. The creation of the community meeting room will enhance the offer of activities and events for all. It will particularly support those who are at risk of social isolation, including older residents. The design takes into account DDA requirements. The aim of removing late return fines will significantly benefit those on lower incomes.

Climate implications- Enclosing the space in the library should reduce energy use to heat this space.

Security implications- Barbican Centre Security have agreed to support this provision through regular patrols of the area when in use outside of library hours. There will be a secure out of hours access system to ensure the safety of the library and the Centre.

Conclusion

23. The CILNF award will ensure that the library has a much needed event space, shielded from the noise of the Barbican Centre, and can generate income through hiring fees, potentially resulting in greater accessibility to all library services with the removal of late return fines.

24. The Barbican Association, alongside other local community groups, will have a much needed meeting space in which to hold activities. The partnership of DCCS and the Barbican Association on this project will ensure that the room is designed for library and community uses and is of a high specification and fit for purpose. The room will foster opportunities for greater community cohesion, as well as the

forming of new connections, in order to support those in the City who are more socially isolated.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Evolution Architects plans

Background Papers

Barbican Library Community Space – 7/6/2019- DCCS/8/7/2019- CHL

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