Committee(s): (Resource Allocation Sub - For Decision) Culture, Heritage and Libraries- For Approval (Policy &Resources - For Decision)	Dated: 5/9/23 18/9/23 21/9/23
Subject: Barbican Library Refresh Project	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	£845,800
What is the source of Funding?	CIL
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y
Report of: Judith Finlay, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Approval
Report author: Rachel Levy, Head of Barbican & Community Libraries (interim)	

Summary

Barbican & Community Libraries has applied for £845,800 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to make some modernising improvements to Barbican Library.

These improvements will create a space that is more flexible, more welcoming and works better for customers and staff. This will be done through reducing the redundant areas of staff desk space, redesigning the public IT and fiction areas and incorporating digital display, including digital community information.

The expected outcomes of this project will be:
- an increase in visits to the library
- an increase in cultural and learning opportunities in collaboration with partners
- greater opportunities to host exhibitions by individuals and partner organisations
- greater equality of access to IT
- local people, visitors and workers feeling more connected to the City.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- To approve the proposal

Main Report

Background

1. In 2021, the City of London was awarded £226k from DCMS/Arts Council England to modernise Artizan Street Library, in the East of the City. Hill House, in the West of the City, which houses Shoe Lane Library, will be redeveloped over the next 5 years. This will include the creation of a new, state-of the art, library for the City. Except for recarpeting, Barbican Library has not been updated for nearly 20 years. It is the main public library of the City of London, with approximately 20,000 visitors a month from across London and beyond. It is therefore potentially an important site to support the development of the *Destination City* strategy.

2. Barbican & Community Libraries recently undertook a survey to better understand the needs of library customers and non-customers post-pandemic. Here is a selection of comments on the appearance of Barbican Library:

- '*Appearance: looking a bit old fashioned and unloved compared to newer libraries in other boroughs, so not as welcoming for younger people.*'
- '*Appearance is dated and not particularly inviting.*'
- '*Library seems dark and outdated. Could do with a refurbishment and more open.*'
- '*Very little has changes in the library since it opened. Lots of students using laptops but not enough space.*'

3. Barbican Library is at the heart of the Barbican Centre and it is important to still maintain the iconic design and the look and feel of its original conception. However, as these comments show, the current layout is still largely reflective of 1980s library user needs.

4. Over the last ten years, the needs of library users have changed significantly, with the majority of people now using their own digital devices in the library, looking up information/book recommendations on the internet and confidently issuing and returning their own items on self-service kiosks.

5. The recent report *Libraries for living, and for living better* by the University of East Anglia and Health Economics Consulting on behalf of Libraries Connected East has estimated that a branch library typically provides £1 million in value annually across the areas of digital inclusion, health and wellbeing and children's literacy. (Full report can be found here:

http://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/resource/libraries-living-and-living-better.) As well as the basic provision of books and IT services, this is attained in a modern library service through freeing up staff time to deliver activities, programmes and projects that support key corporate objectives, such as improving social mobility through literacy and learning and tackling social isolation.

6. In 2022-23, Barbican Library had 218,044 visitors. There is already a rise in monthly visits for this year and this is likely to increase with the creation, in early 2024, of a community meeting room within the library. Although this room will be available for reading, studying and working when there is no booked activity, there will still be an increased need for space for these activities in the rest of the library.

7. The provision of public IT in all three libraries is currently either through fixed terminal PCs or through WiFi for those who can bring their own devices. This creates a disparity of service between those who can afford their own laptops or tablets and those who cannot, who are then only able to use one designated area of the library.

8. There is also a growing need for libraries to offer people in their communities the opportunity to try out new technologies which are not currently affordable for most people. In 2019, Barbican & Community libraries took part in a BBC project to trial virtual reality programming in local communities. This was well received by the public who took part. The DCMS/Arts Council *Libraries Improvement Fund*, of which Barbican & Community Libraries has been a beneficiary to create a digital creative 'makerspace' in Artizan Street Library & Community, was particularly designed to improve community access to new technologies as an identified need for library users. It is therefore important that the design of a modern library has the infrastructure and the flexibility to incorporate any new technologies that might be of benefit to its community of users.

9. In 2022, the Communities Team for the Barbican Centre began working in collaboration with local community members to scope the potential for a Community Hub within the Centre. Changes to that team meant the project was put on hold, but discussions continued between Barbican & Community Libraries and some of the community members. It outlined a clear need for community information within the area, which could be interactive and engage local residents with *Destination City* and other local offers. This is also complimented by the Bumping Spaces project carried out by the library service in 2021, which created playful ways for the local community to interact with each other and resulted in a greater understanding of the library as a place to bring the community together as well as share information.

Current Position

10. Barbican Library currently has 4 active service points, the main enquiry desk combined with an issue and returns desk, a customer service desk in the Music Library and another one in the Children's Library.

11. Cuts to the Barbican & Community Libraries since 2017 have resulted in a reduced staffing across all three libraries. The result of this in Barbican Library has been a closure of one service point, the Information Desk, and increased pressure on adequately staffing the remaining service points, which are functionally designed for a larger number of staff.

12. In the main library, there are currently only 2 self-service kiosks for people to issue, return and renew their items. 228,929 items were issued at Barbican Library in 2022-23. 4 extra kiosks of the same specification have been acquired for free from another public library who were upgrading their kiosks. There is no suitable space for these kiosks in the current layout.

13. There is an IT suite with 15 fixed terminal PCs for public use and currently 63 desk spaces for people wishing to study/work in the library using their own devices, however only 26 of these have plug sockets nearby.

14. Around the walls of the main library, there are original fixed wood shelves and complementary free-standing units located near to these. In the adult fiction area, there are additional shelving units which house the books that were moved when the IT suite was created. These shelving units are heavy and immovable.

15. In the Children's Library, there are original free-standing shelves for the non-fiction books, which are old-fashioned and austere, and block sightlines to the back of the library. The desk is designed for three members of staff and takes up a significant area at the front of the library, closest to the performance and activity space.

16. In the Music Library, the desk has been designed to accommodate 3 points of service, taking up approximately a quarter of the area in which the very successful exhibition programme is laid out. The back of the desk can be seen from the ground floor foyer of the Centre and is functional and unattractive.

17. There is a platform lift in this part of the library to ensure equality of access to the Music Library and the events and exhibitions in that area. The number of these events have increased over the last few years, and it has been found that this lift is no longer fit for purpose. The lift often will not operate when being used by someone in a large, modern, electric wheelchair.

18. There are two popular programmes of exhibition in Barbican Library: the Music Library exhibitions that celebrates a wide and inclusive mix of music

history and performance, and the main library exhibitions, which showcase community artists from across London. There is very limited space within the library for any digital exhibition features or anywhere to showcase technological advances, such as virtual or augmented reality.

19. There are 4 community information notice boards and several other boards that promote library events and activities. All of these are paper-based noticeboards. There is no digital display to promote library events or community information, nor any interactive, searchable, digital offer for residents and visitors to explore the local area.

Options

20. Barbican & Community Libraries has applied for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for a Barbican Library Refresh Project to address the issues highlighted above. The amount of funding requested is £775,800 plus a further £70,000 (approx.) for risk contingency. (Appendix 2- Costs.)

21. The expected outcomes of this project will be:
- an increase in visits to the library due to an improved environment and better facilities for studying and working;
- an increase in cultural and learning activities and events taking place in the library in collaboration with partners, with more potential for these to take place in different areas of the library;
- an increase in participation in children's activities, as more people will be able to be accommodated;
- greater opportunities to host exhibitions by individuals and partner organisations through increased exhibition space and digital displays;
- local people, visitors and workers feeling more connected to the City and a greater sense of belonging through clear, interactive, relevant community information;
- greater equality of IT access through people being able to use library-provided laptops as well as fixed terminals.
- It is also anticipated that there will be a change in perception of the library as a place to interact with new technologies and as a more relevant, modern public library, whilst still maintaining an iconic and attractive design.

Proposals

22. The Barbican Library Refresh project will seek to open up the library space. This will enable the library service to better meet the needs of modern library users. The following changes are proposed to be made - (see Appendix 3 for draft sketch of proposed changes):

23. The removal of all existing library desks with capacity for 3+ members of staff. These will be replaced with desks suitable for 1 to 2 members of staff. This change will better match the current staffing capacity, as well as free up staff

for other duties, such as developing more community learning and leisure opportunities. Staff will always be available to assist customers and to support colleagues at peak times.

24. The extra capacity in the existing desk areas will allow for more exhibition space and seating space in both the main library and the Music Library. In the Children's Library, this will allow for better events space. A proposal to extend the Children's Library into the staff space behind it is also included in the project plan. This will require planning permission and listed building consent.

25. The old Information Desk will also be removed, allowing for the inclusion of the 4 extra kiosks for self-issue and return.

26. The redesign of the IT suite and other suitable areas of the library to better incorporate the needs of people bringing their own devices to study or work. This will include the opportunity for people without their own devices to use library provided laptops or tablets through an in-library loaning scheme.

27. The incorporation of interactive digital display screens into the IT suite, the old 'Libraries Online' area of the foyer external to the library and the Children's Library. These will be for community and local information sharing, digital exhibitions and the showcasing of enhanced digital technologies.

28. The replacement of the post-1980s shelving units within the main library with modern library shelving of lighter weight and on castors. This will allow more flexibility in the space, allowing for a greater number of activities to take place.

29. The replacement of some of the original shelving units in the Children's Library to create a more modern and welcoming environment, whilst still maintaining the iconic look and feel of the library. These will also be lighter weight and on castors, to allow for a greater variety of activity options within the Children's Library.

30. The replacement of the existing access lift between the main library and the Music Library with a one that is suitable for modern electric wheelchairs, ensuring equality of access to the Music Library and exhibitions and events in that area.

Key Data

31. Cost- £775,800 plus £70,000 (approx.) risk contingency
32. Anticipated project timeline- January 2024-June 2025

Corporate & Strategic Implications

The refresh of Barbican Library is aligned to the following Corporate priorities:

Contribute to a Flourishing Society
- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential - through equality of access to a range of IT provision.

- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need- through interactive community information and a better digital infrastructure.

To shape outstanding environments
- We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive - giving access to excellent quality IT resources and innovative technologies.

- We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration - through creating a better environment for study, work and cultural activities

This project also meets the aims of the Barbican and Community Libraries' Strategy 2019-23, to support:
- reading and literacy
- health and wellbeing
- social mobility
- social interaction
- culture and creativity

Financial implications: Funding to be allocated from Community Infrastructure Levy. It will be possible to modify design to fit budget if the estimated costs increase.

Resource implications: Changes to the desks layout will result ensure that staff time is used most effectively.

Legal implications: Although the refreshed design is intended to only update areas and furniture that are not part of the original design, there may still be a requirement for listed building consent for these changes.

Risk implications: There may be some concerns raised by members of the public to any changes to the layout of Barbican Library. The project aims to be sympathetic to the original look and feel of the library and most changes will only affect areas which have already been updated since the original design.

Equalities implications – there are no negative implications. The changes will improve access to library spaces and offer equality in digital facilities.

Climate implications: None

Security implications: None

Conclusion

33. Through opening up and activating currently under used spaces and by providing more digital technology in the library, there will be a greater opportunity for exhibitions and events to attract more visitors to the City of London. People will be able to work and study more flexibly and comfortably in the library. The increase in digital community information will create a greater sense of belonging for those who live, work and visit the City. The Barbican Library Refresh project will ensure that the iconic library is better able to meet the needs of 21st century library users.

Appendices

- Appendix 1- Barbican Library Floor Plans
- Appendix 2- Costs
- Appendix 3- Draft Sketch of Proposed Changes

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