

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee Community and Children's Services Committee	Dated: 7/7/2025 17/09/2025
Subject: Barbican and Community Libraries Building Projects Update	Public report: For Information
This proposal: • Delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes: - Diverse Engaged Communities - Dynamic Economic Growth - Vibrant Thriving Destination • Provides business enabling functions	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
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- Executive Director of Community and Children's Services	
Report author: Rachel Levy- Head of Barbican and Community Libraries	

Summary

This report is an update on the current Barbican and Community Libraries building projects: Barbican Community Meeting Room (The Bostock Room), Barbican Library Refresh and Shoe Lane Library temporary move and redevelopment.

There have been delays to the Barbican Library projects due to financial and staff resourcing, but the support of the Barbican Renewal Team has enabled both projects to progress.

Work on the Bostock Room is due to start in August this year and is expected to be completed by October/November. The new, simplified, design is dependent on

changes to the area at the front of the library, so out of hours access will not be available until the refurbishment in this section is completed. This is expected to be by summer 2026.

Allies and Morrison have collaborated with the library service team to redesign the layout of all sections of Barbican Library, in order to improve study space and increase the flexibility. This design is expected to be completed in July 2025 and will then require listed building review and consent. It is anticipated that the refurbishment work will be completed by December 2026.

The Section 106 agreement for the redevelopment of Hill House has been signed off by the City of London Corporation's planning team and Landsec, and work has begun to adapt units at One New Change to the specification for the temporary library. Shoe Lane Library will be moving to One New Change in November 2025 and is expected to reopen there by January 2026.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

Barbican Library Community Meeting Room (The Bostock Room)

1. In 2023, The Barbican Association and the Department of Community and Children's Services were awarded £449,550 from the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund to construct a community meeting room in Barbican Library. This room will be available to hire, substantially increasing library service income. Local community groups will be able to pay a lower hire charge, resulting in an increase in community activities for residents in the area. 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.
2. Construction was anticipated to begin in Autumn 2023. However, although listed building consent was given for the original design of the space to include a newly constructed access corridor and doors for out of hours use, this ultimately proved untenable within the project budget. Construction was therefore postponed whilst alternative solutions were sought.

Barbican Library Refresh Project

3. Barbican and Community Libraries were awarded £775,812 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to make modernising improvements to Barbican Library.
4. The aim of the improvements is to 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 and redesigning the layout of the main library, children's library and music library.
5. The project was approved by Culture, Heritage and Libraries, Policy and Resources and Resource Allocation Sub in September 2023. Staff resource issues caused delays to the start of the project. The support of the Barbican Renewal Team has enabled the project to go ahead now.

Shoe Lane Library Temporary Move and Redevelopment

6. Shoe Lane Library is located in the basement of Hill House, an office building owned and managed by the property developer Landsec. Planning permission to redevelop Hill House was granted in 2024, with specific requirements regarding the library stipulated in the Section 106 agreement. These are:
 - The library shall be provided at the temporary library location (One New Change) until such time as the permanent library within Hill House has been completed to the City's satisfaction and is available for occupation. This must be within five years of moving to the temporary library.
 - A draft permanent library inventory and specification will be appended to the Section 106 agreement, which will be revised until 6 months prior to completion of the new space.
 - Landsec will construct, fit out and furnish the new library at the Hill House site in accordance with the approved inventory and specification at its own cost to the reasonable satisfaction of the Planning and Development Director Environment and Director of Community and Children's Services. This library will be of high specification and will anticipate the needs of current and future library users.
 - Following completion of the fitting out works, Landsec will facilitate the relocation of the temporary library to the Hill House site. Costs for this relocation will be covered by Landsec.
 - Landsec cannot occupy the development until the library is completed to the City's satisfaction and is available to move into.

7. Additionally, to maximise social benefit from the redevelopment for the local community, the planning team negotiated the following additions to the current library provision:
- A Changing Places toilet which provides sanitary facilities for people with multiple and complex disabilities who have one or two assistants with them.
 - An Apprentice Hub/Affordable Workspace for small and medium-sized enterprises (c.5,200 sq. ft) in the space adjacent to the library mezzanine. The City of London Corporation will have the option to manage this space to provide a potential income stream for the library service.
 - Access to the rooftop community space for library and other community events. This includes fortnightly access for the Dragon Café in the City, four weekends (Friday-Sunday) a year for library events and the option to apply for weekend use for an additional 22 weeks per year for library or community related activities.

Current Position

Barbican Library Community Meeting Room (The Bostock Room)

8. Through collaboration with Allies and Morrison, the Barbican Renewal architects who are supporting the Barbican Library Refresh Project, it has been possible to simplify the design of the community meeting room. This new design does not require an additional out of hours door and corridor to be constructed in the library entrance. Instead, a mesh security curtain will be installed, allowing access to the front of the library (see appendix 1) through the existing front doors without access to the rest of the library.
9. Other simplifications have also been made to the AV and sound-proofing specifications. Funds are being held in reserve to ensure these can be enhanced if issues arise. The modifications to the design have resulted in the price for construction of the room being considerably reduced and is now within budget.
10. The change to the design will result in out of hours access only being available once the area at the front of the library has been refurbished. This is anticipated to be completed by summer 2026.
11. Skyes and Son Ltd have been awarded the contract for the works and are expected on site in August 2025, subject to the manufacture of specialist materials required to meet listed building conditions which may take up to 12 weeks to supply.
12. It is estimated to be a 10-week programme, with completion expected in late October/early November. Following completion, an official opening of the room would be anticipated to be in early 2026.

13. The Barbican and Community Libraries team are currently scoping pricing for the room hire, benchmarking against other local and equivalent rooms for hire.

Barbican Library Refresh Project

14. Barbican and Community Libraries are collaborating with the Barbican Renewal team to ensure that the project fits with the redesign of the Centre as a whole. An architect and a designer from Allies and Morrison have been assigned to the project, and they are collaborating with the library team to develop the redesign drawings.
15. The design is expected to be finalised in July 2025 and then will require planning review for listed building compliance. The tender process for supply of the furniture will begin in autumn 2025.
16. The Barbican Renewal Team have offered to supply project management- (with cost from within the project resource)- and are reporting the project on CORA, the Corporation's new project and programmes management system.
17. It is anticipated that the refurbishment work will begin in spring 2026, with completion by December 2026. There will be a phased approach to the work to ensure that there is minimal disruption to library users and that at least some parts of the library can remain open throughout the majority of the project.

Shoe Lane Library Temporary Move and Redevelopment

18. The section 106 agreement was completed by the planning team and Landsec at the end of March 2025. The terms that affect the library are as listed above.
19. Through the Section 106 agreement process, the Planning Team secured a meeting room space for the new library at Hill House. This is an addition to the original footprint and will be on the same lease terms as the library.
20. The specification and design for the temporary library has been agreed with Landsec (appendix 2). This includes two new hireable meetings rooms, to increase library income.
21. Landsec are currently fitting out the units in One New Change according to the specification. It has been agreed that the move will take place in November 2025, although the exact timeline for the move has yet to be finalised. It is anticipated that the library will be closed for 4-6 weeks. It is expected that library will reopen in early January 2026, given that the move will coincide with the Christmas period.
22. The full terms of One New Change are still be finalised, although they are expected to mirror the existing library terms, as previously agreed with Landsec.

23. Work on the specification for the new library at Hill House will continue once Shoe Lane Library has been relocated to One New Change.

Proposals

24. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Key Data

25.

- £449,550 awarded from CILNF for Barbican Library community meeting room. Completion expected October/November 2025
- £775,812 awarded CIL for Barbican Library refurbishment. Completion expected December 2026.
- Shoe Lane Library will move to One New Change in November 2025.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

26. These projects align to the following Corporate Plan 2024—2029 outcomes:

Diverse Engaged Communities – providing space for more community activities

Dynamic Economic Growth – increasing library income

Vibrant Thriving Destination – designing spaces with greater appeal for a wide variety of users and building in flexibility for increased cultural use.

Financial implications- none

Resource implications- none

Legal implications- none

Risk implications- none

Equalities implications – An equalities impact assessment will be carried out on the move of Shoe Lane Library to One New Change and any necessary mitigations put in place.

Climate implications- none

Security implications- none

Conclusion

27. Although financial and staffing constraints have affected the timeline for the two projects in Barbican Library, the support of the Barbican Renewal Team has enabled them both to move forward over the last 6 months. The Barbican Library Community Meeting Room is on track for completion by late autumn 2025 and the Barbican Library Refresh Project is expected to be completed by December 2026.

28. Following the completion of the Section 106 agreement, Landsec have worked with the library team to finalise the specification for the temporary library at One New Change. Work has begun to convert the units at One New Change to the library requirements. Shoe Lane Library will move there in November 2025 and is expected to reopen in January 2026.
29. The hire of meeting rooms at Barbican Library and Shoe Lane Library will increase the income for the library service. The rates for hire of these spaces are currently being scoped by the Barbican and Community Libraries team, benchmarking to local, equivalent, provision.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Community Meeting Room Drawings
- Appendix 2- Shoe Lane Library @ One New Change Drawing

Background Papers

- Barbican and Community Libraries Update September 2024
- Barbican Refresh Project
- Shoe Lane Library Hill House Redevelopment Terms
- Shoe Lane Library Hill House Relocation
- Barbican Library Community Space

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