Bath & North East Somerset libraries Consultation strategy

Three year document 2009 – 2012
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2009-2012
Consultation strategy
1. INTRODUCTION

The Council’s Consultation Strategy
The Libraries approach to consultation will be based on the Council’s Public Consultation Strategy, from where the following quote is taken:

‘Consultation is an integral part of Bath & North East Somerset Council’s vision and values and commitment to community involvement, The Council’s core values express it’s commitment to “democracy” “empowerment”, “Equality” and “Community leadership”

The Library Service acknowledges that consultation with service users, non-service users and communities of place and interest is a vital part of delivering services which are owned by local people, and this strategy is intended to find new and better ways of involving local people and increasing their influence in the Council’s decision making process.

The council’s consultation strategy can be found by visiting - http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/councilanddemocracy/consultations/default.htm

Library and Information Services Vision

The following statements come from the introduction of the Library and Information Services’ 10 year Vision, which commits the Service to continually developing ways of communication and consultation with the local community:

“Bath and North East Somerset Library and Information Service will be vibrant and innovative; providing a network of access points to Council information, literature, IT, life long learning and cultural services. We will be customer focused, cost effective and efficient”.

“Libraries will be integral to community life, being owned by the communities they serve. We will use customer involvement and consultation to achieve this. A menu of library services will be agreed based on population size, local need and resources”.

“The culture will be one where staff will be empowered to deliver a customer focused, responsive service and will be provided with the necessary training, skills and equipment to do so”.

“We will be both a physical and virtual service. Library buildings will become synonymous with welcoming and safe community spaces for all, offering a range of facilities and activities; not all of them “traditional” library ones. We will exploit IT to deliver and improve services. The service will be promoted and well marketed, and work in partnership with outreach and community workers to deliver the service”.

Underpinning the Vision are the themes of consultation, partnership working, exploiting Information Technology and investing in staff. We will help deliver the Council objectives, making Bath and North East Somerset a better place to live, work and visit. Our work will be fully aligned with other key strategies, including the Cultural Strategy, the Local Strategic partnership and the Community Strategy.

The service will be one that is recognised and relevant to the lives of the people it serves, and will therefore constantly evolve and evaluate its role and purpose.

The current situation

Consultation taking place in the Library and Information Service is planned in advance and is listed on the Council’s consultation diary.

The Library and Information Service will continue to use the considerable expertise that the Council has in consulting at all levels. This is the most effective way to manage resources and make sure that work is not duplicated.

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Consultation strategy
Purpose of this Strategy

A strategy is required to provide a framework within which officers will work and practice will continue to be developed. It sets out the standards, which the public can expect from the Service.

The strategy seeks to ensure that all consultation is effectively carried out, and that information and views are properly used and contribute to the decision-making of the Library and Information Service and across the Council. It will co-ordinate with the Service’s Marketing Strategy and the Council’s Consultation Strategy to achieve cost effective consultation and information sharing.

2. THE LIBRARIES CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Aims:

The overall aims of this strategy are:

- To ensure that the Service’s policies and services reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents of Bath & North East Somerset
- To ensure that the Service listens effectively and considers the views of all citizens as part of its decision making
- To inform the decision making and medium term planning process
- To ensure that all consultation is effectively carried out and well managed
- To provide guidance to staff and elected members
- To provide a structured timescale so that consultation is planned into all activities
- To ensure we consult with all by using Equality Impact assessment measures
Key Principles in outline

The following underlying principles will underpin all consultation carried out by the Library and Information Service

1. Reason for Consultation

All consultations should be needed and the reasons for consultation will be described. The possible options for action or decision making will be explained and any necessary background information will be provided.

2. Who is being consulted?

The consultation proposal will explain who is being consulted and why. It should have a clear purpose which is clearly stated.

3. Methods of Consultation

The methods of consultation that are to be employed will be described and detailed including the time that the process is expected to take. It is important to ensure that consultees have sufficient information on the consultation topic and that it is in a form that they can understand, this may involve translation, tape or Braille and will be in plain English.

All consultations should encourage the involvement of traditionally hard to reach groups.

4. Feedback to Consultees

The consultation proposal will explain how the results of the exercise will be publicised, when this is likely to happen and will ensure that all those individual or groups with a vested interest in the consultation will be informed of its outcome, in a form that is accessible.

5. Using the results

The outcome of a consultation exercise will be used to inform the decision making process, and wherever possible will be acted upon. Clear explanations will be provided to consultees regarding the use of the consultation feedback. All consultations should acknowledge the full range of responses – not just the majority view.

We aim to deliver an environment where people can see what has been said through the consultation and exactly what has happened on a customer or staff level.
Consultation Details

Why Consult?

There are a variety of reasons why we need to consult both service users and non-users.

- To obtain feedback from users/non users on the quality of services we provide
- To inform the decision making and medium term planning process
- To identify and target specific areas of the service for improvement, such as opening hours, book stock etc.
- To meet a statutory requirement as part of the Best Value Performance Plan
- To provide Performance Indicators for user satisfaction
- In response to the introduction of national Library Standards

Who should we consult?

We need to consult a whole range of people including:

- Users of our services
- Unions
- Non users
- Lapsed users
- Ethnic minority groups
- Young people
- Those categorised as ‘hard to reach’ because they are typically difficult to engage in consultation
- Those where barriers need to be overcome including disability, cultural, language, physical accessibility (transport, lack of time, no permanent address) and lack of interest.
- Staff, members, stakeholders
- Local organisations etc.

The above people are then broken down into our customer groups of:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sex

Who we need to consult will be influenced by what we need to find out. Consultation will be targeted as appropriate and may not include all categories at the same time.

When should we consult?

The Library and Information Service is committed to conducting an Adult PLUS Survey every three years, with other surveys e.g. Children’s PLUS in the same year. The Action Plan in section 3 will detail all consultation that the Service will conduct in the medium term. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated as other consultation may be required on specific aspects of the service.
Methodologies

A variety of methodologies will be employed depending on what information we require from the consultation. They may include:

- User suggestion/comments forms
- Staff suggestion schemes
- Surveys (PLUS etc)
- Focus/User Groups
- Citizen’s Panel
- Friend’s Groups
- Interactive Web sites
- Unobtrusive testing
- Outreach
- Local and Core brief
- Staff meetings
- Opinionmeter

Wherever possible we will work together with partnerships to develop a joint strategic approach to public consultation. This will help to identify shared areas of interest and highlight opportunities for pooling consultation resources.

Possible Partners

The advent of the Local Strategic Partnership also brings new opportunities to work with partners, and to share consultation resources. The development of the Council’s consultation calendar is being considered to include consultations being carried out by its partners and the Library Service will follow these developments. Wherever possible we will consult jointly with other departments and outside agencies such as voluntary organisations.

Possible partners include:

- Other Council departments
- Voluntary organisations
- Local community groups
- Librarieswest consortium (Includes Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucs & North Som.)
- Neighbouring authorities
- Local Area Agreements
- Commercial Organisations

Costs of Consultation

As part of the consultation proposal we will identify the resources required to carry out the consultation. We will endeavour to keep costs to a minimum by involving members of the local community and local colleges and universities where appropriate. We will refer to the Corporate Communications and Marketing Team whenever necessary to harness existing expertise and receive appropriate help and guidance.

Special needs consultations

Ongoing visits by the Special Services Senior Library Assistant to housebound clients. She visits every new client to enquire what they need, and encourage them to really say what they want, not just be grateful. She also visits long standing clients when their volunteers are away for any reason, and updates their records with changing needs. A hard copy folder is kept by the Special Services Desk.

As the Home Library Service volunteers are not discriminated against because of their own age or disability, part of the client assessment process ensures that access needs of the volunteers are met, so this means consulting with the volunteers about their own needs. This is done formally at their initial interview, then
again at the annual volunteers get together and informally throughout the year as part of keeping in touch. A hard copy folder is kept by the Special Services Desk.

**Analysing the Results**

All analysis will be carried out using external sources, or internal library resources as appropriate.

**Providing Feedback**

The results of consultation exercises will be available as quickly as possible in the appropriate form for the different audiences.

- Members
- Staff
- Consultees

Effective feedback is an essential part of the consultation process. It informs consultees of the overall findings and explains how they have been taken into account. Feedback will include:

- The results
- What they liked/did not like
- What will happen next
- Explanation of any action we may take
- Explanation of why recommendations may not be acted upon.

The method of feedback will depend on the consultation methodology used but could include:

- Reports in the local media
- Existing Council publications and newsletters including ‘Service Point’
- Written reports to interested parties
- Displays in our libraries
- Feedback meetings
- Library Web pages

**Evaluating Effectiveness**

For each consultation exercise a proposal will be produced detailing the objectives of the consultation. Each exercise will be evaluated against its proposal to assess how effective it was. This evaluation needs to:

- Assess the methodology used
- Look for possible improvements in the future
- Assess the effectiveness of the resources used on the consultation exercise
- Ascertain whether the consultation has genuinely helped us to listed to our users/non users
3. **DELIVERING THE STRATEGY**

In order to implement this strategy we plan to:

1. **Develop User Groups and Focus Groups**

   A variety of groups to help us to develop our library service and where these groups take place feeding back and necessary information through noticeboards and the web. These groups will be set up as and when they are required and will not necessarily be the same people each time.

2. **Incorporate a three-year rolling programme of consultation with the Service Plan, to ensure linkages with other elements of the planning process. Responsibility and the level of support needed will be allocated.**

3. **Work towards closer links with the Corporate Consultation Team in order to improve cross-departmental co-ordination and links with partners**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Why</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Which Groups</th>
<th>By When</th>
<th>Lead Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees &amp; Charges</td>
<td>To enable our customers to have input into the charges process</td>
<td>Take customer viewpoints into consideration as new fees and charges are set'</td>
<td>By using the website and handouts</td>
<td>Customer groups including our Special Services</td>
<td>End April 2009</td>
<td>Peter Moth - COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery Shopping</td>
<td>To ensure the libraries are delivering the service our customers expect</td>
<td>To develop an action plan on the parts of the mystery shopper we are failing on</td>
<td>Through staff action planning groups</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>Peter Moth - COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUS adult &amp; children groups</td>
<td>To get user views on the library service at all ages</td>
<td>To get results that we can then benchmark against other authorities and to ensure we improve our service</td>
<td>Using PLUS survey in libraries</td>
<td>Library users</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>Dawn Browning - COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Libraries timetable review</td>
<td>To review the timetables and develop the service to encourage more use by the public.</td>
<td>A service that is value for money and relevant to the communities that the library serves</td>
<td>Through advertising and leaflets</td>
<td>All consultees</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>Penelope Lorenc – Timetable Changed and updated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library opening hours</td>
<td>To review the opening hours of all libraries across the authority</td>
<td>To have libraries open when customers want to use them</td>
<td>Online consultation and paper form</td>
<td>All consultees</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>June Brassington - CANCELLED being done as part of library usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Service Use</td>
<td>To get the Customer and staff reaction to the system</td>
<td>To use their thoughts for improvements but not to remove the system</td>
<td>By launching focus groups</td>
<td>Customers and Staff</td>
<td>End December 2010</td>
<td>Peter Moth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees &amp; Charges</td>
<td>To enable our customers to have input into the charges process</td>
<td>Take customer viewpoints into consideration as new fees and charges are set'</td>
<td>By using the website and online consultation</td>
<td>All users</td>
<td>End April 2010</td>
<td>Peter Moth – DONE</td>
</tr>
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Consultation strategy
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<tr>
<td><strong>Library Usage</strong></td>
<td>To find out from parishes and councillors their views on the library service</td>
<td>So that we can look at the 5 year vision and ensure what we are doing is right for our users</td>
<td>By email &amp; post to parishes and councillors</td>
<td>Parish Councillors &amp; Cabinet Councillors</td>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Dawn Browning - DONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality Impact Assessments</strong></td>
<td>So that we are aware of how our policies and procedures affect all Customers and staff</td>
<td>So that everything we do we have looked at who it will affect and that we have done things to correct problems</td>
<td>By completing Equality Impact Assessments when we write new policies or procedures</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Valerie Bearne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Service Excellence</strong></td>
<td>To be awarded the Customer Excellence Award for our Customer Service</td>
<td>To have customers views at the forefront of all that we do and to encourage customers to work with us</td>
<td>Working through the Customer Service Excellence Programme and inviting help.</td>
<td>Customers and Staff</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>June Brassington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff suggestions</strong></td>
<td>To get staff comments and suggestions on how to improve their and customer library environments</td>
<td>To take each comment with a full response back to staff who raise the comment or suggestion with a full answer</td>
<td>Using an online feedback form through the intranet</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Peter Moth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Journey Mapping</strong></td>
<td>To get the customer experiences of using our libraries</td>
<td>To change the way the library operates to encourage a better understanding of customer needs</td>
<td>Interviews of customers who comment on our process or procedures and use staff groups to implement changes</td>
<td>Customers &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Peter Moth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complaints</strong></td>
<td>To give customers the chance to feedback issues that arise from their visits to a library</td>
<td>To review complaint and to acknowledge change if it can be achieved.</td>
<td>Using Complaints form and online complaints form</td>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Peter Moth</td>
</tr>
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Consultation strategy
In appendix 1, it shows what we have achieved in those consultations that have been undertaken and completed.

**Appendix 1 – Completed consultations 2007 - 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation undertaken</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Date undertaken</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>What we did</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housebound survey</td>
<td>Paper form questionnaire</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>102 people were surveyed during this time</td>
<td>• We were able to get names and we set up some computer courses for the over 60’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Library Review          | Paper and web based questionnaire | December 2007 | Comments feedback from surveys | • We did a pilot scheme for free one hour use of internet.  
• We updated our photocopiers and added a colour one.  
• We changed the seating for people to use |
| Voicebox 14             | Telephony survey by 1000 of the authorities population | December 2008 | Just over 50% of people surveyed were library members – Full Results | • Staff group set up and action plan put into place to build customer engagement in libraries |
| Fees & Charges Consultation | Web based consultation and Paper form to housebound users | January 2009 | We received 119 consultations back the biggest proportion from housebound users – Full Results | • Mobile libraries overdue notices removed  
• All other charges remained |
| Peoples Network free access | Web based and paper form for feedback on the pilot of free access f ro concession users | February 2009 | We received 140 completed forms of which 50% were entitled to a concession – Full Results | • Free one hour access per day for concession users remained  
• Other charges remained |
| Childrens PLUS Survey   | Paper based consultation in all libraries | October 2010 | We received 842 completed forms | • Currently being reviewed |
| Fees & Charges Consultation | Web based consultation and Paper form in all libraries | December 2010 | We received 0 consultations back | • All charges remained |