

Meeting	Nottingham City Council Libraries Transformation Proposals Public Consultation Event – Basford Library
Date & time	Tuesday 5 th April 2022, 1.30pm – 3pm
Venue	Basford Library
Attendance	54
Speakers	Cllr David Mellen, Leader of the Council, NCC (DM) Nigel Hawkins, Head of Culture and Libraries, NCC (NH) Terranum Abbas, Library Services Manager, NCC (TA)
Host	Jon Rae, Consultation and Engagement Manager, NCC (JR)

This was the third public consultation session on the transformation proposals for Nottingham City Library services and first local event focused on Basford Library.

This was an in person event, open to the public. The event was advertised via Nottingham City Council website Engage Hub, The Next Chapter pages on the Libraries website and via social media channels. The event was also advertised in all city council libraries and local leaflet drop took place in the immediate neighbourhood. Pre event registration was not required for the event.

Purpose of the meeting

To gather the public's views on the transformation proposals for the future of library services in Nottingham – Basford Library Focus

No decisions have been made for the future of the library service. All the questions raised at the meeting will form part of the consultation report.

Agenda

1. Welcome and housekeeping (JR)
2. Presentation (DM, NH, TA)
A presentation was delivered by the panel on the transformation proposals
3. Q&A (All)
Participants were invited to ask questions and share comments and ideas on the proposals
4. Participants were encouraged to submit their views via the online survey <https://www.nottinghamcitylibraries.co.uk/the-next-chapter/> or complete a paper copy available in the library.
Participants can submit any questions outside of the session via: engage@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Presentation

A presentation was given to the audience and covered the following areas:

- Introduction and background to the proposals (DM)
- New library developments underway (DM)
- Drivers for change (NH)
- Library Needs Assessment - Phase 1 review and recap (NH)

- Changes being proposed (TA)

Question and Answer

- The panel responded to the questions posed by the audience
- Comments were noted but not always responded to where a direct question was not asked
- Alternative Suggestions were noted
- A record of all questions, comments and suggestions is set out below and will be added to the consultation responses

Q: What does “customer” mean? - An audience member questioned the use of language in the presentation that referred to library ‘customers’ with concerns that this was linked to charging customers for the service

A: Library users, customers, residents are all used interchangeably. ‘Customer’ for the library service does not equate to a cost to use the service. The library core offer remains a free service and there is no intention of introducing charges for this offer.

Q: Knit and natter group representative: The group has been using the library as a venue for their group to meet for 8 years and are well settled. The age of their members is from 20yrs – 96yrs. It is a social group, ‘nattering’ is the important bit that would be missed. The library is an essential meeting place and social space. The group does lots of charity work to support both local and international charities. The group links with other groups and sessions at the library, such as toddler groups. The group praised the staff at the library for being “fantastic”.

The group suggested they had looked in to an alternative venue at Bulwell but would prefer not to move due to access, transport and cost issues.

The impact of Covid has seen a reduction of library users – Is Covid being used as an excuse for low use and for closing the library?

A: The group were congratulated on their charity efforts and in the success of the group. Support was offered in helping find the group an alternative venue should it come to that.

Data used to look at library use and performance does not include library use figures during the pandemic. The data for library usage covers a number of factors including visits, active users, issues/loans, take up of computer hours and Wi-Fi access and which sites our users borrow from. The data used in the assessment, for the most recent comparisons, is for the financial year 2019/20. Due to the pandemic, libraries were closed to the public on 20th March 2020 and therefore no data was collected for the 11 days up until 31st March 2020 however, data for the past 5 years (2015/16 - 2019/20) has been taken in to account when assessing patterns of usage across all sites and not just a single year.

Q: Community Job Advisor:

Thanked the library staff for making people feel welcome when visiting the library for employment support surgery.

The library is the Heart of Basford, there are no other buildings offering services like this in the area. People need to be able to access employment support to help people improve their lives.

Local buildings are needed for people who can't travel, people on low income, people looking for employment opportunities. Identify Basford as a key area of Nottingham and make it better.

The library is a chronically underused building and should be utilised more. A number of suggestions were put forward:

- **Community café?**
- **Is there a business opportunity to open the library up to the public e.g. café, so it gets more community use.**
- **Is there opportunity in the business community for investment?**
- **Can it better link with the park?**

A: The Council has to make choices as Central Government funding is reduced. We will look into the suggestions put forward and welcome organisations coming forward who may be interested in using the building and working with the council to look at options for Basford Library.

Q: Local Vicar: A café is needed in the area. Transport is expensive to travel to alternative provision. Basford needs a place for the community to access services and support

A: Would the Church be interested in partnering with the Council? It was agreed to follow up the conversation to open a discussion with NCC and the church.

Q: Could management costs and Cllr costs be reduced to fund the service? Can the Council access more funding from Central Government?

A: Central Government have supported the Council with £20m as part of the 'Levelling Up' fund however, this is funding with a particular focus and use cannot be used in other service areas.

Management costs have reduced over the years as has the number of Councillors.

Q: Is Robin Hood Energy the cause for these cuts?

A: When Robin Hood Energy was set up, there was wide concern that the energy supply industry was not acting in the best interests of consumers. Our motives in setting up the company were to try to tackle fuel poverty given the prevailing energy

supply situation at the time and the level of fuel poverty in the city, including a reliance on pre-payment meters. There was a lot of support for the move at the time both locally and nationally. We wanted Robin Hood Energy to reduce energy prices in Nottingham and initially we achieved that. We very much regret that this failed and caused a cost for the Council. It just wasn't able to complete like many others which have now also failed. Lessons on this have been learnt.

Q: Basford is only open for 21 hours per week. This is not suitable for the users. Link with other groups to widening opening. There are no classes / courses for people to access. We need opportunities for connection and friendship.

A: Comment noted

Q: Thinking of educational outcomes for children in the area, the impact of closures will have long-term effect on educational attainment with wider implications linked to health, employment and opportunities.

Options to consider:

- **Co working space – lots of people are working from home looking for a social connection**
- **Safe spaces are needed – Women's groups**
- **More of a community hub**

A: Comments noted

Q: Why is Sherwood being invested in when people there are better off and have more cultural opportunities?

A: Sherwood Library Development

Opportunity for a brand new facility arose as part of a development opportunity in that area. This is being provided at no capital cost to the Council and provide a great opportunity to replace a failing library previously situated in this location.

Q: School Governor, local primary school: The school regularly visits the library on foot. Closure would mean that an alternative library would be too far for primary children to walk to (policy on how far children can walk to off site activities).

Lack of direct contact from the service to its user groups is disappointing

A: Children not being able to walk to a library would be detrimental. All schools have been contacted as part of the consultation to feed in their responses via the survey.

Q: What will happen to the building?

A: NCC would work with the property department to look for other uses for the building e.g. Community interest, voluntary sector, Other NCC services, business interest. It would not be in any ones interest to leave this building to go ruin.

Q: Who owns the building?

A: The land and the building are Council owned. Miners and handed over to the Council – do the Council own the land on which this building sits.

This comment was noted and will be reviewed with property team.

Q: How much money is spent by NCC on consultants?

A: Consultants are used where we need expertise, this is short term and linked to specific projects where the Council doesn't have the specific experience and expertise.

Q: The potential closure of Aspley, Basford and Radford-Lenton would leave a big hole in the city in terms of access to library provision and services. Access to Sherwood isn't easy as an alternative and Central Library isn't centrally located

A: The location of new Central Library fits with a huge amount of development in the south side of the city including Nottingham college hub, retail offer, hospitality, business development of this area and the potential for the Broadmarsh site.

Whilst the city has a network of libraries, we also have links with county libraries and opportunities for using libraries outside of the city boundaries.

An assessment of transport links will be taken in to account in any decision.

Summary of issues and comments raised:

The ideas listed were echoed by many at the meeting:

- Taking provision away from a deprived area will have detrimental impacts
- The library is a really important social space especially coming out of lockdown where people are looking for support and social interaction
- Access and signage to the library from the park is poor, better links with the park is needed to encourage use
- Monetise the space
- Consider a Co-working space
- Consider a Community Café
- Opening hours are poor and not open when people need it
- Basford feels neglected, opportunities are reducing

- Hire the space for children's parties
- Nicest building in the area
- It is needed for the local community and children
- Establish a Friends of Group and Link to Friends of Vernon Park