

Appendix 7

A Review of the Library Property Portfolio

1. Bitterne Library

Bitterne Library was built in the 1964. It is a freehold property owned by the council and described as being in satisfactory condition.

The building is in a high profile location, on one level with an easily accessible entrance and a free car park near by. However the location is not in the heart of the district centre so if this opportunity arose to relocate to a more central location this could be explored.

Whilst the building has self service machines, wifi, a training room and is on a large site the building itself is limited in size given the library's popularity. There is a need for a flexible internal design to maximise the buildings activity and possible review of the external garden space.

Valuation officers have advised that the site is not large enough to generate sufficient capital receipt from a housing development above to fund a newly built library below. Opportunities for working together with other partners to either relocate or update the library to a more flexible modern facility will be explored under the work to be undertaken as part of the One Public Estate initiative.

2. Burgess Road Library

Burgess Road Library was built in 1934. It is a freehold property owned by the council and described as being in satisfactory condition, there have been significant roof works carried out recently.

The building is in a high profile location on Burgess Road with a step and ramped access and some on street car parking near by. The library is not in a district centre but easy walking distance from a densely populated residential area. The building has wifi but no self service machines. The internal design is fixed with immovable shelving and all public facilities on the ground floor with staff facilities located upstairs with no lift access. One of the rooms on the ground floor is used as a toy library by an independent body.

If a decision was taken not to continue to provide an SCC (Southampton City Council) managed library service from this building it could be offered to the community to be run as an independent library, however if there was no interest the site could be sold.

3. Central Library

Central Library was built in the late 1930s. It is a freehold property owned by the city council and is located in the north wing of the civic centre.

The building is located in the city centre with a step and ramped access with some on street parking nearby and multi-story parking within 200m. There are good bus links into the city centre although not all the buses stop outside the library. Whilst the library is not located in the area of highest footfall in the city centre it remains the most heavily used library in the city. If opportunities arose to relocate the library more centrally in the city centre this could be considered. However its location in the emerging cultural quarter is appropriate and footfall in this area of the city is growing with the recent development of Sea City Museum and the future development of the New Arts Complex.

In terms of internal design the building is light and airy, with a pleasant environment in which to read and study, it has lifts to a mezzanine floor and a basement. The internal design and layout needs updating to reflect the need to be flexible but also to attract particularly the children and family audience. There are aspirations to provide some limited refreshment facilities, increase the number of sockets for those bringing lap tops, improve the children and family areas, an improved homework zone, introduce tablet tables and create more flexible movable shelving to maximise the potential use of the space.

Other opportunities exist to make available some of the space within the library either for staff to use as touch down working or for partners to provide advice services and potentially also city council training.

4. Cobbett Road

Cobbett Road Library was built in the 1930s. It is a freehold property owned by the council and described as being in satisfactory condition. There have been significant works carried out in recent years on the building.

The building is located on Cobbett Road with some on street car parking nearby with a step and ramp access. . The library is not in a district centre but in walking distance of a residential area. However despite its location 50% of the users travel to the library by car (library survey 2012). The building has an internal layout which is traditional with fixed, immovable shelving. All the facilities are on one level which includes a large community room.

If a decision was taken not to continue to provide a SCC managed library service from the building it could be offered to the community to be run as an independent library, alternatively the site could be sold.

5. Lordshill Library

Lordshill Library was built in 1974. It is a freehold property owned by the council and described as being in satisfactory condition.

The building is located in the District Centre in Lordshill close to a large supermarket, health centre and community centre. There is plenty of free parking near by and good public transport links. The building has wifi and self service machines and all the facilities are on one level. The internal layout is fixed and in need of updating. If there were opportunities to redevelop the library as part of any proposals for the district centre or partnership with other providers this could be explored.

6. Millbrook Library

Millbrook Library was formerly located in a parade of shops in Cumbrian Way road, this was redeveloped and the library relocated to the MP3 building on Mansel Park managed by Hampshire Youth Options. The library has a lease in perpetuity and whilst the annual costs of operating this library is the second lowest at £28,000 including staffing, the cost per visit is the highest at £16.58 per visit.

Whilst the library is only open for 12 hours per week, it has not been well used in this location with only 33 regular users exclusively using this library despite the range of books, people network sessions available and children's activities programmed.

It is suggested that if a library provision is to continue in this area serious consideration should be given to the location of this service to maximise the use and convenience.

7. Portswood Library

Portswood Library was built in 1915. It is a freehold property owned by the council and described as being in satisfactory condition. .

The building is in a high profile location in a busy district centre on Portswood Road with a free car park near by and good public transport links. However the building has poor access from the street with a platform lift close to the entrance to avoid a steep stepped entrance. The building has Wi-Fi and self-service machines but the internal design is fixed with immovable shelving and is limited in size.

Whilst the building is in an ideal location on the Portswood high street the building is not suitable for the needs of today's library users. Opportunities should be explored to relocate the service to an improved venue which is more accessible, flexible and suitable for the purpose but just as well located.

8. Shirley Library

Shirley Library opened in 2005 as part of a redevelopment of the Shirley District shopping centre. The building is a leasehold property and is located adjacent to the housing office. Capita advise there are no outstanding maintenance issues as these matters are dealt with under the lease.

The building is in a high profile location in a busy district centre with plenty of free parking near by and good public transport access. The entrance is level and the provision for the public is all on one floor. The building has wifi and self service machines and the use of the space can be maximised given the provision of flexible movable shelving. After the Central Library this is the most heavily used library in the city.

9. Thornhill Library

Thornhill Library was formerly located in the old Hinkler Road parade of shops but was provided with a new venue as part of the New Deal for Communities redevelopment of Hinkler Parade. This new library which opened in 2012 is operated under a leasehold in perpetuity. Whilst the annual costs of operating this library is the lowest at £22,000, the cost per visit is the third highest behind Millbrook and the mobile library at £4.75 per visit.

Whilst the library is only open for 12 hours per week, it has not been well used in this location with only 54 regular users exclusively using this library despite the range of books, people network sessions available and children's activities programmed.

If it is not possible for the city council to continue to fund the management of this library that there should be every effort made to find an organisation to be able to continue some type of similar provision.

10. Weston Library

Weston Library was formerly located in the old Weston Lane parade of shops but in 2013 was temporarily relocated to a portacabin on the site of Chamberlayne Leisure Centre pending a new library being provided as part of a new housing development on Weston Lane. The new library would be operated under a lease. As with Thornhill and Millbrook, the costs associated with the library in Weston are small compared to the larger district libraries.

Whilst the library is only open for 12 hours per week, it has not been well used in this location with only 57 regular users exclusively using this library despite the range of books, people network sessions available and children's activities programmed.

If it is not possible for the city council to continue to fund the management of a new library in Weston every effort should be made to find an organisation to be able to continue some type of similar provision.

11. Woolston Library

Woolston Library is currently located in the district centre of Woolston and is owned by the city council freehold. Whilst Capita describe the condition of the building as satisfactory the building has not been ideal to meet the needs of the community with the children's library located up a long flight of stone steps with no lift. Whilst there is some parking near by and level access from the street, the service has been hampered by the lack of suitability of the building.

In 2015 the library will move into a new development being provided as part of the planning obligations within the Centenary Quay development. This new library will have good access from the street, free car parking near by, good bus links and all the provision on one floor. There will be wifi and self service with a large newly designed children's area. The city council will occupy the library under a lease.

July 2014