

Appendix 1

London Borough of Camden strategy on provision of public library services, 2011-14

Foreword



Dear resident

The financial situation we are in has been widely documented – there is a £93 million shortfall in the council’s budget over the next three years. This shortage of funds is due to national government cuts to local government budgets. We, as local councillors, have to make difficult decisions about where to make these cuts across all council services.

Our libraries budget is £8 million and we have to make savings of £2 million over the next three years. I firmly believe that libraries are the cornerstones of our community and that they provide an invaluable service for us. Despite the lack of money, I am not just looking at making cuts. My intention is to develop the library service and provide a modern, sustainable library model for future generations of Camden children, consistent with Labour’s manifesto commitment to preserve Camden’s social mix.

Camden council decided to launch a consultation to allow the community to have an input in the decision making process and to help shape this strategy. The consultation consisted of a survey, focus groups, public meetings and individual meetings with key stakeholders. I’m proud to say that the survey generated 6000 responses from all across Camden highlighting the diverse needs of our community. I also attended some very constructive public meetings organised by CPLUG where people expressed their concerns and shared their ideas of saving money.

Some of the key recommendations from the community that we have embedded in the strategy were around:

- sharing services across other council departments and with other boroughs
- reducing management costs
- reducing opening hours
- working in partnership with Library Friends’ Groups and giving them more ownership over the running of libraries
- increasing online resources in libraries including the use of e-books
- turning libraries into multi functional hubs

This strategy identifies future library provision in Camden and is based on:

- the survey results,
- the feedback from the public library meetings organised by CPLUG,
- the equality impact assessment results which concentrates on community needs ward by ward
- the opinions of all library users who emailed me individually
- Labour’s values of equality and protecting the most vulnerable

My intention has always been to minimise the disruption to the libraries in Camden during this period of change whilst taking this opportunity to evolve our library services in this strategy.

I am grateful for all of you for contributing your ideas to the library strategy and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Tulip Siddiq

Councillor Tulip Siddiq
Cabinet Member, Culture

1 Introduction

This document sets out the vision and strategic priorities for Camden Council's library service between 2011 and 2014.

There is no statutory requirement for the Council to publish a library strategy, but it is presented as an aid to decision-making for elected Members, and to inform the public and stakeholders of the direction and priorities for the service at a time of rapid change.

Camden's library service has adapted and modernised over the past three years to meet changing demands from residents and customers and to increase efficiency. A vision for the service, describing the role of libraries in Camden's diverse communities and what the service aims to provide, has evolved as part of the change process. Given the scale of challenge driven by financial pressures on the Council it is important that the changes to the library service over the period 2011-14 are also informed by priorities for the future delivery of services.

This strategy document outlines the vision and future priorities and is presented for Cabinet Members to approve in June 2011.

2 What does an effective modern public library service look like?

Public libraries are the responsibility of local authorities and although they are a statutory duty, there is no universally accepted definition of what a public library should provide, other than a free service of books and periodicals for loan and reference, information, and appropriate access to these resources for those that live, work, study in or visit the authority.

What libraries provide is therefore down to local authority policy, often informed by the long history of library services, customer expectation and corporate priorities. Government involvement has been limited – the only recent direct intervention being the Wirral Inquiry, commissioned by the Secretary of State in 2009, with policy statements having been produced by the relevant government department in 1997 and 2003.

The most recent definition of a 'good' library service said:

Public libraries make a measurable and substantial contribution to local economies, and help to bridge social divides. They support well-being, encourage reading, spread knowledge, contribute to learning and skills and help to foster identity, community and a sense of place for people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures

(Source: Framework for the future - Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2008)

The Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) is the professional body for librarians in the UK. CILIP published guidance for councils which said:

A good library service will deliver against key policy objectives and provide:

- A positive future for children and young people
- A fulfilling life for older people
- Strong, safe and sustainable communities
- Promotion of local identity and community pride
- Learning, skills and workforce development
- Health improvements and wellbeing
- Equality, community cohesion and social justice
- Economic regeneration

(Source: What makes a good library service, CILIP, December 2010 revised)

CILIP recognises that library services need to be refreshed and updated to meet changing needs, and does not set specific requirements for the numbers of libraries or library staff, stock or facilities to deliver a good service, recognising that this is the role of the local authority.

Despite limited national guidance, a degree of consensus exists across the 151 English local authorities. In addition to the book lending and information service required by law, and a legal minimum archive service, this includes:

- A range of materials in other formats including film, music and spoken word – for all customers and with specific regard for the needs of people with a disability
- Materials in community languages
- Free or subsidised access to computing facilities and electronic resources including internet access
- Online services, enabling people to access library services remotely and facilitating increasing self-service use
- Support for readers including adult literacy, emergent readers, reading group support and advice to individual customers
- Information – particularly focusing on citizenship entitlements and responsibilities
- Signposting to other Council, public and local services
- A meeting place for the community

Some authorities also offer:

- Early years support and book gifting for babies
- Dedicated young people's library spaces and activities including study support
- Support for adult learners including skills for life and computer literacy
- Study space including quiet zones
- Free or subsidised wi-fi access
- Information for local businesses and business start-ups
- Home delivery service, for people who cannot get to the library because of long term limiting disability
- Local history and heritage collections

- Support for community groups including meeting spaces and publicity (free or subsidised)
- Community and library-focused events
- Assistance in accessing Council and public services through helpdesks and drop-ins staffed by those services
- Health information and healthy living advice

At its heart is a service that is responsive to community need, flexible, sustainable and affordable.

3 What key legal and policy drivers are there for local authorities?

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires the Council to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service that is open to all. The Act specifies that this should include appropriate collections of materials for customers to borrow or use for reference in the library, an accessible service and assistance for customers. The Act does not provide any other standards or benchmarks and has usually been interpreted to mean that:

- there will be libraries sited so that they are accessible to most who live, work or study in the local authority area (including provision by others, eg neighbouring authorities)
- there will be a good range of up to date stock
- libraries will have opening hours that enable access by most people
- there will be support in using the library through an up to date catalogue and trained staff
- people with a disability will be enabled to access library services

Public library service standards, introduced by government in 2002 to provide greater clarity on how a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service would be assessed, are no longer monitored nationally, nevertheless they give some guide on acceptable levels of service.

The standards, and how Camden measures up, are:

1. all urban households to be within a mile of a library building (Camden average 0.5 mile to nearest library, no resident more than 1 mile)
2. 128 scheduled opening hours per year per 1000 population (Camden=134)
3. all static libraries to provide internet access (Camden achieves this)
4. six computer workstations per 1000 population (Camden = 13)
5. 50% of book requests delivered within seven days; 85% within 30 days (Camden part achieves this target)
6. 7650 visits per 1000 population per year (Camden = 9600 in 2010/11)
7. 94% of sampled adult residents to rate the library service as 'good' or 'very good' (Camden achieved 85% in 2009)
8. 87% of sampled residents under 16 to rate the library service as 'good' or 'very good' (Camden achieved 81% in 2006)
9. At least 216 items per 1000 population to be added to stock each year (Camden added 244 items per 1000 in 2009/10)

10. Stock turn – each item to be replaced every 6.7 years (Camden replenishes its stock every 6.1 years)

Most local authorities achieved six or seven of the standards in full in 2008, the last time they were collected nationally. Camden achieved seven in full, one in part and did not achieve two. (Source: *Public library service standards, CIPFA, 2009*)

There are also a number of clear challenges, both nationally and locally which act as drivers in the future development and delivery of library services:

- Libraries are under pressure to define their role more clearly in an age of public spending constraints
- New models of service delivery, such as e-Books, are emerging to challenge the traditional book lending service that has previously formed the main activity that libraries have carried out
- There is a strong sense of attachment among some customers to a historic model of library provision focusing on quiet study and printed books. At the same time, others – particularly younger people – may have different expectations and find the traditional model largely irrelevant to their needs. As a borough with a young population, this is a particular challenge for Camden
- Library use nationally is at its greatest amongst younger children and elderly people with under-representation of young adults and adults of working age among library users
- Customers have high expectations of the range of materials on offer, the type of services they can access and when and where those services will be available, not all of which it will be possible to fulfil with available resources
- Camden's residents are used to high quality, well-maintained and equipped libraries with some of the longest opening hours in the country
- The cost of Camden's library service is high, and although efficiencies and improved practice have reduced the cost per visit over the last two years, the pressure is upward due to a range of factors. To be able to continue to offer a sustainable service, there is a need to address the size and scope of the service and focus on core services

4 About Camden and what it needs from a library service

4.1 How libraries meet specific needs

Libraries are a universal service, whose provision is a requirement of law, and are open to all and free at point of use with the exception of some charges for additional services beyond the core offer. It is possible, and justifiable, for councils to target provision of services at those most in need such as people on low incomes, disabled customers, or other target groups, or to provide services to support key Council priorities, such as improving educational achievement.

A challenge that many councils face is adapting a long-established service to current need, particularly if it is heavily dependent on fixed assets (buildings) for service

delivery, as these may be costly to change or relocate or it may not be possible to adapt them to new demands at any cost.

For statistical purposes, Camden is divided into a number of areas below ward level to measure demographic information in the form of outputs. All of Camden's libraries have some of these super output areas (SOAs) within a one mile catchment which fall within the two most deprived categories for SOAs. Kentish Town library has the most (20 of the two most deprived areas within a mile), followed by Camden Town, Queens Crescent and Swiss Cottage, all of which have 19 within a mile. The libraries furthest from and serving lower levels of deprivation are Belsize, Chalk Farm, Heath and West Hampstead, although all have 15 or more high deprivation SOAs within a mile. Some libraries close to the borough boundary apparently serve a much smaller number of SOAs when measured in this way, but this is because a one mile catchment area would also take in parts of neighbouring boroughs.

Evidence from a survey of library customers and analysis of registered customer use shows that use of smaller libraries is much more localised; at Belsize over 80% of registered customers actively using the library come from the immediate postcode areas compared to 60% at Swiss Cottage library and around 70% at Kentish Town library.

In addition to the larger libraries serving customers from a wider geographic area, we also know that customers using the smaller libraries are more likely to be using other libraries as well. For example, 50% of Belsize customers surveyed also used Swiss Cottage library the figure is 60% at Chalk Farm and at Heath it is 56%. At larger libraries such as Camden Town this figure is 26%, at Holborn 22% and St Pancras 22%.

Combining the information on deprivation in each library's catchment area, the distance customers travel to visit the library and how many other libraries customers use in order to meet their needs, suggests that the libraries which have the greatest effect in terms of combating exclusion are:

- libraries sited directly in areas with a high level of deprivation (such as Queen's Crescent library which straddles two such SOAs), or
- larger libraries with a greater range of services located in highly accessible locations which are used by customers from a wide geographic area.

Camden will deliver enhanced services from libraries that serve populations in areas of high deprivation. This new service offer will be tailored to the needs of each community, and specific to the locality. It may be delivered in partnership with other organisations and through volunteers in libraries. Examples of the support and services that would be provided include:

- Help with job searches and CV writing
- Self service online training courses
- Hosting job clubs
- Hosting literacy and numeracy skills sessions
- Healthy living sessions
- Homework support

Wards with particularly high levels of deprivation where libraries will particularly offer these kinds of services include:

- Gospel Oak, Haverstock – served by Queens Crescent library
- Kilburn – served by Kilburn library
- Regents Park – served by partial re-provision locally and nearby Camden Town library
- St Pancras & Somers Town – served by St Pancras library
- Canteloves – served by Kentish Town library

4.2 The role of libraries in Camden

The role of Camden's libraries is to be at the heart of their communities – connecting people to shared interests, local resources and knowledge.

The role of the library service has changed in the past and needs to continue to adapt to Camden's changing communities, as well as changing Council priorities and resources, and customer needs.

In future, the Council will provide a library service that:

- is accessible in the ways, places and at the times that people need it
- ensures good value for money
- offers multi-use space
- connects to other services
- is relevant to our customers needs and stays up to date

This 'role' for libraries was developed during 2009 as part of work to transform the service, and has been adapted to address changing circumstances including the financial pressures the council faces.

5 About Camden's Libraries

Camden has invested significantly and changed its library services over the past ten years, to ensure an attractive, modernised and efficient service. This includes:

- major, award-winning refurbishment of Swiss Cottage central library in 2004, a grade II listed landmark building, as part of a wider re-provision of a cultural hub for Camden
- significant refurbishments of Kentish Town, Queens Crescent, West Hampstead and Heath libraries since 2005
- provision of a new library for Kilburn in 2006, significantly better equipped and sited than its predecessor which has increased use eight-fold
- a 7% increase in opening hours across the service, at no extra cost, with all sites benefitting from increased opening hours
- introduction of self-service facilities at 10 libraries for stock issue and return and customer payments
- introduction of wi-fi and downloadable audio books and forthcoming eBooks

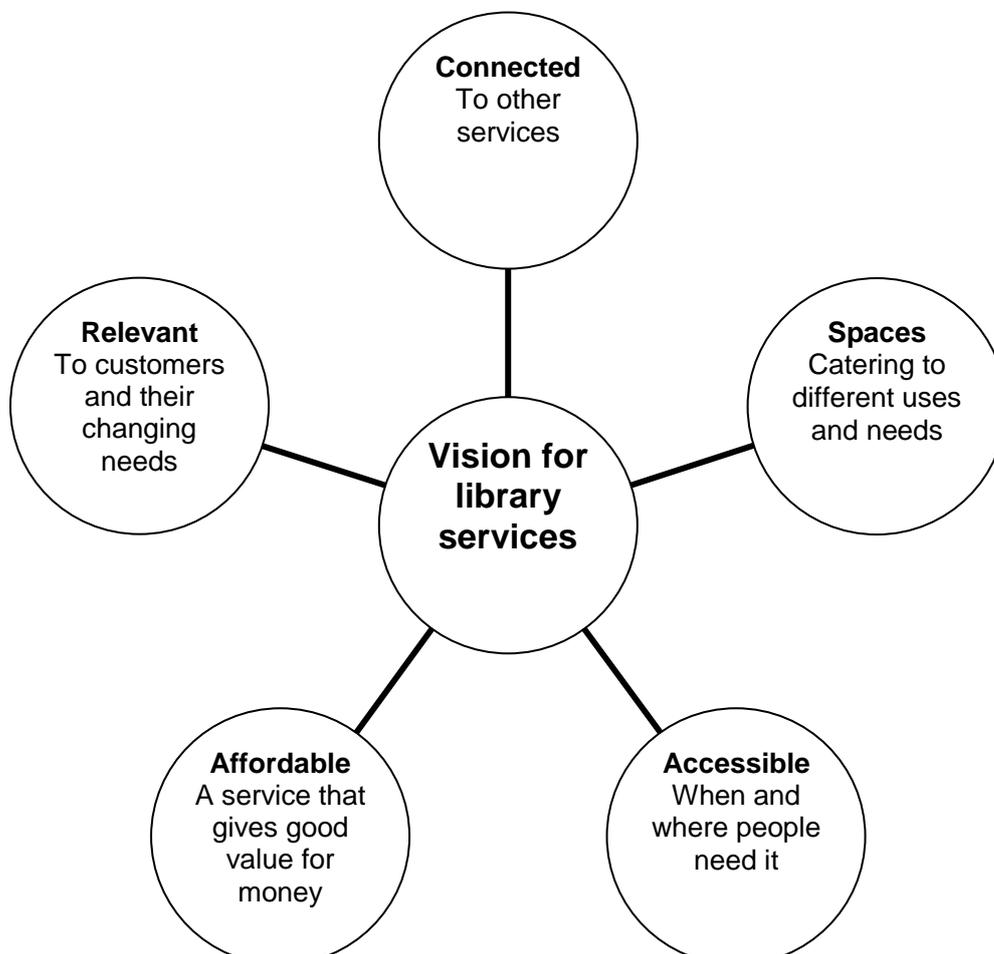
Most usage is concentrated in the central library, which alone accounts for a quarter of all visits and borrowing, and draws its users from all over Camden, and six large district centre libraries. The other six smaller libraries generally offer fewer services, less space and are open less than the seven larger sites. Their usage is significantly below that of the larger libraries, in terms of customer visits, and costs in most cases are correspondingly higher. Nevertheless they are much valued by their customers who feel a strong sense of ownership and are in most cases where the most active 'library friends' or user groups are based.

Camden's library service:

- is well-used: participation is in the top 10 English library authorities (source: DCMS, 2010) and the number of visits rose by 4.7% in 2009/10 and 2% in 2010/11 compared to the previous years
- has good locations often at the heart of local communities, many on high streets or near transport hubs
- has had investment, with up-to-date, attractive facilities
- is used for a wide variety of reasons – less than half of customers borrow books, many come to use computer facilities, study space, to find out about local services, to engage in activities with their children or to meet friends

6 Strategic priorities

To help us achieve our vision for libraries in Camden we have five key strategic priorities that we are committed to delivering.



Priority one

Libraries will be accessible in the ways, places and at the times that people need them

Commitments

- Retain a network of library service points that are well located and offer convenient opening hours
- Make specific provision for mobility impaired customers and vulnerable people, to ensure they can access a full range of library services
- Regular review of opening hours to ensure that, within available resources, they meet the needs of the widest range of customers
- Maintain and develop an up to date, accessible and customer-focused web offer that provides a '24/7 library'

Resources

Libraries will continue to be revenue funded by the Council to achieve these commitments to a high standard
 Libraries will continue to seek external sources of funding as appropriate and available to deliver added value

Outcomes

Library usage and satisfaction levels will remain high and commensurate with the level of provision

The needs of vulnerable customers will be specifically reflected in service design and delivery

Indicators

Visits remain at a % proportion of 2010/11 levels, according to reduced size of service
 Customer satisfaction at or above 85%

% of targeted vulnerable customers at or above Camden average

Priority two

Libraries will be affordable to Camden and offer value for money

Commitments

- Regular review of service offer to ensure it is providing a comprehensive and efficient service and is value for money
- Challenging annual targets to be set for visitor numbers, services utilised and customer satisfaction
- Deployment of staff to ensure optimal customer focus, maximising opening hours and providing effective career development
- Expand the range of other public services provided through Libraries, either directly or in partnership
- Support alternative models of library service delivery where these offer better value or there is demonstrable need

Resources

Libraries will continue to be revenue funded by the Council to deliver agreed priorities

Alternative ways of working and channels of access will be developed to ensuring continuing value for money and accessibility

Outcomes

Affordable, value for money service
High level of usage

Indicators

Cost per visit to move nearer all-London average

Visits remain at a % proportion of 2010/11 levels, according to reduced size of service

Priority three

Libraries will offer spaces for a range of different uses by individuals and groups

Commitments

- Libraries will cater to a range of needs – for quiet study and reading spaces, shared study, family learning, formal and informal group meetings, social meeting space and space for parents/carers and their children, and for young people
- Not all libraries will be able to provide all of these facilities at all times, but across the service as a whole all these needs will be catered for
- Libraries will provide a welcoming environment for all customers, with accessible facilities for disabled people, public toilets at all sites and refreshment facilities where possible
- A commonsense approach, managed with discretion by local staff, will be adopted on noise levels, consumption of food and drink and use of services; there is no ‘one size fits all’ set of rules but an expectation that reasonable activities are allowed whilst at the same time ensuring individual behaviours do not impact on other customers’ enjoyment of the facilities
- Staff will act as ‘hosts’ to help and support customers to get the most out of their library visit, whether by recommending reading or learning activities, signposting to other service providers or supervising the maintenance of a safe and attractive space for customers
- All libraries will be available for hire, subject to availability and local operational constraints
- Priority will be given to community and not-for-profit organisations, and to Camden-based hirers

Resources Good use of premises and property management budgets Effective staff development and deployment	
Outcomes High quality space available for most reasonable customer expectations Staff 'host' role understood and appreciated by customers and staff	Indicators Customer satisfaction at or above 85%

Priority four Libraries will be connected to other services	
Commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Libraries will offer a local, friendly and accessible space where customers can make contact with other Council and public services - Staff will increasingly be trained to help customers navigate online services and find their way to solutions even in cases of complex or multiple needs - To do this, the service will build links with other Council departments and service providers, and in particular with Contact Camden, the Council's customer service team - The service will work in the context of overarching strategies around issues such as literacy, learning and employability 	
Resources High quality ICT provision in libraries Effective partnerships with other providers and services	
Outcomes Customers regard libraries as 'first stop' for access to services in communities Customers are referred on effectively and as appropriate; staff cross-trained with Contact Camden and other services Customers will be able to access resources and support for their learning and employability needs	Indicators Transactions to be monitored including customer enquiries Customer satisfaction at or above 85% Evaluation of learning outcomes for customers

Priority five

Libraries will be relevant to our customers' needs and stay up to date

Commitments

- Libraries will make effective use of information, communications and other technologies to offer up-to-date, relevant and cost effective services to customers
- Libraries will offer a range of learning, information and digital services for customers
- Libraries will promote reading for learning and pleasure, to children and adults, including those with literacy needs
- Services will adapt to suit changing customer need, for example the introduction of eBooks
- Service provision will have particular regard for the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable customers, particularly in respect of those at risk of exclusion from digital provision, those whose first language is not English, people on low incomes, children and young people

Resources

Libraries will continue to be revenue funded by the Council to achieve these commitments to a high standard

Libraries will continue to seek external sources of funding as appropriate and available to deliver added value

Outcomes

Information, literature and entertainment will be available in a range of up to date formats and channels

There will be a variety of different sessions and activities to engage children and young people, adult learners, elderly people and disabled people in accessing learning, reading and information

Particular priority will be given to ensuring libraries fulfil their role of ensuring no one is excluded from participation in the digital society because of lack of knowledge or sufficient income

Indicators

A wide range of materials that are well used by customers, for reference, download or borrowing

Levels of participation commensurate with the level of service provision, with vulnerable groups participating in proportion to the Camden population

Continuing high level of ICT provision within available resources – within the upper quartile for London libraries

7 Resources and core offer

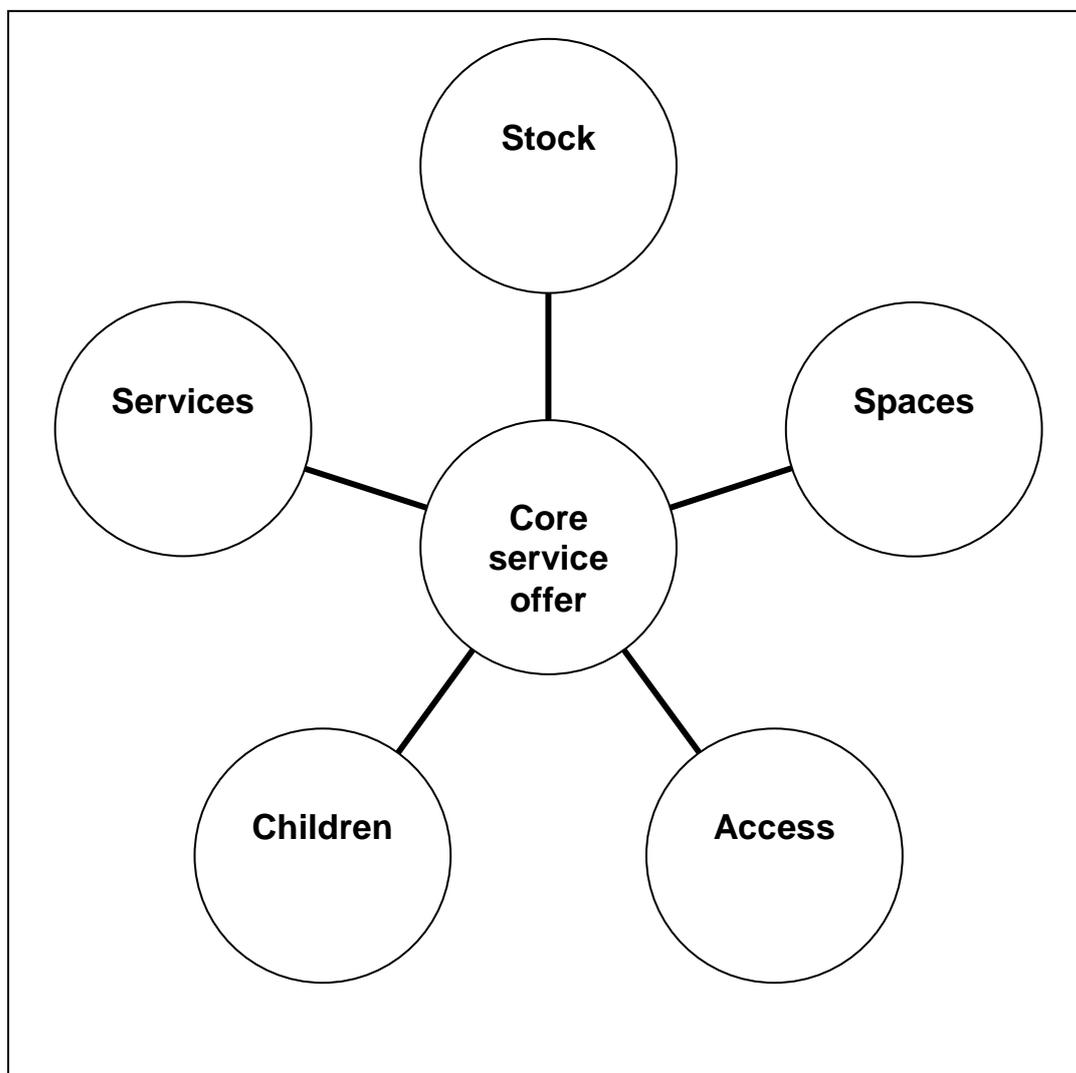
Good use of resources has always been essential but there is renewed need to ensure that, with less, resources available will be used to prioritise the core offer, deliver the strategic priorities and work towards the vision.

Given that most costs in library services are in staff (47% of the total libraries budget in Camden's case) and premises (23%), the Council has taken steps to improve the efficiency of its service. Between April 2009 and March 2011, running costs adjusted for inflation fell by over £700,000 without impact on customer service or acquisitions. This was achieved through process improvements, closer collaboration with other Council services and our external suppliers, and a reduction in management costs of 44%.

In constrained times, the Council faces difficult choices and the strategy aims to support decision-making and focus on the core service that Libraries should provide in future.

Core service offer

The following service offer applies at all public libraries maintained and staffed by Camden Council.



Stock

- A full and comprehensive range of books, e-books, audio and other media which is developed according to customer need
- An ordering service that will supply any library item required by the customer subject to availability
- Good availability of stock and active management to ensure our resources are effectively deployed to help promote reading and literacy in all its forms

Spaces

- An attractive, well maintained and safe space for social meeting, exchange and cultural activities in local communities
- Study space

Access

- Libraries will be open when people need them, with evening and weekend access available on a borough-wide basis
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff who can advise on appropriate material in core subject areas and different media
- Regular displays, promotions and activities
- A high quality online offer, providing access to a library catalogue and information resources, and a 24 hour enquiry service provided in partnership with other library services
- Support for customers with disabilities, through assistive technology, use of appropriate media and a re-scoped home delivery service for customers unable to visit the library because of long-term illness, mobility or sensory impairment

Children

- High quality children and young people's library provision, supporting reading for pleasure and learning lined to the school and college curriculum
- Promotion of children and young people's library services through outreach campaigns and activities including a programme of school and class outreach activities to support educational achievement
- Baby bounce, Rhymetime and other sessions aimed at supporting early years cognitive and language development
- Provision of Bookstart and Summer Reading schemes for children for as long as these are supported by national agencies

Services

- Support on literacy skills and for emergent readers; and support for at least one adult reading group at each library, subject to demand

- Modern computing facilities with a wide variety of up to date software packages and printing, scanning and copying
- Free wireless and internet access for all
- Support for information learning, particularly around ICT skills, skills for life and family learning
- A range of information for and about the local community, including Council, local service providers, culture and leisure facilities, health, community and voluntary organisations and learning and training opportunities
- Signposting and access to a range of Council services and support in making contact with the Council, online and via dedicated free phones in every library

Some libraries will also offer:

- Homework and study support
- Family learning support
- A range of learning opportunities in classes, small groups and 1:1, in partnership with Adult and Community Learning and voluntary and private sector partners as appropriate
- Dedicated community information resources and trained staff
- Advice and information services provided by other Council services and teams eg housing advice
- Health and well-being information resources, eg Books On Prescription
- Meeting facilities with priority booking for Camden residents and organisations

Approach to stock

A core part of the library offer remains access to a good quality stock of books, periodicals, audio, video and electronic resources in a variety of media and formats and where appropriate in community languages. The need for a wide range and different format of stock will change in future as electronic formats complement and compete with the printed word. Camden Council is committed to maintaining a wide range and choice for customers which balances popular and specialist materials. The Council has historically invested significantly to maintain a good quality library stock and there are currently approximately 400,000 items available to customers. This will be supplemented from Summer 2011 by membership of the South East Library Management System, a consortium of 15 authorities which share a stock and customer management system and access for customers to many items in all the partner library services. Camden customers will be able to view and order, via the online shared catalogue, from five million library stock items, which will be delivered to their nearest convenient library.

Camden will maintain an adequate level of spend on new stock for its libraries which, whilst reduced from previous allocation, is likely to maintain its position in the upper 50% of London boroughs for total library acquisitions spend.

A key area for library development is the growth of downloadable formats. Camden launched an audio book download service in 2010 which has already proved popular and its eBook service will be available in June 2011. The Council will use its stock acquisitions budget to invest in new formats and media as and when appropriate, to ensure it can continue to offer a wide range, in a way that is accessible and attractive for customers.

We will continue to work to ensure the efficacy of stock acquisitions, and that we obtain value for money. The Council is a partner in a library stock buying consortium and will review these arrangements periodically to ensure that it continues to represent the best choice for Camden. Evidence based stock management is now in use, which provides better quality information to support suppliers in providing an appropriate range of materials and library staff in managing existing stock resources in ways that are cost effective and meet community need.

Approach to digital services

Libraries play a vital role in combating digital exclusion and supporting the Council's strategy of channel shift. Approximately 25% of residents have no access at home to fast internet services and have to rely on other resources to access the internet, or potentially they face exclusion from this aspect of modern life. The Council wants residents to use the internet to conduct routine transactions and enquiries with it as this is the fastest and easiest channel for most people and the cheapest for the Council. It is important that those who cannot access this at home have a route to services, supported by knowledgeable staff who can encourage them to go online, and free at point of use. This will save money for the Council by signposting as many people as possible away from face-to-face contact, as well as reducing the risk that anyone is excluded as Council services undergo this transformation.

Camden's libraries will continue to provide a high level of access to PCs and the internet. As technology evolves, there are more ways for people to access digital resources and we will right size our computer/internet offer accordingly. The recent introduction of free wi-fi connectivity in libraries has proved popular and we will adapt the library offer – with the core provision of a free service – to ensure it continues to meet customer need effectively.