

Update on Libraries from Kate Murray, Head of Libraries, 22 August 2019

At the start of this year, we held community engagement sessions across the city to talk with residents about their local library. We discussed what the library meant to local people, what already works well and explored both small and big ideas that could make a real difference. There was an open invitation for those interested to become involved, working together to find ways to make some of the ideas happens. This is an update on progress made since these community engagement sessions finished in April 2019.

1. Ideas

We are delighted to have received over 1,200 ideas and suggestions. These came from the engagement meetings, through the online forum, via discussions or emails. They are all now on the council's website at <https://www.libraryideasbristol.co.uk/>. The ideas can be searched by library, key word or theme.

At each library, there is a large poster listing the ideas for that location, with a separate board for additional comments and suggestions. We are collecting the post-it notes regularly and will be adding them to the existing list online and for ongoing discussion at each library. We hope you will continue to communicate with us in this way.

Some ideas that have been put forward affect all libraries, so we have been working on how we might develop these.

For those ideas that relate to individual libraries, if a Friends' Group exists, we are meeting with them to talk about local interests and to prioritise the list of ideas. If you would like to join this discussion, please contact your library or the Friends Groups via – <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/friends-groups-of-our-libraries>

At libraries without a Friends' Group, we are holding drop-in open days for anyone who wants to pop along to talk about the ideas and how we can make some of them happen. We are linking with our Community Development colleagues, who are able to support residents in certain areas to take action and affect change within their library.

Key community organisations supported the initial community engagement sessions. They have held further conversations locally, assisting residents to identify opportunities and, as a result, some community-led action is starting to take place. This continued input is valued and we are keen to maintain links with these organisations.

Examples of things residents would like to take forward themselves in their local library:

- Run coffee mornings;
- Help improve library signage and displays e.g. display local art and history in the library;
- Become IT volunteers to support people using PCs;
- Promote existing events and services via social media;
- Run book focussed events, organise a writer in residence and author talks;
- Set up a toy or games library;

- Supervise the library out of hours so can be used for homework clubs or other activities;
- Improve look and feel of outdoor space e.g. planters

Ideas regarding furniture, building or service related issues are being assessed and we are implementing those that are currently possible.

Examples of things the Library Service is doing:

- Opened the Central Library 7 days a week;
- Replacing children’s rugs, kinder boxes and musical instruments for Baby Bounce and Rhyme;
- Replacing tables and chairs and furniture in key libraries;
- Working with Reading City to install mini libraries in City Farms and Children’s Centres
- Working on replacing the self-service kiosks with new models
- Working with IT colleagues to replace all public computers in 2020;
- Investigating Wi Fi printing (after the self-service kiosks have been replaced)
- Obtaining approval to remove the old Citizen Service Point desking in Fishponds Library;
- Discussing the move of Southmead Library;
- Working with Rising Arts on two pilot projects to engage young people, which will lead to a further funding bid;
- Completed a consultation on the name of Marksbury Road Library
- Opened Extended Access Libraries (Westbury, Stockwood and St. George) on a Sunday 1-5pm;

2. Friends’ Groups

There are now Friends’ Groups at 16 of our libraries, with a few more interested. This increase has happened since the engagement sessions and is great news as we would like a Friend’s’ Group for every library. If you are interested in joining or talking with your local Friends’ Group, you can find the contact details here:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/friends-groups-of-our-libraries>.

If you would like to help set up a new Friends’ Group, please email Library Development Officers, Paul Walker (paul.walker@bristol.gov.uk) or Denis Wise (denis.wise@bristol.gov.uk).

We held a city-wide Friends meeting in May and will hold another in October:

City-Wide Friends Meeting

Tuesday 1st October, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

The Pavilion, BS1 5JE

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/web/the-harbourside-pavilion/venue-hire/home>

This meeting is for existing Friends’ Groups and people interested in getting involved. If you would like to come along, please get in touch via: library.ideas@bristol.gov.uk

We are developing a pack of information for Friends' Groups, which will include sample constitutions, ideas for events and promotions and explanations of insurance. We are working with our Insurance Department to find a simpler solution to the Public Liability Insurance requirements in order to open and give greater access to library buildings.

3. Library Strategy

A new library strategy is currently in development, due to be published in the autumn. Conversations held at the community engagement sessions will inform this document, which will help explain the direction of the service.

We have been successful in obtaining approval for some funds to help with promoting the Library Service and highlighting the services we provide.

4. Further Meetings

We have organised some Councillor briefings in September for local ward members and will be attending a public Communities Scrutiny meeting (this is a meeting of citywide Councillors who examine certain topics) on Thursday 10th October at 5pm

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/how-council-decisions-are-made/scrutiny>

5. Volunteering

If you are interested in volunteering with the library service please use the link below:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries-archives/volunteering-at-our-libraries>

We have roles that help with storytime, IT or events.

Kate Murray 22nd August 2019