



**Oldham**  
Council

**Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

## **Oldham Council Libraries Update**

**Portfolio Holder:**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide an update on Oldham Council Libraries' Performance and outline current challenges and developments.

### **Recommendations**

To note the report.

## Oldham Council Libraries Savings and Impact Update

### 1 Background

- 1.1 The Service Goal of Oldham Council libraries' is to be amongst the best performing library services in the country. To achieve this, the Service has been undergoing a phased and extensive period of modernization over the last few years to improve access and closely align the service with corporate objectives.
- 1.2 This report highlights the key developments made to the service over the last year, ensuring that we continue to deliver a relevant, high-quality modern library service; providing accessible community spaces, free access to books, information and digital resources, and a range of cultural experiences; resulting in a happier, healthier, more informed community with improved life chances.
- 1.3 The report also highlights the future challenges faced by the library sector and how Oldham Library Service are planning to meet these challenges.

### 2. Current Position

We are proud to report that Oldham Libraries have made significant progress on library service improvements, building on past achievements and continuing to innovate and invest in both service and staff developments. Highlights include:

- 2.1 Improvements to Library environments at Uppemill, Failsworth, Lees and Oldham to reflect the changing use of libraries, offering greater flexibility to use the space for cultural and digital events.
- 2.2 Funding approved for new Royton Library; current library will move to Royton Town Hall, sharing facilities with the District Team and GM Police in 2019.
- 2.3 Sensory Room launched in March 2018. We are the first library service in Greater Manchester to provide a sensory room facility. The room is equipped with lots of digital sensory technology, including a musical touch wall, LED interactive bubble tube, fibre optic slideglow, LED interactive infinity tunnel and LED sound activated step light. The Sensory Room's facilities and programmed activities will support the learning and cultural needs for children and adults with autism, sensory impairments, dementia, as well supporting people who are suffering from stress and anxiety. To date we have had over 220 bookings from both members of the public as well as schools, community groups and charitable organisations.
- 2.4 Jack and Lucy, the graphic novel produced as a result of the Engaging Libraries' '*Comics and Cosplay: Caring for Young Minds*' project funded by The Wellcome Trust and Carnegie UK is now being used as a training tool for youth workers and partners across Oldham.
- 2.5 Following on from the success of Engaging Libraries Project we have developed a positive working relationship with Manchester University and are working with them on a partner project exploring women's experiences of radiotherapy.
- 2.6 Carnegie Library Lab - Oldham Libraries Development Officer Kate Smyth has been selected to participate in the prestigious 'Carnegie Library Lab' programme, a unique 18-

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month funding and development programme for public library staff across the UK. Kate is only one of six library staff to be selected for the programme from a UK-wide competition. She has been awarded £8,500 to deliver the 'Count and Code' project which will encourage children between the ages of 3-6 to explore, investigate and learn through counting and coding activities. Alongside the project funding, Kate will also have exclusive access to online learning, networking and mentoring opportunities.

- 2.7 Reading Friends – following the success of the first round of funding during the test phase, of which Oldham were one of just 4 in the country to be chosen, we have now been given £70k to support the delivery of Reading Friends across all 10 GM authorities. As part of the Reading Friends Programme we are working with 5 groups across Oldham, to help combat social isolation through social reading activities. In Oldham a total of 24 sessions took place with 428 attendees who were supported by 27 volunteers and 4 staff. **See Appendix A - Reading Friends Evaluation Summary**
- 2.8 Home Library Service – a mixed model of delivery of the Home Library Service is now offered to residents of Oldham who are unable to visit the library in person. This includes access to the RNIB service, collection service by a friend or family, or home delivery service by a volunteer. Several of the residential homes also have Reading Friends Scheme delivered by volunteers, which suits residents that are no longer able to read but benefit from conversations and having books read to them, either in a 1:1 or group setting.
- 2.9 Building and expanding on the digital offer, including introducing Micro:bit lending, coding clubs and promoting the e-books offer. We have seen an increase in E-Book and E-Audio book issues from 1,400 in 2014/15 to over 10,000 in 2017/18. **See Appendix B**
- 2.10 Shortlisted for North West Cultural Education Awards for our HLF funded project 'Brought to Book' in partnership project with local schools and community groups
- 2.11 Awarded funded places for staff to attend a leadership development course and a national conference
- 2.12 We are strengthening our Volunteer offer by working collaboratively with Arts and Heritage; ensuring that a wide range of volunteering opportunities are communicated clearly to the residents of Oldham. We are investing in Volunteer Makers – an online platform that allows two way communication with volunteers and provides valuable reporting data.
- 2.13 Oldham Libraries profile has been raised nationally:
- Darren Henley, CEO of Arts Council England visited Oldham Libraries during National Libraries Week.
  - We also hosted GM Mayor's Question Time in the Performance Space at Oldham Library,
  - Oldham's Reading Friends participant was profiled in The Reading Agency's film which was launched at the British Film Institute in London in October 2018. <https://readingfriends.org.uk/>
  - Blog about Oldham's Sensory room on Libraries Taskforce website <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/2018/05/11/oldham-library-sensory-room/> and on That's Manchester TV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4W1HXqVL5c>
- 2.14 Budget savings have been achieved by switching our ICT contract at Oldham Library & Lifelong Learning Centre from Allied Worldwide to Unity. Further savings to the casual staffing budget have been proposed by introducing single staffing in the evenings at Chadderton Library and on a Saturday at Limehurst and training volunteers to manage the

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day to day running of Delph Community Library. Staff and Trade Unions have been consulted and robust risk assessments have been carried out.

Annual Report with key performance statistics are included in **Appendix C**

### **3 Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss**

- 3.1 Although we are delivering a variety of new and exciting services as mentioned above, we still face significant building infrastructure challenges to ensure that all our libraries are fit-for-purpose and able to accommodate the new services and meet customers' expectations. Priority libraries are namely Crompton, Greenfield and Northmoor.
- 3.2 Continued investment is also required to upgrade self-service kiosks, wifi infrastructure, and people counters, to ensure we continue to support the Resident First and the 'digital by default' agenda. These are critical to help support the residents of Oldham access the digital technology and skills needed to fully participate in society and support their social, economic, cultural, civic and personal well-being. In order to achieve this ambition, digital inclusion will be addressed at a borough wide level through the Digital by Design workstream. Libraries are playing a key role in this agenda with the provision of free internet access, online resources, digital skills sessions and support with internet searches and guidance to trusted sites. We are currently learning from other library authority models (Leeds, Stockport and Salford) to explore the best model of investment and delivery for Oldham.
- 3.3 Despite the continuing national trend in the decline of issue and visitor figures for public libraries, we are delivering more services with a wider range of partners, from reading schemes, access to online services, health literacy to cultural programming. We are therefore updating our performance framework to ensure we are delivering targeted services, measuring impact and informing business planning for the future.

### **4 Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny to consider the opportunities to develop a stronger library service; that delivers more innovative services that meet local needs and the challenge of balancing that with funding opportunities and increasing library visitor figures.

### **5. Links to Corporate Outcomes**

- 5.1 As a uniquely trusted and accessible public service in the heart of our communities, Libraries are in a good position to support Oldham's co-operative ambition. By working with a resident focus Libraries provide a cradle-to-grave service which empowers residents to make positive choices in their lives and make real and beneficial changes for themselves and their community.

### **5.2 Oldham Council Libraries delivering against Corporate Priorities**

#### **An inclusive economy where people and enterprise thrive**

Oldham Council libraries supports this objective by providing access to:

- Business support, including resources and events to support business start-ups as well as established businesses
- Employment support, including work clubs, jobs fair, resources and information

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- Digital services, including free access to PCs, the internet and Wi-Fi ; and a 24/7 digital library service
  - Learning support, including support for digital literacy and inclusion with Online Basics sessions at all libraries; books and resources to support learning and encourage 'intellectual journeys', signposting to learning opportunities, a programme of events and talks, including Ignite Talks and Tedx Oldham
  - A Tourist Information Service, promoting Oldham as tourist destination and providing travel and transport information
  - Reading and literacy support through a wide ranging book / resource collection, reading groups, writing groups, an annual Bookmark festival and other literature events, and a children's and schools programme which includes The Summer Reading Challenge and the Brilliant Books Book Award
  - Cultural offer, attracting businesses and visitors to the town centre.

### **Thriving communities where everyone is empowered to do their bit**

Oldham Library Service aims to meet this objective by providing access to:

- A network of libraries, some of which are co-located with other key agencies, and all of which are located in prime positions in each major district; libraries fulfil the role of community hubs, providing access to free community space, information and resources (including staffing) so empowering local people to do more for themselves
- Free advice sessions such as CAB and housing support
- Health support, including information and signposting, events (eg Health Awareness Day), resources such as Books on Prescription, and staff trained to help customers access reliable health information resources. All frontline library staff will be trained as Dementia Friends
- Council information, including information to support local democracy
- Volunteering opportunities, work experience and traineeships
- A cultural programme of events and activities through live@thelibrary which includes music, theatre and literature performances
- Local studies collections, and support for those researching their history with access to Ancestry and Find My Past online resources

### **Co-operative Services with people and social value at their heart.**

Oldham Library Service aims to meet this objective by providing access to:

- High quality service provision, including high quality environments, high quality resources and excellent customer service, with a focus on 'getting it right'
- Accessible services, including stock in different formats and languages, assistive technology, accessible buildings.
- An inclusive service for all members of the community, including assistive technology and the Celebrate programme
- Support for older people, including Library at Home service

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- Support for children and families, including Bounce and Rhyme, Stories and Rhymes, baby events
  - Support for young people, including homework help, Get It Loud In Libraries programme and volunteering opportunities
  - Value for money service

## 6 **Additional Supporting Information**

6.1 n/a

## 7 **Consultation**

7.1 n/a

## 8 **Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix A – Reading Friends Evaluation Summary
- 8.2 Appendix B – E-Book and E-Audio Issue Figures 2014-2018
- 8.3 Appendix C – Annual Report 2017-18

## The Reading Friends programme test year: at a glance



**Reading Friends aims to:**  
*'empower, engage and connect older people who are vulnerable and isolated, people with dementia and carers by starting conversations through reading.'*

### How many took part?



### Where were the test sites?



### What did they do?



### What did people think?



90% of Reading Friends participants would recommend the programme to others

90% of Reading Friends participants want to carry on taking part in the programme

94% rated their experience of the programme as 'good' or 'excellent'

100% of Reading Partners would recommend the programme to others

100% of Reading Partners wanted to continue volunteering

The average score Reading Partners gave the experience was 9.3/10

## Outcomes from the test year....

### Motivations



The most common reason for wanting to take part in the Reading Friends programme was to meet new people (42%), followed by wanting to talk about reading with others (32%).

*"I just love reading and have seen lonely people at first hand. I anticipate that I will get as much out of it as they do!" - Reading Partner*

*"I'm partially sighted so I can't read alone anymore" - Reading Friend*



The most popular reasons for volunteers to take up the role was to meet and support isolated/ lonely older people (37%) and share their love of reading (22%)

### Social outcomes

Increasing opportunities for social connections is one of the key aims of the Reading Friends programme.



**88%** of Reading Friends Agreed the programme had 'increased opportunities for social contact'

*"I enjoy the general chatter...it's interesting to hear what other people have to say" - Reading Friend*



### Reading outcomes

How many Reading Friends read with other people once a week?

Before:  
**5%**

After:  
**40%**



*"One volunteer is really enjoying it...they've been introduced to lots of new literature" - delivery staff*

### Personal outcomes



**88%** of Reading Friends either agreed or strongly agreed that Reading Friends added purpose to their week

The programme helped volunteers use and develop skills, feel valued and widen their social networks

*"I really feel that I'm getting the confidence I need, and do not feel shy!" - Reading Partner*

**94%**



of Reading Friends agreed or strongly agreed that they looked forward to taking part in Reading Friends activities

Reading Partners strongly agreed that 'Being a Reading Partner has increased my confidence'

*"One of the volunteers loved the fact that the project gives permission to talk to a neighbour" - Delivery Partner*

### Organisational outcomes

Reading Friends has enabled delivery organisations to expand their current provision, increase capacity, reach out to more beneficiaries, and network.

One delivery staff member commented that it was valuable to be *"raising the library's profile, particularly within circles relating to health and wellbeing for this demographic"*.



*"...every week I'm getting emails from people that want to be involved in the project, either personally or professionally" - delivery staff*

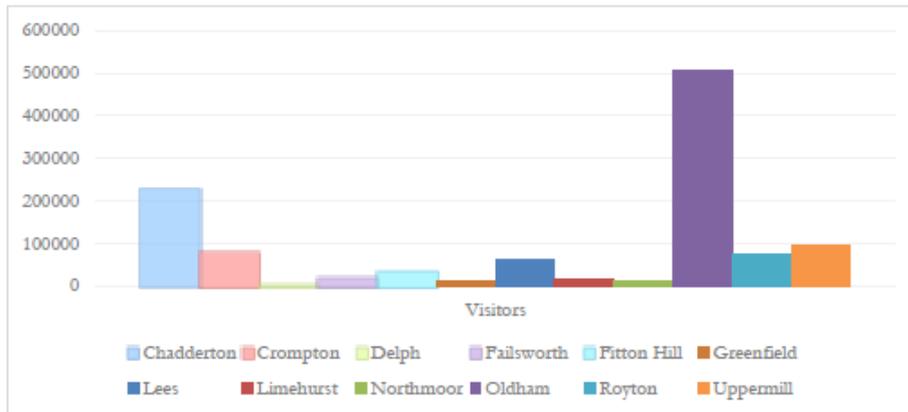
## E-Books and E-Audio Issues



## Oldham Library 2017-18 Annual Report Summary

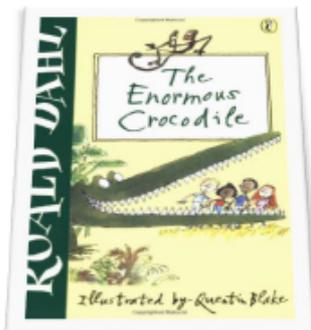
### KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

#### Visitors



- **1,312,140** visits to all libraries
- **39,112** virtual visits to the Oldham Library page

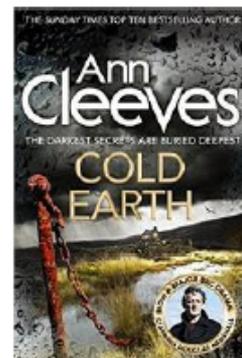
#### Issues



The most popular title was 'The Enormous Crocodile' by Roald Dahl with **224** loans.

Cold Earth by Ann Cleeves was the most borrowed adult title.

- We issued **486,667** books of which **313,436 (64.40%)** were issued on our self-service terminals
- **3,621** books were issued and delivered to our customers who are housebound via our Home Library Service



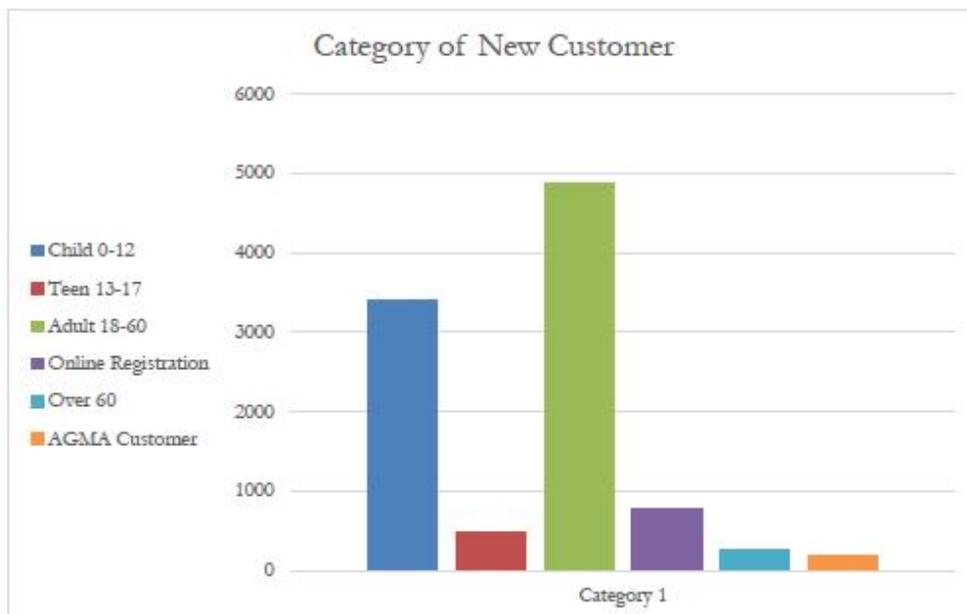
- **146,019** Renewals
- **14,267** Reservations placed with **6,352** placed online which is **44.52%** of all reservations.



- As well as physical book issues, customer's also downloaded 7,400 eBooks and 5,098 eMagazine and eComics.

### Library Memberships

- In 2017/18 we registered **10,045** new customers to Oldham Libraries.



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### Volunteering/Work Experience

- 4 code clubs ran with the help of code club volunteers
- 164 volunteers accounting for over 3,060 hours of staffing time to support for events and frontline activities
- 32 work experience and Duke of Edinburgh students choosing to gain key skills within the Library service

### Projects and Events

As part of our **live@thelibrary** Programme, we delivered **116** shows with **4,743** attendees and **361** artists providing the entertainment.

**Chip Shop Chips** by the Box of Tricks Theatre Company was our most popular show of the year.



Oldham Libraries was the first public library to deliver a **Comic Con** to great success. We had over **3,500** visitors on the day with over 60 guest artists and stall holders.



- We secured funding from Carnegie and Wellcome Trust to deliver Comics and Cosplay: Caring for Young Minds Project; supporting young people to share their feelings about mental health issues through the medium of comic books, theatre and art. The graphic novel produced by the young people will be shared as part of Comic Con 2 in May 2018, and distributed across Greater Manchester.
- Through our new initiative **READING FRIENDS**, which is a national test project, we delivered 21 social reading activities to help combat social isolation and loneliness. Over 100 participants have been reached through the programme to date.
- **204** Readers and **36** Writers group sessions took place with the support of Oldham Libraries.
- With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund we delivered the 'Brought to Books' research project. Working with researcher and writer, Joyce Branagh, this project examined the events surrounding the murder of an Oldham bookseller by two teenagers in 1913 and explored the themes of place and justice in pre First World War Britain. It brought together participants from different community groups in Oldham, young volunteers and Primary School pupils to research both the murder and also the criminal justice system at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, resulting in a sharing event and 4 exhibition banners which will tour all libraries in Oldham.

### Information Technology



**268** People's Network PCs available starting **241,926** sessions using over **11,401,903** minutes online. That's an average of **47** minutes per session, per person.

We also have **24,892** active customers using our computers and Wi-Fi. That's over **10%** of the population of Oldham using library computers or Wi-Fi!



We had **48** 'Learn my Way' starters, learning basic ICT skills.

**21,869** customers have subscribed to our Marketing and Mailing List