

# Culture and Sport Committee

10am, Tuesday, 8 March 2016

## Central Library Update Report

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| Item number       | 7.5 |
| Report number     |     |
| Executive/routine |     |
| Wards             | All |

### Executive Summary

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This report provides a progress update to Committee on the improvements and initiatives which have been delivered from the city's Central Library, following the Central Library Transformation Report which was presented to the Culture and Sport Committee 16 December 2014. The report highlights there has been a significant return on investment in Central Library with new services being developed and new audiences reached. The report also highlights how the library collections are being developed to improve customer experience and updates on the current programme of remedial work in the Central Library bookstore. The report concludes by setting out proposed next steps for the longer term development plan for the building.

### Links

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|--------------------------|--|
| Coalition pledges        | <a href="#">P35</a>                      |
| Council priorities       | <a href="#">CO2, CO19, CO20, CO23-26</a> |
| Single Outcome Agreement | <a href="#">SO4</a>                      |

## Central Library Update Report

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Notes increased performance and successful outcomes;
- 1.2 Agrees to receive future reports on the longer term transformation plans of the building.

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 Central Library dates from 1890 and is the oldest library in Edinburgh's public library estate. It is recognised that this B listed historic building is a significant cultural asset for the city and the best example of a Carnegie Library in Scotland.
- 2.2 The newly refurbished spaces within Central Library, formally opened by Councillor Richard Lewis in May 2014, relocated the Music collections and Children's library services to the main George Washington Browne building as well as enhancing access to Edinburgh and Scottish heritage collections.
- 2.3 These improvements were financed by a capital receipt following the sale of 9 George IV Bridge. The remaining capital receipt budget will be ring fenced for further long-term development of the Central Library building as agreed at the Finance and Budget Committee on 6 June 2013.
- 2.4 The relocation of the Children's library also allowed the launch of a new award winning service across the city for people who are blind or partially sighted.
- 2.5 Recent remedial works to deliver an essential repair programme to the Bookstore (the Stack) Building are nearing completion with additional Mechanical and Engineering repair works to be undertaken in summer 2016.
- 2.6 Central Library has been subject to several feasibility studies addressing the longer term potential transformation of the building and addressing current issues of accessibility and the need to modernise. Bennetts Associates Architects were commissioned to undertake a design feasibility study in January 2014 and a further study in September 2015, to explore the potential to link the Central Library with the National Library.

### 3. Main report

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#### **Central Music Library**

- 3.1 The new Music Library, now situated on the mezzanine floor of Central Library, has benefited from the addition of an acoustic pod, digital piano, teenage area, coffee area and exhibition space.
- 3.2 Use of the Music library has increased significantly since opening in May 2014, with increased visits and use of the space. Digital piano use is very popular with an average use of 50 times per month.
- 3.3 Further investment was made to introduce Sibelius software, which is music composition and notation software, using an iMac and digital piano.
- 3.4 In addition to a regular programme of school visits, the Music Library continues to hold a successful series of concerts and music events, including a family ceilidh which was organised with the Edinburgh and Scottish library team and attracted 40 adults and children.
- 3.5 The Music Library acoustic pod has proved extremely popular with groups and individual customers, including regular use by IT Buddies, as part of the Get Online project; by customers with sight loss who are helped to utilise Apple equipment; and by the digital team to assist users with access to the libraries' eResources.
- 3.6 Since the launch of the new space, staff have developed activity programmes in response to wider cultural and arts interests including the delivery of weekly animation studios and three new creative writing collectives. This refreshed approach continues with plans for National Libraries Day on the 6th February where the Music Library will feature the [#artcore](#) project showcasing music, spoken word, zines, and music production demos.

#### **Central Children's Library**

- 3.7 Since refurbishment the new Children's library now has several bespoke areas for services to children and young people, including an under fives' area and an arts and craft room.
- 3.8 The under fives' area hosts two weekly Bookbug rhymetime sessions every week. These sessions are extremely popular and continue to operate at full capacity, attracting 60 babies and parents each week. Staff have also held Bookbug sessions outwith the library at the 6VT Youth Café to engage with young mothers and encourage their use of the library.
- 3.9 A creative programme of arts and literacy activities is delivered in response to individual customer and group interests. Examples include: children's Friday Craft sessions; the launch of a Chatterbooks Group; The Lego Club which continues to be attract up to 25 children with 18 parents and carers; and a successful series of events titled 'Start with a Story' which included authors such as Nick Sharratt and Vivian French reaching 122 children and 79 adults.

- 3.10 Partnership works features highly in the library team's refreshed approach to widen the reach of the service with one example being the recent initiative to see Every Child a Library Member (ECALM). Staff have joined forces with the Registrar's Office and are giving the parents of every baby registered a library card. The new approach has resulted in 61 new members for the Central Children's Library in the first 5 days.

### **Award Winning Service for people with sight loss**

- 3.11 The relocation of the children's library to the Central Library building provided an opportunity to redesign services for people with sight loss. The new service was designed with input from current users of the service, enabling people with sight loss to access services across the city at a library that was easy to get to. Revenue investment in Apple equipment supported the use of embedded "voiceover" adaptive technology in the iPad, iMac, and iPhone operating system.
- 3.12 These service changes were mainstreamed and embedded across the city by establishing a champion for the new service in every library. Staff and volunteers work to support inclusion and increase visitor confidence in using technology, enabling them to share their learning with others and become more skilled in using library and council services independently.
- 3.13 The Visually Impaired People's (VIP) service is now operating in Morningside, Oxgangs, Stockbridge, Currie, Portobello, Drumbrae Library Hub, East Neighbourhood Centre and Craigmillar Library, McDonald Road, Central Library and RNIB Headquarters. The service has attracted 150 new customers citywide since its launch. The initiative received the international Jodi Award in May 2015 'for excellence and innovation for digital accessibility for all' and is a finalist for the COSLA Excellence Awards 2016 in the Tackling Inequalities and Improving Health category. The service will be available at all libraries by June 2016.

### **Stock Collections Development**

- 3.14 Edinburgh City Libraries has been collecting material for the city and its citizens through purchase and donation since Central Library opened in 1890. In line with other UK Central Libraries, including Manchester and Liverpool, Edinburgh City Libraries is reviewing and rationalising its collections in order to ensure an accessible, relevant and visible offer to customers. The aim is to present a much improved and more accessible collection through preservation, improved archival practices and greater exploitation of new technologies such as the digitisation programme.
- 3.15 With over a million items, Central Library collections support customers citywide. The work will ensure that prominence is given to key areas of stock such as Edinburgh and Scottish, Music, Art and Design material, reflecting continued demand and supporting identified customer need. It will allow staff to identify areas for future collection building and give the public a more defined and clearer offer, enabling customer expectations to be met.

- 3.16 April 2016 will see the delivery of the Scottish Library and Information Council's Public Libraries Improvement Fund project 'Free Edinburgh's History'. This will give the public access to all images digitised by the library service through a touch screen terminal. It will not only vastly improve accessibility and customer service, but will encourage community engagement. The public will be able to feed back information about the images they see to improve the shared knowledge of Edinburgh's heritage.
- 3.17 The Central Reference Library will pilot a short-term loan service across the city in spring 2016. This will enable customers to identify and borrow reference material for use in their local library or at home. This innovative practice will allow a significant collection to support customer leisure and learning needs in localities.

### **Enhanced Performance**

- 3.18 Performance in the period May 2014 to March 2015 showed the return on investment was significant, with visits to the Children's Library at 73,478, an increase of 58% on the previous year and visits to the Music Library at 56,439, an increase of 33%. Visits continue to grow showing an increase of 11% for Children's from April to December 2015, compared with the same period in 2014.
- 3.19 Children's book issues continue to build on the increase that was shown in the period after the new library opened. There has been a further 15% increase from April to December 2015 compared with the same period in the previous year.
- 3.20 The Music Library issues show a small upturn despite the adverse effect of the closure of the library book stack which contains musical scores and texts. This material is currently being returned from storage.
- 3.21 Children's Library membership continues to increase. 341 children joined the library between December 2014 and December 2015 which is an increase of 20% on the same period in the previous year.
- 3.22 Attendance at children's events also continues to increase with 6,504 children and carers attending events between April and December 2015, an increase of 37% compared to the same period in 2014. Central Children's Library had the highest number of children in the city joining the Summer Reading Challenge in 2015 with 458, an increase of 29% on the previous year.
- 3.23 Use of the Naxos music download service which allows customers free access to classical music and jazz has been extremely positive, with over 3,680 downloads made during 2014. A further increase in use has been noted in 2015, with over 4,050 downloads.
- 3.24 Interest in the Edinburgh and Scottish collections continues to show a significant rise with a 26% increase in visits between April and December 2015 and a 23% increase in enquiries compared with the same period in 2014. Stock issues have also increased by almost 20%.

### **Central Library Essential Repair and Improvement Works**

- 3.25 The Central Library Stack building is located at the rear of the Central library building and was constructed in 1903. The building comprises of twelve floors of book stack.
- 3.26 The sale of 9 George IV Bridge required the relocation of a high volume of books to the Stack building. After these books were relocated, a workplace Health and Safety inspection noted that although it had been confirmed that there was no risk to the integrity of the building, there had been movement of approximately three inches on the lower three floors of the twelve floors Stack building. Structural surveyors carried out a detailed survey and remedial works were undertaken. New foundations have been laid and modern roller shelving will be installed by middle of February, allowing the recant of Central Library displaced stock collections back into the building.
- 3.27 Costs for this work have been contained within the Capital Asset Management programme and total £137,045.00
- 3.28 A condition survey for Central Library was carried out in 2015 which estimated £1.32 million investment was required over a five year period to bring the building up to a satisfactory condition. A subsequent high level survey was commissioned to ensure that any Health and Safety issues are addressed with the external fabric. Following the survey, some mechanical and electrical improvements have been commissioned where these can be progressed with minimum disruption to the library service, until the opportunity for a larger scale refurbishment can be carried out as part of any proposed redevelopment plans.

### **Central Library as a Cultural Destination for the City**

- 3.29 The developments outlined in this report have made substantial improvements to services delivered from Central Library as evidenced by the continual improvements in performance and increase in use by customers. The challenge remains to deliver further transformational change for this historic building and realise the vision of providing a prestigious cultural destination for the city.
- 3.30 Central Library has been subject to several feasibility studies addressing the longer term potential transformation of the building and addressing current issues of accessibility and the need to modernise. Bennetts Associates Architects were commissioned to undertake a design feasibility study in January 2014 and a further study was undertaken by Bennetts in September 2015, exploring the potential to create a physical link with the National Library.
- 3.31 Both studies sought to explore the vision of a future re-imagined Central Library which would be accessible and welcoming to all, and realise significant cultural, social and economic benefits.
- 3.32 The proposals from the January 2014 study sought to give the Library a strong on-street presence, whilst unlocking the inner potential through reimagining the various buildings that make up the Library coming together achieved by physical

interventions. This would include the George Washing Browne building, the Bank, the Vaults and the Stack, refurbished and opened to customer access.

- 3.33 A second feasibility study was commissioned, following an approach by the National Library to look at a shared space and vision for both services in the future. This study was undertaken by Bennetts in September 2015, and looked at the possibility of opening up further access to the significant collections held by Central Library and the National Library of Scotland, through a linked building space, below ground level, of the Arches.
- 3.34 Following the publication of the shared spaces feasibility study, a sequence of meetings were held between senior staff in both libraries to consider the findings. A position statement from the National Library is included as an addendum to this report, summarising their considerations and decision not to proceed beyond the feasibility study stage at this time.
- 3.35 It should be noted that the desire to make long term transformational change to Central Library is dependent upon the remaining unresolved funding challenges, however, improvement works will continue to ensure that the building is safe. Future work will need to be undertaken to investigate potential funding sources in order to take forward accessibility improvements.

## **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 Key indicators of the overall success of the Central Library project include:
  - 4.1.1 Increased customer satisfaction with library services (annual);
  - 4.1.2 Increased number of visitors/ stock loans;
  - 4.1.3 Increased number of virtual visits and music downloads;
  - 4.1.4 Numbers of adults and under 16s attending events; and
  - 4.1.5 Numbers of people accessing Visual Impairment Service for the first time

## **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 The sale of No 9 George IV Bridge raised a capital receipt of £0.905m as approved by Finance and Budget Committee 6 June 2013. The cost of the new spaces was contained within this budget, totalling £0.518m.
- 5.2 The remaining capital receipt budget of £0.387m will be ring fenced for further long term development of the Central Library building as agreed at the Finance and Budget Committee on 6 June 2013.
- 5.3 The long term development of the Central Library building will be the subject of further reports but it should be noted that funding over and above the remaining £0.387m will be required to be identified to deliver any further enhancement programme. The ring-fenced status of the remainder of the receipt will be kept

under review based on the ability of identifying further funding to deliver on the long term enhancement programme. This will ensure best use of available resources against emerging and immediate unfunded priorities.

- 5.4 A further £7,250 revenue funding was identified in 2014/15 to jointly fund the feasibility study with the National Library of Scotland.
- 5.5 Costs of £137,045.00 for remediation works on the Book Stack building from the Capital Asset Management Programme.
- 5.6 A condition survey undertaken in 2015 estimates that £1.32 million investment is required over a five year period to bring the building up to a satisfactory condition.

## **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 Risks associated with this report are deemed to be low, and any identified risks will be mitigated and managed through service area risk registers.

## **7. Equalities impact**

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- 7.1 The improved facilities provided easier access to services for all customers and, in doing so, will contribute to the delivery of the Equality Act 2010 general duties of advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

## **8. Sustainability impact**

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- 8.1 The proposals in this report will help to achieve a sustainable Edinburgh by continuing service improvements to the local community and highlighting new services available.

## **9. Consultation and engagement**

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- 9.1 Consultation was carried out with customers before the new spaces were opened and the internal designs and new services provided have sought to respond to the comments received.
- 9.2 People who are blind or partially sighted are involved in the continuing development of support for visually impaired people and some customers now undertake a peer support and teaching role.
- 9.3 The Music library team carried out a consultation on the new space in November 2014. 78% of respondents rated the service as excellent.

## 10. Background reading/external references

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- 10.1 Edinburgh Central Library: Feasibility Study by Bennetts Associates Architects, January 2014
- 10.2 National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Central Library Shared Space: Feasibility Study by Bennetts Associates Architects, September 2015

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## 11. Links

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| <b>Coalition pledges</b> | P35 - Continue to develop the diversity of services provided by our libraries   |
| <b>Council outcomes</b>  | CO2 - Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities   |
|                          | CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm# |
|                          | CO20 - Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens   |
|                          | CO23 - Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community   |
|                          | CO24 - The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care   |
|                          | CO25 - The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives  |
|                          | CO26 - The Council engages with stakeholders and works in   |

partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives

**Single Outcome Agreement**

SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric

**Appendices**

1 - Response from the National Library following consideration of the National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Central Library Shared Space Feasibility Study (Bennett's Associates Architects, September 2015)

## Report Addendum

### **Response from the National Library following consideration of the *National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Central Library Shared Space Feasibility Study* (Bennett's Associates Architects, September 2015),**

The fact that the National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Central Library face each other on opposite sides of a bridge, makes the idea of physically linking the two properties an attractive one. Indeed, successive generations of librarians and councillors have informally discussed the possibility. No workable solution has ever been reached.

On the surface, the needs of the libraries in relation to public reference services are broadly similar. However, the core purposes, funding and future strategic direction of both are quite different, and the practicalities of coming up with a workable model of building and service convergence or partial convergence is beset with difficulties.

The current attempt came from a shared desire to explore the possibility once again, since both libraries were reviewing their estate. Following a shared spaces feasibility study and a sequence of meetings between senior staff in both libraries, we have found that whilst there are advantages in the proposition, the disadvantages are significant and have led the National Library to decide not to proceed beyond the feasibility study. The main reasons are:

1. Even though an engineering solution to connect the buildings has been demonstrated to be possible in the feasibility study, it is achieved at the cost of considerable areas of public and collections spaces within the National Library, together with the removal of significant parts of the listed fabric. It is felt that the benefits that the study shows do not compensate for this significant negative impact.
2. The architectural solution fails to create a legible and intuitive connection between the buildings. There are in particular unresolved issues with the vertical circulation, which requires large numbers of people to negotiate five floors in order to access the new shared spaces.
3. The main proposal to re-orientate the public towards the Cowgate is not convincing.
4. In a very challenging financial environment, the costs are prohibitive. For example, the works to join the buildings alone total £5.6M.
5. In parallel the National Library has been exploring its public spaces needs in the George IV Bridge building and our initial study suggests that the collaboration with the Central Library, as described in this report, will not achieve our aims.
6. Finally, the National Library's current capital programme is fully committed for the next few years while the longer term financial outlook for capital projects is very challenging.

John Scally, National Librarian & Chief Executive  
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3 February 2016