



Kington Town Council



KINGTON LIBRARY: WELLBEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE FUTURE

REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP JOINTLY FACILITATED BY HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL
AND KINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
Friday 20th March 2015 at the Burton Hotel, Kington

This report provides the main discussion points that resulted from the workshop. It is hoped that these points will contribute towards the shaping of the new services that will be provided in the library, with full engagement of local Kington and district and area organisations and residents. The workshop was attended by over 40 people, representing local organisations and Herefordshire Council departments.

The workshop objective was to engage a wide range of stakeholders, in a discussion of the way forward for delivery of the Kington Library as a centre for wellbeing. The workshop was participative, with discussions in small groups and as a whole.

Initial presentations were provided by Councillor Bob Widdowson, Kington Town Council and Councillor Graham Powell, Herefordshire Council. In his opening remarks, Bob Widdowson noted:

- The Starting Point
 - March 2014 - question mark over the future of library, discussion between Kington Town Council and Herefordshire Council
 - Could we find a partner to use the building?
 - Serious cuts faced by Herefordshire Council
 - 4600 libraries in UK ten years ago: 600 have been lost, 400 now run by volunteers
 - Kington Town Council response: Think differently

The concept of library as “social service” agency is not a new concept. Started in the 1970s. A series of reports:

- **Royal Society of Arts report in 2011:** Public Services Hub - Library buildings are often public spaces at the heart of communities: on high streets, near schools, shops and work places, near train stations, places of worship, leisure and health centres.
- **Arts Council 2013:** Libraries:
 - provide a neutral and safe space
 - provide a shared space to facilitate interaction and create a sense of community
 - are an environment for exploration, a point of trusted information and provide a breadth and depth of knowledge
 - introduce children to books and reading, firing their imagination and at the same time supporting the development of children and young people
 - provide a learning environment and space for quiet study
 - are inclusive and open to all, and provide a non-stigmatising environment
 - Libraries are valued for their atmosphere, the resources they offer and their role in the local community and wider society.
- **Carnegie UK: Speaking Volumes Programme.** Libraries and well being:
 - Libraries can connect communities and change lives
 - Libraries are spaces in which people can be creative
 - Library staff can help people understand and act on information which can make a real difference to their wellbeing.
 - Public libraries can be agencies for economic wellbeing in their communities.

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Next Steps

- Herefordshire Council took up the challenge
- Research identified emerging changes in libraries e.g.:
 - Re-use. Some libraries, like Bristol, actively invite donations of books, CDs and DVDs for re-use by the library.
 - Libraries as places in which to provide information about volunteering opportunities in the community, as well as the possibilities of volunteering in the library service itself.
 - Bookstart programme in Wales involves community nurses and encourages mothers to take their babies for 2 year check etc.
 - Westminster Reference Library, Birmingham Central Library, Islington Library, and Brent Library established a free, interactive, online legal advice service provided by Instant Law UK. A video conferencing facility enabled users to obtain at least one free face to face session with an advisor to discuss subjects including Immigration, Employment, Landlord & Tenant and Family matters.
 - Northamptonshire Enterprise Hubs work closely with the local enterprise partnership to provide advice and support to new businesses. By working with partners, training library staff and imaginatively adapting library spaces, the Enterprise Hubs offer coaching, advice and access to facilities (meeting rooms, IT, knowledge and information) to people interested in developing a business idea and taking it to market.

The Reading Agency and Society of Chief Librarians: Libraries and Health. Public libraries health assets include:

- A network of local community hubs
- Creative reading with therapeutic and mood boosting benefit
- Social opportunities e.g. reading groups acting as a social connector, breaking down isolation
- Contributing to the wider determinants of health and well being e.g. learning and literacy, community outreach expertise, access to vulnerable people and local knowledge
- Supported on-line access
- Health related self -help reading programmes, services and resources, referral and signposting and social and recreational activity
- Volunteering and community engagement opportunities

Councils throughout the UK have linked their libraries to health and well being e.g.

- West Berkshire Library Service has announced plans for an ambitious programme of arts activities with a 'health' theme, supported by a grant from Arts Council England.
- In 2012 the Welsh Assembly published "Incomplete Guide to Wellbeing in Libraries"

Key Messages

- Library function - books and learning - at the core. Reading increases well being
- This is about library plus - not replacing existing services but opening the door to them
- Opening the door to other services also opens the door to books
- Simple message - "if I don't know, the library will"

Cllr Powell emphasised the need to offer activities and services that would assist in the support of the area's aging population, to reduce pressures on the adult social care budget and the NHS. This

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is critical to well-being, as enabling people to remain physically and mentally fit and active longer is also important for the individual, in retaining their independence and being an active part of the community.

Following the two presentations, the next two sessions were undertaken in small groups. The points from the small groups have been aggregated.

SESSION 1 – WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WELL-BEING?

The input from the groups has been combined and clustered. A very wide range of ideas as to what well-being means were contributed by the groups. The key areas identified focus on having a purpose and being valued; being connected, taking part in shared activities, reducing isolation and enabling a sense of belonging; a clear link was made between mental and physical health for well-being; having access to information and support when needed and having access to someone to talk to.

- Happiness
- Feeling useful, having purpose, feeling valued
- Confidence, sense of identity
- Acceptance of differences
- Nurture – both feeling nurtured and nurturing and protection from neglect and abuse
- Empowerment, having choices and aspirations
- Friendship, connection and collaboration, company and contact – social interaction, involved and included – reducing isolation,
- Shared activity, shared experience, belonging
- Physical, emotional and mental well-being – feeling healthy, mental stimulation
- Relaxation, education and learning, having an interest
- Spirituality
- Achieving and maintaining independence – receiving the right help and support and access to it; self-determination and self-advocacy; information on options
- Shelter, feeling safe, security – having someone to talk to, who can signpost to information and advice
- Communication
- Having enough money – receiving the right help and benefits
- Improving quality of life
- Housing warm, secure and fit for purpose

Some groups went further in this session and started to identify what helps to achieve well-being:

- Games that stretch the mind – both social and achieving
- Mental well-being paramount – impacts on physical health. Activities therefore that create positivity e.g. singing, art, creativity; opportunities for self-expression
- Being able to just join in without feeling intimidated, e.g. by feeling that you have to commit or that you are not as good as others
- Being made welcome, feeling comfortable
- Someone remembering your name or just who you are
- Not feeling confined – lot of people who can't get out or around. Limited access to transport (links to connected). Need Liftshare, informal car share arrangements, needs co-ordination.
- Holistic approaches that are person centred
- Social and economic benefits



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This session helped to identify the range of activities and services that the library could offer, to enable the key contributors to well-being to be achieved.

Session 2 – what should the library and the community offer to enable well-being?

The library building was clearly seen as a neutral space for service delivery and activity development. Four key areas were identified as economic, social, financial and person. Opportunities for interaction with others; ways in which people can feel valued and included and heard are very important. The centre should have a whole person approach, providing knowledge to individuals, enabling the power to change.

Some points were made specifically about access to the library and the basic facilities that should be on offer:

- Open more hours for access
- Flexible, appropriate space. Access to a “messy” room or space
- Rentable small meeting space and spaces to hire for sessions for local groups to add value to well-being. Space can be difficult to find in Kington
- Wi-Fi available and IT access crucial as a service for Kington residents unable to get it otherwise – also linkage to MAP
- Areas for reading and relaxation, with the newspapers
- Refreshments, link to other activities, e.g. fund raising (cf All Saints)

What services should be provided were also highlighted:

- Books
- Promotion of what is going on locally, promote other venues including the churches. Local directory of what is going on locally, a notice board. Show and Tell events for local organisations
- Link with other local facilities and organisations e.g. the leisure centre for printing and computers (should also include the pubs, schools, other community facilities); linkage to MAP
- Promote and provide opportunities to get involved e.g. volunteering, skills exchanges
- Social networks for all ages
- Opportunities to learn new skills, learning from each other, sharing skills
- Activities need to be based on need – need to start on a basis of what people want or would like

More specific ideas for **activities** came from all of the small groups:

- Evening classes
- Youth sessions
- Lunch club
- Mother and baby sessions, warm room for baby massage
- Coffee morning groups
- Poetry group
- Storytelling
- Book start groups
- Art classes
- Recycling groups
- Drama/music

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- Singing groups
- Games sessions, informal – fun activities
- Taster sessions
- Fun sessions with schools
- Intergenerational support – carers support

These points were identified as being of importance in offering activities:

- Target people who may not necessarily currently access the library
- Inclusion of isolated groups e.g. from other cultures
- Activities for all age groups, from 0 – 90+.

Services were also identified:

- An initial contact point for individuals wanting to know about services, or organisations etc., Signposting people to services and groups, providing access to services people may need but not know about. In this context: Active signposting – letters of introduction to groups and services, acting as a broker to enable people to feel more confident accessing services and organisations
- Citizens' Advice, benefits advice, debt counselling
- Help with form filling
- Housing advice surgeries (Home Point)
- Tackling financial isolation and exclusion
- Therapy sessions
- Research facilities – access to the internet and support with research

For local organisations:

- Accounting advice
- Fundraising and funding advice
- Poster design

For local economic development:

- Business support (Marches LEP)
- Hot desk option (which could also apply to local organisations providing services)

General points:

- Consideration should be given to activities that were successful and previously funded but have stopped due to lack of funding – e.g. art therapy to support mental health through MIND in Leominster
- The more vulnerable the people who use the activities, the more input needed from health, social care and other well-trained practitioners to make sure they are safe and of quality. Substance misuse is a problem in Kington and support locally is very much needed. Co-ordination with services is important. The library has a separate rear and potentially confidential access.
- Payment for a service must cover the costs for the provider
- Activities should not get silo'ed by generation – need to support older people to feel confident and safe to come into town in the evening and make most of activities at a time to suit younger people at school or work.
- Bring services and activities into Kington, e.g. Courtyard outreach.
- There must be collaboration between the library and other spaces, such as the Youth Centre and the Café at the Garth, the Parish House, Marwick Hall, Kington Court Day Centre,



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- Football Club, Market Hall, Baptist Church rooms and the Kington Surgery.
- The library must link and co-ordinate with all local organisations and service providers, such as MAP.
- The library can be a champion of the local areas and what is happening.

CONCLUDING SESSIONS:

How can all the assets (in the broadest sense) in the community be used effectively and linked to the Library to deliver wellbeing? How can the community be fully engaged in this process? How do we take this initiative forward and make it sustainable?

The concluding session discussed how to achieve effective community engagement and the way forward. The main points made included:

- The culture and ethos of what a library is in the broadest sense needs to be maintained.
- That real and effective community ownership and engagement are very important.
- To this end, a group to support the Centre Manager and enable wider community outreach should be established. It was suggested that this could be called the COMMUNITY ADVISORY FORUM and should be representative of local organisations and interests.
- Mapping of organisations in the community – who does what, where and when – should be undertaken: updating of existing information is important. This will enable and ensure that ALL local assets can be used effectively. Linking the different spaces available in the town for different activities – not everything can or should just take place in the library space.
- The library is an important place for providing LOCAL ACCESS to services, which are otherwise distant from Kington.
- It is very important that what happens and what is developed in and through the library enhances and has a synergy with existing local groups and organisations and does not cut across them. To this end, the library can be a HUB and a PORTAL – a way in to existing organisations and activities as well as filling gaps. It needs to provide FLEXIBLE RESPONSES, ADD VALUE and enable PREVENTION and EARLY INTERVENTIONS to the needs of local residents.
- Who currently uses the library and for what purposes should be more fully researched, and who is not using the library and what would encourage them. What the library is going to become needs to be effectively communicated to local people. Word of mouth is an effective way of spreading the news about what it does.
- Retaining BOOKS is vitally important – if the size of the “on the shelf” offer has to be reduced to provide more flexible space, consideration should be given to making the book offer available through other spaces in the town. It appears that this would be possible and how this could be done can be considered.
- Community engagement can be achieved by developing a rota of volunteers to support the Centre Manager and other staff.
- One key role the library can play is in encouraging CREATIVITY (a key aspect of well-being). Cultural contributions are important: artists, musicians, poets, writers, sculptors etc. and links with other arts organisations across Herefordshire.
- Increasing the learning offer for the town can also be done through the Library – it was noted that there are 16 community learning providers across Herefordshire, offering a wide range of courses.
- Visits to other libraries which are developing innovative approaches would be welcomed.
- Various offers from organisations were noted, including The Cart Shed (outreach and transport, activities for all age groups, focus on mental health and well-being); Carers’



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- Support – training for families where there are support needs; HVOSS – access to community transport; links to Herefordshire Activities Together group.
- SUSTAINABILITY is a key issue – ideally the library needs three-year funding to be able to demonstrate the difference it can make. It has real potential as an exciting experiment and model for Herefordshire. Cllr Powell pointed out that the library will need to demonstrate that it can save money in other services by the range of activities it can offer, particularly in relation to age care issues. It was suggested that a social return on investment model was needed, to be able to measure the kinds of gains and savings the library will enable. Links with the Bulmer Foundation on this can be followed up.
 - The current timetable is that hopefully staff will be in place by the beginning of May.

Finally, it was noted that this is a real CHALLENGE and OPPORTUNITY for the community, to make this work, to be engaged, and to secure its sustainability for the future.

Appendix A

List of organisations, projects and individual interests represented at the workshop (in alphabetical order)

Report written by Christine Forrester, Councillor, Kington Town Councillor and Event Facilitator



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Appendix A ORGANISATIONS, PROJECTS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS REPRESENTED AT THE WORKSHOP (in alphabetical order)

Age UK
Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing; Chairman Health and Wellbeing Board, Herefordshire Council
Ceramic artist
Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)
Community Larder
Ewyas Harold Parish Council (Golden valley Health hub)
Friends of Crooked Meadow
Friends of St Marys
Garth Care
Halo
Herefordshire Carers
Herefordshire Council: Childrens Department, Healthy Lifestyle Trainer Service, Adult and Community Learning, Customer Services (Market Towns), Libraries, Adults wellbeing and Sustainable Communities
Herefordshire Nature Trust - Kington Branch
Hergest Estate and Kington United Charities
Homestart
HVOSS (community transport)
Kington Community Luncheon Club
Kington History Society
Kington Primary School
Kington Tourist information
Kington Town Council
Local choir
National Health Service (Kington Surgery)
Pembridge Good Neighbour Scheme
Presteigne Natural Health Centre
Stonewater
The Cart Shed
Three Towns Food Network
Ward Member, Kington, Herefordshire Council