

## **EX15. Library Services Strategic Plan**

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services which provided an update on the Library Services five-year strategic plan and proposed changes to library opening hours.

Since April 2022 Library Services had:-

- Procured and implemented a new Library Management system – Civica Spydus
- Introduced PressReader providing online access to a range of popular magazines and newspapers
- Changed Wi-Fi within all 8 public libraries to the Council's provider
- Completed extensive engagement to inform five-year strategic plan
- Maximised use of Falkirk library by sharing the reception area and implemented hot desking within the staff area, shared between library services, the Advice Hub, Access to Housing and the Marketing and Sales bookings team.

Following extensive engagement with communities a strategic plan for Falkirk Libraries had been developed which set direction for the next five years. Engagement consisted of a paper and online survey as well as focus groups and drop-in engagement sessions at all libraries. There were 2,684 survey responses and over 200 people attended a session. The findings were collated and considered as we developed our plan.

The plan set out 6 priorities for Falkirk Libraries which were:-

- Empowering citizens
- Equity and inclusion
- Community wellbeing
- Reading and learning
- Culture and heritage
- Sustainable development and future investment.

While developing the Strategic Plan the Service had considered how provision could be redesigned in relation to the library structure and opening hours to best meet the needs of communities whilst achieving efficiencies. Libraries were open 6 days a week, with 2 late nights. Opening hours varied across the 8 branches with: Falkirk, Grangemouth, Denny, Larbert, Meadowbank and Bo'ness open 45 hours a week; Bonnybridge open 39 hours a week, and Slamannan open 19 hours a week.

As part of the engagement exercise feedback was sought on a range of options that would reduce library opening hours. The opening hours option preferred by those who took part was to move to one late opening each week in each branch, maintain Saturday opening and close all libraries on a Wednesday.

Closing libraries one day during the working week offered an opportunity for library buildings to be used by other services, partners and community

organisations, generating additional income. Whilst Falkirk library would be closed on a Wednesday, the Hub would continue to open that day.

Wednesdays were the least busy day across all Falkirk libraries. Saturday opening would be maintained across the 7 libraries that currently opened on a Saturday and would introduce Saturday opening in Slamannan library.

## **Decision**

### **The Executive:-**

- (1) approved the Strategic Plan as set out at appendix 1 to the report, and**
- (2) agreed the changes in library opening hours to deliver efficiencies whilst best meeting the needs of communities.**