

## *Appendix 3*

# **Scrutiny Management Board Briefing Note. Library Service: Approach to customer engagement and feedback**

### **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this briefing note is to provide SMB with an overview of the Library and Archive Service's approach to customer engagement, insight and feedback.
- 1.2 This builds on the June update to the Board on the transformation of the service since 2019.

### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Libraries and Archives are universal public facing services, available to all local residents and communities. Therefore, customers of the services are incredibly diverse as the offer is available to everyone.
- 2.2 The Council Plan and Customer Strategy clearly stated the need to put customers at the heart of everything we do; and the Library and Archive service has sought to integrate this ethos into all aspects of its work including capital projects, selection of book stock; delivery of activity and development of the workforce. This briefing note provides examples.

### **3.0 Developing our customer insight**

- 3.1 Understanding our customers is important. We do this using a range of sources
  - Information from our customer and catalogue data base (Koha) which gives us numbers of members, age profile, geographic spread, gender identity, types of books being selected, numbers of books being borrowed and location of where they are being borrowed from.
  - Feedback provided directly from customers on the customer feedback forms available in every library. Often the feedback we receive via this route highlights individual members of staff and the support they have provided to customers.
  - Complaints – either formal or informal, made directly to the service or via the corporate complaints team. These are investigated and responded to – adopting an approach to seek resolution informally without the issue escalating.

- Making good use of the local intelligence available from Area Managers, Community Development Teams and feedback from Local Committees. The 6 Library and Customer Managers proactively engage with the local teams to understand local need and priorities; so that the library offer can be tailored accordingly.
- Proactive engagement with partners to understand customer need and demand – for example DWP, the federation of small businesses and chamber of commerce, local voluntary and community groups.
- Engagement with target groups to understand their requirements – this has worked well with young people, some of the autism groups in the county, refugees and asylum seekers.
- Use of evaluation forms after events to understand impact as well as gather information about numbers of attendees.
- Social media – we have been reviewing our approach to use of social media and considering how we can use it as a two way tool, not just for information sharing and marketing. Posing questions on there has resulted in us getting some feedback about services.
- Analysis of customer emails/ queries – as part of a review to streamline communication routes and support consistency of response, the service analysed the types of queries and emails coming into the service. This provided the team with a better understanding of frequently asked questions which could be dealt with online to provide a faster response to customers.
- Covid recovery survey – once libraries were able to re-open following the first closures at the start of the pandemic an online survey was conducted with customers to understand any concerns they would have about returning to libraries and the sort of service they would be looking for in the future. This information helped inform the approach to re-opening and helped the service's understanding of what was important to customers to support their confidence to return.

#### **4.0 Project specific engagement and consultation**

- 4.1 The service is taking forward several capital projects aimed at redesigning and improving the space in some key locations. Barrow library was the first of these and the service sought to ensure customers informed the final design. The approach taken was to use apprentices to observe customer and staff interaction to understand how customers were being served on the library floor. The views of local residents about the library were gathered through informal interviews at a local supermarket. Engagement sessions took place with schools in the local area to get views on how young people wanted to use the library and the type of space they would like to see. Once designs were developed these were displayed online and also in the library – with

questions posed to take views on the proposed designs. Views from carers for those with autism were also sought to inform the autism room in the library.

4.2 A similar approach was adopted to support Kendal library refurbishment; and the work to redesign Carlisle library has now started with early learner, user and public engagement sessions taking place in September.

4.3 The input of our frontline team members is also critical to ensuring the needs of customers are taken into consideration. They have considerable insight about how customers use the space and which events are successful and make a difference to people. Staff engagement is built into the design development process to ensure they can make this contribution.

## **5.0 Using the information to inform service delivery and our practice**

5.1 As part of the restructure, additional capacity was introduced to ensure the business systems could be better interrogated so the management and customer information held in the system can be put to more use. Management information is now being used on a more routine basis to inform decision making and service delivery.

5.2 The service has started analysing the digital customer interactions we have, which is also leading to improvements being made – for example the introduction of an online booking system for events and activities, FAQs and query functions on the website to support customers get the answers they are looking for quickly and without making a call or email to the service.

5.3 Frontline staff are encouraged to share their feedback through regular sessions in the local areas and with the senior managers in the service so that changes can be made at all levels throughout the service.

## **6.0 Areas for development and next steps**

6.1 The service is always seeking to ensure as many people as possible can make use of the resources and activities on offer online and onsite. Many people are not aware of the library service offer and therefore concerted efforts will be made to look at how we can market and promote our offer with existing and potential new customers.

6.2 Workshops to explore our approach to marketing have been facilitated by the communications team and this work will inform promotional activity.

6.3 Work will also continue to ensure we make the best use of the information in the business system to inform stock selection and purchasing – along with the

involvement of frontline staff in sharing their customer insights about book preferences and trends with the stock management specialists.

- 6.4 And finally, the service will continue to seek to embed a customer focused culture at all levels. Putting the customer at the heart of the work of the service is a message which is revisited in all staff engagement sessions, with teams encouraged to share their practice and successes with each other.

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