

Library Service Update: Service Plan Q1 Review July 2023



The Libraries Service Plan was launched in March 2023, setting out the key priorities and activities for the year. This document ties back to the Libraries and Heritage Strategy, and links to our Council priorities too. This is the first time that we have introduced two separate plans, i.e. one for Libraries, and one for Heritage; and we did this to give greater clarity. There is still work to do to make these Plans even more effective, but at least we are moving in the right direction! As you will see below, we have really hit the ground running this year; so, thank you for all the hard work that has gone into these achievements.

In Q1, we said we *would...* - and we did...

- *Progress the Asset Development Plan towards implementation, including Banbury redevelopment and Chinnor refurbishment* – The Asset Development Plan was approved by the new Chief Executive and the Strategic Capital Board in April, and is now waiting to be taken to Informal Cabinet, and then Cabinet, for Members' approval, which is likely to be in September now. The signs are looking good, but until the significant capital investment is confirmed, we need to remain calm and patient! In the meantime, negotiations surrounding a new library in Banbury are almost complete, and hopefully there will soon be some positive news (one way, or another) on that front. We have progressed refurbishment projects at Chipping Norton, and Chinnor (about to go out to tender), and the roll out of the new RFID kiosks was completed.
- *Reflect on Climate Action activity to date and identify key areas for improvement and development* – Colleagues from Climate Action attended the Libraries Leadership Team to discuss various ideas, including OCC Libraries signing up to the Green Libraries Manifesto. Lots of practical initiatives have also continued; and these have included various nature events and emerging plans for a sensory garden at Didcot library; we celebrated Big Green Week; and several managers completed their Carbon Literacy training.
- *In partnership with Communications, develop a marketing and communication strategy for Libraries, and progress roll out of new branding* – Big news! At the end of June, we gained approval from our Portfolio Holder to move forward with some new branding for the Library Service, which will give a more modern and vibrant look and feel to our social media and communications, signage, and our libraries themselves (in due time). We are working with OCC Communications and Marketing on finalising the plans and designs at the minute, and once we have those, we will share them with staff as soon as we can.
- *Review collections development and engagement activity as linked to key priorities, including climate action; and health and wellbeing* – This one is a 'work in progress' and something that the Stock and Reader Services Team are always focused on. The eBook short story competition winners were announced last month, and in Q1 the monthly Libraries e-Newsletter has highlighted collections and activities in areas such as Gardening and Earth Day; Hi Vis fortnight and Disability Awareness week; and the Richard and Judy Summer book club. Plus, the Summer Reading Challenge is about to launch – Ready, Set...
- *Once room hire policy has been updated, look to actively engage groups to use library facilities more* – Income generation is increasingly important to the service; and room hire plays a big part in this, particularly given the falling performance of DVDs and CDs... We have reviewed our charging policy and completed the re-development of former Property team office accommodation at Oxford Westgate Library to create an amazing 'collaboration space'. Now we are turning our attention to bringing groups and business(es) in.
- *Seek to establish a sustainable model for Oxfordshire's Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC)* – Ryan and Unai have continued to deliver great service and transformational activity through the BIPC, which has culminated in a national award for their work with children and young people (presented in June at the Libraries Connected seminar). We also hosted a national networking event in May; and, in the background, we have been actively pursuing various future funding options (the current funding runs through to June 2024).