

Report to Calne Area Board – 7 February 2017

Calne Community Hub and Library - review of the first six months

1. Background information

In summer 2016 the library building was refurbished to make better use of space and to create a new Community Hub.

The refurbishment focused on creating improved space and facilities for the entire community - of all ages - to provide a focal point and vibrant place for the town and surrounding area. It also became home to the Calne Community Hub which relocated from its premises in Phelps Parade.

The refurbishment included a new colour scheme, carpets and flexible, movable shelving to enable larger meetings and events to be held in the library area. Open+ - a state of the art automated swipe access system - was also installed to allow access to the new hub and its facilities outside of library opening hours.

A new bookable meeting room, for up to 16 people, and a smaller breakout room for 1 to 1 meetings, was also provided.

2. The impact to date

In August 2016, the Community Hub relocated vacating the retail unit it leased in Phelps Parade. In October 2016, Citizens Advice Wiltshire also relocated into the hub, providing its services and advice on Monday and Friday mornings.

Calne Community Engagement Manager is also located at the hub and regularly hosts community meetings and gatherings. Other council officers use the hub to meet with local people and organisations.

The new hub has seen an increase in the numbers of local people using and visiting the building and benefiting from its informal and user-friendly atmosphere.

Visitor figures show an increase of 5.1% since its opening (5 month period). This is set against a national trend of a decline in library visitor numbers.

3. Improved access

The relocation of the Community Hub, combined with the implementation of the Open+ swipe access scheme, has resulted in library customers, community groups and visitors to the hub being able to access the building and all its services and facilities on Wednesdays - a day the library was previously closed and outside the opening hours of the library.

The Community Hub volunteers offer services on Wednesdays and provide refreshments. There has been a total of 2,932 visitors to the library on Wednesdays in the first 5 months - an average of 139 people per Wednesday. The building is also accessible from 8am on

weekdays and 9am on Saturdays and available for evenings as bookable space by a wide range of community groups (as highlighted Appendix A)

This has resulted in a 37.5% increase in the opening hours.

4. Increased users and community opportunities

Library membership has increased by 5.6% (5 month period) compared to the same period last year.

The Open + access system has enabled the building to be used for meetings and events outside of library opening hours without additional staff costs.

39 diverse community groups and organisations now use the building - 282 room/space bookings were made by these groups in the first 5 months. New groups have also been established including a support group for parents with children on the autistic spectrum and an accessible art group.

Demand for the meeting rooms and space continues to grow and the new hub has received a huge amount of positive feedback.

Having access and flexible shelving in the library area has enabled the space to be used for larger meetings and events. The community area board meetings are now held in the building, the Our Community Matters JSA event and a theatre performance of Romeo and Juliet also took place in this space.

5. Customer Survey – initial results

A customer survey is currently being undertaken to gather further feedback from customers and user groups and organisations. This information will be reviewed to help develop the services and facilities that the hub can provide.

The survey ends on 10 February 2017. The initial responses (from more than 100) show 92% of users are either 'Satisfied or Very Satisfied' with the new Community Hub & Library. When asked if they used the building more or less since the refurbishment 35% said they'd used it more.

Of those customers who had used the library during Open+ sessions, comments include:

"I feel that it's important to get maximum use out of a public building"

"The system is really awesome" "It's easy to use"

"The library is nice and quiet during the early morning Open+ sessions"

"It's good to know that the Hub and library are listening, making quiet sessions at the Hub events for children with autism and resetting the automatic doors so that these children can attend rhyme time more safely"

"Love the coffee from the Hub on Wednesdays"

A few negative comments have been raised around issues relating to heating and noise levels. These have either been resolved or review is underway.

The Community Hub has also provided its initial views following relocation. The Hub's comments include:

“Since the move various groups and activities have continued and the Spectrum Group, which supports children on the autistic spectrum and their respective families, has been successfully established.

Amongst the various events that have taken place, the Critters afternoon, where children were invited to meet various reptiles, was a notable success.

The Library building provides a lovely clean and bright venue, with many well established facilities.”

The Community Hub has raised some concern that the new hub is not as ‘homely’ and inviting as the old Hub premises and that the space is not fully shared. This has led to a feeling of ‘guest status’. It has been agreed that there will be a review of how space and facilities can be best allocated and managed to ensure that there is a common vision for the new Community Hub. Everyone is in agreement that it can provide an integrated community facility that will be hugely beneficial for the Calne area.

6. Open+ swipe access statistics

The Open+ system has proved to be a reliable way to extend the opening hours of the hub and enabled access in the evening for community bookings. 160 individuals have registered for Open+ access since mid-September 2016. This is steadily increasing each week. There have been 63 evening group bookings between Mid-August to Mid-January (See Appendix A for the groups and organisations regularly using the building).

The Open+ swipe access system has been used 159 times in the first 5 months following installation. An induction is provided to customers and users on registering for Open+ access. Access to a telephone with pre-programmed emergency and buildings helpline numbers are provided - no calls have been made to date.

This initial feedback highlights positive support for the newly refurbished space and access to facilities. This has been achieved without additional staffing or caretaking requirements, or compromising the security of the building.

7. Next steps

The Open+ swipe access system was a new introduction to encourage greater community use of both the library and other facilities and services. Following its implementation a gradual build up of its use was adopted. Usage is now steadily increasing and there has been no misuse of the system or any vandalism of the building.

Options for increased access (outside of community room/space bookings) such as additional evening opening hours for the public will now be considered and the early morning access will be publicised.

Appendix A

Group bookings and regular usage

Access 2 Art Group
Air Quality Group
BBC World Service
Calne Community Area Board
Calne Fairtrade
Calne Gaming Club
Calne Green Party
Calne Labour Party
Calne Lions
Calne Bowl Project
Calne Men's Shed
Calne Rotary Club
Calne Summer Playscheme
CATG meetings
Citizens Advice Wiltshire
Community Safety Forum
Community Transport
Dementia Action Alliance
Domestic Abuse Charity
FairTrade Group
HACCA
Health & Wellbeing Steering Group
Health Trainer
Heart for Calne
Job Club
Learning Curve
Local Youth Network
Marden Vale PTA
MPs Surgery
Older People Carers Voices
Older People Champions Area Cluster
Our Place
Pins & Needles Knitting Group
Registrar
Richmond Fellowship
Sewing Group
Spectrum (Autism) Support Group
Tourism Working Group
Wiltshire Addiction Support Group
Wiltshire College Careers
Wiltshire Council Officers meetings
Wiltshire Family Learning Workshop
Wiltshire & Swindon Users Network

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