Item 2

13th April 2023

Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities, Culture and Engagement City Policy Committee

Report by Susan Deighan Chief Executive of Glasgow Life

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Vision for Glasgow Libraries

Purpose of Report:

To inform the Committee of the work carried out to refresh the Vision for Glasgow Libraries, and to provide the final draft document for review.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

(a) consider and review the draft Vision for Glasgow Libraries;
(b) agree that the refreshed Vision for Glasgow Libraries be submitted to the City Administration Committee for approval; and
(c) note that progress will be reported to Glasgow City Council on an annual basis through the Operational Performance Delivery Scrutiny Committee.

Ward No(s):	Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐	consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1 Introduction

1.1 In August 2015, A Vision for Glasgow Libraries (VfGL) was published, the first major review of the city's library service since 2005. It set out a collaborative, five-year strategy for developing the library offer in line with the needs of the city's changing communities and while acknowledging the challenges and opportunities presented by developing technologies, the Vision remained true to the fundamental purpose of public libraries as places to read, learn and discover: the trusted guides at the heart of the city's communities.

1.2 With the 2015 Vision coming to the end of its anticipated lifespan, the Glasgow Life Business Plan made a commitment to refresh the Vision in 2022/23.

1.3 Glasgow City Council passed a motion in March 2022 recognising the significant contribution made by the city's public libraries to local communities, re-affirmed the core services, and recommended additional developments around the role of libraries in tackling the climate emergency and supporting local growth of the circular economy. The motion also tasked Glasgow Life with developing and consulting on a refreshed Vision.

2. Strategic Context

In developing the refresh of the Vision, it was important to reflect and connect closely to city and national priorities where libraries, and the services they offer, can have significant impact on health and wellbeing, financial and digital inclusion, developing knowledge and skills, economic development, supporting sustainable community development, creating circular economies, and addressing the wider climate challenge.

2.1 Locally, Glasgow City Council's Strategic Plan 2022-27 sets out its priorities as a series of 'grand challenges':

- Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities
- Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens

- Fight the climate emergency in a just transition to a net zero Glasgow; and
- Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities.

2.2 Nationally, Forward: Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2021-25 sets out its priorities under three key themes: People, Place and Partnership.

- People – Libraries will support people and communities to reach their full potential and celebrate the unique skill set of staff.
- Place – Libraries will be recognised as both valued places and place makers, with community-led design at the heart.

- Partnership – Libraries will deliver on local and national priorities through a strategic approach to collaboration and partnership.

2.3 Since the approval of the Vision for Glasgow Libraries in 2015 the City Council has invested in the refurbishment of a number of libraries including Castlemilk, Cardonald, Partick and Woodside. A significant refurbishment of Elder Park Library is currently underway and funding has recently been allocated through the Place Fund for Bridgeton Library. In addition funding has been allocated to relocate Parkhead Library into the new Parkhead Hub, due to open in 2024, alongside a range of community health services and voluntary sector provision.

3 Project Methodology

3.1 The broad rationale driving the refresh process was to re-state Glasgow's commitment to its public library service, reflect the significant changes that have taken place since 2015, and to ask service users and stakeholders how they would like to use the city's public library service over the coming years. It was also designed to recognise that many of the things that people, and partner organisations want from Glasgow's public library service remain consistent. Much of the initial feedback received suggested a desire for continuity around the key themes identified in 2015.

The aim of the refresh process was to set out the next part of Glasgow Libraries' journey, specifically focusing on the articulation of a core library service offer that is practical and achievable, and one that continues to reflect current national strategies for the development of public libraries.

3.2 Following a series of workshops comprising national and city stakeholders, partners who collaborate in delivering services and library staff a draft Vision document was created identifying 5 key themes that connected to city and national priorities:

Culture: recognising libraries as supporting reading for pleasure and as providers of a cultural and creative offer for all ages including music, arts and crafts, history and heritage, language and literature, exhibition space and maker space.

Health and wellbeing: recognising libraries as a focal point to support the health and wellbeing of citizens providing a range of services that have a positive impact on mental health and support citizens to self-manage their health.

Social: recognising libraries as a safe, social hub for services, programmes and activities that respond to the needs of users and wider communities, help connect and engage communities, and reduce isolation.

Economy: recognising libraries as places of learning, skills, and knowledge development for all ages and stages through access to physical and digital

resources and providing pathways into more formal learning opportunities and employability.

Environment: recognising libraries as supporting sustainable community development, creating circular economies, and addressing the wider climate challenge.

3.3 At the WECCE & General Policy Committee meeting on 22nd September members approved the draft refresh of Vision for Glasgow Libraries could be opened up for public consultation. The engagement and consultation process tested the VfGL Refresh Draft with stakeholders, partners, communities, and citizens using a range of one-to-one meetings, focus groups, comment boxes located in libraries and online consultation via the Glasgow Libraries section of the Glasgow Life website. Participant groups included the general public, community organisations, area partnerships, elected members and local MPs and MSPs, community councils, housing associations, campaign groups, citywide forums, and Glasgow Life staff. Fuller detail regarding the consultation results is set out in Appendix 1.

Glasgow Life received 628 consultation responses, over 90% of which were from library users. Around 66% of respondents use the city's libraries every week or every month. Over 80% of respondents use libraries in person. A wide range of uses were specified, however over 86% of respondents identified borrowing books and magazines; almost 30% identified access to PCs, around 21% specified access to Wi-Fi and just under 24% identified access to digital resources as their main reasons for accessing libraries. The ranking of importance of these services broadly corresponded with these percentages.

Satisfaction levels were high with the existing service, with 75% of respondents rating it as excellent, very good or good.
It is important to highlight the consultation responses mainly reflect the views of current service users and stakeholders. Engagement was made with over 200 voluntary sector organisations to collect the views of individuals not currently using library services, however the return rate was low. In addition, demographic data was not collected. Library staff will engage with stakeholders to co-create an action plan to underpin the vision, gathering demographic data of participants where possible, and more generally will work to achieve a better understanding of library user demographics for the purposes of equalities monitoring and subsequent service improvement.

The themes which emerged from the process can be summarised as:

- It is important to continue to offer the core services around reading, digital and safe, inclusive spaces in local libraries and offer the highest quality experience to service users;

- There is a strong sense of ownership amongst Glasgow's public library users and they want to be involved in the design of their local services. They also want them to be protected and prioritised;

- The importance of friendly, approachable, well-trained library staff;

- The cost-of-living crisis, poverty, inequality and the experiences of Covid-19 have re-emphasised the critical necessity of the physical and digital spaces and services that libraries provide, free at the point of use;

- Access to free Wi-Fi and PCs remains crucial for a significant number of people;

- Libraries actively support their local communities and are valued for the benefits they bring and the information that can be accessed;

- Libraries are places where people new to the city go to better understand their local community. Libraries need to continue to be welcoming and reflect a wide variety of different lived experiences.

Overall, the strongest themes to emerge from the consultation were the need for continuity but with an improvement in quality; the importance of free services in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis; and the need for space for social connection and to be around other people. These themes were present in the pre-consultation draft Vision but as a result of the consultation, the draft increased in emphasis on libraries' impacts on cost-of-living and on mental health.

At its meeting of 29 March 2023, the Glasgow Life Board endorsed the draft Vision and recommended it be submitted to this Committee for review.

4. Next Steps

Following approval by the Committee, and adoption as the City's Libraries Strategy, work will begin on a detailed action plan co-created with stakeholders to underpin the refreshed Vision. The implementation of the Vision will be monitored internally through Glasgow Life's performance management framework and progress will be reported to Glasgow City Council on an annual basis through the Operational Performance Delivery Scrutiny Committee.

5. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	There are no new financial implications arising from the report
Legal:	There are no new legal implications

Personnel:	There are no new personnel implications
Procurement:	There are no new procurement implications
Council Strategic Plan:	As indicated in the report the Vision for Glasgow Libraries connects to all four Grand Challenges
Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:	
Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	Positive impact through providing opportunity to access services both locally and digitally
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	The Vision sets out the aim to reduce social isolation, support access to a range of support services and learning opportunities, having a positive impact on mental wellbeing in communities
Climate Impacts:	
Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	Supports communities to access information and engage in discussion and action to deliver the Carbon Plan actions.
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	Refurbishing venues and introducing energy efficient building systems reduces carbon footprint.
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	Yes

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	
Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report	No
If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out	

6 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

a. Consider and review the draft Vision for Glasgow Libraries;
b. Agree that the refreshed Vision for Glasgow Libraries be submitted to the City Administration committee for approval; and
c. Note that progress will be reported to Glasgow City Council on an annual basis through the Operations Performance Delivery Scrutiny Committee.