



Local Level
Understanding life in neighbourhoods

Manningham treasures



Report on a community engagement exercise
at Manningham Library, June 2008

1. introduction

Bradford Libraries is to receive a grant under the Big Lottery's Community Libraries Programme to support the refurbishment and extension of Manningham Family and Community Library.

Plans have been drawn up, and community engagement and consultation exercises have begun. As part of this process, the community development consultants Local Level were invited to design an event in June 2008.



The event took place in Manningham Library, with a treasure hunt as the main attraction. A number of consultation questions were designed into the hunt using a 'Diffusion eBook'. This was supplemented by an SMS (text) consultation exercise and the presence at the event of an architect and staff.

The process was designed to raise awareness of the forthcoming library renovation, to stimulate interest and further engagement in the future, and to invite people to submit views at the time. A small number of comments were captured through the eBooks and through SMS, and these will be included in the following short report.

2. constraints

The event was limited to two hours on a weekday early evening, to take place at a time when the library would be open anyway. There was space for display boards and the plans for the new building. A rear door to the building would be left open, leading into the car park, in addition to the main door. Light refreshments were provided. The key design requirement was for an event where people might be coming and going the whole time, so it was necessary to avoid a specific timetable, presentations, or the format of a formal meeting.

3. treasure hunt

The treasure hunt was chosen as a device for various reasons. It satisfies the requirement to cater for people coming and going. It focuses the mind for a little while without being off-putting or daunting as an exercise. It helps people to visualise the changes that will take place within and around the building, stimulating curiosity and a gentle sense of achievement.



The process encouraged intergenerational involvement and numerous conversations between groups of hunters, with staff and with the architect.

We encouraged people to hunt in pairs, where possible of different generations. In a couple of cases whole families went round, learning and discussing as they went.

We deliberately ordered the clues so that solutions were alternately outside and then inside the building, thus creating lots of movement.

A small prize was provided to everyone who completed the exercise and handed in their notebook. Language difficulties meant that it wasn't reasonable to expect much written content, but what we did capture is valuable and was augmented with plenty of conversations.

Either by talking with staff or using a checklist on the eBook, residents had the chance to express interest in influencing a range of decisions to be taken as the library development project develops.

Overall this approach meant that the exercise hit some important objectives. It was

- intergenerational
- multicultural
- conversational
- informative, and
- fun.

It also raised general awareness of the project and created opportunities for volunteering.

4. the eBook

The treasure hunt was based around the playful eBook technology developed by Giles Lane and his colleagues at Diffusion (diffusion.org.uk). These are digitally generated handbooks with some sections printed and space to write notes by hand. They are ideal for jotting things down as you move about.



Visitors were given a 12-page eBook with the first clue printed on the first page. Each clue required the hunter to visit a specific point inside or outside the existing library building. At the location of the answer to each clue, the next clue was to be found in the form of a peel-off label, which was stuck ('Clue 2' etc) on the next page of the eBook.

There were eight clues, several of them designed to require some consultation of the plans ('Where will the toilets be in the new library?'). Several questions necessitated a conversation with the architect, who was present; or reference to the history, place and role of the existing building.



In addition to the clues, we used the eBooks to ask consultation questions. For example, Clue 4 required people to consult the plans where they would discover that a 'community garden' is proposed. We then asked them:

What sort of garden would you like to see beside the new building? (A peace garden, a herb garden, a rose garden, or something else?)

The eBook also provided space for hunters to indicate if they were interested in helping to take decisions about various themes in the new library, such as décor and furniture, signage, the garden, and so on. (The themes had been the subject of development work by a team of local people helping to design the community consultation component of the overall project).¹ The final page was used to collect contact details for further involvement.

The eBook is available for download on the Diffusion site at <http://diffusion.org.uk/?p=369>. Instructions on making the printed sheets into a notebook are at http://diffusion.org.uk/?page_id=147.

¹ See www.local-level.org.uk/uploads/ManninghamLibraryConsultationDesign.pdf.

4. a selection of treasure-hunters' comments

How might the new library be used to celebrate Bradford and Manningham?

Have evening readings of poetry in Urdu, English & other local languages

Improving the library

Use Bradford authors

Invite local people in to do talks

Perhaps some 'timelines' – old maps and pictures of Bradford – perhaps the same view & how it has changed over the years

Have more children's activities at weekends and holidays

What else is needed to make sure that disabled people have good access to the new library?



Enough room for wheelchairs to move about

Seating for people who can't stand for long

How to make higher shelves accessible?

A ramp for disabled people & wheelchair access

Clean and warm is important for winter

Can you suggest other ways in which the building can have a minimal impact on the environment?

Fit solar panels on roof

Don't throw litter

Turn off the lights

Have a recycling bin for public use

We can have recycling bins to recycle cans, bottles or bags

Producing as little waste as possible!

What sort of garden would you like to see beside the new building?

A garden that is welcoming and relaxing to be in but not too 'precious'

A peace garden

Nice flowers and plants with a fence

Peaceful place to sit with benches, maybe sensory things i.e. smells & textures for blind adults and children with special needs

Something pretty but also a quiet reflective place. Also somewhere we can walk kids around

Can you suggest how the meeting room should be used, and by whom?



By groups, community projects

For Manningham residents

Mother & toddler reading group

Writing room

Have class visits which include special classes, storytimes / activity for young kids

Reading clubs with prizes

By school groups

Should the library be a place to celebrate literature? If so, how could we do that?

YES – talks about authors

Poetry reading

A reading group?

More books – bigger selection

How about a Manningham literary festival in future?

Add more books, reading clubs, games with books

Yes! Invite authors in to talk about books

Have a writing competition

Should computers in the new library be located together, or spread around the building? What other technology would you like to see in the new library?

Some computers could be joined together, some can be spread around

Perhaps wireless access for people who want to study on their own laptops

Probably some together, others so you can access information while among the books

Spread around the library so younger children can have access to them

Can you suggest ways of encouraging people who don't use the library to come inside and see what it offers?



Maybe some special open days?

Events with taster sessions

Local history evenings

Give leaflets to houses about the improved library and have sign boards up

Free coffee

Have more activities here

In addition to these comments, participants indicated willingness to be involved in helping to take decisions about the new library in various areas. For instance, five people offered to help with decisions on stock in the library, four on governance, and three on developing and managing the garden. All these contacts are being followed up by staff.

5. text messages

Alongside the treasure hunt, we arranged for people to have the option of sending comments about the new library in Manningham using text messaging. A 'thumbprint' website (www.thumbprintcity.com/bradford) was set up by Blink Media (www.blinkmedia.org).

Messages can be sent and viewed from a mobile phone or using the website. This is now a fairly simple and inexpensive option that can be used to create some extra interest.

A small leaflet was printed by the libraries department and distributed in the library, explaining the process and giving people the number to use for messages.

It is important not to mistake this for a formal democratic consultation process, but we would argue that it broadens the choices for people who may have something to say, and therefore belongs in the mix of engagement options.

6. sample text messages

What would you like to see in the new Manningham Family and Community Library?

wud like 2 see Comfy seating, self service and somewhere 2 relax and get peace and quiet. As well as a bright area 4 the children 2 hav lots of fun and games. Thankyou!

a cafe

At Manningham liabery i want a placed which is specifically dedicated for the means of studying also with the access of WIFI system

activities 4 all

baby changing facilities

free wifi

local people hav the chance to influence what goes in2 the new library

Kan u make 1 or 2 quite roomz in da extention plz



There were also passionate pleas to keep the library open while the renovation takes place

Plz keep da library open even wen da work on da extention starts v r begin u

Wat r v goin 2 du 4 8 months if u shut da library keep it open whilst u du da extention v wil b ritin a petion 2 u and 2 da national lotery

If u shut da library durin da winter it wil b very depresin 4 all da localz especialy if v av a bad winta dare must b a way around it

7. reflections on the community engagement exercise

The involvement of local people in service delivery is not a process that can be switched on and off when policy deems it necessary. It has to reflect an ongoing conversation between agencies and their constituencies.

Bradford Libraries Service has been stimulating this conversation in various ways and this particular event should not be seen in isolation. It is part of, and contributes to, a culture of engagement and consultation that is inseparable from the role of the public library.



By making activities fun, inclusive and informative, it's possible to stimulate involvement without people feeling that they are imposed on. The exercise raised awareness of the forthcoming developments in Manningham, and brought to the surface residents' interest in being involved in the decision-making processes.

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