

Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	15/07/2025
Report of:	Pauline Stuchfield - Director of Housing & Communities
Portfolio of:	Cllr Pete Kilbane – Executive Member for Economy and Culture

Decision Report: Update on Future Libraries Investment Programme (FLIP)

Subject of Report

1. This report provides an update to Executive on the Future Libraries Investment Programme (“Programme”), including -
 - a) Success of the investment programme so far in the delivery of Haxby & Wigginton Library and Clifton Library Learning Centre (Annex A)
 - b) Proposals for the enhancements to Acomb Library based on public feedback (Annex B)
 - c) Budget for the Acomb library enhancements, noting the external funding from Arts Council (Library Investment Fund), Mayoral Renewables Fund and timetable for delivery.
2. To enable the Executive to approve the final stage of the FLIP delivery programme and to ensure Acomb library is updated in line with users’ feedback.

Benefits and Challenges

3. The benefits of approving the enhancements at Acomb library include delivering on the successful £250,000 Arts Council grant as part of the Libraries Investment Fund (LIF) and to improve the look and feel of the internal layout by providing:
 - a) investment in new furniture and shelving to create a larger children’s library:

- b) a better layout for the indoor café area, increasing capacity where possible and improve accessibility:
 - c) quiet spaces for work and study:
 - d) improved toilet facilities including an additional accessible toilet:
 - e) a larger area for books:
 - f) improved meeting rooms including a refurbished and improved IT suite:
 - g) flexible shelving on wheels for onsite performances both inside and outside of library opening hours, and
 - h) improved lighting, audio-visual/PA and blackout blinds.
4. The grant has been successful, due to the key focus of delivering what the public want from their local library, based on the public consultation feedback undertaken in 2023.
 5. The refurbishment of the Acomb Library represents a significant and positive development for both Westfield and the wider Acomb ward. As a key community asset located in one of the more deprived areas, the library plays a vital role in supporting residents across all age groups.
 6. Improving the library facilities will deliver a range of long-term benefits for local schools and educational providers via a modernised library offering a valuable space for learning.
 7. The refurbishment will also contribute to reducing social isolation, particularly among older residents and those with limited mobility, by creating a welcoming and inclusive space for social interaction, community-led events, and support services.
 8. Furthermore, the upgraded library will serve as a hub for local organisations and community groups, enabling them to run activities, workshops, and outreach programmes that address local needs.
 9. Not going ahead with the project would mean having to return the grant and not following through with the consultation feedback from residents.

Policy Basis for Decision

10. Libraries are part of the Council's statutory service and improvements to the properties remain the Council's responsibility under the operational contract with Explore York (Explore Libraries and Archive Mutual Ltd).
11. The FLIP programme supports the Council's four key pledges:
 - a) **Affordability** – Libraries play a key role in providing quality advice and information, to support residents needing help or just a safe place to visit.
 - b) **Environment** – Solar panels and some LED lights are being installed to improve the energy efficiency of the building.
 - c) **Equalities and Human Rights** – An access audit was carried out to understand how accessibility could be improved and improvements have been included based on specialist advice and guidance.
 - d) **Health Inequalities** - Explore will be able to enhance their programme of activities to promote this agenda working with relevant agencies.

Financial Strategy Implications

12. The original capital budget of £7.701m approved by Executive on 13 January 2022 indicated an estimate allowance for Acomb library enhancements of £500k. This was based on the principle that the delivery of Haxby & Wigginton Library and Clifton Library were delivered in priority order with Acomb being the final project.
13. After delivering the two new libraries this has left a remaining budget of £100,000, plus project management resource time. In addition, the Council has been successful in securing an Arts Council Libraries Investment Fund of £250,000 and a £26,000 grant from the Mayoral Renewables Fund for renewable energy generation projects (Increases to £40,000, with £14,000 match funding from the Council's Climate Change budget), which increases the total project budget to **£390,000**.
14. The Arts Council, Library Investment Fund does come with grant conditions, but the application was based on delivering the feedback from local resident's needs, which was an important factor in being successful, as we could show significant public and

user engagement to really understand demands for the service provision.

15. The £26,000 renewable energy grant from the Mayoral Renewables Fund also has separate conditions and a delivery deadline of 31 March 2026.

Recommendation and Reasons

16. The Executive is asked to approve the following officer recommendations –
 - a) Note the progress on the FLIP Programme to date.
 - b) Approve the Acomb library delivery budget of £390,000 including the external grants.
 - c) To delegate to the Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Governance and Head of Procurement, the authority to take such steps as are necessary to enter into the grant agreement with Explore York.
 - d) Approve the procurement of the works contracts to deliver the enhancements for Acomb Library and delegate authority to the Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Governance and Head of Procurement, to take such steps as are necessary to procure, award and enter into the resulting contracts.
 - e) To note the delivery timetable deadline for external grant bodies as 31 March 2026.

Background and success so far

17. In January 2022, the Executive approved a £7.701m Future Library Investment Programme (FLIP), to deliver three projects in order. First a new library for Haxby & Wigginton, second a new library learning centre in Clifton and finally an enhancement to Acomb library. See Annex A for a summary report on the positive impacts the investment has made.
18. Acomb was the very first Library Learning Centre, opened in 2007 after a £500k investment to include a café and create new flexible spaces, therefore it already has the core library vision at its heart. The ongoing success of the café has allowed Explore York the

income generation to contribute to their events schedule and programme of activities which benefit the local community.

19. Acomb library had also benefitted from over £110k investment on replacing a large part of the main roof and green credentials such as the wood pellet boiler.
20. The potential to develop and improve the current building to further enhance the offer to local residents was noted in the original report but committed to engaging with local residents, seeking their views and ambitions to influence the next stages of its development.

Consultation Analysis

21. The public consultation for Acomb Explore Library Learning Centre was carried out in 2023, led by Explore.
22. The survey was completed by 234 people and Explore asked people to tell them what they loved about their library and what they would like to see more of. They also asked what does not work so well and what is not important to users. The top three priorities were:
 - a) Bigger children's space
 - b) More indoor café space
 - c) Quiet space for work or study
23. Responses also told us residents wanted to see more space for books, a covered area outside for events such as craft fairs and, on a more practical note, extra toilets. People were not so interested in lighting and signage improvements, touch-down office space or better cycle parking.
24. A summary of the survey results was published on the Explore website in April 2023 and remains on the website for people to review.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

25. The options available to members are:
 - Option A – To progress with the enhancement of Acomb Library
 - Option B – To not progress

26. Option A (Recommended option) – The future library investment programme has been very successful in updating and delivering benefits for local residents and all who use the libraries. The significant external grants have enabled the Council to plan to deliver on the feedback of the consultation, listening and responding to people's views and needs.
27. Option B – This option is possible but would require the Council to return grants to both the Arts Council and Mayoral Renewables Fund, with reputational risk for future funding bids. In addition, Acomb was the first Explore library in 2007 and needs refurbishment and improvement to accessibility in certain areas. This could start to have an impact on visitor numbers due to the declining condition of the library.

Organisational Impact and Implications

28. Financial – The budget available for the final stage of the FLIP project to enhance Acomb library is shown in table 1 and the proposed expenditure in Table 2. Table 2 also shows which expenditure lines will be granted to and procured by Explore York.

Table 1:

Budget	£
CYC Capital	£100,000
Arts Council Funding from Library Investment Fund	£250,000
Mayoral Renewables Fund (Includes £14k from CYC Climate Change Budget as match funding)	£40,000
Total Budget	£390,000

Table 2:

Expenditure	£	Expenditure by
Professional Fees and Services	£26,500	CYC
Building Contract – Works	£140,000	Explore
Specialist library furniture	£110,000	Explore
Audio-visual and ICT installations	£30,000	Explore
Kitchen fitout	£17,500	Explore
CYC direct works (Fire panel & drainage)	£10,000	CYC
Solar Panel install	£40,000	CYC
Loss of income to Explore for closure	£12,000	Explore
Contingency	£4,000	CYC
Total	£390,000	

29. Explore York is not currently eligible to recover VAT in relation to Acomb Library. This would mean the project costs for Acomb Library would need to be considered with VAT added which would equate to around £60,000. Having discussed this with the Explore York's Chief Finance Officer, it is confirmed that Explore York will investigate ways to enable them to recover VAT relating to Acomb library and liaise with the relevant authorities to do so. If successful, it will allow York Explore to claim back the VAT paid on refurbishment costs meaning that money can go towards further improvements. The costs shown in Table 2 are based on VAT recovery.
30. There are also revenue financial benefits for Explore following the Council's investment including lower utility costs due to the energy efficiency measures and improved income potential.
31. **Human Resources (HR)** – no implications.

32. **Legal** – The proposal is for Explore York to lead on the expenditure items as identified in table 2 above. A grant agreement between CYC and Explore York will be required to ensure the terms and conditions of the Arts Council and Mayoral Renewables Fund with CYC, are passed through to Explore York. This is to protect CYC should there be a failure to meet any of those terms and conditions by Explore York.
33. **Procurement** – The proposal to have a mixed procurement strategy between CYC and Explore York is acceptable based on the terms and conditions of the grant funders being passed through to Explore. For example, the Arts Council grant conditions have obligations for CYC to:
- a. Seek best value for money
 - b. Procurement process conducted in a transparent and proportionate manner
 - c. Obtain quotes or competitive tendering for purchasing goods or services cost more than £12,000.
 - d. Comply with Procurement Act 2023.
34. For any council funded works or services, these must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.
35. **Health and Wellbeing** – Improved library services positively impact health and well-being by providing access to information, fostering social connection, and supporting mental health. Libraries offer resources for self-management of health conditions, reduce social isolation, and promote overall well-being. Therefore, Public Health are fully in support of the continued library improvement programme.
36. **Environment and Climate action** - The successful Mayoral Renewables Fund to add solar PV to Acomb Library is part of the Council's overall carbon reduction strategy. The improvements to LED lighting and Solar PV will assist in reducing emissions associated with libraries, which is currently 48.31 tCO₂e per year.

- 37. Affordability** – Libraries play a key role in providing quality and trusted advice, information and guidance which helps people access and navigate many support services.
- 38. Equalities and Human Rights** – An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and can be seen at Annex C. The outcome of the EIA shows the proposed physical works to Acomb Library will positively affect people sharing a protected characteristic.
- 39. Data Protection and Privacy** – The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- 40. Communications** – Explore will lead but supported by CYC in the communications of the project and any closure of service.
- 41. Economy** - no implications.

Risks and Mitigations

- 42.** There are two external grants associated with this project, which both have terms and conditions.
- 43.** The LIF grant from Arts Council has a deadline for completion by 31 March 2026 and requirements to seek competitive tenders for all contracts in excess of £12,000 (excluding VAT) and show that we have selected the option which provides value for money. To mitigate this risk in any grant agreement with Explore the terms and conditions of the grant will be included.
- 44.** The renewables energy grant from the Mayoral Renewables Fund has a delivery deadline of 31 March 2026, which is short but manageable due to the small scale of the solar installation and the initial feasibility already carried out. This is still dependant on a structural engineer's report on roof loading.

45. The timetable for delivery cannot be certain at this point, until a construction partner has been appointed to take on the works as there are a number of options to consider. The project team are working on the basis of a 12-week closure of the Acomb Library during Autumn/Winter 2025 and possibly into spring 2026, depending on the agreed start date of the selected contractor. The aim will be to look at options that minimises public disruption.

Wards Impacted

46. Wards impacted by the Acomb Library enhancement works will be Acomb and Westfield mainly but noting that some users come from further afield.

Contact details

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Background papers

Executive – Thursday 13 January 2022 – [Item 85 Future Libraries Investment Programme](#)

Annexes

- Annex A: Success of Haxby & Wigginton Gateway Library and Clifton Library Learning Centre investments.
- Annex B: Proposed enhancements to Acomb Library
- Annex C: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)