

FUTURE LIBRARY SERVICES

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND ADULT SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:
- (i) provide members with an overview of library services in Sunderland
 - (ii) outline the proposed Vision for Future Library Services
 - (iii) detail the consultation and engagement programme to inform the future offer and
 - (iv) seek the views of Committee on the proposed Vision

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Sunderland Libraries currently serve the population of 280,000 through a network of 20 static libraries, 1 mobile library, a mobile ICT learning vehicle (Libraries Information Access Zone), a Local Studies library and a Books on Wheels service in partnership with the WRVS. It also serves Sunderland Schools (via the Schools Library Service) and Sunderland Royal Hospital via a ward trolley service, funded by health partners.
- 2.1 The Library Service is a statutory function of local government. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires 'every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service'.
- 2.2 The Library service must:-
- Serve both adults and children
 - Be available to everyone and meet any special needs required by members of the local community
 - Encourage participation and full use of the service
 - Provide materials in sufficient number, range and quality to meet general and specific requirements of those in the community
 - Provide value for money, working in partnership with other Authorities and agencies
- 2.3 The Public Libraries and Museums Act does not state a minimum number of libraries nor does it have any guidance on geographical distribution or specific levels of access.

3.0 FINANCIAL CONTEXT

- 3.1 The council has made efficiency savings of approximately £100m over the last 3 years and now faces a similar, further amount in savings to be made over the next 3 years.

- 3.2 Over the past 3 years, like all council services, the libraries revenue budget has reduced, however, the council has continued over a longer extended period to invest in new and improved provision. Examples include refurbishment of libraries in Houghton, Hetton and Washington in addition to new developments at Ryhope and Silksworth.
- 3.3 The 2012/13 budget for libraries is £4.6m. In 2011/12 the Library Service released efficiencies of £553k and as part of the council's draft budget setting proposals there is a target of a further £850k to be achieved in 2013/14.

4.0 FUTURE LIBRARY SERVICES

- 4.1 Based on evidence of recent trends in usage, survey results, good practice, discussions with other local authorities and through initial engagement with staff and residents there are opportunities to increase the overall use of services particularly within communities who would most benefit and to reduce the overall cost of the service. The proposed vision of the new library service is:

“The Library Service will become a beacon of excellence in the community for reading, learning and information. Library Services will support the development of confident individuals and communities who can realise their full potential and contribute to the broader vision of the city”.

- 4.2 Realising this vision will include targeting families and children to enable them to access high quality learning environments through reading material, training and education opportunities and is consistent with the Marmot Report – Fair Society – Healthy Lives (2010).
- 4.3 This proposed refocusing of resource would mean services would be taken to communities, in particular, those that need the most support to engender reading and learning. Locations such as schools, children's centres, community centres, and other neighbourhood venues that local people have affinity with and that are accessible to them will be used to deliver these services. This approach has the potential to increase the overall number of locations where the Library services are accessible.
- 4.4 The new service model will also promote access for all to high quality reading materials and learning environments, that will embrace modern technological and e-based service developments and incorporate these within the overall service offer .
- 4.5 It is considered that this can be achieved by:
- Working with current users, children's services, schools and other partners to target underachieving young people to encourage book lending, supported reading sessions and support to parents to increase confidence to read with children

- Establishing a volunteer base of confident readers to work with parents and children who need the most support
- Focussing on outreach and community based provision
- Providing wide access to reading materials and reading related activity and promotions in a much wider set of community venues
- Maintaining relationships with communities and partners to build and share information resources and to help ensure that those customers who are most in need have prioritised access to services
- Providing opportunities for social engagement and inclusion, particularly in our most deprived communities
- Maintaining a level of qualified librarian support and knowledgeable staff to work more in communities than in static provision
- Tailoring services to meet the needs of both customers and communities
- Investing to save by refurbishing key sites where necessary
- Seeking opportunities to engage with key partners who may consider developing and delivering a service offer

4.6 The service model would provide a reduced number of static libraries or “Library Hubs”, some of which would provide a range of colocated services. These “Hubs” would support the community outreach programmes, other local service provision with:

- opening hours to reflect the local communities needs,
- a comprehensive range of reading materials in a variety of formats
- access to high quality learning environments, support and materials
- Information and advice, customer service and digital services including ICT provision
- access to community space.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

5.1 It is important that the Council is able to get a clear view from a sample of all stakeholders about the types of neighbourhood and overall provision that best suit their needs. In this context, stakeholders refer to library users, non-users, residents, elected members, current library staff, other shared service providers and voluntary and community groups.

5.2 The consultation needs to take account of the need to increase the overall access and use of the service, particularly amongst those who would most benefit, and the requirement to reduce costs. Areas for consultation include:

- Articulating and refining the overall Vision
- Identifying appropriate locations to increase access to services via a community outreach approach which incorporates activities delivered in non-traditional library settings across the city
- Determining the Library Hubs, overall offer and opening hours
- Making appropriate and adequate provision for those otherwise unable to access services in their community
- Advising on reader development activities for all ages and further learning opportunities and related programme

- Enhancing services to schools, for example to include increased structured class visits and library instruction
- Developing a network of volunteers to add value to the overall service offer

5.3 It has been agreed that a two stage consultation approach will be adopted with residents (including children and young people), users and non-users, staff, partners, voluntary and community groups and members. Feedback from all groups will be used to inform the future library service offer.

5.4 The key milestones within the two-stage consultation plan are:-

- Cabinet Report – 13.2.12
- Consultation on Vision, service model and approach – 14.2.12 to 20.3.12
- Feedback to Cabinet with outline proposals – 17.04.12
- Further Consultation on proposals – 18.04.12 to 16.5.12
- Cabinet Report on final proposals and implementation – June 2013
- New service operational 1st July 2013

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members are requested to:

- (i) consider the proposed Vision for Future Library Services in Sunderland and provide feedback

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 The following background papers were relied upon to compile this report:
Report to Cabinet 13th February, 2013 – Future Library Services