

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

**ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES –
POLICY REVIEW 2010/11**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: PROSPEROUS CITY

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CI01: Delivery Customer Focused Services, CI02: Being ‘One Council’ CI03: Efficient and Effective Council, CI04: Improving partnership working to deliver ‘One City’

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the work ongoing within Culture and Tourism with regard to the Libraries offer across the city and to provide evidence for the review the committee is undertaking in relation to Culture supporting sustainable communities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Sunderland Public Libraries currently provide services through a network of 20 static libraries, 2 mobile libraries, a mobile ICT learning Vehicle (Libraries Information Access Zone), a Local Studies Centre and a Books on Wheels Service. It also serves Sunderland Schools (via the Schools Library Service) and Sunderland Royal Hospital via a Hospital Service.

2.2 In 2009/10 the service received over 1.39 million visitors and provided access to over 450,000 items and electronic resources.

2.3 Libraries deliver and support key outcomes for local communities and individuals with service planning and outcomes aligned to match Sunderland Partnership and city aims.

2.4 The main objective of Sunderland Public Library Service is to deliver a responsive and customer focused public library service. The key aims of the service are:

- To facilitate access and inclusion for all
- To support digital citizenship
- To provide books and reading material
- To deliver services to young people
- To support good health and well-being
- To support learning and development
- To deliver continuous staff development

2.5 Library services are delivered through a variety of locations and venues across the city which include static libraries, mobile services and outreach provision. Library programmes and stock are tailored to meet the needs of communities reflecting the key factors and influences which have been

identified through the development of community profiles and partnership working.

2.6 Staff work with a wide range of partners including customers, local schools and the community / voluntary sector to ensure individual and community needs are identified and addressed.

2.7 Libraries key programme include a wide range of activities which support sustainable communities by:-

- Ensuring accessible services which meet the needs of all citizens
- Encouraging participation by all individuals
- Working in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations
- Encouraging digital inclusion and participation
- Opening up reader choices, increasing participation and enjoyment in reading and offering opportunities for people to share their reading experiences
- Developing services for children and young people that are safe, welcoming and inclusive
- Developing and promoting access to health information and resources in order to support healthy lifestyle choices
- Providing access to formal and informal learning opportunities
- Providing spaces and opportunities for individuals and groups to meet and participate in joint activities
- Creating opportunities for individuals and groups from minority groups to highlight and celebrate their identities

3.0 EXAMPLES OF CURRENT LIBRARY PROGRAMME

The following examples demonstrate some of the wide range of programme delivered by libraries which support sustainable communities.

3.1 Silksworth Library

Silksworth Library was opened in May 2009 as a new build replacement for the previous community library. The library is located within the Beckwith Mews extra care housing development. This development was made possible through a close and positive partnership between Housing 21, FHM, Sunderland City Council and the Homes & Communities Agency. The development is built on the site of the previous community library and the library service, residents and users have been involved throughout the development of the scheme.

3.2 Adult Learning

During 2009/10 almost 90 courses took place in libraries attended by over 1000 learners. Courses ranged from crafts to family history and yoga to IT. Comments included:-

“I have achieved much more than I thought I would. The tutor has been a joy to work with and I am now thinking of doing other courses”

“I have learned a lot. My typing improved and I can e-mail, do puzzles and shop on the internet”

3.3 Information, Advice and Guidance

Sunderland Libraries offer Information, Advice and Guidance on learning and work. 2009/10 saw the number of qualified advisers rise to 6 with another 6 members of staff currently training. During 2009/10 126 people attended one to one or group sessions receiving a range of help and support. Sunderland is also leading a regional library initiative to promote, offer and signpost nextstep IAG within all libraries in the region.

3.4 Knit and Natter

One of the regular groups who meet at the newly refurbished Washington Library and Customer Service Centre is the Knit and Natter group. The group meets weekly with all items created being donated to charitable causes. Most recently the group explored traditional crafts such as hookey and proggy mat making during Heritage Open Days.

3.5 Booktime

In the autumn of 2009 Sunderland Library Service delivered the national Booktime Project across the city. The Booktime Project is the gift of a free bag and storybook to all reception aged children. Children were invited to gifting sessions at the library to take part in a Booktime activity and to receive their free book.

3.6 Summer Reading Challenge 2010 – Space Hop

Over 1,890 children aged 5 to 11 years took part in Space Hop, the 2010 Summer Reading Challenge, at libraries across the city. They took part in a wide range of activities linked to a space theme and the BBC's Space Hop programme.

3.7 Teenage Reading Group

The City Library and Arts Centre host a monthly Teenage Reading Group. The group formed in August 2009 and the six members have so far read approximately twenty titles. The group have also been involved in helping the City Library and Arts Centre achieve *Investing In Children* status.

3.8 Young People's Visually Impaired Reading Group

The Young People's Visually Impaired Reading Group which meets at Sandhill Centre Library is a UK first. Members of the group are all pupils at Sandhill View School and attend the reading group during the school enrichment period, when they are allowed to do hobbies or activities, and are accompanied by two support teachers.

3.9 Sacred Exhibition

The 'Sacred on Location' exhibition was hosted by the City Library and Arts Centre in 2009. Following a launch at Sunderland Minster there were over 3,500 visitors to the exhibition with over 200 taking part in workshops. Sunderland was one of nine locations chosen in England to host the touring exhibition on loan from the British Library. 'Sacred on Location' is a unique touring programme celebrating the diversity of religious traditions within Britain today and explored the many links between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three religions that have shaped so much of European history and civilisation.

In partnership with faith groups from across the region a series of workshops were organised with the aim of bringing communities together to contemplate all faiths and what faith means to different people. The exhibition provided a greater awareness of differences and similarities with regard to religion and culture across the North East, in particular Sunderland, and attempted to emphasise understanding and tolerance across different faiths.

The programme allowed relationships to be forged with different faith groups across the city and members of the Sunderland Interfaith Forum were able to advise about the importance of religious sensitivities and to support and deliver programme.

3.10 World Mental Health Day

On World Mental Health Day (10 October 2009) a wide range of activities were offered at the City Library and Arts Centre. The theme was 5-a day for Health and Happiness:

Connect ... with the people around you

Be Active ... go for a walk or a run

Take Notice ... be curious, catch sight of the beautiful

Keep Learning ...try something new, rediscover an old interest

Give ... do something nice for a friend

Over 100 attended on the day taking part in activities including street dancing, varied therapies, a book swap, art workshop, hanging baskets and lots more. There were also information stands and activities for children including face painting, a children's entertainer and for older children a graffiti wall.

Asked what had been the best part of the day feedback included:-

"Bringing mental health issues to people's attention in a fun environment"

"The friendliness and people getting together to learn and join in activities"

3.11 UKOnline

During 2009/10 two projects were set up by the library service in partnership with UK Online. Through these projects library staff gained additional skills which then enabled them to deliver the UKOnline (UKOL) user journey to digitally and socially excluded learners from their local communities. Hendon Library received funding to establish a UKOL learning centre at the library. The year long project started in August 2009 and supported 91 new learners. Southwick Library also received funding to establish a UKOL Learning Centre. The project started in February 2010 and successfully supported 117 new computer users.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Library Service is currently undertaking a review of all areas of service provision. The aim of the review is to ensure that the Library service continues to meet current and future demand and supports key priorities whilst providing a 21st century service which can meet the constraints of the current economic climate.

This review will look at all aspects of the service including staffing, stock, programme, outreach work and buildings.

- 4.2 With an increasing emphasis on ensuring that services maximise value for money and ensure efficiencies whilst reducing costs, the library service is reviewing its current offer and examining its core business.
- 4.3 Working in partnership with existing community providers the service will be tailored to meet the needs of local communities. Existing and new programmes will be targeted at individuals and groups supporting the city priorities. Examples will include reader development and learning activities for vulnerable individuals and groups and outreach programmes for children and young people
- 4.4 The review is currently ongoing and further reports will provide members and partners with an outline of how Sunderland's Library Service proposes to enter into a new chapter in the delivery of library services.

5.0 NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

- 5.1 Nationally the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) has recognised the importance of community engagement and collated a number of case studies highlighting good examples of work with communities. These include:-
 - Bury Libraries – who worked with the local residents to create a new community library which now acts as a hub for the local community providing local residents with a central meeting place from which to run numerous activities and advisory sessions.
 - Croydon Libraries – who worked in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust to create a library based healthy living hub. The Hub is a safe space for Croydon residents, and anyone else who is interested, to obtain information about health and well being, without the need for an appointment.
 - Full details and further examples of best practice can be viewed at the MLA website (http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice)

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The information and examples provided above highlight the work that is currently ongoing in relation to libraries and the role they play in supporting sustainable communities.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.