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## Meeting of the Executive Member for Leisure Culture and Social Inclusion Advisory Panel

15 July 2008

Report of the Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning and Culture)

### Explore: York Library Learning Centre

#### Summary

1. This report seeks the agreement of the Executive Member to:
  - the future transformation of York Library into an Explore Centre in line with the scrutiny report on the Library Service and as a part of the cultural quarter development
  - the first steps of the transformation
  - spend the receipts from the sale of withdrawn stock to part fund this project
  - officers submitting any appropriate external funding bids

#### Background

2. In 2005 the Executive agreed the Scrutiny Board's vision for a 21st century library service; that vision put learning at the heart of the service. As a result, the Library Service, working in partnership with Adult and Community Education, developed the concept of library learning centres. It is planned to have 6 such centres at York, Acomb, New Earswick, Clifton, Haxby and Tang Hall libraries.
3. The concept is set out in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries* (see Annex A) which describes the vision for welcoming, contemporary spaces designed and adapted to meet the needs of their communities.
4. In February 2008 the first explore centre opened at Acomb. The library has been refurbished and extended with a capital grant from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Council. Since opening the usage has increased dramatically: there were approximately 200 people a day visiting the old library and the visitor count now regularly is 600. The centre is seen by local people as the hub of their community and there are a wide range of activities taking place in the flexible spaces. Some examples include:
  - Monthly Police surgeries on a Saturday morning in the café. This allows people to talk to the Police in an informal way and builds a good relationship between them and the community
  - Reading groups
  - Dads drop in – Young People's Services provide support for young dads

- [Easy@York](#) have used one of our IT suites to train benefits staff over a period of a month
- Capable Guardians meet in one of our rooms (this is a community safety group)
- A range of adult education classes – Spanish, Polish, Food Hygiene, Better Health etc, during the day and in the evening. In addition the centre is going to be used for Saturday one day workshops classes
- The library service runs a computer club once a week for adult social care clients. This is a good example of self directed learning supported by our staff's expertise
- One to one IT starter sessions for people who have no experience of computers
- Skills for life programmes both in the flexible learning centre and in the mainstream programme – where they will be able to be supported with high quality childcare provision

In addition to the current planned programmes there are a number of one off activities that demonstrate the flexibility of the centre, for example;

- In the summer we plan to push the shelves back and have a hockey tournament – arranged through Street Sport to support the summer reading challenge – Team Read
  - Celebration event for the regional project – Fulfilling their Potential – showcasing libraries' work with young people
  - The centre provided a computer training facility for [easy@york](#) for over a month using laptops in one of the learning rooms
  - Various meetings and training sessions are taking place at the centre including training for school administration staff and children's centre training
5. The centre manager is developing strong partnerships within the community through Neighbourhood services and works in close cooperation with both the Children's Centres and Oaklands Sports centre. The Centre also provides hot desks for the service arm. This helps to promote joint working between libraries, adult ed and sports.
  6. The café provides catering facilities for the rooms as well and has become an essential part of the centre – allowing people to stay longer and us to support a wider range of activities.
  7. We have just begun to understand the many possibilities that explore centres afford us. Acomb has allowed the partnership of libraries and Adult and Community Education visibly to demonstrate the social capital that library learning centres can provide.

8. The second explore Centre will open on 26 June 2008 at New Earswick where it will be a part of the Children's Centre. We are just beginning to develop partnerships and there are some exciting possibilities working with the school and the Children's Centre. Our first plan is to join every family to the library through the school.

### **Consultation**

9. Experience of refurbishing libraries has shown that usage always increases and that increase is sustained. This is true of Strensall, Fulford, Dunnington and Acomb. The public have clearly demonstrated that they want more modern library spaces and will use them when they are provided.
10. Once we have Members' views we will undertake a series of consultations with stakeholders and the public which will inform future developments.
11. Public consultation has already taken place on revised opening hours for York Library. A report is being prepared following further consultation with stakeholders.

### **The way forward for York**

12. Planning has now begun for the next explore centre - which will be at York's central library. The transformation of York Library will be a major undertaking. Initial exploration with our architect shows the huge potential of the building. He will begin now to draw up plans that demonstrate what can be done and at what cost. The complete transformation will cost over £5m. Given that amount of capital is not currently available it is necessary to identify initial steps that can be taken now within the overarching vision.
13. The following key principles have already been established for explore centres:
  - Integration of the building into the surrounding landscape and the cultural quarter
  - Transition space that invites people in and allows them to understand the building and its services
  - Welcoming, safe spaces that encourage people to stay
  - Well designed, modern, flexible spaces that can easily be altered for different purposes
  - State of the art learning rooms
  - Library and learning spaces to be integrated
  - Staff to be freed from the counters to engage with the public through innovative use of technology
  - Modern book display
  - Provision of refreshments to support all activities
14. These principles suggest that the following actions should be our starting point:
  - Transformation of the foyer area into a transition area that is welcoming and leads naturally into the rest of the building

- Reshelving of the adult fiction books to follow the lines of modern bookshop display. This will include face on display and comfortable seating areas designed to encourage people to stay longer. The books will be supported by innovative reader development activities with the aim of promoting the joy of reading and supporting literacy.
- Investigation into reshelving non fiction books
- Creation of a baby change room leading off the children's library
- Creation of learning rooms
- Replacement of the issue/return counter with a smaller, more modern facility to be followed by investigation into new technology such as RFID (radio frequency Identification) which supports self issue
- Investigation into the positioning of a café within the library
- Implementation of revised opening hours following public consultation

### **Options**

15. We would like to seek Members' views on the above. To help with this we particularly invite members to address the following questions. We will provide a plan of the library at the meeting to aid this discussion:
  - There should be a space for young people in the Centre. The current space in York Library has been very unsatisfactory and we need some radically different thinking. What services should an explore centre offer to young people?
  - The library holds several collections that were donated to the service many years ago – principally the Marriott collection (books) and the Rowland Collection (oboe sheet music). The terms of the donations are now unclear and the collections are very little used but take up space in a city centre location. What should we do with these collections?
  - One of our principles is the provision of refreshments – but where would be the best position for a café?
  - The building was built in 1927 when libraries were very different places. It has a grade II listing and whereas we would never wish to ignore this – we do need to create a modern library learning space. How do we reconcile these two positions?

### **Analysis**

16. In the light of Members' views a prospectus will be drawn up detailing plans and timescales. Consultation will be undertaken and further funding sought before the initial scheme goes ahead.

### **Corporate Priorities**

17. The development of Library Learning Centres is a key part of the following corporate objectives:
  - Increase people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects

- Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city

It also contributes to all five of the outcomes from the Lifelong Learning and Culture Plan:

- Making York More Eventful
- Engaging in Learning
- Being Healthy
- Building Stronger, Safer and Greener Communities
- A Vibrant Cultural Infrastructure

## **Implications**

### **Financial:**

18. We have been successful in identifying a quantity of stock that is no longer used and was stored in the basement. This stock has been auctioned to gain the best possible price and so far we have realised the sum of £95k so far to invest in the future of York Library for all the people of York. This funding will support the first phase of the development.
19. Property Services have also indicated that it may be possible to align some repair and maintenance spending with the scheme in order to add to its impact. We will also investigate external funding opportunities especially from the adult learning sector.
20. The Library Service has a revenue income target of £336k for 2008/09. Against a similar target in 2007/08 there was a shortfall of £94k. The service has been working hard to address this shortfall and, excluding the income from the sale of obsolete stock referred to in paragraph 18, income levels so far in 2008/09 suggest that the deficit may be lower.

The council's financial regulations require that the income from the sale of the obsolete stock should first be used to achieve the in year income target. Any remaining surplus could be converted in to a revenue contribution towards a new capital programme scheme to develop the central library. At this stage in the year it is too early to assess the likely level of excess income available but a clearer picture should be available at the time of the first budget monitor in September.

### **Human Resources:**

21. There are no HR implications.

### **Property**

22. As the building is grade II listed, we are in the process of consulting with Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development to review the extent and nature of proposed changes. We are including them from the beginning to ensure any alterations meet with their approval.

### **IT**

23. The development will include potential moving of both public access and staff PCs. We will be working with ITT through the process.
24. There are no legal, equalities or crime and disorder implications.

### **Risk Management**

25. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

### **Recommendations**

26. The Executive Member is asked to approve
  - The principles and priorities of the scheme
  - The expenditure of £95k of the Leisure and Culture budget on this scheme
  - The views of Members' on the areas for discussion

Reason: To enable phase one of the work to begin

### **Contact Details**

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#### **Chief Officer responsible for the report:**

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#### **Report Approved**

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**Date** 27.6.08.

#### **Specialist Implications Officers:**

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#### **Wards Affected:**

**All** ✓

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

#### **Background Papers:**

21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries – Report to the Executive  
Libraries at the Heart of Their Communities – Scrutiny report 2005

#### **Annexes**

Annex A: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries