

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Culture)

Development of the Explore Vision in Libraries

Summary

1. This report details how the Explore vision will be extended across all of the library service.

Background

2. In 2005 CYC (as part of the Scrutiny report Putting Libraries at the Heart of Their Communities) set a vision for the library service – one that put learning at the heart of the service and centred around the principle that libraries should not just be libraries but places that add value to their communities in a whole host of ways. They should be spaces that are:
 - Modern, contemporary - designed to meet the needs of the communities they serve
 - Outward looking - connected with the surrounding landscape and community, drawing people in
 - Welcoming - where staff are proactive in helping people make sense of the complex world of information sources
 - Customer first - combining the design principles of a modern layout of a bookshop with the traditional values of a library service
 - Engaging – inspiring people to join a reading group or a homework club, listen to storytelling, sign up to an evening class, discover their family history, have a coffee, meet new people, surf the internet, access any book ever published, look for job opportunities, learn with their families, hire the latest DVD, access information that enables them to make informed life choices and supports independent living
3. This vision is at the heart of our strategy and influences everything we do. It led to the development of a partnership between libraries and adult education which delivers the concept of library learning centres – or Explore Centres as they have become known. This was first set out in the document *21st century learning: 21st century libraries*. Since then there have been three explore library learning centres opened – Acomb and New Earswick in 2008 and York in 2010. The Explore concept is now a recognised and popular concept. Visitors and issues have increased at all three centres, bucking a national decline in library use. The centres are seen by local people as the hub of their community and

there are a wide range of activities taking place in the flexible spaces. Staff have built strong links into the community.

4. Over the last 5 years we have worked hard to make York Libraries a high performing and efficient service. CIPFA's VFM Toolkit 2010 puts us in the cheapest 10% of library authorities and the highest performing 10%. (see annex 1 for further information). Furthermore:
 - We have received national recognition as an example of good practice for our vision and performance.
 - We are bucking the national decline in library use – both visits and book issues
 - Over half the population in York uses libraries – highest in the region
 - We have relatively low staff costs having removed our back room functions
 - We deliver about 4,000 volunteer hours a year – which puts us in the top 7 performing authorities
 - We have fewer books than other authorities, but our books work harder
 - 26th highest issuing library in the country (151 authorities)
5. In 2005 we began a process of improvement and modernisation – following our clear vision. We have created efficiencies in our procurement of stock – we are part of a trans regional stock consortium which drives out the best discounts and enables us to buy more books with the same money. Buying more paperbacks also helps us to maximise our stock. In 2009 we got rid of the back room department that bought the stock. This was achieved through using electronic ordering, supplier selection and direct delivery of books to libraries. We have restructured the service to better align the service with national and local priorities.

Consultation

6. Staff consultation has been undertaken during January and February. Unison have also been consulted and kept updated. Staff have contributed new ideas and the proposals reflect their input.

The Role of a modern library service

7. Public Libraries are a statutory service under the 1964 Museums and Libraries Act. A modern library service fulfils a range of roles both in its buildings and outside in the wider community:

Reading and Literacy: We promote the joy of reading as well as supporting adult and child literacy

Digital Inclusion: Around 30% of York residents are not using the internet. York is a UK Online Champion Centre committed to Race Online 2012. We get people online for free and provide them with free, supported access to the internet through PCs and increasingly through WiFi.

Learning and Skills: Learning is at the heart of the service. We support and provide learning in a wide variety of ways –family history, archive, study space, IAG, work clubs, learning rooms, access to the world's knowledge and ideas.

Access to Information: The cornerstone of a public library service is free, neutral access to information for all. We work with both national and local government to provide access to services e.g. DoH, DWP, JCP

Community Anchors: Libraries are community anchors – safe, neutral spaces where people can come together in a range of activities or just to read, have a coffee.

The New Model Library Service

8. The Explore Centre model has been very successful. The rise in use shown in Annex 1 demonstrates that people value both the buildings and the services and they want more. The next stage is to extend the Explore concept across all the service – looking at communities to see how they want their library service delivered. To this end we are proposing a new model of Centres and Gateways that will deliver library services and learning, involving local communities much more in developing and delivering the service. Community Libraries will be transformed into Explore Gateways, retaining the use of the word library e.g. Bishopthorpe Library : An Explore Gateway.
9. Key proposals:
 - **Explore Centres** will be: York, Acomb, Tang Hall, Clifton and Haxby
 - **Explore Gateways** will be: Bishopthorpe, Copmanthorpe, Dunnington, Dringhouses, Fulford, Huntington, Poppleton, New Earswick and Strensall
 - The mobile library will be reviewed later in the year as a new vehicle is planned. The mobile library will continue to provide services to those people unable to easily reach a static library.
 - The Library at Askham Grange Prison will continue to be run and the Home Library Service will be developed to include more people.
 - Digital services will be developed with free WiFi offered from every building and the People's Network PCs will be upgraded The E Library will continue to be developed as a virtual branch – providing an online service to York's digital community.
 - Each Gateway will have one paid member of staff. To facilitate this, self issue terminals will be put into every library (currently only in Acomb and York).
 - Gateways will be grouped around Explore Centres to provide support. The full range of services will be available at Explore Centres and through Gateways.
 - Specialists will work more closely with frontline staff providing expertise
 - There will be more community involvement through the establishment of Friends groups and the use of volunteers. The role of volunteers will be to provide additional activity such as story times, IT support, help with the Summer Reading Challenge. The service already uses volunteers to deliver its Home Library Service. We will work with CVS to develop our expertise around recruiting and managing volunteers

- A process improvement project will be undertaken to support this model, working with EDRMS to set up a new system for sharing information across the service
- We will be actively looking at other possibilities for the provision of Gateways. One possibility we are currently proposing to provide an Explore Book Café in Rowntree Park. This will involve bringing the current café use in house and providing the services relating to the Gateway function along with greater involvement of the Friends of Rowntree Park
- During 2011/12 we will begin to consider shared use of our buildings by both other council services and community groups

Proposed Services within Gateways

Books and Information:

10. The principle is that customers should experience a taster of what they can expect in Explore Centres. Explore Gateways will contain:
 - A collection of books for adults and children in different formats including large print and ebooks. A free request service allows everyone access to all York Libraries stock through their local library
 - A split of 80% fiction, 20% non-fiction, with 80% titles being in paperback format. Feedback from the public tells us that they want more paperback titles
 - The information service will be delivered by providing customers with access to a range of paper-based reference titles supported by online subscriptions to popular reference resources as well as free access to the internet
 - Local history stock pertinent to the community
 - Community information (posters/leaflets etc) will have a very local focus – library and Council information will be the priority supported by information on local community events (local WI fair for example). Parish Council meeting minutes will be held for one year
 - Copies of the York Press and Yorkshire post plus subscription to 3 magazines
 - Access to CYC and national government services online
11. The focus of the book stock will be on bestselling titles as usage figures at smaller libraries reflect that these are in high demand. In addition, there will be a core collection of non-fiction titles focussing in popular subject areas – cookery, DIY, biographies, gardening etc. These will be supported by stock that reflects the needs of local communities, based on the community profiles we have developed for each library. The profiles look at the hobbies and interests of the area and these will be taken into account at the different Gateways. These will also be reflected in the magazine holdings so these will not be generic across each Gateway. Stock will circulate around the service.
12. Readers panels will be established to help to choose stock for their local libraries.

Archives / Local History:

13. Explore Gateways will serve as preliminary access points for local and family history, and act as pathways to the Archives and Local History department at Explore York. Key resources will be available online via the people's network, with free access to the library edition of Ancestry.com. Each Gateway will also hold a selection of relevant non-fiction books, comprising approximately 1% of stock. About 1/3 of these titles will be specific to the history and interest profiles of the community the Gateway serves. The remainder will comprise popular titles relating to York and Yorkshire, as well as a selection of books relating generally to local and family history. In addition, a small selection of local and family history books for children and young people will be available. These will reflect the history syllabus and topic areas covered by schools in the community, for example, York Minster, Clifford's Tower and Victorian York. Gateways will further encourage active citizenship and community engagement by maintaining copies of parish council minutes and magazines for the current year.

Learning:

14. Learning will be a key feature of the Explore Gateway concept. The use of Digital technology will be a central plank to achieve this ambition. There will be opportunities for online and informal learning at all centres, and the gateway will be able to sign post to a full range of appropriate learning opportunities, sometimes at the local centre but more often at larger Explore centres or other venues. Gateways will also be places where people can register interests in particular learning activities and will be able to identify people with similar interests.

Digital:

15. Each Gateway will have free access to the internet through fixed PCs as well as WiFi. There will be free help in getting online.

Options

16. The options open to the Executive Member are:
 - to adopt the new model
 - to retain the current model of service delivery

Analysis

17. Our statutory responsibility includes ensuring that the service reflects the needs of local communities. This new model offers a greater degree of community involvement through the establishment of Friends groups and roles for volunteers and will allow us to better understand and respond to local need.
18. In changing times the library service must develop as well as retaining those key elements of books and information which are core to the service. This model will enable us to develop our digital offer for the York online community as well as opening up our buildings to other services and community groups.

19. There will be a clear library offer across the whole service. The public will be able to better understand not only what services are available but also where and how to access them. Specialist staff will be more tied into frontline working, providing expertise in areas such as children's books, reference and stock work
20. The Explore groups will provide a flexibility in staffing and support for the staff in Gateways. Good practice working with communities and developing the service to meet their needs will more easily be shared.

Next Steps

21. The development of the explore concept will include a number of phases. As we talk to communities we will discover possibilities that are now unknown and so this will need to be a responsive process, taking on board new ideas as they arise:

Phase One - by October 2011:

- Installation of self issue terminals
- Staff changes
- WiFi
- Advertising volunteer opportunities
- Setting up Friends group
- Exploration of ways to involve communities in the development of the service
- Process improvement work - looking at everything we do and challenging the way we do it - with the aim of reducing admin. work and freeing up front line staff

Phase Two - from October and ongoing:

- Working with each community to ensure the service reflects local need, for instance, in terms of stock, local history and activities
- Developing use of volunteers and ongoing recruitment
- Development of online services - the e library
- Developing partnerships with third sector and community groups in the use of our buildings
- Developing access to CYC services through libraries
- Exploring other options for delivery of service e.g. Rowntree Park cafe

Community Involvement:

22. Over the next few months we will be beginning to involve the community in a number of different ways:
 - We will be setting up a "friends" group. We are looking at how other services run them successfully. We would like it to be an explore friends group involving adult learners as well as libraries and archives users.
 - We have developed a number of roles for volunteers - story readers, IT buddies, archive newspaper indexers for example. We will be advertising these opportunities in communities and through CVS. A number of people

have already come forward as volunteers. How we work with volunteers will be a developing picture over the next year.

- We are investigating how local people can be involved in the development of our services - other services have local committees with members of the public working alongside staff on new projects e.g. Blackpool have community volunteers working on their new central library.

Although we are beginning this work now, it will be an ongoing commitment.

Corporate Priorities

23. The proposal relates to all the strands of the LSP. The provision of safe, free spaces open to all in local communities is important to community cohesion and enables CYC to deliver a range of services that will directly contribute to the corporate strategy:

The Sustainable City – less travel for services as well as information on green issues

The Thriving City – access to IAG on learning and work as well as help to improve digital skills, the Gateways will support people back into employment

The Learning City – free access to the internet and provision of learning courses as well as space for study and bookstock to support study

The City of Culture. – access to reading and author events

The Safer City – safe, welcoming spaces that are open to all

The Healthy City – access to health information

The Inclusive City – libraries are anchors, open to all, working to bring communities together

Implications

Financial:

24. The following table shows the total cost of the proposed new structure (at 2010/11 prices):

Cost of new posts and delivery team	2011/12	2012/13
	Part Year	Ongoing
Ongoing costs:	£'000	£'000
14.8fte at Grade 7	66	132
Annual maintenance costs	6	12
Prudential Borrowing Repayments	21	21
Total ongoing costs	93	165
One off Costs in 2011/12:		
Installation of self issue machines	18	-
Installation of Wi-Fi	14	-
Estimated Redundancy Costs	11	
Total Costs	136	165

Funding Available:

Existing Staffing Budgets	163	261
Change to Big City Read	6	12
Contribution from Library HQ budgets	7	7
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	176	280
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Total Saving	40	115
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25. The cost of the new structure will be £165k in a full year (at 2010/11 prices). The total savings generated will be £40k in 2011/12 and £115k ongoing savings from 2012/13 onwards.
26. The majority of the funding for the structure will come from existing staffing budgets. On top of this a change to the method of delivery of the Big City Read project in 2011/12 should generate further savings of £12k. There is also a £7k contribution being made from the Library Headquarters budget.
27. It should be noted that the amounts included for redundancy costs and Wi-Fi installation costs are estimates and may change. There may also be some element of pay protection associated with the structure, although this is not expected to be more than around £1k in total.
28. **Human Resources:** There will be a reduction of 4.8 FTE posts. Vacant posts are being held and there are some expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy (total approx. 6.1 FTE). Staff identified within scope of these changes will be consulted through CYC's Supporting Transformation (Management of Change) process. However it is hoped to mitigate potential compulsory redundancies by releasing vacancies and considering voluntary redundancy requests. Staff and Trade Unions have been briefed on the proposals and further meetings are due to take place.
29. **Equalities:** The EIA has been done and is available. Further more detailed work will be done on it throughout the implementation
30. **Legal:** No legal implications
31. **Crime and Disorder:** No Crime and Disorder implications
32. **Information Technology (IT):** IT Services will be involved in the provision of self issue terminals and WiFi
33. **Property:** During 2011/12 we will look to see how we can begin to reduce premises costs: This will be done by consulting with communities and implementing shared use, either by bringing people into existing libraries or by moving our services into alternative community locations. CYC Asset Manager will be involved in this work.

34. The use of Rowntree Park Café for the Gateway service will require the Council to serve notice on the current tenant that the lease will not be renewed on 30 November 2011, the termination date. This action will result in a loss of rental to the Council.
35. The current lease is governed by the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 which allows the tenant an automatic right to renew, however the Council, as landlord, has grounds not to renew the lease if the Council wish to occupy the property for its own service provision.

Risk Management

36. The risk/s associated with the recommendation of this report are assessed at a net level below 16.

Recommendations

37. The Executive Member is asked to agree to the implementation of the innovative Explore Gateway model, including the proposed extension to Rowntree Park Cafe

Reason: so that the library service can continue to develop its Explore vision

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**Report
Approved**



Date 3.3.11.

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Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

21st Century Learning ; 21st Century Libraries

Annexes

Annex 1 – Performance graphs