Agenda item 8. Library Consultation Feedback

Main Consultation Findings

Copies of a detailed analysis of each of the consultation components, set out in the cover report, will be tabled at the meeting. They will also be published with the minutes of the meeting.

The following "headlines" are drawn from the initial analysis of these components.

Draft Vision: There was universal support for the headline vision for the library service of being *'Centres of Learning and Opportunity for All'*.

The element of the vision rated most important by respondents was that libraries are *'staffed by well trained staff with excellent customer focus'.* This was highlighted in the stakeholder sessions and in the online survey where 96% of responses rated it as important.

Even the two elements of the vision that were least endorsed were rated as important by 25% of respondents:

- '*Flexible spaces which can be used for other purposes when not being used for library servic*es' and

- *'Creative spaces that challenge your imagination and encourage the sharing of knowledge and ideas'*

Furthermore, where respondents were asked in the survey about money saving ideas, they frequently commented on the importance of using library spaces to generate income.

The stakeholder sessions enabled a thorough debate about the vision and three key messages stood out that might help to strengthen it:

- **Community involvement** – There was strong support for a 'bottom up' approach where the local communities have a voice and involvement in libraries through the Friends Groups or volunteering. The online survey also highlighted that 1 in 4 respondents would volunteer to carryout basic tasks, like shelving, whilst 1 in 5 said they would join a friends group, help make local decisions and help out with events.

- **Marketing and promotion** – There were numerous comments about a lack of awareness of the services and activities provided by libraries and the need for more marketing activity. The non-

user survey also highlighted the need to know more about what is on offer as a solution to encourage people to use libraries in the future. (This was the second highest answer).

- **Reading Cafés** – 40% of responses from the non-user survey felt that a reading café would be the single most important element in encouraging them to visit a library. The stakeholder groups and online survey also confirmed the importance of cafés in libraries, especially for the parents of the younger users, in generating library usage / growth and facilitating social interaction.

Future priorities for services - With regard to people's top priorities for the different types of library, the top answers were the same for all libraries: Borrowing books, reading and studying space, local information, events, computers. There was just one exception which was that archives and local history was also a priority for York Explore.

Non-users indicated that the top three things that would encourage them to come to a library in the future was: a reading café on site, better information about services, and more events and activities.

Future network of libraries – The key finding here is that almost everyone from the stakeholder and focus group sessions saw the local library providing an important community hub. There were strong aspirations to enhance this hub role through improvements to library buildings and facilities. The perceived role of the community hub varied depending on local needs, but in general there was strong recognition of the key role that the local library provides in a broader context of social inclusion, providing a neutral place to meet people and to engage in activities including relating to learning and literacy.

Co-location – There was support for the vision of moving away from stand-alone buildings and recognition of the need for partnerships to create services co-located with other community amenities.

With respect to location, over 50% of respondents in the online survey said they would be most likely to combine a visit to the library with a trip to the shops, the post office or the bank suggesting that prominent high street locations remain the most suitable for libraries.

Young People – Three focus groups with young people found that young people like having flexible space for sessions such as lego or story-time and that this works best at the larger libraries such as Acomb and York which have rooms off the main library space. Cafés were also highlighted as important enabling young people to meet up with friends.

In terms of what they want to see in the future, especially as teenagers, the importance of technology and things they don't have at home such as 3D printers was stressed. A desire was expressed to see more clubs such as coding clubs.

Revising the Vision

In response to the consultation on the draft vision the following revised vision is proposed:

We propose to build on the success of our libraries by continuing to place learning at the heart of everything we do, re-imagining our libraries as *Centres of Learning and Opportunity for All*. We believe that our libraries should continue to be stocked with a broad range of books and materials that promote reading and literacy and to support people with the information they need in their everyday lives. Increasingly they will be:

- Fit-for-purpose, contemporary spaces meeting the needs of everyone
- Fully accessible: information will be easy to obtain, reading encouraged, research easy and learning natural
- Outward looking, linking with the community and drawing people in to foster a sense of place
- Open at times that reflect the needs of the community including late night and weekend opening where required
- Shaped by local need, promoting community involvement and enabling local people to take action in their area
- Transparent and visible from the outside, clearly signed and encouraging people to come in
- Staffed by well trained staff with excellent customer focus

And they will:

- Maximise use of the building assets through partnership working and innovative programming
- Proactively promote their activities and services making sure that the whole community is aware of the offer

They will also provide state-of-the-art learning spaces that have:

- The latest digital technologies

- Flexible spaces for formal and informal learning
- Study space and creative spaces
- A range of learning programmes
- Digital inclusion programmes to get people online for free

What network of library buildings should we have?

We believe that there should be a range of libraries to meet the needs of different users. Some libraries will be larger, offering all services, and some smaller, designed to meet more local needs. Reading cafés should be incorporated into all libraries wherever possible. There will be five types of library:

York Explore: this should remain the flagship facility where all services are available including the Archive & Local History Centre.

Explore Library Learning Centres: Experience shows that the bigger libraries are popular (the biggest 4 currently account for 64% of library visits). People will travel further to use them because they have more stock, are open longer and offer more services. There is a case to build on this by creating three Explore Library Learning Centres across the city providing:

- A broad range of library and information facilities
- Space for Adult Learning courses
- Café
- Space for multiple community use / hires
- Access to archive and local history resources

The Explore Library Learning Centres would be located in the areas of greater need: at the Burnholme Centre (currently under construction), Acomb Explore (which has been so successful that it would now benefit from enlargement) and in the Clifton area (potentially a replacement for / upgrade of the current Clifton library).

Explore Gateways: Offered in a variety of venues, preferably with café facilities, these libraries should be co-located with other community activities, with local communities invited to be involved in their operation. They will remain a key part of the statutory service and the library provider will continue to ensure that they are staffed and stocked with books, materials and information.

Virtual Libraries: A 24/7 online service including ebooks and emagazines, other online resources and virtual spaces for people to share ideas e.g. online reading groups.

Reading Cafés: These are a different type of library service encouraging the joy of reading especially for those who may feel uncomfortable in a more traditional library.