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

24 March 2009

Report of the Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning and Culture)

Explore York - Library Learning Centre

Summary

1. This report asks the Executive Member to approve the first phase of a capital scheme at York Library to create the Explore York Library Learning Centre.

Background

2. 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. Staff have built strong links into the community, especially with the police and the neighbourhood team. It is a central part of the work to bring the community closer together.
3. In July 2008 the Executive Member agreed:
 - that York Library should be transformed into an Explore Centre in line with the scrutiny report on the Library Service and as part of the cultural quarter development
 - the first key steps of the transformation
 - that receipts from the sale of withdrawn stock should be used to part fund this project subject to the overall budget position
 - that officers should submit appropriate external funding bids
4. Three phases of work will be required to complete the transformation:
 - Creation of the core explore centre on the ground floor - £500k
 - Creation of the new York Archives and Local History Centre – approximately £1m
 - Full realisation of the building's potential – costs to be assessed
5. Funding amounting to £540k is now available to undertake phase one of the necessary works:
 - Budget Council allocated £200k of capital to this project

- The Library Service and the Adult and Community Education Service have entered into a three year partnership with Aviva which will provide £200k of capital funding to transform the Library
 - £100k has been raised from the sale of withdrawn stock
 - £40,000 has been obtained from Housing & Adult Social Services (HASS) to provide a Changing Places Facility (toilet and changing facilities for people with a severe physical disability)
6. The vision for the partnership with Aviva is *to help the people of York achieve prosperity and peace of mind, and a thriving future, by inspiring and developing community based learning in financial capability*. It will deliver a series of financial capability programmes to help people to better manage their money and will:
- Improve the financial capability of the people of York, including hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups
 - Elevate York Libraries into one of the UK's top 5 performers
 - Establish best practice in financial capability learning and its measurement

Consultation

7. A number of consultations have taken place on this initiative and more are planned:
- Officers consulted a conservation officer at the very early stages of the project as York Library is a Grade II listed building. It was very important to work with the conservation officer at every step as ensuring the integrity of the building is a key aim.
 - Discussions with the CYC Press Office have produced a plan for keeping the public informed about what is happening and allowing them to comment on the plans. The library will need to close for approximately 6-8 weeks in the Autumn so it is important to keep people up to date with alternative provision.
 - In June 2006 Talkabout 25 a series of questions were asked about York Library and we have followed the results of them up in the latest Talkabout. We are expecting the results for this in April 2009.
 - Public consultation was undertaken on opening hours for the central library in 2008 and we are using the results of that to revise the opening hours for the new explore centre.
 - Library staff will be attending every ward committee in April to show the plans and to consult on stock, learning, spaces etc.
 - There will be a public consultation held at York Library during April/May where people can talk to staff about the key elements of the plan.
 - There is a monthly staff meeting for all York Library staff to consult, update and receive feedback. Also – the wall of the staff room is being used to generate ideas through post its under key headings. Unison is being involved in these meetings.

The Scheme

8. Officers have been working with the Council's architects to prepare a draft layout (see Annex A) for phase one which focuses on the ground floor. The layout proposed demonstrates all the principles of an explore centre:
 - 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 a café to support all activities
9. A full condition survey has been completed for the building and a feasibility report produced. This gives us the complete picture of all the work that needs to be done to the building so we can ensure that at each phase we pick up essential work and ensure that later phases of work do not disrupt earlier work.
10. Work is now being undertaken on the detail of this first phase to ensure that it can be delivered within budget. Listed building consent will then be applied for and we anticipate work being completed and the explore centre opened by December 2009.
11. There will be a closure period of approximately six to eight weeks to undertake the work. A plan is being drawn up to enable people to return books within the city centre and the mobile library will be visiting the city centre at various times to be determined.

Options

12. The key aim is that the explore centre is the centre of knowledge for the city. The following are the key options proposed:

Stock:

13. The target is to have 30,000 additional books making a total stock of 120,000. There will be a larger ratio of paperbacks to hardbacks as that is what people have told us they want (Talkabout 25 June 2006). Stock will be arranged in an innovative way that is more intuitive and transparent for users whilst retaining the ability to retrieve individual titles quickly.

Digital Library:

14. It is planned to introduce innovative technology to provide access to the most up to date knowledge e.g. online reference tools, downloading of audio books and e-books, guiding to key subject websites. Free access to the internet will continue to be a cornerstone of this offer as will staff's expert skills and knowledge.

Spaces:

15. There will be a variety of spaces catering to a range of user needs. These will range from informal to formal with a clear space for individual quiet study remaining upstairs. We will also be able to offer space to groups wishing to study. The café will be at the front of the building and will offer quality food at affordable prices. It will have internet facilities.

Archive and Local History:

16. Following the decision to combine the two services taken by the Executive in December last year, the post of Archive Development Manager has been advertised. It is anticipated that this person will be in post by June 2009. Following that the reading room will move from the current location in the City Archive to the explore centre when it reopens later this year. This will dramatically improve the opening hours and access to the collections.

Self Issue:

17. The counter will be replaced by self issue machines – freeing staff up to work more closely with the public – helping them choose books, working with children, supporting learning etc.

Opening hours:

18. Self-issue should mean that opening hours can be increased at no extra cost. Subject to a further report being brought on this issue with detailed costings, the aim is for the explore centre to be open for longer than the current library: an increase of 6.5 hours a week for Reference and 9.5 hours a week for Lending – including Sunday opening which we have had a lot of demand for. These are the proposed new hours:

Monday	9am – 8pm
Tuesday	9am – 8pm
Wednesday	9am – 8pm
Thursday	9am – 8pm
Friday	9am – 6pm
Saturday	9am – 5pm
Sunday	11am – 4pm

Learning Provision:

19. The explore centre is particularly suited to programmes delivered during the day. (Due to parking restrictions evening programmes will be limited). Its central locations will mean it is well suited to the following programmes:
 - English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) at all levels. ESOL provision is expanding
 - Provision for learners with disabilities.
 - One day short course programmes at the weekend
 - Family History programmes to complement and use the local collections
 - Short taster and brush up programmes for ICT
20. In addition it is planned to establish a skills for life centre at the explore centre with online support for Council employees and some sessions to support people working independently.
21. York Library is currently used for a supported learning programme for people with learning disabilities and this would be expanded once the café facility is opened.
22. Financial capability workshops will also be available. Workshops will be run throughout the week to support people in budgeting, savings and understanding financial products. This will be supported by trained library staff who will be able to offer one to one support. A longer programme aimed at people who require more support will be run three times during the year.

Analysis

23. Explore York will be an iconic development designed to put us in the top 5 performing library services in the country and to deliver 1 million visitors per year once all three phases have been completed. It will provide an important centre for financial capability programmes, ESOL, and for delivering the skills pledge for Council staff, as well as a greatly enhanced York Library.

Corporate Priorities

24. 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 four of the outcomes from the Lifelong Learning and Culture Plan:

- A Vibrant Cultural Infrastructure
- Engaging in Learning
- Active Lifestyles
- A cultural offer for young people

Implications

Financial:

25. Capital

Source	Funding
Aviva	£200,000
CYC capital	£200,000
HASS – changing places facility	£40,000
Sale of withdrawn library books	£100,000 – subject to approval to carry forward by the Executive
Total	£540,000

26. Revenue

The Explore Centre will operate within existing budgets. Key issues are:

- The 30,000 additional books will be delivered through better purchasing within the existing book stock budget (using better discounts provided by the new purchasing consortium arrangements, and purchasing a greater proportion of paperbacks) together with a proposed donations scheme.
- There will be some costs incurred through the closure of the library for the works to take place due principally to loss of income and storage costs. The cost depends on the length of closure required (currently being assessed). There will be some savings to off-set these costs e.g. on relief staffing. Furthermore, we may be able to move the audio-visual stock to other libraries to reduce loss of income. Any alternative arrangements made for customers during the closure period will use existing York staff and will therefore be cost-neutral. If these one-off costs cannot be fully off-set they will need to be funded from the stock fund.

27. Further work will be done on detailed plans for operationalising the centre including:

- Financing of self-issue machines
- Providing additional opening hours to be delivered through new staff rotas (made possible by self-issue technology) funded within existing staffing budgets
- A robust business plan for the café in the light of the successful experience of Acomb. The working assumption is that this will operate on a break-even basis

28. The detailed financial implications arising from these three proposals will be considered in future reports, prior to any decisions to implement them.

29. It is envisaged the Explore Centre will deliver additional income which will help to address the current income shortfall across the Library Service.

Human Resources (HR):

30. There will be potential HR implications arising, for example, from new working timetables to deliver the increased opening hours and Sunday opening. These will be discussed with staff, Unison and HR. There will be some changes to roles, for example to create a centre manager post, and to staff the proposed café. These will be dealt with through a restructure process which will be reported separately. There will be no redundancies required by these proposals.

Property:

31. Planning permission and listed building consent will need to be obtained. The Conservation Officer is aware of our scheme and has been working with us from the beginning.

IT:

32. There will be moving of IT equipment within the building. We have involved ITT in our planning.
33. There are no legal, equalities, crime and disorder or IT implications.

Risk Management

34. Regular monitoring will be required during the implementation of the capital scheme.

Recommendations

35. The Executive Member is asked to agree to:
- The budget (subject to the approval of the Executive for the carry forward of £100k)
 - Phase One of the building works subject to planning permission
 - Final decisions on the proposals for self issue machines, increased opening hours and the operation of a café being taken in light of further detailed reports

Reason: To enable officers to go ahead with phase one of Explore York

Annexes

- A. Plan of facilities

Background papers:

Explore: York Library Learning Centre – Report to the Executive Member for Leisure & Culture, 15 July 2008

Future of the City Archive Service - Report to the Executive, 23 December 2008

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**

✓

Date 9.3.09.

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Wards Affected:

All ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report