

Report of the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Libraries Scrutiny Review Final Report – Cover Report**

**Summary**

1. This cover report presents the final report arising from the Libraries Scrutiny review – see Appendix 1, and asks Cabinet to approve the recommendations arising from the review.

**Background & Review Objectives**

2. At a meeting of the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2012, the committee received an update on a previously completed scrutiny review of library provision across the city together with a briefing on the current provision. The Committee agreed they wanted to investigate further local library provision across the city and their use as community hubs providing other council services, in order to ascertain whether the Council is making best use of library buildings and if more could be developed as community hubs to better serve residents in their surrounding locale. The Committee set up a Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf, and agreed the following objectives for the review:
  - i. To increase the number of people going into libraries
  - ii. To make better use of library buildings (whilst not undermining the integrity of the library service)
  - iii. To provide greater access to Council and third sector services, and provide more opportunities for community engagement on local issues.

**Review Conclusions**

3. Overall the Task Group agreed that where possible it would be helpful to increase the opening hours in those library buildings where the layout of the building and/or the availability of additional rooms, would allow for their alternative use.

4. Communities should be encouraged to use the buildings and the space they provide for community purposes, complementing other community facilities in the vicinity.
5. Whilst library buildings are open for community use, where at all possible and where self-service facilities are in place (or could be provided in the future), the library opening hours should be extended to provide a basic level of library service without the need for library staff.
6. Information on a range of council services (including public meetings and how to get involved), together with contact information, and similar appropriate information from the council's partners and third sector organisations should be made readily available in Libraries either on notice boards or via leaflets etc. The Task Group also agreed it would be useful if all libraries displayed more community information and details on how to volunteer and participate in responding to issues affecting their local community.
7. The Task Group agreed it would be useful to have a definition of what a community hub modelled around a community library was. They therefore suggested the following:

*'A Community Hub puts the local library at the heart of the community providing a flexible and welcoming space where local residents can come together for a wide range of community activities'*

### **Review Recommendations**

8. As a result of their work on this review, the Task Group has drafted the following recommendations for the consideration of the full Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

i. The Library Service to:

- a) adopt the following definition of a community hub modelled around a community library and commit to implementing community hubs throughout the city:

*'A Community Hub puts the local library at the heart of the community providing a flexible and welcoming space where local residents can come together for a wide range of community activities'*

- b) Consider the customer base for each library to identify ways of encouraging more use
- c) Consider ways of increasing the number of volunteers and volunteering roles
- d) Improve marketing for libraries and their facilities through a variety of mediums to the community and organisations
- e) Identify the community hub elements currently available at each library and investigate how other elements may be introduced in the future to meet the aims of the agreed definition
- f) Investigate the introduction of a fair trade refreshments / cafe at all community libraries
- g) look at the Big Survey responses in detail to try to understand the reasons behind the figure of 13% of respondents who had stated a lack of transport as the reason they did not use libraries, and investigate the use of Dial-a-ride to improve access
- h) Investigate the possibility of ring-fencing a proportion of the income raised by each library for re-investment into supporting the specific needs of its local community.

ii. Each Community Hub to:

- a) Clearly define its opening hours and the services it offers and when, and ensure these are appropriately advertised so that it is clear when the building is available for alternative use.
- b) Increase its opening hours to enable more opportunities for community use wherever possible.
- c) Provide flexible space so that it may be used for a variety of purposes e.g. moveable shelving
- d) Maintain self-service machines in its community library to enable a basic level of library service throughout its opening hours, without the need for library staff

e) Provide display boards and/or leaflets on:

- council services, public meetings and contact information
- the council's partners and third sector organisations
- community events and activities etc
- volunteering and participating in responding to issues affecting the local community

Reason: To complete the work on this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

### **Council Plan 2011-15**

9. The recommendations arising from this review supports the council's aim to build strong communities and be a city full of active and self-reliant communities, where everyone has an effective voice in local issues and where there is a strong sense of belonging.

### **Implications & Risk Management**

10. **HR** - The Head of Libraries, Information & Archives has confirmed there would be no HR implications associated with the implementation of the proposed recommendations, even if the proposed introduction of a Social Enterprise to operate the Council's Library and Archives services were to proceed.
11. An assessment of the HR implications associated with the introduction of a Social Enterprise will be presented in a future report to Cabinet. All HR changes will be managed in accordance with the CYC Supporting Transformation policy.
12. **Legal** – There are no specific legal implications flowing from the recommendations. The Council does have a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. The Service also needs to ensure that appropriate agreements are in place for any building hires.
13. **Financial** – There are no financial implications associated with Recommendations (i) a-c & e, and (ii) a, d & e.
14. In regard to recommendation (i) d, the cost of marketing will depend on the mediums used. The intention is to advertise via the council's website, council newsletters, Your Ward, within library buildings etc therefore the costs will be minimal.

15. In regard to recommendations (i) f, g & h, there are no financial implications associated with carry out the recommended investigative work. In regard to recommendation (i) f, fair trade or rainforest alliance goods are no more expensive and are already in use in the current library cafes. In other libraries, the plan is to introduce small drinks machines which will be self financing following a model in Northants libraries. In regard to recommendation (i) g, the Library Service plans to investigate opportunities for sponsorship i.e. good news story for a private sector firm. In regard to recommendation (i) h, the Library Service currently has an income target that needs to be met in order for the service to remain within budget. If income is above budget (and the overall service is within budget) the Service Manager has discretion to vire budgets to fulfil service aims. However following a move to a Social Enterprise, it may be easier to implement this recommendation through different ways of working with the community.
16. In regard to Recommendation (ii) b, extending community hub opening hours may increase costs in relation to staffing and premises. However it may be possible to recoup that cost through the use of volunteers, and charging for the use of the building, which will be easier in a social enterprise. The costs and potential charges would need assessing for each hub.
17. In regard to recommendation (ii) c, at some libraries movable shelving has already been introduced allowing better use of the space available, and it may not be very expensive to add to that. Where plans already exist to refurbish or extend library buildings, any furniture will be costed into the overall plan to make it easier for other uses of those buildings. Those plans will be initiated if and when funding becomes available.
18. In regard to recommendation (ii) e, there would be no cost to the council as long as the notice/display boards were already available and the leaflets and notices were printed by others. There may be an additional minimal cost to Democratic Services if a decision were taken to provide a hard copy of each agenda for public decision making meetings at all community hubs.

## **Options**

19. Having considered the scrutiny final report attached, the Cabinet may choose
  - i. To approve the recommendations

- ii. Not to approve some or all of the recommendations listed above.

### **Recommendation**

20. Taking into consideration all of the information contained within the final report attached and its annexes, the Cabinet are recommended to:
- i. Approve the recommendations arising from the review, as shown in paragraph 8 above.

Reason: To conclude the Scrutiny Review in line with CYC Scrutiny procedures and protocols

### **Contact Details**

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**Report Approved**



**Date**

23 May 2013

**Implications:** Information was provided by the following Officers:

Legal – Andrew Docherty  
Finance – Richard Hartle  
HR – Mary Bailey

**Wards Affected:**

For further information please contact the author of the report

All

**Background Papers:**

See information contained within the final report attached

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1** –Final Report