

Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

21 March 2017

Report title	Draft Libraries Transformation Strategy 2017 - 2027: Consultation	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds City Economy	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Keren Jones, City Economy	
Originating service	Libraries	
Accountable employee(s)	Charlotte Johns	Head of Strategic Programmes
	Tel	01902 554240
	Email	charlotte.johns@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Cabinet	22 February 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise the draft libraries strategy and key appendices, including a draft equalities analysis.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the draft libraries strategy and supporting appendices, including the draft equalities analysis which will be subject to public consultation for 12 weeks, from 27 February to 21 May 2017.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In May 2016 the Library Service undertook a Peer Challenge. This provided invaluable feedback on our libraries and our plans and approach to developing them in the future. The key areas of feedback included:
- Recognition that there is a need for change;
 - Advised the council to review the role and function of a library service looking forward;
 - Identified the need to increase the capacity for transformation;
 - Identified key opportunities for the service such as commercialisation and digital agendas;
 - Emphasised the importance of how libraries can support the wider priorities and outcomes for the city.
- 2.2 As a result a libraries transformation programme was established, with a view to developing a strategy for our libraries which responds to this feedback.
- 2.3 Previously there was a £500,000 savings target for libraries in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2017/18. This was removed by Cabinet in October 2016. Any savings will be service led, and based on feedback received in the engagement and formal consultation exercises.
- 2.4 A specific recommendation from the Peer Review was to work with The Consultation Institute, to provide advice, guidance and approval to any engagement and consultation approach. This recommendation has been completed, and The Consultation Institute have supported and quality assured the approach to libraries transformation
- 2.5 As part of developing the draft strategy a period of engagement was undertaken with local people to better understand what they want from libraries in the City of Wolverhampton, and put the 'case for change' to them.
- 2.6 The case for change is that:
1. Demand for the library service is in decline and we need to promote use while demonstrating value for money.
 2. We need to explore new ways of working as our resources are stretched and we struggle to maintain a quality service.
 3. We need to meet the future needs of citizens in order to create a vibrant and modern library service for the city, including maximising opportunities in relation to digital technologies.

2.7 Over 500 people participated in the engagement phase with the public through externally facilitated workshops, an online survey, email and social media. The key themes from the engagement exercise were:

- Individuals were very supportive of the library services and believed that it continued to be relevant for a wide variety of reasons. They expressed a view that libraries were especially relevant for those on low incomes and for those who did not have internet access at home. Besides offering educational value, libraries were seen to serve an important role as a social hub.
- Adopting a multi-use facility approach. The largest proportion of respondents believed that library services could be optimised and utilised more effectively through co-location and multi-use spaces.
- Although a large proportion of respondents reported having never used another library other than a Wolverhampton library (46.4%), the majority seemed to agree that library services could improve if integrated into other organisations, in particular community, health and social organisations (40.1%).
- When asked what would make people use a library more, the most cited theme was more convenient opening hours (19.6%), wider number of services (14.3%) and better computing facilities. (8.3%)
- Most participants reported that libraries of the future need a building because they are the hub of the community and motivate people to get out of their houses, relax, and enhance social interaction. (37.2%)
- The most frequent response regarding reasons for the decline in demand for libraries concerned the competition that digital technologies present (32%). That is, people indicated that they are more likely to find information that is available in libraries through the internet, which was considered more convenient and accessible for individuals without the need to visit a library.

3.0 Consultation

3.1 As part of the libraries transformation programme, a draft vision and strategy have been developed. These align to meeting local priorities, the recently published national framework for libraries 'Libraries Deliver' and the Society for Chief Librarian's 'Universal Offers'. As part of the consultation, we are seeking people's views on the strategy.

3.2 Our draft vision statement is:

Modern, vibrant and sustainable libraries for the City of Wolverhampton

In order to explain what we mean by modern, vibrant and sustainable we will work to a number of strategic aims.

3.3 Proposed Strategic Aims

3.3.1 The law requires the Council to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for local people, although it does not define what is meant by 'comprehensive and efficient', leaving it open to local interpretation.

3.3.2 We have identified the following strategic aims for Wolverhampton Libraries which we believe are focussed on delivering modern, comprehensive and efficient library services to achieve improved outcomes for the City of Wolverhampton.

- Supporting reading and literacy
- Promoting learning & improving skills
- Increasing the use of digital services
- Promoting and enabling health & wellbeing
- Widening access to quality information
- Broadening access to culture

3.4 Service Transformation

3.4.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council are committed to library services, and are proposing to maintain the number of libraries in the city, and enhance service provision.

3.4.2 Included in the strategy are things we want to improve in all 16 branch libraries – such as improving the book stock, digital offer and physical appearance within libraries. There are also some specific opportunities in each library site, and the consultation document seeks the views of local people on these. This includes any suggestions from local people and community groups about how libraries can work them and other services to respond to feedback and extend opening hours and improve provision.

3.4.3 As part of the consultation, we are also seeking people's views on fees and charges and the types of events and activities they wish to see in their local libraries.

3.4.4 The Home Library Service is also included in the consultation document. Whilst we will maintain the Home Library Service, we wish to gain more customer feedback in order to look at ways to improve provision.

3.4.5 The Education Library Service is also included in the consultation document. This is a service providing teaching materials to schools – and is not about school libraries. Take up of the service has declined over the last three years as schools move to Academies, school budgets are put under increasing pressure and technological advancements support teaching the curriculum in new and different ways. We want to understand customer views on the future of the service.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The 2016/17 net controllable budget for the Library Service is £1.3 million. There are currently no savings target included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the service. The outcome of the consultation and any revisions to service provision will be reported to a future meeting and will include the full financial implications of any proposed changes. [MF/09022017/U]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 Library authorities are required to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for everyone who wants to use it in its area (Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964).

Section 7 (2) of the above also requires an authority to have regard to the “desirability” of keeping adequate stocks of books by various means. the Council is also subject to a general duty of best value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". Best Value Statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, revised in 2015, makes clear that this duty applies and includes economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision. The relevance of the best value duty is that it formed a substantive ground of challenge in a High Court challenge and, whilst the challenge was lost, set a high benchmark for other local authorities where decisions simply reflect the need to make cuts without reinvesting in widening access to the remaining library service.

5.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 establishes what is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and requires an authority to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not. An authority must be mindful of these requirements in the run up to and at the point of decision. To meet these Section 149 requirements an authority often completes an equality analysis although completing one or more of these does not itself mean that the need to have “due regard” has been met. [RB/10022017/B]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 Equalities implications have been considered in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out above. This has included work on equality analyses on all alternatives for the library service. A draft equality analysis is included as an appendix to this report, and Cabinet are specifically asked to consider it as part of their decision making. The equalities analysis is also part of the consultation, and will be updated in response to feedback received.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no known environmental implications at this time. A travel survey conducted in October/November 2016 showed that walking is the most popular mode of transport for visiting a library. The environmental implications of the options are that should people travel further to visit a library the carbon footprint of their journey has increased.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 Human resources implications will be addressed after the agreement of a libraries strategy in July 2017, as employee resources will need to be aligned to ensure effective delivery of the strategy.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are significant implications for Corporate Landlord in terms of potential relocation and investment in certain libraries.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 None.