

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	8 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
3.	Title:	Library Strategy proposal.
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development

### 5. Summary

To seek approval to develop a strategy for Rotherham's Public Libraries

### 6. Recommendations

- **Recognition of the important role played by our libraries in helping to change lives and transform communities by provision of a service striving for excellence.**
- **Approval is given to develop a strategy for libraries to help embed the positive change and improved performance already being delivered by our public libraries. The strategy would be based on a full assessment of local needs in order to ensure the council fulfils its statutory duties under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

- A 10 year strategy for Rotherham Libraries will be produced during 2010. This would be a public document and would identify the services provided to the public via the library network.
- This process will involve consultation with the public, elected members, stakeholders, partners, managers and staff.
- When the final version of the document is produced it is intended that there will be a public launch to allow maximum publicity for the service.

### **7.1 Background**

- The Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) requires local Councils to provide a local library service which is comprehensive and efficient and that is available to all who wish to use it.
- Framework for the future (DCMS 2003 -2013 { 10 year vision for Public Libraries})
- Public Library Service Standards.
- Cultural strategies in Rotherham 2000- 2007.
- Annual Library Plans, Position statements, Libraries Team plan.
- Continued member support for the Public Library Service in Rotherham.
- All the above have been useful in helping to move the Library service forward in Rotherham.

### **7.2 Current situation**

- Still a statutory service working under the terms of the Act above.
- In common with many local authorities, following guidance from HM government, RMBC no longer produces a separate Cultural Strategy but incorporates Culture and Leisure aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- We are still using the most useful elements of Public Library standards to help us locally, but from this year they are no longer a national requirement.
- Current building improvement programme nearing completion.
- Clarity needed for managers, staff, members, stakeholders, partners and local communities on what makes a good Library Service in the twenty first century and the future direction of the public Library Service in Rotherham.
- An approved strategic direction of travel for Rotherham Libraries is required and needs to recognise the ongoing financial constraints based on all future services.
- Audit Commission have given a clear and consistent message that good policy/strategy development is key to improving services and outcomes for local people.
- We need to be aware of the recent DCMS Inquiry into the Library Service in the Wirral where Wirral Borough Council was found to be in breach of its statutory duties.
- The Library service has undergone and is undergoing lots of change which is producing positive results locally. We are also increasingly attracting the attention of other local authorities for our good practice - we now need to embed this positive

change in strategy so that the service continues this improvement in performance for the benefit of our local communities in Rotherham.

## **8. Finance**

Strategy development is the shorter term and main interest of this report. Costs of putting the strategy together entail consultation costs and printing and marketing/advocacy costs which involve the resources of time, money, and people. These have revenue implications and we intend to put a bid into the promotions and publicity pooled budget.

Longer term, the costs will be around library strategy delivery and these will be informed by the library strategy itself. Some of these will be met through current revenue and Capital allocations and agreed through annual service planning. Others may require additional capital and revenue investment if the service is to continue to improve, move forward and exemplify good practice. As a major factor within this strategic review, a VFM exercise will be carried out on both the current and possible alternative methods of delivery.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

**9.1** Ensuring enough resources for development of strategy e.g. time, money, people, advice, expertise.

**9.2** Ensuring enough resources for implementation of strategy.

**9.3** To not have a Public Library Strategy would place both the Council and the service at risk. (The recent DCMS Wirral Inquiry points to 'risks in relying on a Strategic Asset Review without a concurrent Library Service Review to specifically address the design and delivery of the Library Service.')

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

**10.1** Rotherham Libraries are one of the few Council services that are based in local communities but whose services connect with National shared priorities. Libraries are therefore ideally placed to assist in contributing to CAA and all the priorities in the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

- Rotherham Alive

'People will be able to express themselves and have opportunities to be involved in a wide range of high quality cultural, social and sporting activities'

'Improve the life chances of children and young people.'

'Enhance opportunities for involvement in the cultural activities.'

- Rotherham Learning

'Rotherham people will be recognised as being informed, skilled and creative.'

'Encourage more local people to become involved in learning.'

- Rotherham Achieving

'Raise quality of life and living standards.'

‘contributes to the cultural life of Rotherham’

- Rotherham Safe  
‘Environments, people and businesses will be protected and nurtured.’
- Rotherham Proud  
‘The borough will have a positive external image.’

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

- Rotherham Libraries and Information Team Plan 2009/10
- Cultural Services Team Plan 2009/10
- Culture and Leisure Team plan 2009/10
- Framework for the Future ( DCMS 2003-2013)
- Digital Britain (White Paper and various Government consultations and reports 2009)
- The Learning Revolution ( BIS White Paper on Informal Adult Learning March 2009)
- APPG on Libraries , Literacy and Information Management (Sept 2009)
- Taking Stock: the future of our Public Library Service (Unison, 2008.)
- Library service modernisation review (DCMS imminent –expected Spring 2010)
- Swindon Public Library Service Report July 2009
- Wirral Public Library Service Inquiry.( led by Sue Charteris) (DCMS Nov 30 2009)
- What makes a good Library Service? ( Cilip Oct 2009)
- Strong and Prosperous communities – Local government White Paper (2006)
- Building a society for all ages (DWP, 2009)
- Families ,learning and culture: Inspiring families through museums, libraries and archives. (NIACE, 2008 )
- Department of Health / Public Libraries Memorandum of Understanding ( Agreement signed Nov 19 2009)

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