

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet member for Lifelong Learning and Culture</b>
2.	<b>Date:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> March 2012</b>
3.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>The Merger of Schools' Library Service and Museum Loans Service</b>
4.	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Environment and Development Services</b>

### 5. Summary

Funding for the Museum Loans Service (MLS) via the Dedicated Schools' Grant has ceased. The Schools' Library Service (SLS) has for some time operated as a successful service to primary and special schools within Rotherham, which is fully funded by those that choose to buy in.

It is proposed that the Schools' Library Service assume responsibility for the management and operation of the Museum Loans Service, adding the service to its portfolio offer. This should improve the sustainability of both services.

Management of the combined service (Schools' Library and Heritage Loans Service) will come under the Library & Information Service with professional input as required from the Heritage Service.

### 6. Recommendations

- **That the merger of the Schools' Library and Museum Loans Services under the management of the Library & Information Service is approved.**
  - **That the impact and value of the new Schools' Library and Heritage Loans Service as a fully funded service offered to schools, supporting their literacy and learning agendas and offering good value for money be recognised.**
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## **7. Proposals and Details**

The proposal is to bring the management and day-to-day operation of the Museum Loans Service under the Library & Information Service alongside the Schools' Library Service as a combined offer to schools. The new merged service, the Schools' Library and Heritage Loans Service, would operate out of Maltby Library as an extension to the current Schools' Library Service.

SLS has demonstrated its efficiency and effectiveness in delivering both a loan service and a professional service to schools. It currently has 60 primary and special school clients.

It is acknowledged that there will be a need for ongoing support from Heritage Services e.g. in terms of curatorial expertise and collections maintenance, including an annual audit of items.

### **Timescale**

Service Level Agreements for the Portfolio of Services take effect in April 2012 and that date is proposed as the launch of the majority of new services. The aim is to have the merger fully completed by September 2012.

### **Pricing Model**

Any pricing model should be consistent across the new services. It is proposed that this is a subscription model, payable at the start of the financial year. This is in line with the existing charging policy of SLS and provides a relatively stable financial platform for setting budgets and planning service delivery.

Up to now the SLS has offered a single charging rate (currently £650 per school plus £6.95 per pupil). It is proposed to offer a variable rate to schools depending on their interest in MLS; e.g. Gold: SLS +MLS, Silver: SLS only, Bronze: MLS only.

Any charges for museum visits for schools are a separate issue to the content of this report and the separate concern of Heritage Services.

### **Access to Services**

The offer will be made initially to Primary and Special schools within Rotherham Borough. Any approaches from secondary schools or schools outside the Borough will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Items from the MLS will be catalogued in such a way that SLS can issue them to schools on a similar basis to their loans of library materials (topic boxes, fiction exchange, bag books etc). The aim is that the catalogue of materials would be web based and searchable seamlessly alongside SLS stock. Requests for loans that come in through the Heritage Services will be redirected to the SLS which will manage the delivery process.

Storage of MLS items will be co-located with SLS. The alternative would be costly in time and fuel, difficult to administer and a failure to realise one of the benefits of bringing the

two services together. It is envisaged that there will be sufficient space at Maltby to create a display area for Museum loan items, SLS topic boxes and other materials such as big books.

SLS operates a successful delivery programme to schools, whilst also allowing and encouraging visits to the showroom at Maltby. The deliveries are generally made at the start of the term with collection at term end. Topics can be delivered during the term by pre-arrangement, as can collection of stock from schools. This pattern of deliveries will be extended to the MLS collection, i.e. generally a termly or possibly half-termly arrangement.

## **Communication**

Communication with customers is going to be particularly important in the transition stage. The new SLA for the schools portfolio of services has been issued and this indicates museum loans as a possible new option in the SLS offer with differential pricing (see Pricing above). It may be that a change of title to "Schools' Library & Heritage Loans Service" would be helpful in raising awareness of the change.

Heritages Services will still produce a SLA relating to chargeable services to schools across its venues.

A new leaflet is in preparation and this should reflect the new museum loans component in the offer.

Any existing MLS customers will be contacted directly by Heritage Services to inform them of changes to the service from April 2012, with the new service being fully operable from Maltby by September 2012.

There will be opportunities to publicise other services offered to schools by Heritage Services, e.g. guided museum visits and activities. Reference can be made to the wider service offer in promotional material. Similarly, it would be envisaged that contact with schools by Heritage Services would allow publicity about the new service to be passed on.

## **8. Finance**

The new joint service will operate as a fully funded Service, which schools can choose to buy in.

The service options available to schools on a subscription basis in the 2012-13 Service Level Agreement are:

### **Option 1 – Gold**

Full i) Schools Library Service offer plus ii) Museum Loan Service.

### **Option 2 – Silver**

i) Schools' Library Service offer.

### Option 3 – Bronze

ii) Museum Loans Service offer.

Professional support for reading and library development are included in all three available options.

### Charges

The grid below identifies the cost to schools associated with each level of service.

<b>Option 1 (£) Gold</b>	<b>Option 2 (£) Silver</b>	<b>Option 3 (£) Bronze</b>
<i>Base allocation of £790 plus £6.95 per pupil</i>	<i>Base allocation of £650 plus £6.95 per pupil</i>	<i>Base allocation of £650 per school</i>

The charge for Option 1 takes account of the fact that delivery costs for museum and library loans will be combined. So for the small additional charge of £140 schools will be entitled to loans from the Museum loans collection ( a potential 18 loans during the year) in addition to the Schools' Library Service offer.

The charge for Option 2, Schools' Library Service alone, remains unchanged for a further year, in acknowledgement of the financial pressures being faced by schools.

The charge for Option 3 reflects the costs incurred for making separate deliveries to schools for museum loans and will also be used to help maintain the museum loans collection.

	For the average sized <u>primary</u> school of 230 pupils the costs would be:	For the average sized <u>special</u> school of 90 pupils the costs would be:
Option 1 - Gold	£2,388.50	£1,415.50
Option 2 - Silver	£2,248.50	£1,275.50
Option 3 - Bronze	£650	£650

- Schools may commit to this Service Level Agreement for either one or two years. In each case the school will be invoiced on an annual basis.
- Payment is requested within 30 days of invoice.
- If the school opts for the two year SLA they will receive a 10% discount on the full price.

As referred to above, maintenance of the MLS elements of the new service will incur some costs. Heritage Services will cover costs of curatorial support where necessary and will submit recommendations for new purchases or repairs on an annual basis to the Library Group Manager, Lifelong Learning.

## 9. Risks and Uncertainties

The main risk is that insufficient schools buy in to the new service to make it a viable operation – that is the case whether or not the merger takes place.

If the income from schools subscriptions is insufficient to finance the service then steps would need to be taken to terminate it and dispose of the collections.

The pricing regime has been set in order to encourage purchase of the joint service - subscription to the merged service will ensure most cost-effective management and deliveries.

All anecdotal feedback so far from schools is that the museum artefacts will be popular. However, it is unclear what pressure will be put on the delivery schedule and how effectively the existing SLS staff will be able to absorb delivery of the extra MLS materials.

The cost of maintenance of the museum artefacts collection is an unknown.

At present there are some uncertainties around the re-housing of the MLS collection with the SLS at Maltby Library – work is under-way to create appropriate storage, organise the transport of the materials and add the MLS items to the Library catalogue.

## 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The service will contribute to the following corporate priorities and outcomes:

- ***Corporate outcome 23: People enjoy parks, green spaces, sports, leisure and cultural activities***
- ***Corporate outcome 6: More people have formal qualifications and skills***
- ***Ensuring quality education for all; ensuring people have opportunities to improve skills, learn and get a job***
- ***Concentrate efforts on primary schools to improve the achievement of children aged 5-11 and support babies and pre-school children to play and be ready for learning***

The combined delivery of library and museum stock to schools enhances a joint cultural services offer and opens the door to further opportunities for joined-up working.

## 11. Background Papers and Consultation

**Contact Name :** *Mark Heaton, Library Group Manager, Lifelong Learning, 01709 816142*  
[mark.heaton@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:mark.heaton@rotherham.gov.uk)