

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2012/2013 REPORT NO. 14

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

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Council – 4 July 2012

REPORT OF:

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Agenda - Part: 1	Item: 8
Subject: New Library Strategy	
Wards: All	
Cabinet Member consulted: Councillor Bambos Charalambous	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library Strategy outlines how over the next 3–5 years we will realise our ambition to develop our existing provision to create a dynamic service that plays a key role in supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan by engaging local people through the provision of accessible, high quality and relevant services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked (following its referral by Cabinet) to approve the Library Strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The public library service is a statutory service, governed by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act requires library authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service to all those desiring to make use thereof".
- 3.2 Since the 2007-12 Library Strategy was published, Local Authorities have seen a period of substantial change and development and whilst the Library Service has seen significant improvements, it is time to review how library services are delivered in the future. This updating of the Library Strategy outlines how over the next 3–5 years we will realise our ambition to develop our existing provision to create a dynamic service that plays a key role in

supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan by engaging local people through the provision of accessible, high quality and relevant services.

- 3.3 This report presents a revised and updated Library Service Strategy for approval.

4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The review of the library service was part of the LEANER Programme of Strategic Service Reviews which ensures that the Council's services meet the LEANER objectives of:

- **Less bureaucracy – faster decision making**
- **Eliminate waste and duplication**
- **Automate what we can**
- **New ways of working**
- **Excellent staff and services**
- **Reduce overheads**

As part of this strategic review of library services in the borough, consultation was set up in the Summer of 2011 to elicit the library needs and priorities of the local community. An online and paper survey was designed by an external consultant for library users as well as residents not currently using the libraries. This was launched on the 1st July and was live on the London Borough of Enfield website until 30th September 2011.

- 4.2 Alongside the survey, the external consultant moderated six group discussions to explore future options for the library service in some detail. These groups were run in July and September 2011, and involved people from across the borough. Those participating broadly reflected the breadth of the local population, including those from smaller communities and those not currently using the service.

- 4.3 Specifically, the consultation addressed the following key questions:

- how is the library service currently being used?
- what should a modern library service be for?
- who should a modern library service be for?
- what prevents the use or greater use of libraries in the borough?
- what would encourage the use, or greater use, of libraries in the borough?
- how can the library service be improved or modernised?

- 4.4 In total, over 1600 people participated in the consultation. In addition to the formal consultation methods, the public made their views known more informally by talking with library staff during the period of the consultation.

5. KEY OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATION

5.1 As a result of assessing the current performance of the service and in response to the consultation results, four broad priorities for improvement have been identified for the service. They are:

- Books and reading
- Lifelong learning and literacy
- Digital services and access to information
- Buildings and community space

5.2 These broad priorities need to be supported by developments in:

- Partnership and community engagement
- Staff and skills
- Marketing and promotion

6. BOOKS AND READING

The consultation showed us that physical books remain important to local people. Books and reading for inspiration, pleasure, knowledge, and personal growth are at the heart of our library service, promoting enjoyment of reading as well as improving literacy and the ability to access and use information. We will continue to improve the provision and access to a range of books and other materials that meet the needs of the communities of Enfield.

7. LIFELONG LEARNING AND LITERACY

Learning through informal and stimulating activities for individuals, families and communities can raise confidence, skills and aspirations to create a lifelong love of learning. A key issue arising from the consultation was that almost two thirds of current users feel the library service should focus its efforts on promoting literacy and learning among children while around half of users would like the service to focus its efforts on promoting literacy and learning amongst adults. The service must, therefore broaden the range of available learning opportunities and work with other learning organisations to engage with new and diverse users.

8. DIGITAL SERVICES AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Libraries have a vital role to play in delivering access to the Internet and e-Government services. They are also key to supporting democratic engagement for people who do not have access to the Internet for whatever reason. Enfield Library Service must ensure that libraries are seen as the first point of contact for providing access to quality information resources delivered by knowledgeable staff who are aware of the latest developments and able to provide access to and make efficient use of new technologies to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

9. BUILDINGS AND COMMUNITY SPACE

The Library service needs to be prepared to meet the needs of the growing population and take advantage of opportunities that arise to ensure that our service is delivered in locations that meet the needs of the customer and ensures a wide range of services on offer. Dual use facilities can be a cost effective way of providing a joint service benefiting distinct user groups and we need to ensure that full advantage is

taken of opportunities to be located with and to work in partnership with other services where it meets the needs of our customers. We also need to work with neighbouring authorities on shared service improvements such as reviewing mobile libraries, investigating improvements to stock purchasing and sharing good services, such as the School Library Service.

In some authorities, notably the London Borough of Brent, the decision has been made to achieve savings through the closure of library service points. Enfield may still have buildings which are not well located and in need of investment. However, whilst those authorities closing libraries may believe it to be best value to provide fewer well resourced sites spread geographically across the borough with extended opening hours, we know that local communities value local library provision and not all customers are able to travel to access library services. This was a point made very clear during the recent public consultation and is a key challenge for the delivery of Enfield Library Service moving forward.

10. RESOURCE ISSUES

- 10.1 Services must be delivered in future that meet national and local needs and are designed around customers. The Library Service is delivered from 17 static library service points. This includes the recently developed a small service point in Millfield House which has been funded via the Residents Priority Fund. Opened on 15th May this year, it gives Enfield the most libraries of any London borough.

Any changes must be delivered within the constraints of current resources, which are reducing. In order to bring about an improvement in library services it must be acknowledged that provision cannot be maintained in the same way and at current levels across the existing network of libraries.

- 10.2 The total income target for the Core Public Library Service is £436k. With the changing pattern of use, particularly more IT use, it has become impossible to meet this target. The two main income targets for the Library Service are fines - £100k (23% of overall target) and charges for DVDs - £123k (28% of overall target). Income from fines is entirely reliant on customers returning their items late and issues of material on DVD is falling drastically as people access new technologies. Higher charges do not increase income achieved and 24/7 renewal capability has exacerbated this problem. The shortfall in income for 2011/12 is estimated at £130k which is money the service will need to redirect from other budgets.

- 10.3 Despite an increase in the number of library service points, there has been no corresponding increase in the resources fund.

However, we do take full advantage of consortium purchasing arrangements, efficient supply chains, increased discounts and supplier selection to enable us to make better use of our resources.

- 10.4 There is a tension between the need to ensure adequate staff at the counter and the enquiry desk, and the need to free up staff to deliver other core

services such as school class visits, homework support and under-fives sessions. Specific developmental projects normally come with dedicated staffing initially although they add to this staffing pressure if they have to be mainstreamed without additional ongoing funding.

However, the recent review of our staffing structure has enabled us to ensure that staff resources are utilised in the most efficient and cost effective way. We will continue to challenge how services can be made more effective and efficient by ensuring ownership and commitment from library staff to the essential changes required to deliver customer focused services. Strong customer focus is fundamental to the way in which all members of staff see and fulfil their roles and we need to regularly review our staff and skills to ensure that we identify capacity for implementing change. We also need to enhance the skills of library staff to ensure that those skills match whole-Council service requirements.

We are also minimising our use of service desks and enquiry points and increasing our use of self-issue and discharge. This will allow users to borrow or return library materials without intervention by library staff, releasing them to perform other functions.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

A strategy of having fewer but larger library buildings has been rejected as following the public consultation; it was considered that a reduction in the total number of library buildings would not be in the interests of residents.

12. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

12.1 Financial Implications

The Library Strategy in itself does not commit the Council to additional expenditure. Any future proposals with cost implications would need to be subject to separate reports and full financial appraisals.

The library strategy includes an action plan and identifies funding for this plan. A majority of actions will be funded from within existing resources and staff time.

12.2 Legal Implications

12.2.1 Under section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, the Council is under a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to all persons desiring to make use thereof who reside, work or are in full-time education within the library area of the Council. The Council further has power under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of its functions.

12.2.2 The procurement of any goods works or services must be conducted in accordance with the Council's Constitution, in particular Contract Procedure Rules. Any resulting contracts must be in a form approved by the Assistant Director of Legal Services.

12.3 Property Implications

12.3.1 Property Services consider that dual use of facilities is a very cost effective use of property assets and is considering this across the Council's Property Estate generally. The Property Review Team and Property Services will assist the Library Service in using its property assets to meet the needs of the growing population and take advantage of opportunities to ensure that the service is delivered in locations that meet the needs of the customers. Enfield may still have buildings which are not well located and in need of investment and Property Services will assist in reviewing the options available for these buildings to ensure that the level of service provided is maximised and best value is achieved for all the property assets of the Library Services. Working in partnership with other services, Property Services will also assist in bringing to the Library Services any potential sharing of services and generally continue to review savings on property costs

13. KEY RISKS

Having a clear Library Strategy over the next three to five years should help mitigate identified risks and to ensure that the relevant opportunities are seized, subject to due diligence

14. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES

14.1 Fairness for All

The Library Service supports this:

- By providing a wide geographical spread of local libraries offering services which are free at the point of delivery, supplemented with a Mobile and Housebound deliveries for those who are unable to access us via one of our branches
- By giving equality of access to information and learning opportunities for people of all ages
- Through free public access to Internet and WiFi

14.2 Growth and Sustainability

The Library Service Supports this:

- By providing high quality spaces, modern services and environments which support informal learning
- By providing free access to study space and learning resources, open in the evenings and at weekends
- By acting as an access point for Council information

14.3 Strong Communities

The Library Service supports this:

- By working with local people to ensure that the service meets community requirements
- By developing partnerships with a wide network of agencies, including those of council and partner agencies, which all contribute to bringing about sustainable and active communities
- By delivering in a range of flexible ways through engagement with local communities and volunteers to help extend the range and reach of our existing core library service

15. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the Library Strategy will contribute to the achievement of a range of Council Priorities including educational attainment, resident engagement, narrowing the digital divide and increased customer satisfaction

16. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Health and Safety implications

17. EQUALITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

A predictive equality impact assessment/analysis of the proposed Library Strategy has been undertaken that illustrates that significant consultation on the strategy has been carried out with a wide range of residents, including both users and non-users of the service. As a result, the proposals contained within the strategy are likely to maintain, if not improve, levels of access to the service and facilities by all groups in the community. The Community Engagement Team will be setting targets and standards in relation to community outreach as part of their work programme, and monitoring the impact

Background Papers

Equality Impact Assessment