WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

Leicester
City Council

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD	**8th May 2008**
CABINET	**12th May 2008**

LIBRARIES STRATEGY 2008 - 2013

Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Culture

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   This report presents the Draft Libraries Strategy 2008 – 2013 for consideration and approval.

2.   Summary

2.1   The Draft Libraries Strategy sets out the objectives and priorities of the service for the next 5 years in order to deliver a service based on the needs of city residents and to continue to achieve improved service quality, access and performance. The Strategy has been prepared in the context of the "One Leicester" vision, the Corporate Asset and Neighbourhood Management Strategies while contributing to targets in the Local Area Agreement.

2.2   A Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Task Group was set up in August 2007. This review has now reached its conclusion and the task group reported back to the OSMB on 10th April.   The Overview Scrutiny and Management Board endorsed the Task group recommendations for inclusion in the Libraries Strategy and Action Plan to be presented to Cabinet in May.

2.3   There is now clear evidence showing the ways in which we can maintain and improve on performance and 60 actions have been identified to achieve this.   The majority of the improvement can be achieved within existing resources.   However, there are 2 key areas within the report which will require additional funding between 2008 and 2013 to enable the Strategy to be fully implemented.   Investment in Buildings and replacement technology have been included as proposals for funding from the Capital Programme and an increase in book stock funding can be considered for revenue growth in 2009/ 2010.

3.   Recommendations

3.1   Cabinet is recommended to approve the Libraries Strategy for the next 5 years as set out in this report and the attached strategy "Better Libraries – Better Lives".

3.2   Cabinet is also asked to note that approval to this report and strategy does not at this stage represent a commitment to identify additional funding. Where necessary, proposals for additional funding to implement the strategy will be brought forward for consideration as part of the Council's Budget Strategy (Capital and Revenue).

3.3   Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is recommended to note and provide feedback on the final draft of the Libraries Strategy that will be submitted to Cabinet.

4.   Report

4.1   The Library Service has produced a Draft Strategy for 2008–2013 (attached).   The document is the result of a thorough review of existing library provision in Leicester, examination of current performance and how the service relates to the "One Leicester" vision.   Best practice both within the service and nationally has also been identified.

4.2   The strategy makes a contribution to the city's "25 year Vision" supporting the following key challenges:

- to be a "Prosperous city where everyone meets their potential"
- to be "A caring city where people feel safe and at home"
- to "Provide quality services which promote equality".

4.3   In particular the Library Strategy supports the following priorities for action:

- Invest in our children
- Invest in and support communities
- World class public services

4.4   The strategy has been informed by consultation with library customers, other services and organisations.

4.5   The strategy identifies the need for modernised central library provision fit for purpose for the next 25 years. It recommends that such provision should be considered as a potential part of all future city centre development proposals. Any such scheme should explore the range of services which can be delivered and the potential for enhanced programme delivery through integration with other services in a new building.

4.6   For many city residents their local library is the main route by which they access library services and the strategy identifies the importance of libraries in local neighbourhoods.   Library services can make an important contribution to the delivery of the City Council's Neighbourhood Management and Corporate Asset Strategies, through their close links with other service providers. Where appropriate, co-location with other Council departments and external partners will increase local people's access to a range of complementary services. We are currently working closely with Property colleagues on options for a joint service LIFT centre in Eyres Monsell/Saffron.

4.7   A Culture and Leisure Task Group was set up in August 2007 to support the libraries review and the development of the strategy. The Task Group undertook to visit a cross section of City Libraries to inform their views of current library services and the needs for the future. This review has now concluded and the Task Group have now sought the endorsement of OSMB for their recommendations (APPENDIX A) to be included in the Libraries Strategy and Action Plan. The findings of the Task Group corresponded closely with the key issues identified in the library service strategy. There were 12 findings which are addressed in the Strategy Action Plan, the main two of which were as follows:

    1.   There is insufficient book stock in some libraries and that there is a need for more new stock.

2.   Older buildings are in need of attention to maintenance decoration and general upkeep. In some cases there is a need for replacement of worn and out dated lighting, furnishing and flooring.

4.8   Recommendations achievable through the existing budget will be addressed through Libraries annual Service Improvement Plans. Other items will be raised as budget issues, or dealt with as opportunities arise for making bids or partnerships to address them. *The Bookbus recommendation has been successfully resolved (see Appendix A for details 2.1.10).*

4.9   The quality and performance of the current service is high. The previous strategy (Achieving Inclusion) 2001–2006) successfully increased the performance of the library service by targeting hard to reach groups in the city and removing barriers to their use of libraries. The focus of this work has led to the service winning national acknowledgement of the achievements in both service provision and workforce development. Leicester City won the "Libraries Change Lives" award for its work with refugees and asylum seekers and Libraries also made a vital contribution to the achievement of Beacon Status for Cultural Services to Hard to Reach Groups.

4.10   The Library Service therefore has strong foundations on which to build. The new strategy focuses on the need to continue to expand the use of libraries by city residents and to ensure that library users receive a high quality service that meets their needs by:

    •   maximising the positive role that libraries play in local communities,

    •   expanding partnerships with other services and agencies to increase activities and ensuring that the service plays a full and active role in the delivery of the Local Area Agreement.

4.11   The key aims for the service are that by 2013 Leicester Libraries will be:

    •   recognised locally, regionally and nationally as a centre of excellence for engaging hard to reach communities in cultural participation and

community learning, raising skills and aspirations through successful partnership working.

- a source of pride and community identity making a unique contribution to quality of life and well being, helping Leicester to become a harmonious place where people 'feel safe and at home'.

- recognised for successfully developing the unique role of public libraries in encouraging reading as a valuable cultural activity and actively helping individual adults and children to improve their literacy as a vital life skill.

4.12 Overall objectives for the service are as follows:-

- Providing a high quality service for all
- Enhancing learning opportunities
- Providing a sustainable infrastructure
- Reducing the digital divide

4.13 In order to achieve the aims and objectives, 7 priorities for development have been identified for 2008–2011. These are set out below in priority order:-

1. Promote reading and learning to improve quality of life.

2. Support mainstream learning provision for children and adults.

3. Reach out to more people to make our services more accessible.

4. Ensure that all library buildings are welcoming, accessible and fit for a wide range of community uses whether in stand alone or multi-service locations.

5. Use the latest technology to improve services

6. Ensure the library workforce has the right skills, knowledge and leadership necessary to deliver the strategy.

7. Improve value for money and performance.

4.14 The strategy concludes that Libraries in Leicester have successfully brought the service into the 21st century by creating an accessible service for city residents, and improving performance. This strategy demonstrates that the library service commitment to the development of services that contribute to a better quality of life for the disadvantaged, vulnerable and hard to reach communities in the city is as strong as ever. The task for the next 5 years will be to continue to improve our performance, working with communities to extend the range of libraries offering cultural and learning activities, increase book issues and maintain high levels of user satisfaction whilst managing the competing priorities of budgets and the inevitable effect of inflation on salaries and core costs. The new strategy is the first crucial step in seeking

the support, investment and high profile needed for the service for the next decade to ensure that the achievements to date are sustainable and that the potential for the future is realised.

4.15   An Action Plan has been developed for delivery of the strategy over the period 2008–2013. The majority of the 60 actions in the plan can be delivered within existing resources and by partnership working. However, there are 3 key areas which require additional resources. These action points are:

4.15.1 Ensure that all library buildings are welcoming, accessible and fit for a wide range of community uses.

a)   Include the potential of a modernised Central Library provision in all major new city centre development proposals.

b)   Categorise all community libraries into one of 3 groups: those that are delivering an effective service and should be kept, those which are currently unsuitable due to a shortfall in requirements, but can be improved, and those which need replacing with a different service location or model. This would then require critical improvements to prioritised community libraries to bring them to a good standard of repair and appearance and remove barriers to library access by disabled people (priorities – internal decorations and furnishings; external and internal signage in appropriate colours, design and lettering repairs and provision of public toilets).

c)   Develop an interim plan to make improvements to existing Central Library buildings to make them fit for purpose and increase use, pending agreement for and building of a new building.

Cost: Detailed proposal to be developed for inclusion in the Capital Programme but an estimate of up to £1m over a 4 year period would be required to deliver the improvements needed.

4.15.2 Using technology to improve services and reduce the digital divide.

£362,000 - 2011

4.15.3 Replacement hardware and software for People's Network.

£170,000 – 2012

4.15.4 Improve value for money and performance.

4.15.5 Bring book stock in all libraries up to the quality required to meet the needs of city residents, thus ensuring library book related performance does not fall behind comparator authorities.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1   Financial Implications

5.1.1   Delivery of the Strategy is affordable within the current revenue budget taking into account known job evaluation issues, with the exception of the following 2 areas where there is a requirement for capital funding

- Building improvements
- ICT replacement and investment

5.1.2   The draft corporate capital programme went to Council for agreement in March. Only those items which clearly support the 25 year vision and the underpinning financial strategy were included for approval in this draft capital programme.

5.1.3   The balance of resource has been held back pending completion of the corporate plan. Once the plan is complete, further work will take place to consider how our capital resources can best be used to achieve it. This work will include consultation with our partners in the Leicester Partnership.

5.1.4   Capital bids were originally submitted covering building and ICT improvements across all library facilities as per paragraph 4.13. These will now have to be considered as part of the further work in deciding what will be included in the remaining capital programme.

5.1.5   The increased funding for book stock would have to form part of the 2009/10 revenue budget proposals.

Martin Judson, Head of Resources, R. & C. Ext.297390

5.2   Legal Implications
There are no significant legal implications arising from this report.

Beena Adatia, Solicitor. Ext.297031

6.   Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph references within the report
Equal Opportunities	Yes	2.1, 4.2, 4.3. 4.5, 4.6, 4.9 to 4.15
Policy	Yes	4.1 – 4.12
Sustainable & Environmental	No	
Crime & Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	

7.   Risk Matrix Assessment

Risk	Likelihood L/M/H	Severity Impact L/M/H	Control Actions (if necessary/appropriate)
Lack of additional funding for buildings, technology and book stock will limit the achievement of the outcomes detailed in the strategy	M	M	Provide additional funding Identify efficiency savings

L – Low   L – Low
M – Medium M – Medium
H - High   H - High

8.   Consultations

Stakeholder interviews	June – Sept. 2007
Corporate Directors Board	August 2007
Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Task Group	Sept 2007 – Jan 2008
Public user and non user consultation	October 2007
CYPS	December 2007
Property Services	January 2008

9.   Report Author
Patricia Flynn – Head of Library Services
Ext.297348

Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Significant in its effect on communities in one or more wards.
Appeared in Forward Plan	yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD – 10TH APRIL, 2008
RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1.1   Serious consideration to be given to investing in the library buildings. The state of some of the buildings visited was found to be poor and in decline in the upkeep.

2.1.2   That improvements are made to the external and internal signage, the image and the general appearance of libraries.

2.1.3   Environmental improvements to be made in the area surrounding library venues, task group members request for these to be prioritised. During site visits the common complaints related to litter, graffiti and dullness.

2.1.4   The task group considered that the central lending library and the reference library should be combined under one roof and in order to make it more attractive and modern it should be relocated to another part of the city centre. However, it is recognised that this would be a long-term goal and therefore the task group would recommend that a feasibility study to look into the options for relocation be carried out.

2.1.5   That consideration be given to an increase in the investment of book stock, especially in the libraries that are well used. Insufficient book stock was an issue in many of the libraries visited and there is definitely a need for more up-to-date books.

2.1.6   A future consideration for the re-branding of libraries to more adequately reflect the modern service that was offered. There was some discussion as to possible options and it was agreed that wider consultation would be needed; however initial suggestions included "Libraries and Learning Centres", "Libraries and Learning Zones" and "Libraries and Learning".

2.1.7   That consideration should be given to investing in more technology. It was noted that computing was very popular in all libraries and requests had been made for investment in more technology to meet the demand. Caution was expressed however, in that some libraries did not have room to accommodate any more computers, and also that an increase in the number of computers would result in less room for books.

2.1.8   That the soft furnishings, furniture and chairs in some libraries were in a poor state of repair and dated.These should be replaced. An investment to replace these with modern pieces should be considered.

2.1.9   Members suggested that the library user guides be improved and colour coded for ease of access around a library. In particular, the layout maps need to be more visible, user-friendly and placed in a prominent position in the library venues.

2.1.10   Members also discussed the Council Book Buses in relation to the image and attraction to young users and it was felt that the standard Council yellow vans were unlikely to prove sufficiently inviting for young people.

2.1.11   That investment was needed to improve access to libraries, in particular extending opening times in libraries where demand is high.

2.1.12   That the Libraries Review Task Group supports the Libraries Service to set the priorities and direction for the next 5-10 years.