

Cabinet – 23 March 2005

Principles into practice: The Library Service Review Improvement Plan

Portfolio: Councillor Garry Perry, Culture and Leisure

Service Area: Libraries and Heritage

Wards: All

Forward Plan: Yes

Summary of report

In 2004, Walsall Libraries embarked on a major review intended to enable the service to modernise and achieve excellence by 2008. On 22nd December 2004, Cabinet received the first report arising from the review (entitled “Principles for Excellence in the Library Service”) and requested an action plan detailing how the service would turn those principles into practice. The action plan will deliver a clear path to an enhanced and modernised service and will provide a foundation for work with our strategic partner, Fujitsu.

On 27th January 2005 a report entitled “Laying the foundations of an excellent library service” was presented to the Community Organisations, Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel. This was in the form of a Best Value Review report and served to inform the Panel of the work undertaken so far by way of consultation, analysis and benchmarking of the library service.

An improvement plan has now been formulated to take account of the points raised in the above two documents. Full details of the improvement plan can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

The crucial points of the plan are that the service will:

- ❑ Undertake a viability study of each of our libraries to assess their physical condition, their usage by and relevance to the community and their importance in relation to Walsall’s continued fulfilment of national public library standards
- ❑ Commence the first stage of the modernisation process by opening a new library at Blakenall Village Centre. This will provide an exciting modern facility within the Blakenall and Bloxwich LNP, enabling the closure of the decaying facility at Coalpool and its replacement with a package of alternative provision
- ❑ Extend the opening hours at district libraries and review the opening hours of smaller libraries in the light of community need
- ❑ Minimise barriers to access by making our procedures customer-focussed and user-friendly
- ❑ Create a culture of positive change by implementing recommendations from the report, and training on, the use of retail techniques to promote the service and ensure it matches user needs

- ❑ Develop a staffing structure to enable a clearer definition of roles and the reallocation of time for key activities such as reader development, learning support, stock management and consultation

The improvement plan will be incorporated into the service plan and team plans for Libraries and Heritage.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet agree the plan of action for the achievement of excellence by the library service, within the council's vision for 2008

Resource and legal considerations

The action plan to achieve excellence has been developed within the revenue budgets attached to the Library Service and identification of future investment choices. However, significant levels of investment will be required to achieve the necessary improvements to the library network and infrastructure. Work is underway with our strategic partner to identify ways of achieving the necessary investment.

The council has a legal obligation to provide a Library Service that is "efficient and comprehensive" under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. "Efficient and comprehensive" is defined by the national Public Library Standards which came into force in April 2004. The library service currently meets 19 of the 23 measurable public library standards and robust plans are in place to achieve the remaining before 2008.

Citizen impact

All developments to the Library Service in its drive towards excellence will have a positive impact both on the individual citizen and within local communities. Plans for the modernisation and future of the service will respond positively to the key messages identified in both the MORI survey of library users and non users and the annual CIPFA surveys. The Library Service will also seek ways to open a dialogue with local communities which will inform ongoing development and ensure that they are involved in the shaping and development of their service, matching appropriate service delivery to community need

Community safety

The library service will continue to ensure that its facilities maintain the safest possible environment for its staff and customers alike. Active use of the library service by disaffected and vulnerable groups, as shown by the 'Ready Steady Summer' programme, will have a beneficial effect on crime rates.

Environmental impact

Priorities and targets will aim to offer the people of Walsall access to a wide variety of learning opportunities, the ability to improve life chances and encourage civic pride and a sense of place. This will seek to promote a knowledge and awareness of the environment and develop community identity.

Performance and risk management issues

The drive to excellence will require a firm commitment to the principles of excellence as outlined in the previous report. A full risk assessment will be carried out to identify the major risks at each stage and the action plan will be monitored through robust performance management systems, as set out in the Libraries and Heritage service plan 2005-06.

Equality implications

All priorities and targets are designed to be socially inclusive and give the widest possible access to library services for all sections of the community regardless of disability, race, gender, social or ethnic background. These priorities will form a key strand of the Lifelong Learning Equality Action Plan.

Consultation

Walsall residents' survey and focus groups -MORI, December 2003
CIPFA PLUS User Surveys - Children (October 2002), Adults (October 2003), Electronic users (October 2004)
Staff survey (August 2004)
Staff Forum (ongoing)
Details of future consultation can be found in the action plan attached

Vision 2008

Proposed library developments will contribute to council priorities:

- 1 Ensure a clean and green borough
- 4 make our schools great
- 6 encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall WBC
- 7 make it easier to access local services
- 9 listen to what local people want
- 10 transform Walsall into an excellent authority

Background papers

Walsall Libraries' Service Review Improvement Plan February 2005

Report to Community Organisations, Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel
27th January 2005, **Laying the foundations for an excellent library service,**

Report to Community Organisations, Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel,
15th April 2004, **Key messages from Walsall Libraries' public consultation**

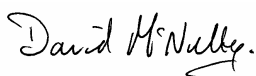
Report to Cabinet, 11th November 2004, Public Library Position Statement 2004

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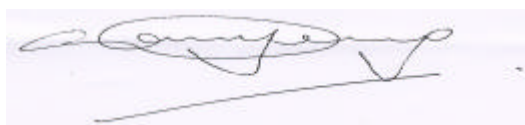
Signed:



**Executive Director
David McNulty**

Date: 14.03.2005

Signed:



**Portfolio holder
Councillor Garry Perry**

Date: 14.03.2005

Appendix 1

Walsall Libraries' Service Review Improvement Plan

IMPLEMENTATION MANAGER:

Sue Grainger

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PERIOD OF PLAN

1 April 2005 TO 31 March 2008

Principles of Excellence						THEME LEADER: Sue Grainger	
	PRINCIPLE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?	BY WHEN?	LINKS TO OTHER PLANS	STATUS V TARGET
1	Meet all public library standards and impact measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve stock performance and maintain request supply times • Raise levels of customer satisfaction to place Walsall in the upper quartile of English metropolitan authorities • Assess the impact on service capacity & performance of all planning decisions on quarterly basis • Measure current performance against forthcoming DCMS impact measures 	1/3 1 1 2	SS LHMT LHMT LHMT	3/06 3/07 3/06	Libraries & Heritage Service Plan Lifelong Learning & Community Service Plan	
2	Involve stakeholders and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce options document for consultation • Engage with the community over modernisation of service by consulting with new and existing groups of users and potential users • Consult on options with Local 	1 1 1	PST LHMT SG	5/05 7/05 7/05	Libraries & Heritage Service Plan Lifelong Learning & Community Service Plan Vision 2008 –	

		<p>Neighbourhood Partnerships, stakeholders and local communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report progress on consultation to Scrutiny and Performance Panel • Report to Cabinet recommending the optimum number and location of libraries required to maintain standards and achieve excellence 	1	SG	9/05	Year 2 pledge	
			1	SG	10/05		
3	Deliver service improvements and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish value for money standards for all library service points and develop actions plans to ensure targets are achieved. • Maintain increased proportion of total library budget spend on books • Create culture of positive change and implement recommendations of report & training on retail principles • Increase number of visits (actual and virtual) to libraries by making libraries more attractive, improving consistency of service, arranging appropriate activities and setting local targets. • Improve online access to services by introducing online reservations, 	1	LHMT	4/05	Libraries & Heritage Service Plan	
			2	SS	3/07	Lifelong Learning & Community Service Plan	
			1	LHMT	3/06		
			1	LHMT	3/06		
			1	CC/RK	3/06	e-government	

		<p>developing websites for all parts of the service and establishing remote access to online information resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a staffing structure to enable a clearer definition of roles and the reallocation of time to reader development, learning support, stock management and consultation • Identify and pilot alternative means of providing a modern library service, particularly through the network of Children's Centres • Monitor evaluate the impact of the "mini library" within Birchills Children's Centre and develop models for other centres 	1	PST	3/06	strategy Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	
			1	LHMT/LD	3/06	Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	
			2	LD	11/05		
4	Ensure effective performance management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link personal targets to service objectives through IPM reviews, timely monitoring and remedial action • Achieve liP re-accreditation • Achieve Charter Mark for service delivery 	1	LHMT	3/06	Lifelong Learning & Community Service Plan	
			1	RK	9/05	liP action plan	
			2	RK	3/07		
5	Ensure library facilities are fit for purpose and open at	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence the first stage of modernisation by opening a new library at Blakenall Village Centre, 	1	LHMT	7/05	Neighbourhood renewal fund	

	convenient times	<p>closing the decaying Coalpool and offering a package of replacement services in its place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with our strategic partner, complete a review of all libraries to establish their viability in the light of structure, use, location, costs & national standards • Establish the optimum balance of fixed, mobile and other means of service delivery, confirming the number of buildings and mobiles required to deliver an excellent library service and ensuring comparable levels of provision across all Local Neighbourhood Partnerships • Following the viability survey, establish a rolling programme of refurbishing the library network, to improve facilities, furnishings, décor and external appearance • Increase opening hours at district libraries and review the hours of smaller libraries in the light of community need 	1	LHMT	9/05	Lifelong Learning & Community Service Plan	
			1	LHMT	9/05		
			1	LHMT	3/06	Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	
			1	LHMT	3/06	Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	
6	Ensure staff are friendly and knowledgeable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise staff training on customer service and reader development through projects 	1	LHMT	3/06		

		<p>such as “Frontline”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all job descriptions and employee specifications in the context of the revised structure 	1	LHMT	3/06		
7	Ensure that diversity issues are embedded across library practice and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review library stock selection policy & procedures to ensure maximum effectiveness • Achieve Equality standard Level 3 	2 1	SS LHMT	3/06 3/06	Lifelong Learning & Community Equality Action Plan	
8	Provide up-to-date ICT facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain programme for refreshing public access (People’s Network) hardware and software at rate of 33% per year 	3	JS	3/07		
9	Provide a gateway to other council services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with our strategic partner, develop libraries as part of the council’s network of access points 	2	RK	3/06	Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	
10	Deliver learning opportunities & activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase take-up of formal and informal learning opportunities in libraries through targeted marketing • Extend provision of homework support to all libraries and increase take-up of places 	2 2	RK LD	3/07 3/07		
11	Develop libraries at heart of local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise all barriers to access both by making our procedures customer-focussed and user-friendly (e.g. removing the need 	1	LHMT	9/05	Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	

		<p>for proof of identity before membership and for young people over 12 to have a guarantor) and by removing physical obstacles such as security barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication between library service and potential users through better marketing and effective use of technology 	1	LHMT	3/06		
12	Ensure library needs are met by alternative means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review use and deployment of mobile service to ensure effectiveness in the light of the modernisation of the library network • Develop a range of personalised library services to meet the individual needs of those unable to travel • In conjunction with our strategic partner, develop models of alternative service through e.g. Children's Centres 	3	SS	3/07	Vision 2008 – Year 2 pledge	
			3	LHMT	3/07		
			3	LHMT	3/07		