

## **BRIEFING NOTE**

**TO: NEIGHBOURHOOD SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**DATE: Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

**RE: Library Modernisation Plan Update**

### **Purpose**

This briefing note is to update the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the progress of the Library Modernisation Plan. This is a three year programme to transform the Library Service and remodel or refurbish its network of branch libraries and was agreed by Cabinet in March 2006. Funding for the programme would be found from capital receipt received from the sale of those library sites released by the relocation of 5 branch libraries: Brownhills, Coalpool, Forest Gate, Shelfield and Walsall Wood.

### **The Library Modernisation Plan Board**

A Library Modernisation Plan Board has been formed to monitor the progress of the programme and to ensure the timely involvement of all services connected with its delivery. The Board comprises representatives from: Property Services, Finance, Customer Services, ISS, and Library Services and is chaired by the Assistant Director of Leisure, Culture and Lifelong Learning, Tim Challans.

### **Individual Project Reports to November 2006**

Bentley - The library closed to the public in April 2006 to enable preparation for the disposal of the site as part of a package of land for development to regenerate the centre of Bentley. The provision of a new library will be a condition of that development. A library service is currently being provided by the Mobile Library with computer facilities accessible at the Children's Centre. Further provision at the information centre opposite the library has been delayed while necessary wiring is installed, but should be available imminently. Ongoing community consultations seek the views of residents on how they would like to see the new library developed.

Brownhills - The Library relocated to the new Park View Centre, Brownhills in June and the building, which also houses a health centre and the local committee offices, was officially opened on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> October. In the first four months of operation the new library has received 39,557 visitors, issued 24,919 items and welcomed 629 new members. Over the same period in 2005, the old Brownhills Library received 19,907 visitors and issued 17,746 items.

Aldridge - A feasibility study has been undertaken and work is being commissioned for the removal of some internal walls to create greater public space. The remodelling and refurbishment should be completed by March 2007

Forest Gate/New Invention - A planning application for "change of use" has been made, but there are objections to current ramp leading to the front doors, which fails to meet current Disability Discrimination Act requirements. The replacement of this ramp will increase costs and delay the completion of the project. Every effort is being made to enable the completion by the end of the financial year.

Walsall Wood - The work on Walsall Wood has been moved forward from Year 3 to take advantage of an opportunity to relocate the library to the vacant Neighbourhood Office building on Coppice Road. Detailed design work has been completed and work has been commissioned, including replacing the floor to conform to the loading requirements for library shelves. The project is on target for completion before the end of the financial year.

Bloxwich Library - An opportunity has arisen to submit a bid to the Big Lottery to develop the library and theatre together to offer enhanced community focussed services and space. The deadline for submissions is March 2007, with funding released to successful applicants by September 2007. This opportunity would greatly enhance the current planned refurbishment of the library area and a comprehensive and exciting plan is being developed to include the theatre as part of the enhanced facilities. This space would be multi-functional and offer facilities, not only for live theatre, but for meetings, dance, films, community groups and a wide range of activities. It is vital to the success of the bid that it demonstrates strong, ongoing community engagement. Should the Big Lottery bid be unsuccessful, there is still the intention to refurbish the library as originally planned, but this would not take place until the end of Year 2.

### Years 2 and 3

Plans are currently in development for Pelsall, Pleck, South Walsall, Streetly and Willenhall in Year 2 and Pheasey, Darlaston and Beechdale in Year 3. A design brief for these projects is in preparation in consultation with Property Services.

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