

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet **DATE:** 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

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**WARD(S):** All

**PORTFOLIO:** Community and Leisure - Councillor S Chaudhry

### **PART I** **KEY DECISION**

#### **STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SLOUGH'S PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

This paper summarises findings and proposals of a strategic review of the library service from April-July 2009 for decision and approval to implement recommendations. The review was commissioned through the Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel, whose representatives on the Steering Group were Councillors, Davies, Long and Walsh. Councillor Shafiq Chaudhry, as Commissioner for Community and Leisure, was also on the Steering Group.

##### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) that the report of the libraries strategic review be approved and its recommendations be implemented, in particular to:
  1. Endorse a new vision for public libraries as a force for change and improvement at the heart of communities.
  2. Extend provision through mini libraries in community venues.
  3. Adopt an invest to save strategy to improve service outcomes for customers and communities while reducing expenditure in other areas to deliver efficiencies.
  4. Test the potential for a local authority strategic partnership to add value and accelerate improvement of Slough's public libraries.
- (b) To advise on strategic issues and opportunities raised by the review.
- (c) that the submission of quarterly performance reports to the Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel to maintain scrutiny of the progress in implementing actions arising from the review be noted.

### 3 Community Strategy Priorities

- **Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion**
- **Adding years to Life and Life to years**
- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**
- **Prosperity for All**

The libraries review has focused on finding ways to enable Slough's public libraries to fulfil their potential as a catalyst to help realise the Sustainable Community vision and strategy for Slough.

### 4 Other Implications

#### (a) Financial

The review of libraries proposes an invest to save strategy, which is described in more detail in section 7 of this report. This is summarised in the table below.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b><u>Investment Costs</u></b>					
Stock & opening hours (growth)	35	50	50	0	135
Stock management	0	15	-25	0	-10
Open mini libraries	0	0	40	0	40
Redundancies	0	200	-200	0	0
	<b>35</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>-135</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>165</b>
<b><u>Savings</u></b>					
Library Management System	0	-10	-15	0	-25
Library organisation & management	-180	-90	0	0	-270
RFID (self-issue)	0	0	-20	-30	-50
Learning Curve	0	0	-60	-50	-110
Replace mobile library	0	-30	-30	0	-60
	<b>-180</b>	<b>-130</b>	<b>-125</b>	<b>-80</b>	<b>-515</b>
<b>Net Costs/Savings(-)</b>	<b>-145</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>-260</b>	<b>-80</b>	<b>-350</b>
<b>Year on Year Costs/Savings(-)</b>	<b>-145</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>-270</b>	<b>-350</b>	

A separate capital bid for £250,000 for RFID (self-issue) has been submitted.

#### (b) Risk Management

A key element of the review was evaluating options for future development of the library service. Risks and their mitigations were addressed and are considered in the main sections of this report for each of the main recommendations.

#### (c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act or other legal implications at this stage.

#### (d) Equalities Impact Assessment

The review includes proposals to engage local people more effectively in shaping library services to ensure they meet their needs and are delivered in ways that improve access for all members of the community. Proposals are made that recruitment focuses on core competencies, enabling people from all communities to compete on more equal terms than a focus on experience and qualifications.

#### (e) Workforce

The service can reduce its operational costs without reducing customer services, focusing on simplifying processes and management structures. Any changes to the organisational structure will be complemented by a staff development plan, ensuring that all staff have the opportunity to develop skills and perform well in the re-energised service.

Roles will be designed to ensure skills development and transfer across the whole service. They will support cultural change that is focused on high quality customer services, community engagement and working with partners to provide an easy to use integrated service offer. All roles will be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose to deliver the new vision for the service.

There are potential redundancy costs for re-organisation of around £200,000. All efforts would be made to minimise these costs and find opportunities to redeploy staff.

### 5. Background

- 5.1 The Executive Summary of the report of the strategic review is attached as Appendix A. This describes the main issues, findings and proposals. Appendix B is the Conclusion from the report, which lists the principal conclusions and actions, as well as a summary of finance and Human Resources implications.
- 5.3 The review assessed the current performance of the library service, but more particularly considered a wide range of options and opportunities to improve its performance and relevance to the people of Slough.
- 5.4 People living in Slough make good use of libraries. 51% of Slough residents used a public library in the past year, but not necessarily in Slough, comparing favourably with the national average of 49%. However, while service quality overall is average, the cost of the service is high at £4.71 per visit, partly because the service is too small to achieve any economies of scale and partly because it has complex and proportionately costly management overheads.

### 6 Community role for libraries

- 6.1 Key issues and recommendations are summarised below. These are described in more detail in the Appendices.
- 6.2 The vision for libraries (Recommendation (a) 1)  
The review proposes a new vision for public libraries in Slough that positions them as a creative force for change, supporting individuals and bringing together individuals and communities, nurturing cohesion and improving skills:

“Slough Libraries bring people together, celebrating the diversity and richness of Slough’s community, raising people’s aspirations, creating opportunity and nurturing skills and creativity. Through this they will be a force for change, making Slough an exciting and vibrant place to live and work.”

6.3 The vision is for Slough’s library service, but fundamentally it is a vision for community services, delivered with and through libraries.

6.4 Mini libraries in community venues (Recommendation (a) 2)

The current library network comprises a large central library, three community libraries, a mobile service and weekly book borrowing provision from children’s centres. The central library, located in the centre of town, is used by over 70% of regular borrowers in the town. With its more extensive and comprehensive service offer, it is a hub supporting all library provision across the Borough.

6.5 Communities least well served by libraries are Baylis and Stoke, Chalvey, Colnbook and Poyle, Foxborough and Haymill. Based on a successful working model developed in Dudley, it is proposed to introduce mini libraries, which would be co-located with other services in community buildings. Their main function is to provide a link or gateway to a main library through providing stock, staff, and online provision in a prime location. They would be open when the community centre was open, typically around 35 hours a week.

6.6 Revenue funding for two mini libraries is included in the invest to save proposal. Around £50,000 capital is needed for each centre, which is assumed would be funded from budgets for each new or re-developed community venue.

6.7 It is proposed that the mobile library should be replaced with initial investment in two mini libraries. The mobile library has 250 public users, 20 housebound users and a number of institutions receive visits and collections. The housebound service can be provided by extending existing provision through volunteers, which works very well for other housebound people. The mobile service costs over £100 for each user. The new service would provide a better and more cost effective level of service to more people for more time.

6.8 Consultation with mobile library users will be undertaken in 2009/10, focusing on finding practical solutions for those who are not able to use alternative library facilities, especially the housebound.

7 Invest to save strategy (Recommendation (a) 3)

7.1 An invest to save strategy is proposed which delivers net savings of £350,000 by 2013 over the 2008/9 budget. This includes investment of £135,000 over 3 years from 2009/10 to 2011/12 in stock and opening hours, which is currently in the budget programme. The strategy is summarised in the table below:

	<u>Growth/saving 2009-2013</u> <u>(+/-) £'000</u>
Stock and opening hours	+ 135
Two mini libraries replacing mobile library	- 20
Self issue and other process improvements	- 85
Library organisation and management	- 270

Learning Curve	- 110
<b>Net</b>	<b>- 350</b>

7.2 Research and consultation has identified better opening times outside office hours and stock quality as the top priorities for customers and community. Slough Libraries are open 77 hours per thousand population, compared with unitary and national averages of 118 hours and 120 hours respectively. Opening hours have increased 12.5% in 2009 after £35,000 investment. Improved hours at Cippenham, combined with extension of the library, have led to an increase in visits of more than 50%.

7.3 There is provision for £100,000 growth in 2010/11 and 2011/12 for opening hours and stock in the Council's budget plan. This investment, combined with new mini libraries and online services, would enable a substantial improvement in access to Slough's library services.

#### 7.4 Operational processes

A number of operational processes can be streamlined to be more efficient (faster stock supply for example) and reduce costs. The main proposals are to change supplier of the library computer system and invest in stock management systems to reduce staff time inputting data and handling items.

7.5 Self issue (using a technology called Radio Frequency Identification or RFID) is proposed, to reduce customer waiting times, provide people with a choice how they wish to borrow items and free up staff to spend more time helping customers use the library. A capital investment of £250,000 will be sought, with a reduction in staff revenue costs for a full year after implementation of £50,000. Revenue savings are dependent on this being secured.

#### 7.6 Management and organisation of the service

There are 5 senior managers reporting direct to the Head of Libraries and a management team comprising 9 people. Management costs are out of proportion in a service with fewer than 60 FTE posts.

7.7 In Spring 2009, the service deleted a number of vacant posts costing £130,000 saving. Posts totalling a further £50,000 were held vacant to address underlying budget pressures. An additional £90,000 efficiency in staffing is proposed with a full year effect from April 2010. This would be achieved through a single re-organisation to put management and staffing arrangements on a sound footing.

7.8 Benefits of re-organisation of the staffing structure would include:

- Reduction in management costs, not frontline delivery
- Faster decision making and an environment where innovation can thrive
- Simpler, more direct communication and accountability
- Local sites empowered to engage with and respond to communities

7.9 There are a number of vacant posts in the service, and a number of changes have already been made in 2009/10. Redundancies would be kept to a minimum and re-deployment opportunities would be sought for all eligible staff.

7.10 The timing of the re-organisation may be deferred if there were a short-term opportunity to establish a strategic partnership.

### 7.11 Learning Curve

Efficiencies through the Learning Curve are anticipated through bringing together adult learning, community arts and libraries in one building with integrated service management.

## 8 **Strategic partnership** (Recommendation (a) 4)

8.1 Many of the changes and improvements identified in the review can and must be made quickly. However, in order to make substantial changes that are embedded and generate continuous improvement, something more – a transformation - is required. It is clear that more strategic partnerships and different relationships with suppliers and others have the potential to be the catalyst for this transformation. This approach fits closely with the Council's development as a commissioning body and could also unlock opportunities for further service improvement and efficiency.

8.2 It is critical that local libraries focus on identifying and meeting community needs, but a strategic partnership model that provides other systems and processes that do not have to be located in the local library in other ways would help release frontline staff to focus on customers and also improve value for money.

8.3 A number of options were considered, with five basic models and assessed for potential benefits and risks. They were each scored out of a total of 25 for likely speed of adoption and impact, value added to customer service delivery, capacity to bring solutions that facilitate transformation, demonstrable record of achievement and potential to reduce costs. The options and scores were:

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- Strategic partnership with another local authority (21/25)
- Slough shared services initiative (8/25)
- Library consortium shared services (11/25)
- Trust (4/25)
- Private sector strategic partnership (16/25)

8.4 The review recommends that officers proceed formally to market test the local authority strategic partner model for the whole library service, inviting local authorities to express interest. This will require a service specification to be developed. The private sector strategic partnership model remains a viable option should the public sector model not succeed.

## 9 **Performance management** (Recommendation (c))

9.1 Performance management is an essential part of ensuring that a service is taking action to achieve positive and improved outcomes and is contributing to the wider objectives of the council. The focus of performance management is on achieving results, improving service delivery and ensuring better value for money.

9.2 Overall, there is a clear lack of focus and a performance culture in the library service at all levels. There is no sustained evaluative understanding of local community needs. Performance issues should be addressed as part of a transformation programme that establishes a positive change in ethos and a clear steer for the way forward so that staff can feel engaged and empowered in terms of what is expected and what is needed for the service.

- 9.3 As part of a new performance system, an improved reporting system will be introduced. Starting with annual strategic objective setting and service and site plans, reports will show each month how libraries are performing in comparison to targets set against a range of benchmarking criteria.
- 9.4 It is proposed that quarterly reports on implementation of the strategic review and overall performance improvement of the library service should be provided for the Scrutiny Panel and Commissioner to review progress.

## 10 **Comments of Other Committees**

The report of the libraries strategic review will be considered by the Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September. A report of the Panel's comments and advice will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 22 September.

## 11 **Conclusion**

- 11.1 Slough has a uniquely diverse and lively community. Its library service should both reflect and celebrate its community and add real value to it through bringing people together and creating opportunity for all.
- 11.2 In many ways Slough libraries have maintained a good level of service and built some strong partnerships. Langley and Cippenham libraries are good libraries beginning to fulfil their role as community centres. Good initiatives though are not carried through and a lack of customer awareness and performance management indicate that the service needs a strategic change programme and transformational leadership if it is to improve substantially.
- 11.3 The review proposes a package of measures that together will set in motion and sustain continuous improvement of library services. It proposes changes to systems and services, but fundamentally the review is about cultural change and engaging the power of local people and library staff to achieve their potential to shape local services and local communities.
- 11.4 The Cabinet are invited to:
- (a) Approve the report of the libraries strategic review and endorses the actions proposed, in particular:
    - 1. Endorse a new vision for public libraries as a force for change and improvement at the heart of communities.
    - 2. Extend provision though mini libraries in community venues.
    - 3. Adopt an invest to save strategy to improve service outcomes for customers and communities while reducing expenditure in other areas to deliver efficiencies.
    - 4. Test the potential for a local authority strategic partnership to add value and accelerate improvement of Slough's public libraries.
  - (b) Advise on strategic issues and opportunities raised by the review
  - (c) Note that quarterly performance reports will be submitted to the Scrutiny Panel to maintain scrutiny of progress implementing actions arising from the review

12. **Appendices attached**

- Appendix A - Executive summary
- Appendix B - Summary of conclusions and actions

13. **Background papers**

- 1 Building a sustainable community: a strategic review of Slough's public library service. September 2009.