

Culture, Tourism & Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 43

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Libraries Plan Workshop - Feedback
Date of Meeting: 1st March 2012
Report of: Strategic Director: Communities
Contact Officer: Name: Sally McMahon Tel: 29-6963
E-mail: sally.mcmahon@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision No
Wards Affected: All All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Libraries Plan 2012-15 will set out the Council's vision for the service and outline the main priorities for the coming three years. Brighton & Hove City Library Service is highly successful, comparing very favourably with similar comparable authorities as identified by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy).
- 1.2 The Scrutiny Committee workshop was held to engage Members in the development of the new Libraries Plan at the formative stage. The original date for the workshop was moved back to 5 January 2012 to enable Members to discuss the Libraries Plan in full knowledge of the budget proposals.
- 1.3 Under the current Governance arrangements, the Libraries Plan is one of the key strategic documents that require full council approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Members note the report and endorse the development of a new Libraries Plan for 2012-15

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The workshop looked at the current state of Brighton & Hove Libraries, reviewing the latest performance and comparative data. Nationally, Brighton & Hove out-performs for its size, with the Jubilee Library being the sixth most successful library in the country, in the same league as the major conurbations such as Manchester and Birmingham.

3.2 In comparison with our 16 'nearest neighbours' (similar authorities), Brighton & Hove is:

- Best value in terms of cost per visit
- Second highest for:
 - visits to libraries
 - satisfaction by under 16s
 - loans of non-book items
 - total books and other items in stock
- Third highest for website visits
- Fourth highest for loans of books

3.3 Other evidence presented gave examples of the positive impact of library services on people's lives, helping children and young people, developing skills, supporting health and wellbeing.

3.4 Members discussed a wide range of issues around public libraries, identifying aspects of good practice, as well as their main concerns:

Aspects of good practice that were noted:

- Development of Whitehawk Library and hub
- Success of Patcham Library working with Patcham High School to improve reading and communication skills
- Wide ranging use of Jubilee Library as a hub
- Praise for the helpful and welcoming library staff
- The support for children and young people through services such as Bookstart and Homework clubs

Members' concerns included:

- To have a good range and selection of books and other resources
- To review and update the Stock Policy to ensure effective stock selection and management
- To maintain a library presence in local neighbourhoods
- Over the level of opening hours of libraries
- That the new Woodingdean library would be open only three days a week

3.4 Members sought clarification on and discussed the impact of the savings proposals on library services.

3.5 Members also raised issues regarding the mobile library and the impact on housebound and other vulnerable people, and the measures being put in place to mitigate this.

3.6 Library Service Values and Priorities:

- 3.7 Members reviewed the core values and priorities identified by library staff in a series of workshops. There was general support and agreement for the values and priorities identified, although Members preferred a focus on 'promotion' rather than 'marketing' of services.
- 3.8 Members expressed particular support for the development of libraries as hubs. The idea of a collection of 'village' services in local neighbourhoods, with libraries playing an important role in supporting local communities.
- 3.9 There was discussion around the role of libraries in enabling access to digital services, especially with the introduction of access to services such as welfare benefits mainly online.
- 3.10 Members also identified the critical role of good quality and range of stock for the future of the library service.
- 3.11 Next Steps: A draft Libraries Plan will be developed based on the identified priorities for the service, taking account of the input of Members through the workshop. The Plan will contain the vision and ambition for the service, the values and key priorities, and also the questions and challenges for the future.
- 3.12 Once completed, the Library Plan will go to the relevant decision-making body, then on to Full Council later in the year. The timetable will be confirmed once the new committee system is in place.

4. **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The draft Library Plan will go out for a 13 week public consultation which will include input from key stakeholders such as local schools, community and voluntary organisations, as well as regular library users and specialist groups.

5. **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The 2012/13 draft revenue budget for the library service is £5.5m and is to be considered at Budget Council on 23rd February 2012.
- Key actions for inclusion in the plan will be developed subject to identifying the funding either through the revenue budget, external funding or spend to save schemes. Continuing to improve value for money will be integral to the plan.

Accountant consulted: Michelle Herrington date 21/2/12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Libraries Plan is a key strategic document that requires full council approval. There are no adverse legal implications arising from the Plan or the report

Lawyer consulted: Bob Bruce Date 21/2/12

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An equalities impact assessment will be completed for the new Libraries Plan.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The Libraries Plan will include measures that will improve sustainability. For instance:

Sustainable Consumption and Production: The use of new technology and new ways of working would include a reduction in use of paper and other consumable resources.

Climate Change and Energy: The regeneration of community libraries is likely to improve the environmental performance of the library buildings.

Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement: No implications.

Sustainable Communities: The development of community libraries as hubs and the expansion of our community engagement activities contribute to the development of more sustainable communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The Libraries Plan will include a risk and opportunity assessment.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Libraries contribute to the achievement of priorities for the city as identified in the Communities Strategy.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms:

1. None

Background Documents:

1. None