

---

**Cabinet - 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

**Providing A Modern Library Service In Dudley MBC – a strategy for the future**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek approval for a new vision and ten principles to enable Dudley Libraries to become a modern and excellent service
2. To agree an outline strategy to shape the future of the library service.

**Background**

3. In 2003 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) produced guidance for local authorities entitled '**A Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade**'. This document outlined their vision for the future and the developments needed to ensure it is achieved. This included a strand relating to effective management of services. Funding has been made available nationally to support the implementation of the vision.
4. Library Peer Review is one of the key programmes for the Museums Libraries and Archives Councils (MLA), the operational arm of DCMS, who have a service management element that works close with IDeA. The Peer Review Programme *'aims to help individual library services understand how well they are performing and supports them in achieving real improvement, using the best knowledge and expertise of people working in and with libraries, to share their understanding and spread good practice'* (Library Service Peer Review Benchmark 2005).
5. In the summer of 2005, Dudley's Library Service was approached to take part in the Peer Review process as part of a funded pilot. The offer was accepted and the service was reviewed in October 2005. The resulting implementation plan is the first stage of a full review of the service called 'Dudley Libraries – A Blueprint for the Future'.
6. The review recognised the current strengths in the service including:
  - Staff commitment and motivation
  - High customer and partner satisfaction rates
  - Work with children including Bookstart/ rattle and rhyme
  - Improving book stock and promotion and usage
  - Improved services as a result of the Housebound review
  - Improvements in ICT provision and use
7. However it also highlights issues that the service needs to face in order to develop a modern and effective service in the future:
  - Lack of staff time and resources to develop services
  - Lack of management time to better support and develop services and staff

- Lack of evidence on how the service performs which could help raise its profile and secure future improvements for service/ stock and buildings.
  - Lack of flexibility to meet the future needs of customers as they change and develop
  - Communication not always working- for staff or customers
  - Need for stronger leadership and a clear vision for the service
8. Following the review, a Peer Review Improvement Action Plan was created to carry forward the improvement process as the first stage in a review of the whole service. The plan is clearly linked to the Review Report recommendations and has been agreed by the MLA who are providing £50,000 to support the improvement process.
9. The review process as a whole has resulted in the identification of options for the future structure of the library service to enable it to become an excellent modern service that is flexible and fit for purpose in supporting the strategic aims of the council and of the community of Dudley.

### **Current service issues**

10. There are ten service improvement issues recommended by the Peer Review as follows:
- The need for the resolution of current staffing pay anomalies which still remain following a previous re-structure of the service 4 years ago.
  - The staffing structure is inflexible and does not have a clear competency framework.
  - The service culture is buildings-based and needs to change to a customer service-based operation, including a wider range of service provision methods.
  - There is no clear statement of the minimum size and standard of buildings required to provide a modern and effective library service.
  - There is a need for a vision for the service which clearly links to the Corporate and Community visions; the Council's Cultural Strategy; and the vision for the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS).
  - The library service needs a clear image and 'brand' which clearly links it with the Council brand.
  - The performance management process needs to be improved and include more effective management of risk.
  - Communication needs to be improved both within the service and with customers and external stakeholders.
  - The service needs to participate more effectively in the Council's established consultation processes.
  - Stakeholders' current high satisfaction levels will potentially reduce if the service does not modernise its customer access points and staffing structures. Failure to modernise will also result in a reduction in the achievement of library standards and Best Value Performance Indicators. *Appendix 1* shows the current performance against Public Library Standards

## **Dudley Library Service Vision and Ten Principles**

11. The proposed new vision statement following consultation with staff for the library service is *'Open and Accessible to all'*.
12. This will be achieved by applying the following principles to create an excellent modern library service:
  - Services that are focused on the needs of the community offered through our own sites as well as in partnership with others as appropriate
  - Well trained and competent staff with excellent customer care skills
  - Well trained, competent managers and leaders with the right skills to work with staff and partners to develop the service
  - All staff open to, and actively seeking, innovative ways to improve the services we offer and acting as advocates for the service
  - The right stock in the right place at the right time
  - Bright, light, welcoming, flexible buildings acting as a focus for their community
  - A budget that matches clear service levels and standards
  - A service that knows what we are doing, why and whether we have achieved what we set out to do
  - A pro active service that is valued by partners and stakeholders and regularly asked to participate in, support and lead on projects, and seen as a 'can do' organisation.
  - A service that meets and exceeds standards and expectations that we can all be proud of.

## **Ten dimensions of a new strategy for the future of the Library Service**

13. The staffing structure needs to be remodelled and simplified to better utilise the professional staff; improve lines of communication and delegation; and provide a better career structure for staff. This needs to include the rationalisation of some roles carried out within the whole Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning Division in addition to remodelling within the library service. This process is proposed to commence in October 2006 to create an effective framework for future development of the service. The relevant unions will be involved and consulted throughout the process.
14. The need to develop of alternative ways to access the library service through linking with partners. The service will continue to develop the e-enablement of service building on the current services available online to join the library, renew and request items and search for information as the technology becomes available.

15. The number of service points and their location and their condition will be reviewed in the light of developments occurring across the borough, and the results of under investment in the past and current structural problems. A clear standard will be created stating the minimum size and standard of buildings. The current opening hours for libraries will need to be reviewed and revised as a result of the staffing restructure which should enable the library service to meet, or get closer to meeting, Public Library Standards relating to the number of hours open.
16. The alignment with Corporate policies to realise the potential opportunities from joint working with partners as part of the regeneration of the borough and development of sustainable communities. This work requires work with customers and stakeholders for the services provided.
17. The development of a clear image and 'brand' which clearly links it with the Council brand.
18. Implement a more effective performance management regime working with the Business Services staff in DACHS to ensure that all staff, customers and stakeholders are aware of what the service is able to do, and how well it is doing.
19. The initiation and development of partnership work to develop the contribution of the library service to the key priority areas as laid out in the Community plan. This will be done by using good practice available from other projects (e.g. Inspire project to improve access to important collections available in all libraries in the borough through a cooperative scheme) and acting as a pilot authority for relevant projects.
20. There is a need to develop and implement clear policies relating to the purchase and utilisation of stock to ensure that funding resources are used more effectively. This will enable the service to work steadily towards meeting Public Library Standards relating to number of items purchased and time taken to replenish stock.
21. The layout and use of the town libraries need to be reviewed as part of a longer term capital programme including potential from the use of technology to release staff to provide extended services through 'Invest to save' projects, linking with town plans and work with Dudley Council Plus as they extend their services across the borough.
22. The need to create a service that continues to meet and exceed the expectations and needs of its customers which has a clear and effective programme of customer, stakeholder and partner engagement and consultation which informs developments and confirms current practice.

## **Finance**

23. By participating in the Peer Review pilot, the Council has secured funding amounting to £50,000 from MLA, which is being utilised to fund the review itself and has secured further consultancy support to assist in the delivery of the Improvement Action Plan. The Council has already received a part-payment of £14,000 which has been used to pay for the review.
24. The Improvement Action Plan has been accepted by MLA and a second payment of £12,000 to support the implementation of this plan has been received. A progress report has been submitted in June which has released the 3<sup>rd</sup> payment of

£12,000. A further progress report must be submitted and approved in September to release the final payment of £12,000.

25. The implementation of a revised staffing structure will enable the service to manage more effectively within existing resources, whilst improving the coverage and range of services available.

### **Law**

26. Under the requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, the Council is a Library Authority with a requirement to provide '*a comprehensive and efficient library service*' as defined by the setting of Public Library Service Standards. These standards are set by the Museums, Libraries and Archives National Council (MLANC) on behalf of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). In 2006 there will be an additional requirement to meet the Public Library Impact Standards.

### **Equality Impact**

27. The implementation of the options and recommendations emanating from the 'Dudley Libraries – a blueprint for the future' process will take account of the need to develop a future library service which is committed to meeting the Council's Equality and Diversity aspiration and responsibilities.

### **Recommendation**

28. That Cabinet:
- Approves the implementation of the vision, principles and outline strategy to make the aspirations of the Library Service a reality in Dudley.
  - Receives a future report on key areas of future implementation.



.....  
**Linda Sanders**  
**Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

**Contact Officer**  
Kate Millin  
Telephone: 01384 814745  
Email: kate.millin@dudley.gov.uk

## **List of Background Paper**

Corporate Board Paper *Providing A Modern Library Service In Dudley MBC* 25<sup>th</sup> April 2006

IdeA/MLA *Library Service Peer Review Benchmark* 2005.

DCMS *Framework for the Future; Libraries, Learning and Information in the next decade* 2003

## Appendix 1

Table showing the current performance of Dudley Libraries against Public Library Standards

Number	Description	Standard	<i>Dudley 2005</i>	<i>Dudley 2006</i>
1	Proportion of households living with a specified distance of a static library ( <i>Dudley works to within 2 miles currently, there is a 1 mile standard</i> )	All	<i>All</i>	All
2	Aggregate opening hours per 1,000 population	128	115	115
3	Percentage of libraries open more than 10 hours a week that have access to the internet (and online catalogue)	100%	100%	100%
4	Total number of workstations available to users per 10,000 of population	6	11	11
5i	Percentage of requests for books met within 7 days	50%	73%	76%
5 ii	Percentage of requests for books met within 15 days	70%	81%	84%
5iii	Percentage of requests for books met within 30 days	85%	89%	90%
6	Number of library visits per 1,000 population ( <i>Standards vary according to type of authority –we use the Metropolitan standard</i> )	6,000	5,140	5,087
7	Overall Adult Satisfaction ( <i>taken from 3 yearly PLUS survey due in 2006</i> )	94%	93.5%	93.5%
8	Overall Children's Satisfaction ( <i>taken from 3 yearly PLUS survey due in 2007</i> )	77%	78%	78%
9	Annual items added through purchase per 1,000 population	216	145	173
10	Time taken to replenish the lending stock on open access or available for loan	6.7 years	13.6 <i>years</i>	10.5 <i>years</i>