

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

SPORT, LEISURE AND CULTURE CABINET MEMBER

LIBRARY NETWORK REVIEW

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the public library network, arising from the library network review.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- A review of the North Lincolnshire library network has been carried out to assess fitness for the future in the light of key drivers for change
 - This has led to the development of a vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the library network
 - Approval of the vision and blueprint will allow the process of exploring and developing specific proposals to begin.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

National and Local Context

The council has a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service to all in line with the Public Library and Museums Act 1964. The council has to do this at a time of increasing pressure on public sector budgets.

Over the last twenty years there has been a national decline in traditional library use. This decline is reflected in North Lincolnshire where take up has always been relatively low. Although library issues have risen in recent years, since 1999 issues have fallen overall from 852,000 to 712,000 per year.

Recent library refurbishments and relocations to shared premises have helped to improve take up. Many libraries though, remain as traditional stand-alone facilities, and most offer a 'one size fits all' universal service.

2.2 Library Network Review

2.2.1 In 2009 Library & Information Services undertook a review of the library network of facilities (static and mobile libraries).

2.2.2 The review assessed the network's fitness for future purpose in the light of the drivers that are shaping the future of library services, specifically:

- Professional, national and local policy drivers
- Technological innovation and change
- Service performance and value for money
- Customer insight.

2.2.3 The key issues and findings arising from the review include:

- North Lincolnshire has a comparatively high number of libraries per person, but average opening hours per library are very low
- Condition, suitability, performance and efficiency vary considerably from library to library
- a more dynamic model for universal, specialist and targeted library provision is required to respond more effectively to community needs
- the service needs to explore ways to engage local communities more effectively in the development and delivery of library services
- new technology, especially Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) self-service offers a platform to develop innovative solutions for service delivery
- the service needs to sustain a balanced focus on take up, impact and efficiency in future service planning.

2.3 Vision and blueprint for the future

2.3.1 From the key findings the service has set out a vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the library network.

2.3.2 There are two dimensions to shaping the future library service delivery model:

- The first sets out the range of service offers for universal, specialist and targeted library provision and the potential channels to deliver them
- The second seeks to improve the consistency of library provision across North Lincolnshire, linking levels of community provision to the settlement hierarchy set out in the council's Local Development Framework.

2.3.3 The blueprint for the future outlines the key principles and standards for developing the library network. These include a continuing move from stand alone to more shared facilities, more targeted services, more community involvement, better library spaces and an overall increase in opening hours.

2.3.4 Further refinement of some of these issues is required to establish a consistent approach to staffing levels, criteria for levels of mobile library provision and community engagement plans.

2.3.5 The vision and blueprint provide a framework to allow for the development of new library service delivery models, that will be fit for future purpose and better meet the library and information needs of communities in North Lincolnshire.

2.4 Making the vision a reality

2.4.1 The next stage will be to explore capacity to develop and implement specific proposals to meet the vision and blueprint. This will involve developing

specific service delivery proposals for some library facilities, to align with the proposed hierarchy of community library provision in the blueprint.

- 2.4.2 These options could include any of the potential service delivery channels identified in the review, including community hubs, shared sites, community-run libraries, self-service outlets, or mobile services.

3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1 – to approve the vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the library network
- 3.2 Option 2 – to request changes to the vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the library network
- 3.3 Option 3 – to reject the vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the library network

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 - will endorse the vision for the strategic development of the library network, enabling work on criteria for service provision and development of specific proposals to begin straightaway. This is the preferred option.
- 4.2 Option 2 - the vision and proposals seek to evolve the network over time. Changes can be made to the vision and blueprint at this stage, but this will delay capacity to develop and implement specific proposals.
- 4.3 Option 3 - rejecting the vision and blueprint would constrain capacity to develop and implement improvements to the library network. This could result in the service missing opportunities for relocation or harnessing new technology to maximum effect. There is an increasing expectation at national level that library services develop strategic plans to ensure provision of comprehensive library services. Without a vision and blueprint the council may find it hard to justify future changes to the network.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Financial

There are no immediate financial implications. Assessment of financial implications will be a key element in developing specific proposals to meet the vision and blueprint.

5.2 Staffing

There are no immediate staffing implications to approving the vision and blueprint. Consultation with staff and unions will be integral to developing specific proposals.

5.3 Property and IT

There are no immediate implications to approving the vision and blueprint. As proposals are developed and implemented there will be significant impact on property and IT through potential relocation, amalgamation or release of some assets.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 Statutory

The council's statutory duty for library provision has been considered throughout the review.

6.2 Environmental

There are no specific environmental implications. As specific proposals are developed consideration will be given to opportunities for improving the energy efficiency of the library network.

6.3 Diversity

A diversity impact assessment has been carried out for the overall library network review. There is no significant negative diversity impact overall. Further diversity assessments will be undertaken as specific proposals are developed.

OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 Council officers and stakeholders have contributed to the development of the library network review.

7.2 Specific proposals will be subject to consultation with customers, communities, elected members, staff, partners and identified stakeholders, as they are developed.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the cabinet member for Sport, Leisure and Culture approves the vision and blueprint for the strategic development of the library network.

8.2 That the cabinet member for Sport, Leisure and Culture authorises development of specific proposals for the library network, in line with the vision and blueprint, to begin.

8.3 That the cabinet member for Sport, Leisure and Culture receives further reports on specific proposals for library facilities in due course.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Library Network Review
North Lincolnshire Council *Corporate Asset Management Plan and Property Strategy*
North Lincolnshire Council *Local Development Framework*
Framework for the Future, DCMS, 2003