



DEPARTMENTAL BRIEFING (COMMUNITIES)

4

date 1st July 2008

REPORT OF THE ACTING STRATEGIC DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

A modern library service at the heart of the community

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Members of current and future developments in the Library Service.

Background

2. Apart from schools, the library service is perhaps the most visible face of the County Council. It is also one of the most popular, heavily used and highly rated services that the Council provides. It is a service that seeks to be at the heart of Nottinghamshire communities and at the centre of community life.
3. Through a network of 60 libraries and 7 mobiles, the service is available to people of all ages and backgrounds, in all communities, whether large or small. It is a service that is proactive, dynamic and developing.
4. The provision of a traditional book loan service is a core function with approximately 5 million items being loaned each year. This, however, is just one (albeit an important one) element of provision. To this can be added:
 - free access to the internet at all service points
 - a high quality information service
 - reader development activities (including reading groups and reading chains)
 - learning programmes and opportunities
 - the provision of heritage and local history materials and
 - a wide range of programmes and events for all ages, reflecting the arts, culture and performance.

5. Most of our libraries have a real “buzz” about them and are benefiting from a modernisation programme that includes 15 building refurbishments, new builds at West Bridgford and Worksop (as part of the Community Hubs initiative) and a soon-to-be-implemented redevelopment of the County’s premier library at Mansfield.
6. To date, the impact of this modernisation programme has been both positive and significant. Library refurbishments have seen increases in book issues, visitor numbers and new members. Initiatives such as Bookstart and People’s Network have been shown to be life changing. ICT developments, such as the introduction of Wi-Fi and the provision of an ever-widening range of on-line services, have improved access to knowledge and information.
7. The library service is, therefore, making a vital and exciting contribution to the cultural, learning and information agenda. The potential exists, however, to further improve and our goal, in the national context, is to become a top performing library service at the heart of the community.

Financial implications

8. Library service expenditure is approximately £14 million per annum.

Personnel implications

9. The service currently employs a total of just over 400 staff.

RECOMMENDED

Members are asked to note this report.

Steve Calvert
Acting Strategic Director, Communities