



REPORT OF THE TEMPORARY DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES

INDEPENDENT LIBRARY REPORT FOR ENGLAND

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members on recommendations and implications resulting from the publication of the Independent Library Report for England.

Information and Advice

2. The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned philanthropist, entrepreneur and publisher William Sieghart to produce an independent report that considered:
 - what are the core principles of a public library into the future?
 - is the current model of delivery the most comprehensive and efficient?
 - what is the role of community libraries?
3. An advisory panel was established to take evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and published their final report in December 2015. Its recommendations aim to ensure that public libraries flourish for generations into the digital age.
4. The Review identifies a clear need and demand within communities for "*modern, safe, non-judgemental, flexible spaces*" from where everyone, of all ages and especially those most vulnerable, can access the world's knowledge for free and with the support of knowledgeable staff. In particular, libraries support two key skills:
 - literacy – working with schools and local cultural organisations, libraries can assist standards in schools and provide courses for adults
 - digital literacy – at least 20% of people have no digital technology at home, and those that do need help to make the most of what they do have.
5. The Review states that the public library service should be re-invigorated: WiFi in every library; a comfortable, retail-standard environment, with coffee, sofas and toilets; new services to make it a vibrant and attractive community hub, supporting individuals and communities to become more enterprising, more literate and, in consequence, more prosperous.
6. The evidence received by the Review argues that the future of libraries as community hubs is essential for the well-being of the nation.

7. The Review seeks coherence at national level: it describes the current governance arrangements as inhibiting both strategic leadership and economies of scale. Central government needs to demonstrate its own commitment and understanding of the crucial nature of the service to the nation's welfare and advancement.
8. The Review highlighted key areas for development:
 - a. improved national leadership through a Library Taskforce led by local government
 - b. that wider government initiatives should recognise that libraries provide access to services from education and welfare reform to business and economic growth to health and well-being. And that they also support a range of digital inclusion activities
 - c. that progress on the E-Lending pilots be concluded allowing libraries and publishers' interests to be protected. Specific work on in-library audio and e-book lending be progressed
 - d. that volunteering and volunteer led libraries for some communities is an option but is lower in more disadvantaged communities
 - e. the Review advocates greater involvement of communities in the management of library services and observes a range of different models are developing.
9. The Review recommends that local authorities should continue to have a statutory duty to provide library services and the autonomy to determine the levels of local provision, spending, management structure and delivery arrangements. It also encouraged local authorities to consider the advantages in new, alternative models – staff led public service mutuals; community mutuals; trusts; shared services; in-house; contracting out etc.
10. The Review describes libraries as the most valued of civic spaces with a unique cross generational appeal. It identifies examples of exciting, relevant and vibrant community hubs that drive footfall to town centres and help create a climate of aspiration, and of collaborative working by local authorities that extend services and improve efficiency.
11. The report currently has no financial resources available to undertake areas for development. It has identified key actions:

Central government

- a) to fund local authorities to extend WiFi access, computer facilities and workforce training for all public libraries in England
- b) to have greater cross-government recognition and support for libraries
- c) to change copyright law to extend the Public Lending Right to remote e-loans.

Central government and local government

- a) to work together to establish a library taskforce, led by councils working with sector partners, to: provide leadership; implement the Review's recommendations, and reinvigorate the public library service in England.

The taskforce

- a) to support the creation of a national digital library network

- b) to work with publishers, libraries and others to adopt the e-lending pilot models
- c) to develop the library workforce, especially new recruits and graduates
- d) to develop sector-led best practice guidelines to help local authorities' work with volunteers and community-led libraries.

Local government, through the taskforce

- a) to develop a vigorous culture of mutual support among local authorities, sharing good practice/resources and seizing opportunities for greater collaboration
 - b) to consider all available options for the delivery of local library services
 - c) to encourage more community involvement in the management of libraries.
12. The Strategy for Nottinghamshire's Libraries was approved by County Council on 15 December 2011.
13. Since its approval the strategy has under-pinned the service business plans for 2012/2013 and 2014/15.
14. The strategy has positioned the Council and the service well to respond to changing requirements and in most parts has enabled the service to positively meet the recommendations of the review. In particular placing the library at the centre of community life as a reading, cultural, information and heritage hub is central to the Nottinghamshire approach.
15. The ongoing modernisation of the library network provides for a modern 'retail' public space that is vibrant and well used.
16. The delivery of an alternative operating model through a community benefit society will enable financial savings and encourage greater community engagement of the service.
17. The roll out of WiFi to the majority of Nottinghamshire's Libraries is underway with free internet available at all sites.
18. Nottinghamshire County Council is well placed to meet its statutory duty and respond to changing needs and environments and will contribute to outcomes of the taskforce as they develop.

Other Options Considered

19. As this is a report for noting, it is not necessary to consider other options.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults,

service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

22. The detailed work undertaken in relation to the delivery of the library strategy aims to improve the accessibility and quality of library and information services for our customers.
23. The development of an alternative operating model via a Community Benefit Society will encourage wider engagement and involvement in the development of services.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the recommendations and implications resulting from the publication of the Independent Library Report for England be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

24. As this report is for noting only, no constitutional comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 13/02/15)

25. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Independent Library Report for England – Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 18 December 2014

A Strategy for Nottinghamshire's Libraries – report to County Council on 15 December 2011

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.
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