PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	Creating a Sustainable Library Service
Committee:	Cabinet
Date:	25 March 2014
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Peter Smith
CMT Member:	David Trussler (Interim Director for Corporate Services)
Author:	Dave Saunders, Interim Asst Director for Customer Services
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Ref:	DS/Libraries Plan, 2014
Key Decision:	No
Part:	1

Purpose of the report:

This report has been written to fulfil Pledge 70, to "introduce a proper plan to protect and enhance libraries".

The Library Service is a popular and well-used statutory service of the Council. Its primary purpose is to support cultural engagement through literacy, learning and skills development. This purpose is achieved through a mix of services and buildings but it is not dependant on those buildings for its success. Libraries in Plymouth are visited by almost one million people a year. The future shape of the service will be determined by a combination of identified community needs, customer insight and consultation and engagement.

The report recommends the creation of a clear but flexible Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service over the three years 2014/15 to 2016/17. It considers the library service in three contexts:

- Libraries at the centre of the organisation
- Libraries at the heart of the community
- Libraries in the right place for the future

The report concludes with a three year Action Plan.

The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17:
The library service has four key objectives which link directly to corporate objectives.

Corporate objectives	Library service objective
Growing Plymouth	Develop a literate population and workforce for the benefit of both the economy and culture
Confident Plymouth	Develop an informed population which values learning
Caring Plymouth	Reduce the inequality gap, particularly in health, between communities
Pioneering Plymouth	Work with partners to maximise resources to benefit customers and make internal efficiencies

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Including finance, human, IT and land

The Council continues to face the impact of the economic downturn. At the same time, public libraries are facing ever-increasing expectations and demands from users. Although the service has been protected from budget reductions in 2014/15, it faces further reductions in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Staff costs form by far the biggest area of expenditure for the service. A restructure in 2013 achieved savings of £250,000 and further restructures will be required as the service continues to downsize. At the same time, increased opportunities are already emerging and the service now has a part-time volunteering co-ordinator.

The service is a heavy user of IT with almost every aspect of the service being dependent on it. The public computers give free Internet access to all users. As channel shift continues in PCC the demand for public computers will increase. IT can bring further efficiencies to the service and can also enhance it at low cost - for example, through a Libraries app.

Consideration of the libraries estate will happen as part of the development of the proposed Strategic Plan and Transformation Project. There is scope of further efficiencies through co-location.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. There is no case law to define this, but the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and especially the Public Sector Equality Duty, with respect to libraries have been more closely defined following the Statutory Inquiry carried into library closures in the Wirral.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

- Child Poverty – The library service provides parents, carers and children with free access to books to support literacy. Many homes contain no books. These are likely to be same homes where child poverty and low levels of literacy are already both significant challenges.

- Plymouth Plan – The Strategic Plan will be prepared to be consistent with the aims of the developing Plymouth Plan. It will be evidence for the Plymouth Plan, will directly inform the strategy set out in the Plymouth Plan and will also contain elements which will deliver key objectives of the Plymouth Plan

- Risk Management – There is evidence from the Wirral, Gloucestershire and Somerset that library closures carried out without adequate consultation and without regard to the Equality Act 2010 risk a judicial review or statutory Inquiry together with loss of the Council's reputation.

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? EIAs will be undertaken at key stages within the development of the Strategic Plan to inform the decision making process.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- Recognise that the primary purpose of the library service is to support cultural engagement through literacy, learning and skills development. This purpose is achieved through a mix of services and buildings but it is not dependent on those buildings for its success.

- Approve the action plan in order to create a Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service over the three years 2014/15 to 2016/17 which is integrated within the Council's Transformation Programme (which will include stakeholder and partner consultation).

- Request officers to submit progress reports on each of the three phases of the creation of the plan in April 2015, 2016 and 2017 and to submit the draft plan for approval.

Reasons for recommendations

- To clarify and redefine the library service offering that will inform the development of the Strategic Plan.

- To align the development of the Strategic Plan for the library service to the Transformation Programme.

- To audit the progress of the action plan against the development of the Strategic Plan.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Do nothing – given the level of budget reductions forecast, and the need to further modernise the service, this is not a viable option.

Other options are considered in the report.

Published work / information:

Plymouth City Council, Plymouth Libraries: Library Consultation Report (October 2012)
Plymouth City Council, Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Task and Finish Group: Library Modernisation (April 2013)
Arts Council England, The library of the future (May 2013)
Arts Council England, Community libraries - Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities
William Sieghart: An Independent Review of E-Lending in Public Libraries in England (March 2013)
Government Response to the Independent Review of E-Lending in Public Libraries in England (March 2013)
Lambeth Council, Cabinet Report on Co-operative Libraries (9 July 2012)
Lambeth Council, Cabinet Report on Co-operative Libraries (22 October 2012)
RedQuadrant: Report on Plymouth Libraries (May 2013)

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	mc13 14.38	Leg	TH 0148	Mon Off	TH 0148	HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: David Saunders, Interim AD for Customer Services													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

1 INTRODUCTION

This report delivers on the pledge to *"Introduce a proper plan to protect and enhance libraries"*. It sets out the framework for creating a Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service in the form of a detailed Action Plan.

While local authorities are statutorily required to provide a library service, what this means in practice has been challenged in recent years. Changing demographics and usage, the impact of new technology and budget reductions have all had a part to play.

A Library Service is now much more than a network of buildings which lend books. The growth of e-books and online resources, including social networking, means that the service's "virtual" presence is just as important as its physical one. Targeted interventions in non-library settings bring the service to those who need it most.

> To the staff at Central Library
>
> I APPRECIATE YOU!
>
> The free film showings are a great idea - I have NO TV or DVD access, computer/laptop, etc.
>
> Some staff have occasionally struggled with me.
>
> I am bi-polar, dyspraxic and partially sighted.
>
> You have a nice safe respectful space in a world I personally find too stressful.
>
> Mrs B, February 2014

This recent comment from a customer gets to the heart of what some libraries are already achieving in the twenty-first century. In a few lines we see a service which is already supporting growth, is caring, is pioneering and is building confidence.

In February 2014, the Government announced that an independent report on the public library service in England had been commissioned by Culture Minister Ed Vaizey and Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis.

The report, due to be completed in December 2014, will address three questions faced by Plymouth locally, and all libraries nationally:
- What are the core principles of a public library into the future?
- Is the current model of delivery the most comprehensive and efficient? and
- What is the role of "community libraries"?

Whether this report will result in major changes, possibly legislative, to the service remains to be seen. In the meantime, Plymouth's own strategy for library service sustainability cannot be put on hold.

The Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service will be developed in the context of the Council's new Corporate Plan, our co-operative approach to community engagement and commissioning, the developing Plymouth Plan, and - crucially - the Transformation Programme.

In summary, the Strategic Plan will:

- aim to *protect* the library service by safeguarding its core functions and integrating them with the Transformation Programme;

- *enhance* the library service by setting out a plan to understand and deliver what our customers want and need and maximise the use of limited resources;

- ensure that the library service is at the *centre of the organisation*, at the *heart of the community* and in the *right place for the future*; and

- map the objectives of the library service onto the new Corporate Plan objectives.

2 DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

2.1 Customer-driven change

Libraries are no longer primarily places where you borrow books. The traditional measures of success - book loans and membership - increasingly fail to paint an accurate picture of use. Customers, whether members or not, visit the library to use the free public computers or to find a quiet place to study or relax in a safe public space. Finding information almost instantly via the Internet is increasingly preferred to finding information in reference books. However, physical access to books is still very important, particularly for young children and older people.

Even though we have increased the ease with which people can borrow books (for example, self-service and free online reservations) the number of book loans continues to fall.

Loan transactions in 2013 were 14.7% lower than those in 2012. However ebooks will be launched in April 2014.

2.2 Technology-driven change

Since Christmas 2013, half of the population owns a tablet computer. There is a growing demand for new and improved technology such as ebooks, Wi-Fi access and improved online catalogue facilities. Local authorities that have introduced ebooks for loan have seen a surge in membership as a result. We can confidently expect that to be Plymouth's experience too when the service is introduced in April 2014.

At the same time, moves towards "channel shift" and "digital by default" mean that it is even more important that people who don't have computers are able to use those in libraries.

2.3 Budget-driven change

In 2010/11 the Library Service's budget was £3.9m.

The budget for 2013/14 is £2.9m - a reduction of £1m or 25%. This saving has been achieved through major reductions in staffing at all levels, and halving the purchase of new books and resources. The number of libraries and their opening hours have been unaffected.

The need to make further spending reductions over the next three years means that sufficient savings cannot simply be made by continuing to cut back staffing piecemeal. Only the largest libraries now have more than two staff on duty, and the smaller ones are all single-staffed. This reality leaves only three options:

- Reduce opening hours to a level where buildings are closed so much that they cease to be useful
- Close libraries outright
- Work with communities to find alternative delivery models

As this paper is to introduce a proper plan to protect and enhance libraries, options one and two conflict with this and that leaves only option 3 as a viable approach going forward.

We want to have a comprehensive, efficient, modern service which is fit for purpose and delivers our statutory obligations. Given the resources available, this can only be achieved by making fundamental strategic changes. As the Transformation Programme moves forward over the next three years alternative delivery models will be developed co-operatively with customers, partners, staff and members. The Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service will be developed to remain flexible to adapt to these alternative models and any changes in the corporate estate.

3 A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Key challenges for the Library Service are to:

- Take a central role in the delivery of the Customer strand of the Transformation Programme

- Find new innovative ways of delivering library and other services to maintain footfall and thereby viability

- Develop the service with internal and external partners to maximise its impact and secure its future.

This work will require the service to develop its vision and approach with staff, communities and partners. This will be aligned with the values and objectives of the Corporate Plan and build capacity and develop new skills across the service to ensure that the library service can in future:

- Act as a **trusted gateway** to services and information. Achieved through convergence with Customer Services through training, strengthening the core offer – virtual and physical, and more front line staff.

- Carry out effective **community consultation and engagement**: by working with internal and external partners to ensure that the library service has maximum impact and is tailored to the communities it serves.

- Engage in **co-operative commissioning**: acting as a commissioner of services to deliver the service's objectives – for example, around literacy, as well as being commissioned to deliver corporate objectives – for example, around employment and health and wellbeing.

The current direction of travel for the library service is based on greater integration with the Customer strand of the Transformation Programme through the establishment of Hub Libraries and an operational convergence with Customer Services. However, there are other models of provision and governance, some of which would appear to be compatible with the Council's co-operative principles and which could be implemented. These will continue to be explored drawing on the experience of other authorities.

The 2013 Arts Council England report *The Library of the Future* identifies four priorities to sustain and develop a twenty-first century public library service:

- Place the library as the hub of a community

- Make the most of digital technology and creative media

- Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable

- Deliver the right skills for those who work for libraries

We believe that a Strategic Plan to protect and enhance libraries together with the new 2014 staffing structure will put the Library Service in a strong position to deliver all of these priorities for the future.

The Action Plan which follows meshes the Transformation Programme with the recommendations of the 2013 OSP Task and Finish Group (Appendix A), the 2013 report from consultants RedQuadrant, and the recommendations from Arts Council England.

ACTION PLAN

Action	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Recommendation from		
				Arts Council England	Task and Finish Group	Red Quadrant
A. LIBRARIES AT THE CENTRE OF THE ORGANISATION						
A1 : Transformation Programme						
Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable	●	●	●	✓		
Ensure that Libraries are fully represented within the Transformation Programme and that their potential is understood by leaders, decision-makers and stakeholders	●	●	●			✓
Analyse library programmes to determine best fit with Transformation Programme strands	●					
Work with partners, including schools, to identify service areas that can benefit from joint working in shared accommodation	●	●	●			✓
Use customer insight to determine which services can best be delivered through which channel to which customers	●	●				✓
Within the Transformation Programme, members, stakeholders and staff to develop a Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service	●	●				
Develop and deliver internal and external communication plans for the Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service	●	●	●			
Ensure that the aims of the Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service are fully integrated into the overarching strategies of the Plymouth Plan	●	●	●			

Action	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Recommendation from		
				Arts Council England	Task and Finish Group	Red Quadrant
A2 : Further integration						
Expand the role of some posts include other teams within Customer Services	●	●	●			✓
Integrate roles in Libraries and Customer Services more fully		●	●			✓
B. LIBRARIES AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY						
B1 : Building a Co-operative Library Service						
Open a dialogue with library services in other co-operative councils so that Plymouth's model can draw on best practice	●	●	●			
Place the library as the hub of a community	●	●	●	✓		
Consult widely and deeply to fully inform the Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Library Service	●	●				
Carry out customer satisfaction surveys to establish baseline figures	●					
Carry out annual customer surveys to monitor changes in satisfaction ratings		●	●			
Strengthen community consultation and engagement to support the co-design of the service with our customers	●	●	●			
Place co-operative commissioning at centre of service planning		●	●			
Assess each communities' capacity for co-delivery.	●	●				✓
B2 : Take advantage of opportunities for better libraries in better locations						
As part of the History Centre Project, relocate the Central Library and Library Headquarters to better, more suitable accomodation.	●	●	●			

Action	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Recommendation from		
				Arts Council England	**Task and Finish Group**	**Red Quadrant**
Involve the communities of North Prospect in the development of their new library at The Beacon	●	●	●			
C. LIBRARIES IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THE FUTURE						
C1 : Innovative Services and Marketing						
Develop an overall programme for library events and put in place a communications plan	●	●	●			✓
As part of the Transformation Programme, explore opportunities for maximising income generation potential.	●	●	●			
Analyse marketing data to feed into a marketing strategy	●	●	●			✓
Develop a library marketing strategy to promote the core objectives of the library service	●	●	●		✓	✓
Implement an e-book service, subject to licensing constraints	●				✓	
As part of the Transformation Programme, explore alternative provision and governance models for the service	●	●				
Make the most of digital technology and creative media	●	●	●	✓		
Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable	●	●	●	✓		
C2 : Staff, efficiency and capacity building						
Embed performance management and Customer Service Excellent within the library service	●					✓
Improve staff engagement – Staff Survey Action Plan	●	●	●			
Explore and develop sustainable volunteering opportunities with the community and voluntary sector. Explore and develop with Job Centre Plus a work placement and work experience programme	●	●	●		✓	

Action	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Recommendation from		
		12		Arts Council England	Task and Finish Group	Red Quadrant
Identify appropriate performance measures for activities and develop mechanisms for reporting on these at regular intervals	●	●	●			✓
Deliver the right skills for those who work for libraries	●	●	●	✓		
Engage staff in service planning and improve Staff Survey results	●	●	●			
Migrate calls to Contact Centre		●				
Deliver savings in line with 2014/15 budget	●					
Deliver savings in line with 2015/16 budget	●	●				
Deliver savings in line with 2016/17 budget		●	●			

APPENDIX A

The OSP Task and Finish Group made the following recommendations. This update shows progress on each one.

	Recommendation	Update
1	The council introduces Wi-Fi access to all of its libraries as soon as possible	August 2013: Wi-Fi implemented at: ▪ Central, Plympton, Plymstock, St Aubyn February 2014: Wi-Fi implemented at: ▪ Crownhill, Efford, North Prospect, Peverell, St Budeaux, Southway, Stoke, West Park The remaining libraries (Eggbuckland, Estover, Ernesettle, Laira and Tothill) are unsuitable either because they are in shared premises or because the buildings are very small.
2	Consideration is given to transferring ownership of premises, under the Community Asset Transfer scheme, where it is no longer financially viable to maintain solely as public library, subject to extensive community consultation and engagement prior to any such transfer taking place	Where building tenure allows and where there is community interest, we will explore this option.
3	Local access to a library is maintained regardless of whether service provision remains in its current location or is relocated elsewhere in the neighbourhood in order to ensure that all premises fit with the vision of a future modern library service	This will form key issue for community consultation and engagement for the Strategic Plan.
4	The option of using volunteers is explored further with the community and voluntary sector	The service's new 2014 structure includes a post for volunteer management and work is already underway to development volunteering opportunities
5	Consideration is given to developing a library marketing strategy promoting the facilities and services on offer with a view to rebranding them as community resource centres	The service's new 2014 structure includes a post for a marketing specialist. Rebranding will be considered as part of the Transformation Programme.
6	The provision of e-books be explored, subject to licensing constraints, with a view to introducing e-lending to the library service	E-books will be available to public library customers and Library Service to Schools subscribers from April 2014.
7	The installation of one-stop shops to enable easier access for customers to council services, such as the issuing/renewal of bus passes, payments (including the recharging of utility key cards), reporting issues/complaints and for signposting customers onto other agencies	This will be a key issue for community consultation and engagement for the Strategic Plan.

	Recommendation	Update
8	Discussions with Job Centre Plus continue around further developing the 'back-to-work' project with a view to rolling it out to targeted libraries in the city	Partnerships have been established with JCP, Working Links, Plymouth Community Homes and others to create very successful work clubs at St Aubyn, Crownhill and West Park libraries.
9	Work with other partner agencies continues with a view to identifying service areas that would benefit from joint working in shared accommodation, such as credit unions, to further reinforce the council's commitment of providing easier access to services for its citizens	This will be a key issue for community consultation and engagement for the Strategic Plan.
10	The Cabinet Member with responsibility for libraries provides an update to the panel on progress with the library service review and the above recommendations in six months' time	Incorporated into the recommendations of this report.