COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL	Agenda Item No. 6
11 FEBRUARY 2009	Public Report

Report of the Head of Culture

Report Author – Heather Walton, Library and Customer Services Manager
Contact Details - (01733) 864271

IMPLEMENTING THE LIBRARY STRATEGY

1.   PURPOSE

1.1   The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Community Development Scrutiny Panel on key issues as part of the implementation of the draft library strategy, in particular the proposed new opening hours and subsequent restructuring of the Library Service.

2.   LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

2.1   This work underpins the draft Library Strategy which supports the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement outcome Pride in Peterborough. The main priorities being:

- Personal and community wellbeing and health;
- Community cohesion and celebration of diversity;
- Lifelong learning and education;
- Sense of pride, identity and belonging.

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   The draft Library Strategy presented to the panel on the 17 September 2008 outlined some challenges that the library service was facing:

- Achieving the right level and quality of resources, services and facilities;
- Having the flexibility of responding to and leading on community expectations and need and the city's growth agenda;
- Developing effective and efficient skilled staff, leadership and management;
- Embedding ongoing improvement;
- Ensuring recognition of the vital importance of public libraries to personal, family and community development, and how they contribute to the priorities of the city.

4.   KEY ISSUES

4.1   There are a number of proposed changes emerging from the challenges set out above. These are as follows:

- Changes to the skills base of the staff;
- Changes to the staff structure;
- Changes to opening hours;
- Changes to the systems to support the service.

Changes to staff skills

4.2   The way the Library Service is used has changed over the past few years, and while the main business still remains focussed on books and reading, more and more people are using the service for informal learning and to attend library events. The Library Service has started to develop events to such an extent that it now needs to ensure the current skills and structures are in place to be able to focus on maintaining and developing this part of the service, to ensure quality control and the flexibility to respond to ever-changing demands from our customers. Alongside this the Librarian's role needs to change to reflect customer needs and council priorities. The emphasis needs to be on service development and community engagement. Without this change, the service will stagnate.

4.3   In order to ensure continuous improvement and that staff skills are kept up to date and refreshed, tailor made and specialist training will be made available. Much of this will be achieved through online learning offered by the Reading Agency which has in the past proved very cost-effective and has delivered positive results.

Changes to the staff structure

4.4   The current flat structure does not allow for progression or succession planning which has resulted in problems with staff retention. Currently most of the job descriptions are generic and the service needs varied job descriptions which reflect the range of tasks and skills required to recruit and retain the right people. In addition, recruiting to posts with few part time hours is difficult and not cost effective.

4.5   Library services are currently split between managers and therefore the decision making process is not as co-ordinated as it could be regarding day to day operations. Currently there is little co-ordination of work with customer focus groups or on audience development; the proposed structure would address this issue.

4.6   In order to address these issues a new staff structure has been drawn up which is set out in Appendix 1. This structure is no longer flat and so enables career progression; it also creates better co- ordination and decision- making.

Changes to opening hours

4.7   In 2007 a six week usage survey was undertaken. This highlighted the need to revisit current library opening hours. The analysis revealed that there were times where members of staff outnumbered members of the public. A separate survey undertaken a few years ago also highlighted that people often use more than one library.

4.8   The challenge is to identify a programme of opening times that balance across the city and can be delivered within the overall library budget. Key principles are to ensure that there will be a library open somewhere in the city every weekday between the hours of 9am and 7pm and between 9am and 4pm on a Saturday. The main changes relate to weekend opening with closure of Central Library on Sundays and reduced Saturday opening times across the city (where the cost per hour open is significantly higher than during the week). The full proposed opening hour programme, compared to the existing is set out in Appendix 2. These proposed changes have been based on the challenges above and the costs associated with the provision of the service; an example of the staff costs per visit is set out in Appendix 3.

4.9   **Changes to the systems to support the service**
The current library management system which controls the records relating to the stock held by the service, the customer database and the items borrowed, is no longer being developed. In light of this we will be changing to a new system which will provide more streamlined processes, enhanced services for the customers such as email notification while also offering some efficiency savings.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

5.1 There are significant financial implications relating to the delivery of the new opening hours and restructure. Once costs relating to redundancies and other factors have been met, there will be a reduction in the overall running costs of around £240,000.

HR:

5.2 There are significant implications for Human Resources the Council is currently in an intensive period of consultation with staff.

ICT:

5.3 Less out of hours cover will be required (e.g. Sundays). ICT involvement will be required in the move to a new library management system.

Legal:

5.4 There are no significant legal implications other than those relating to redundancies.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Wide consultation on the key principles within this paper was undertaken through the draft Library Strategy. Consultation on the detail of the staffing implications is currently underway.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

7.1 That the Community Development Scrutiny Panel explore the implications of the implementation of this phase of the Library Strategy.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 The changes will be part of a formal consultation with staff. The changes should be implemented in April 2009.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

   i)   Library Strategy
   ii)   Library Use Survey

10. APPENDICES
   i)   New staff structure
   ii)   Current and proposed opening hours
   iii) Cost per visit

This page is intentionally left blank