

## **DRAFT**

### **Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee**

**27 October 2015**

Present: Councillor S Day (Chair)  
Councillors K Bolger, J Cassidy, D Drummond, P Earley,  
E Hodson, L Miller, A Newman, P Oliver and M Thirlaway.

Also Present: Councillor E N Darke, Cabinet Member responsible for Leisure,  
Culture and Tourism.

#### **CL19/10/15 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors J Munby and J Pickard.

#### **CL20/10/15 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members reported.

#### **CL21/10/15 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest reported.

#### **CL22/10/15 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 September 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **CL23/10/15 Draft Library Strategy 2016-2021**

The Sub-committee received a report and presentation which informed of the approach to the draft library strategy for the delivery of library services to cover the next five years and to seek comments and observations as part of the consultation process. The Draft Library Strategy 2016-2021 was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

At its meeting on 2 February 2015, the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee considered the findings of its Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee on the review of library provision in the Borough. Following Cabinet's approval of the recommendations of the library review on 13 April 2015, the Culture and Leisure Sub-committee agreed to take forward the recommendations as part of the development of a new library strategy at its meeting on 23 June 2015.

In 2011, a five year strategy was produced for libraries in North Tyneside. During that five year period the Authority had modernised the service; created vibrant public spaces that were flexible and welcoming; and provided opportunities for people to meet and participate in the social and cultural life of their community.

The importance of libraries as community hubs has long been recognised. They offered a safe, non-judgmental, trusted space that was open to all, with expert staff to support and advise customers. Not only did libraries offer a wide range of digital and print resources they were the gateway to an extensive programme of events and activities.

The Council had made major improvements to its libraries over the last ten years. Since 2004 the Authority had invested over £20 million in new library provision, including the development of three state of the art Customer First Centers’.

In the past five years, there were over 6.5 million visits to libraries in North Tyneside and more than 4 million items were loaned to customers. The Authority gave out more than 27,000 free book packs to under 5s; over 10,500 children took part in the national Summer Reading Challenge; almost 9,000 children were given the opportunity to meet an author; and more than 300,000 people attended library events programmes.

The Authority’s libraries were not only buildings. The Authority worked with a wide range of partners to offer services that encouraged independence and wellbeing, enabling people to do more for themselves whilst supporting more vulnerable residents. It also offered something for all age groups from birth onwards which were relevant to many different life stages. Libraries supported wellbeing within communities, engaged with schools and offered opportunities for residents to access cultural events and community activities.

In 2014, the Government commissioned William Sieghart to review the public library service in England. The ‘Independent Library Report for England’ recognised the role of the libraries in underpinning every community, providing “an infrastructure for life and learning”. The review noted that the future of libraries as community hubs was essential for the wellbeing of the nation, and, libraries could and should play a major role in rectifying literacy standards and creating digital literacy.

The strategy sets out the Authority’s aspirations for the development of the service over the next five years. Six key strategic areas were highlighted:

- i. Books for a better start in life
- ii. Reading to improve life chances
- iii. Creative leaders in the digital world
- iv. Information navigation
- v. Learning throughout life
- vi. Literacy for a longer life

These key strategic areas were based upon the goals of Arts Council England (ACE), which had responsibility for libraries at a national level; the universal offers, as outlined by the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL); and the key recommendations of the Sieghart Review.

In each area the strategy considered existing provision, how work would be developed and what success would look like. The exact mix of provision may vary over the lifetime of the strategy as resources allowed and funding streams permitted. However, the core principles of the strategy would remain. The numbers engaging with library provision continued to illustrate massive demand for all of the services provided. The footfall generated by recent investment in town centre provision demonstrated the significance of library provision to local regeneration initiatives. As community hubs their range and diversity of services was unrivalled. Having taken library provision to a new level in North Tyneside over the past five years, the current strategy would look to build upon those successes and develop a service with even greater community impact in the years to come.

The sub-committee was informed that in a comparison carried out between how often people visited the cinema, the church, A&E and another cultural institution; it was found that people visited libraries several times more than they visited the theatre and football matches combined; that people in the UK made 282 million visits to public libraries during 2013-14; and that a web-link to this information could be provided, if requested.

Members highlighted the importance of providing an open and accessible space for all to visit, to learn and to enjoy a range of activities; and for well trained staff to help people find reliable, trusted information in a wide range of formats - in print, online or via sign-posting.

In response to a Member's query about the source of the original publications used to indicate reading could improve life changes, in that reading for pleasure promoted emotional intelligence, created a sense of community, feelings of social inclusion and interaction; and that in England, poor literacy was more closely linked to low pay and unemployment than in any other developed country; it was agreed that officers would provide Members of the sub-committee with details.

Members suggested it may be useful to give further consideration to the strategy wording in context to the Authority's aspirations about literacy for a longer life, with a view to promoting literacy as enrichment.

In response to a Member's query about the support in place for children with learning difficulties, in particular dyslexia, on whether provision could be put in place to link with schools for children age 7 to identify problems at the earliest stage; it was agreed that officers would take this suggestion back to their teams for further consideration.

A Member requested the current figures on the number of children who had been issued with a library card in relation to a query about the Government's new national initiative for issuing library cards to all school children by year 3. It was agreed that officers would provide details.

Members were informed that following this initial consultation with the culture and leisure sub-committee the next stage was to further consult with management teams, library staff, and library users via public events across the Borough in each of the four Customer First Centres (CFC) and also on-line feedback surveys. At the conclusion of the consultations a report would be submitted to Cabinet for approval of the Strategy in March 2016, to take effect from April 2016.

Members thanked representatives of the Cultural Services Team for the presentation and conveyed positive feedback for the comprehensive and ambitious aspirations set out in the Draft Library Strategy proposals for the next five years.

It was **agreed** that the report and presentation be noted and comments be included as part of the consultation process on the Draft Library Strategy 2016-2021 proposals.