

Meeting: Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee**Date: 27 October 2015****Title: Draft Library Strategy 2016-2021**

Author: Steve Bishop**Tel: 0191 643 7410****Service: Environment, Housing and Leisure****Wards affected: All**

1 Purpose of Report

To present Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee with a draft strategy (see Appendix One) for the delivery of library services to cover the next five years and invite comments as part of the consultation process.

2 Recommendations

The committee is invited to note the information indicated in the report and offer comments and observations on the approach outlined in the draft strategy.

3 Details

- 3.1 At its meeting on 2 February 2015 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. At its meeting on 13 April 2015, Cabinet agreed the recommendations of the library review. At its meeting on 23 June 2015 the Culture and Leisure Sub Committee agreed to take forward the recommendations, agreed by Cabinet, as part of the development of a new library strategy.
- 3.2 In 2011 a five year strategy was produced for libraries in North Tyneside. During that five year period we have modernised the service; created vibrant public spaces that are flexible and welcoming; and provided opportunities for people to meet and participate in the social and cultural life of their community.
- 3.3 The importance of libraries as community hubs has long been recognised. They offer a safe, non-judgmental, trusted space that is open to all, with expert staff to support and advise customers. Not only do libraries offer a wide range of digital and print resources they are the gateway to an extensive programme of events and activities.
- 3.4 The Council has made major improvements to its libraries over the last ten years. Since 2004 the Council has invested over £20 million in new library provision, including the development of three state of the art Customer First Centres.
- 3.5 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. We 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 our events programmes.

- 3.6 However, our libraries are not only buildings. We work with a wide range of partners to offer services that encourage independence and wellbeing, enabling people to do more for themselves, while supporting more vulnerable residents. We offer something for all age groups, from birth onwards, and are relevant to many different life stages. Libraries support wellbeing within communities, engage with schools and offer opportunities for residents to access cultural events and community activities.
- 3.7 In 2014, the government commissioned William Sieghart to review the public library service in England. The *Independent Library Report for England*¹ recognised the role of libraries in underpinning every community, providing “an infrastructure for life and learning”. The review notes that the future of libraries as community hubs is essential for the wellbeing of the nation and libraries could and should play a major role in rectifying literacy standards and creating digital literacy².
- 3.8 The strategy sets out our aspirations for the development of the service over the next five years. Six key strategic areas are highlighted as follows:-
 - 3.8.1. Books for a better start in life
 - 3.8.2. Reading to improve life chances
 - 3.8.3. Creative leaders in the digital world
 - 3.8.4. Information navigation
 - 3.8.5. Learning throughout life
 - 3.8.6. Literacy for a longer life
- 3.9 These key strategic areas are based upon the goals of Arts Council England (ACE), which has 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.
- 3.10 In each area the strategy considers existing provision, how work will be developed and what success will look like. The exact mix of provision may vary over the lifetime of the strategy as resources allow and funding streams permit. However the core principles of the strategy will remain.
- 3.11 The numbers engaging with library provision continue to illustrate massive demand for all of the services provided. The footfall generated by recent investment in town centre provision demonstrates the significance of library provision to local regeneration initiatives. As community hubs their range and diversity of services is unrivalled.
- 3.12 Having taken library provision to a new level in North Tyneside over the past five years, the current strategy will look to build upon those successes and develop a service with even greater community impact in the years to come.

4 Background Information

The following background papers have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- 1) Sieghart, W. et al., *Independent Library Report for England*, DCMS (2014).

¹ Sieghart, W. et al., *Independent Library Report for England*, DCMS (2014).

² Ibid