

Meeting: Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Date: 2 February 2015

Title: Report of the Library Review Study Group

Author: Yvonne Harrison Tel: 0191 643 5320

Service: Democratic Services

Directorate: Law and Governance

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To consider a report produced by the Library Review Study Group on the review of Library provision across the Borough.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee is recommended to:

- 1) agree the report and refer it to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on the 9 February 2015.

3. Details

3.1 As part of the Culture and Leisure Sub-committee work programme 2014/15, Members agreed to carry out a review in relation to the review of Library provision across the Borough.

3.2 The main objective was to examine the ability of the Authority to meet its obligation to provide a Library Service, as defined by the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964, which makes public library services a statutory duty for local authorities, stating that Councils must:

- i) Provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons in the area that want to make use of it.
- ii) Lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

These obligations were considered in the context of:

- a shrinking financial envelope to meet service delivery;
- the wider review of Council accommodation and its use;

- changing patterns of consumer behaviour in relation to print and published media;
- greater expectations for partnership working arising from the Council's change programme.

- 3.3 During the review Members of the study-group identified several areas that they wanted to investigate in more detail. These included; the number and type of buildings required, how engaged the local community were in the library network, partnership working, and the changing pattern of use of books in particular. Members were also keen to explore the breadth of service on offer, the extent of the use of new technologies and the potential for new innovation, at the same time being mindful that the service was not only complex but also in a process of transformation from its traditional image.
- 3.4 Members held a series of evidence gathering meetings with expert witnesses between September and December 2014. The findings and recommendations can be found in Section 5 of the full report attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The report was considered by the Culture and Leisure Sub-committee at its meeting on 20 January 2015, when it was agreed that the report would be forwarded to the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for referral to Cabinet.

4. Appendices (if any)

Appendix 1 – Report of the Library Review Study Group.