

Report to: CHILDREN'S SERVICES, CULTURE
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES,
YOUNG PEOPLE AND SPORT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**Report
No:**

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Report Title: Bolton Library Service: delivering a modern library service for
Bolton 2008 - 2011

**Purpose of the
report:**

To outline the template for the delivery of a modern library offer 'Library PLUS' within Bolton. It details a timetable of activity which results in a three year action plan for the library service to ensure sustainability and an improved capacity to further modernise the service.

Decision:

Members are asked to comment on the outcome of this report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

The Libraries Policy Development Group has undertaken a detailed programme of visits, information gathering and in-depth discussions over the past year in order to inform Members' views on the future direction of the service.

It has worked to bring about a stabilisation of the library service in Bolton.

This paper brings the work from this programme together and presents a strategic template for the delivery of a modern 'library offer' – Library Plus - within Bolton.

The following objectives are crucial to future delivery:-

- Develop a library network that is fit for purpose, affordable and sustainable;
- Make better use of Council facilities by relocating, co-locating and integrating library services with other services;
- Find out what people want from their local library service;
- Increase the use of the library service;
- Develop new service points in partnership with other services and local communities.

Library Plus will also deliver national strategies for public libraries as set out in '**Framework for the Future' Action Plan (2009-2013)**, to a high quality standard as appropriate to the new national Public Libraries Benchmark, in a way that is relevant for the people of Bolton.

It will contribute to other national strategies pertinent to the 'modern' offer such as 'Find Your Talent', Adult Learning, the promotion of health and well being and re-skilling the workforce for the challenges of the next decade.

Library Plus will be a sustainable model, operating within this tight spending period and the continuing need to find efficiencies to meet Government and local targets. It will deliver high quality cost effective services within available resources, contributing to the 'Value for Money' programme.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Libraries PDG was convened in April 2007.
- 1.2 It was tasked to obtain a view on the future direction of the library service in Bolton and to come to a conclusion about the way forward over the next three year period reflecting the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) CSR round.
- 1.3 It followed an extensive programme of information gathering which involved visits to several libraries within Bolton and a new partnership library development in North Manchester. Several 'expert witnesses' were also called to offer presentations and reports in relation to partnership opportunities, regional and national good practice; and property and budgetary constraints for the service.

2.0 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR LIBRARIES

- 2.1 The department for Culture, media and Sport's national strategy '**Framework for the Future' Action Plan (2009-2013)** sets out national generic shared priorities for modern libraries as follows:-
 - 1. Raise standards across our schools
 - 2. Improve the quality of life of older people and of children, young people and families at risk
 - 3. Create safer and stronger communities
 - 4. Promote the economic vitality of localities (including improving adult skills)
 - 5. To modernise delivery to the customer by ensuring that the Department and its sponsored bodies improve performance and pursue institutional excellence
- 2.2 These priorities translate into Bolton's six priority themes plus 'transforming services' agenda. Bolton Libraries contribute to these corporate outcomes (see **appendix 1** 'Bolton Libraries supporting the Bolton Family').
Library Plus would ensure that this offer is tailored to meet local neighbourhood need.

3.0 THE VISION FOR BOLTON LIBRARIES – LIBRARY PLUS A MODERN LIBRARY OFFER

- 3.1 Library Plus is Bolton Council's response to higher customer expectations, increased demand for information and the need to keep libraries looking attractive, open at times when people want them, and delivering other council services.
This will be achieved within the context of value for money whilst maintaining the reputation for quality which we enjoy nationally.
- 3.2 The PDG process had focused on getting more and better for less: we will retain the best service points and, in some areas, **increase** the number of places people can access library services. It will increase the opening hours at a number of libraries in order to provide better access to services for local people. It will reduce 'standalone' libraries by relocating facilities into shared buildings which will offer community involvement and volunteering opportunities, building on the solid core we currently have (over 70 in number).

- 3.3 From the review process several principles have been identified as key in the future role and direction of the service:-
1. Resources for reading, information and learning.
 2. Free access to resources, good quality and what our customers tell us they want.
 3. A gateway into Bolton's rich Cultural heritage.
 4. Support the customer in pursuit of their individual interests.
 5. Support learning in an increasingly complex information and digital society.
 6. Support the local economy.
 7. Support and champion cohesive communities in a shared and safe space.
 8. Challenge exclusion, social or skills based.
 9. Promote and deliver access to council services.
 10. Work in partnership to offer value-added services.
 11. Engage local communities in the delivery of their services.
- 3.4 In addition the following objectives have been acknowledged as crucial to future delivery:-

1. Develop a library network that is fit for purpose, affordable, sustainable and able to support the delivery of the Councils' strategic objectives.
2. Increase the use of the library service by existing members and by attracting new and different members through marketing, outreach and community engagement.
3. Make better use of Council facilities by relocating, co-locating and integrating library services with other service providers.
4. Find out what people want from their local library service through extending existing consultation processes.
5. Develop delivery models in partnership with other services and local communities to prevent duplication and to supplement neighbourhood area working initiatives.

Library Plus will deliver these principles and objectives.

3.5 Libraries delivering (or capable of delivering) the offer: Library PLUS

Of Bolton's 16 service points 8 are compliant or can be made compliant with Library Plus.

3.6 Supplementary collections.

The library service is working in partnership to provide additional access to library service through partnership venues.

More work needs to be done on community-managed collections which are run by volunteers, but which adhere to the service standards in staffed libraries.

3.7 Libraries not meeting the offer: Library PLUS

The PDG was asked to consider alternative ways to deliver library services in those areas with non-compliant stand alone libraries. The preferred alternatives are now built into the action plan and timeframe attached. **Appendix 2 ,3 & 4.**

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Providing a modern service i.e. Library Plus has financial implications. These include rising customer and partner expectations of the service on all fronts: stock, buildings, opening hours, computers, web based 24/7 access. All are placing heavy demands on resources available.

4.2 The service has taken around a 14% cut in its revenue budget over the last 3 years with the demands of Gershon and other efficiencies. In addition, income levels have fallen as industry trends change e.g. music downloads, extra service hours have been added and e-access has allowed renewals 24/7/365

4.3 As part of the council's Value for Money programme the current budget forecast for the next three years has been broken down as follows:

'09 – '10	projected savings @ 3%	113, 958
'10 –'11	projected savings @ 3%	110,540
'11 – '12	projected savings @3%	107,224
Total savings over 3 years		331,722

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Members are asked to comment on the outcome of this report.