

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

23 JUNE 2011

SUBJECT:	RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION OF LIBRARY BOOKS
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR CHRIS MEADEN
KEY DECISION	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report details the current position with regard to the installation and use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) for Library books and how it will help improve the service by automating the issue and discharge of books. This is currently being installed at New Ferry Library with proposals for use at other sites where a business case for efficiency can be made. This report details the timescales and the likely savings and efficiencies that will be realised by these changes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members note that the contract has been awarded to Intellident (Specialist Computer Centre) and the commitment to install the RFID system in New Ferry Library.
- 2.2. That RFID be installed in all Libraries where a business case for efficiency can be made.
- 2.3. That the total cost of installation, which could be upto £1m, be funded from reserves.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The use of RFID will improve the facilities on offer in Libraries, release staff to perform other duties and reduce book loss.
- 3.2. The installation of RFID forms one element of the implementation of new technology to enable the strategy for the merger of Libraries and One Stop Shops. The overall strategy will deliver savings of £1.7m with no reduction of facilities or services.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The current system for the public to take out and return books to a Library is the TALIS Library Management System which is an IT system to keep track of stock, maintain customer records and requests, and manage the catalogue. Books are still stamped in the traditional way with a return date and the system is used to update the status of both lender and book.
- 4.2. The RFID system can automate much of this system. It is a self service issue and discharge system where the Library user can check out and return items by themselves in a simple and user friendly way. The system has a tag in each book which has a computer chip and antenna which identifies each individual book. When the Library user places the book on the receiver pad and inserts their library card into the card reader the TALIS system is updated and a receipt is produced for the customer. There is also a payment facility available with the system which allows payment of fines or other charges.
- 4.3. Automation will free up Library staff from a routine and time consuming task without any adverse impact on the service. Staff can then engage fully with customers requiring a more in depth response which is a major step forward for the service.
- 4.4. The system has the advantage of allowing multiple book issues to be completed quickly and allows confidentiality for the user when issuing or returning books.
- 4.5. It also has the potential to improve the security of the book stock, which represents a significant investment, as the tags act as an alarm system if books are removed without being properly issued. The security system is unobtrusive and less of a barrier to use than the large security gates used previously thus allowing a more open aspect. The tags do not emit radio frequencies and so there is no harm to staff or customers. For customers who cannot use the system staff will always be available to help. Initially there will be a staff member situated by the self service unit to guide and encourage customers, who should appreciate the freedom this gives and I expect that over a short period, the system will be found to be easy to use and become increasingly accepted by users as has been the case at other Library sites around the country.
- 4.6. The Authority has already tendered for this system and Intellident has been awarded the contract over a four year period under the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework. Installation will proceed on a site by site basis where the business case provides a reasonable return on investment in a timescale of up to four years.

- 4.7. Initially the system is being installed into the remodelled New Ferry Library based at the Grove Street Junior School, Grove Street, New Ferry. The RFID equipment on this site has been funded from the Merseyside Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. This will enable the Library service, working with the Children's Centre, to offer a better service than the twelve hours per week previously opened with little additional staffing input.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 If not developed then staff will continue to spend time on routine tasks instead of extending the service.
- 5.2. There is a risk that users may not use the system and therefore it could become under utilised and not cost effective. This will be addressed by ensuring that staff engage with users to maximise the use and understanding of the system by utilising the release of time it gives staff to engage with users.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1. No other options were considered.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1. In June/July 2009 Intellident and other RFID companies demonstrated their systems as part of the tender process and consulted staff and customers about the equipment and process. Initial feedback was positive.
- 7.2 Consultation has included outcomes from other Library services where this has been welcomed positively and once installed there will be ongoing consultation with users to understand their issues and comments about the system.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 8.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 9.1. **FINANCIAL** – The cost of the New Ferry development is £21,000 which is being met by a grant from the Merseyside Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.
- 9.2. The cost of installation in all Libraries would be about £1m which could be funded from existing reserves.
- 9.3. Annual costs for linking self service options to TALIS and maintenance and upkeep of equipment will be contained within the current budget. The additional cost of the RFID tags will be contained within the overall cost of book purchase.

- 9.4. The ongoing savings that this system can bring include an overall reduction in staff numbers which has been achieved through EVR/VS and will be reflected in the co-location project and a reduction in stock loss at each site based on a 4% reduction of this type of loss. The system will give a return on investment by year four at sites where it is installed.
- 9.5. The overall saving from the co-location of Libraries and One Stop Shops is £1.7m of which the implementation of RFID forms one element.
- 9.6. **STAFFING** – The system will allow staff to move to more direct public engagement by allowing the system to do the simple transactions, leaving staff free to engage with customers who do need support.
- 9.7. **IT** – The system is installed and maintained by the manufacturer and links with the TALIS IT system. Sufficient bandwidth and awareness of system support for Library outcomes will be required to maximise the efficiency the system provides.
- 9.8. **ASSETS** – There are no implications arising directly from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

FNCE/99/11

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

NONE

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	9 December 2010