

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### CABINET

8 DECEMBER 2011

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>LIBRARIES STRATEGY</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF FINANCE</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR CHRIS MEADEN</b>
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	<b>YES</b>

#### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 This report sets out a strategy for libraries in Wirral, "Wirral Libraries, A New Chapter". Libraries are a key community asset and the strategy sets out the key challenges, how the service will address them and reflects the views of the then Museums Libraries and Archives Council (now the Arts Council).

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That Members agree the Libraries Strategy for Wirral.

#### **3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 The strategy has been formulated to provide a base for the many changes and challenges the Library service is facing both locally and nationally. This document which will be subject to regular review will allow people to better understand the work and vision of the Library service on Wirral.

3.2. Given the Libraries integration with the One Stop Shops this strategy has been developed taking account of the Customer Access Strategy which was approved by Cabinet on 13 October 2011.

#### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The Library Service has been subject to a number of recent reviews in Wirral ranging from the 2009 Strategic Asset Review, the investment approved in 2010 with the consequential linking to One Stop Shops, and latterly the study undertaken in April 2011 by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) which has subsequently been subsumed into the Arts Council.

- 4.2 Libraries have received investment in a number of areas in Wirral such as the introduction of an e-books service, the installation of wi-fi in all sites, customer information screens, a relaunched website and the linkage to One Stop Shops. One joined up service facility is already open at Heswall while another at Eastham is due to open. Capital approvals have also been made to undertake substantial work at Bebington and Rock Ferry and plans are being formulated for work at these sites.
- 4.3. The Library service plays a key role in supporting a number of key objectives outlined in the Corporate Plan. This is seen in the Libraries work with children, and adults, and the key neighbourhood role the facilities offer which can support a wide range of sectors and develop neighbourhood involvement.
- 4.4 The strategy reflects the strengths the Library service already has in the buildings being community assets. It also addresses vision for the service and how to ensure it is modern, accessible and responsive to user needs.
- 4.5. It begins to address the functions to be delivered now and in the future and this will link to the skills required. The strategy reflects the areas used in the recent MLA review which discussed Libraries as a Place and as a Service. The strategy details how to deal with peoples needs and also reviews what can and should be provided.
- 4.6. The key themes that reflect place and service are  
*“A Wirral Library is a friendly accessible place that provides a safe, trusted and welcoming resource aimed at meeting the needs of the local community”*  
*“The service’s focus is on providing information, knowledge and reading for self improvement and enjoyment”*  
All of the services provided are covered within this vision for Libraries in Wirral.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 If the Authority does not have a Strategy then it is likely that while day to day business can continue the medium to long term development will not occur in a planned and efficient way. This is especially so given the challenges facing libraries in technological and human resource terms as well as locally in the ongoing development of the community role and the linkage to One Stop Shops and Customer Services in general.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 None

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 This was undertaken as part of the MLA review in April 2011 and there will be ongoing customer / service user consultations. A number of the Libraries already have Friends and Users groups which will continue to be a local focus for consultation.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

8.1 There are none arising directly from the approval of this strategy but these groups will form part of ongoing development and review of the strategy.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS; FINANCIAL, IT, STAFFING & ASSETS**

9.1 **Financial** – The development of an increasingly efficient and responsive Library service and the linked development with One Stop Shops is being done within the financial constraints that the Council faces and offers potential savings in terms of buildings and staff by aligning these complementary services. Capital costs are reported on a scheme by scheme basis.

9.2 **IT** – The development of more self access routes to Library services requires IT development which is being accessed by users although as with all IT this will require regular review and updating given technological advances that are made.

9.3. **Staffing** – Migration to more self access alongside the linking of One Stop Shop and Libraries could lead to savings or a refocusing of staff resources.

9.4. **Assets** – Each Library development will assist Asset Management to maximise the effective use of facilities whilst not affecting service standards and offer an opportunity for savings with integrated flexible spaces that are modern and maximise usage.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are none arising directly from the approval of this strategy.

## **11.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The Libraries Strategy seeks to offer access to quality local services for the benefit of all users. A commitment to equality and diversity is integral to delivering excellent services responsive to all users including those who may not be current users. The recognition that different users have different physical and service needs informs access and service plans.

11.2. Customer insight information will enable identification of customers who are vulnerable or hard to reach and working collaboratively will help to meet and support these groups in a cost effective manner.

11.3. An Equality Impact Assessment is required and one has been completed in November 2011.

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

FNCE/270/11

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## **APPENDIX**

Libraries Strategy – Wirral Libraries, A New Chapter.

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last three years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet	23 June 2011
Cabinet	9 December 2010