

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

12 APRIL 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>THE READER ORGANISATION</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 LESLEY RENNIE</b>
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out the work undertaken by the Authority and The Reader Organisation as part of the Get into Reading initiative. The 2012/13 Budget identified a sum of £100,000 for this initiative. This report details the work delivered with similar funding in 2011/12.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 In the 2012/13 Budget Council approved an award of £100,000 to ensure the Get into Reading project continued, and is to prioritise those who have mental health needs. This built on the 2011/12 Budget award of £100,000 which was to support ongoing work as well as give a focus to the parenting role of children in care and promoting and improving reading to this group of Wirral children.

2.2 Wirral Library Service has been working closely with The Reader Organisation (RO) via the Get into Reading project since 2007. Currently, RO run 91 Get into Reading groups reaching more than 560 individuals every week ranging from mixed sessions to one to ones. The Wirral funding supports 51 of these groups reaching 360 people each week. Many group members are from hard to reach groups focusing on health or complex social needs.

2.3 The Wirral continued support also enables RO to attract external funding which adds value to the Council investment. External funding comes from Wirral NHS, Wirral Drug and Alcohol Action Team, Forum Housing, Extended Schools, JP Getty Foundation and Trust House Charitable Foundation.

2.4 Reading groups are facilitated by RO staff, library staff, and a structured volunteer programme which allows group members to progress to support others and helps enrich the social outcomes of the project.

- 2.5 During 2011/12 funded delivery within Libraries has increased, specifically with project workers acting as “readers in residence” one day a week at four Libraries (Beechwood, Birkenhead Central, Eastham and Seacombe).
- 2.6 Outreach work continues for specialist groups and these focus on teenagers excluded from school, young mothers with housing issues and mental health day centre users. Project workers can link these to local Libraries with the intent to encourage Library use and increase social interaction.
- 2.7 RO undertake 11 weekly sessions within the Looked after Children project. These are undertaken by RO staff and are on a one to one basis. These are in addition to the school based work.
- 2.8. In 2012-13, whilst the underlying work will continue that has become so important to the many users of these services, the focus will now be to see what can be done to prioritise work with those with mental health needs. Meetings have already taken place between officers and the RO to set out how this may be taken forward.
- 2.9. This will link to the joint work with RO and the Director of Public Health in developing a new library model based on soft social care, education and community development being available on site that has also been proposed as part of the 2012/13 budget. This model is expected to be piloted at one Library site with the aim of replicating it across the entire Library network if successful.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 Without this financial support this initiative would not be able to engage as successfully with the range of people it does. Whilst Library staff alone would continue to offer a level of service it would not be as comprehensive as currently offered.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The option would be to reduce or remove funding and attempt to balance the benefits of the programme on offer, which is consistently being expanded, compensated by the commensurate budget saving with only Library staff being utilised, however the breadth of service would be curtailed significantly.

### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 In reaching out to and developing new reading groups in regard to the social inclusion agenda, need is first established through community profiling, statistical research, partner involvement, user and non-user surveys and discussion with frontline library staff. This then determines the type of group that will be established in each chosen location and allows the Library service to specifically target those with literacy issues, learning difficulties, basic skills needs or mental / physical health problems and helps ensure their local Library reading group has something to offer them.

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

6.1 There are none arising directly from this report, however the Library service continues to work with all sectors as part of the recently agreed Strategy.

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

7.1 **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. The budget for RO in 2012/13 is the award of £100,000 which, as with last year, is to be paid quarterly to RO in line with the regular review with RO.

7.2 **IT** – There are none arising from this report.

7.3. **Staffing** – To deliver Get into Reading both trained Wirral Library staff and volunteers work with The Reader Organisation staff to encourage take up.

7.4. **Assets** – This service helps maximise the use of Libraries.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Libraries seek 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 and this work is complementary.

9.2. An Equality Impact Assessment for the service has been completed as part of the Customer Access and Library Strategy development, the link is below;  
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/finance>

## **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION**

12.1 That Members note the report.

### **13.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

13.1 So that Members are aware of the work being undertaken with RO.

FNCE/80/12

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### **APPENDICES**

None

### **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

None

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

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet	21 February 2012
Cabinet	21 February 2011