

LIBRARY SERVICE REVIEW: RESPONSE TO REPORT OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARIES SERVICE REVIEW

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **28th September 2010**

From: **Executive Director of Community and Adult Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **2010/040**

Key decision: **Yes**

Purpose: **The purpose of this report is to present initial responses to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee's recommendations following scrutiny of the Libraries Service Review options.**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is asked to note the initial responses to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.**

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1. RESPONSES

- 1.1 Comments are set out below in response to each of the five recommendations of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 1: Cabinet task officers with the further exploration of opportunities for revenue generation within libraries, e.g.:

- sponsorship
- third sector partnership
- consideration of lessons from the private sector

Response:

- Accepted. This will form a key part of the business case produced for the externalisation options strand of the Library Service Review

Recommendation 2: Cabinet identify with officers a means to increase the capacity within the Libraries, Archives and Information service for as long as is necessary to deliver successfully the proposed development of the libraries service

Response:

- It was acknowledged by all involved in the Scrutiny Committee meeting that the Library Service Review represents a complex and difficult set of problems and that a multi-faceted approach is rightly being taken to solving them.
- The workload involved in the next stage of the Review – producing detailed business cases and final recommendations on the overall future strategy for the Service by January 2011 - is significant and officers are at the same time committed to implementing this year's agreed savings.
- Specialist legal, financial and HR expertise will be required in order to ensure that robust business cases produced to inform the final recommendations and strategy produced as the outcome of the Review.
- Some funding has been made available within the current Integrated Plan to enable this support to be resourced. However, the amount set allocated was an early estimate at the outset of the process and may not prove to be sufficient.

Recommendation 3: Officers make full use of the research, advice and support offered by the Museums, Libraries and

Archives Council offering advice on the future of library services in the long term.

Response:

- Cambridgeshire is already at the forefront or well advanced in relation to a number of developments which feature in the latest thinking – library access points, implementation of self-service technology, online / remote access to services
- MLA is represented on the Library Service Review Project Board by the Regional Manager, East of England who will continue to ensure that CCC officers are able to make full use of MLA research, advice and support.
- Cambridgeshire's participation in the South Fens Project within the national MLA Future Libraries Support Programme will also enable the Library Service Review in the County to be informed by the latest thinking, research and development work and best practice.

Recommendation 4: *Cabinet delay making irreversible decisions, such as library closure, before there has been time for a thorough review of all of the options. (i.e. the timescales may need to be extended beyond January Cabinet)*

Response:

- The risk involved in delaying decisions beyond January 2011 is that the Library Service Review and its outcomes will then be out of step with the Council's Integrated Planning cycle

Recommendation 5: *Local good practice – such as that emerging at Rock Road Library – should be identified and shared with other county libraries*

Response:

- Local good practice in Cambridgeshire be disseminated via Cambridgeshire's participation in the MLA Future Libraries Support Programme
- Similarly, the same avenue will enable Cambridgeshire to take into account good practice elsewhere.