

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA**  
**FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –**  
**REPORT BY LIBRARIES MINI-GROUP**  
**(Chairman: Councillor Barbara Campbell)**

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Family and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 22 November 2010 appointed a mini-group to consider the Libraries Service. The members appointed to the group were Councillors Robert Atkinson, Barbara Campbell (Chairman), Andrew Dalton and Gerard Hargreaves, and one co-opted member, the Revd Dr William Taylor.
- 1.2 The group met on 27 January. Councillor Elizabeth Campbell, Cabinet Member for Education and Libraries, also attended. The group was supported by Ms Tyerman (Director for Community Learning), Ms Hay (Director for Policy and Performance) and Ms Battye (Head of Library Service). Mr Quinn clerked the meeting.

**2. NATIONAL POLICY DIRECTION**

- 2.1 The group noted the national policy direction set by government towards shared services, transparency and citizen involvement, as expressed in the Public Bodies (Reform) and Localism Bills and in the Green Paper - Modernising Commissioning. There was also a Private Members - Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) - Bill, which aimed to strengthen the social enterprise business sector and make the concept of 'social value' more relevant and important in the placement and provision of public services.
- 2.2 The main points of relevance to the Libraries Service are:
- Shifting power away from central government to local authorities. New areas proposed: joint ventures, pooled resources, payment by results.
  - New rights for the public and employees.
  - A proportion of public services to be provided independently to encourage third sector providers and to bring in external expertise, e.g. mutual bodies and cooperatives, and attract other funding streams.
  - Increased democratic accountability. Local areas to have more powers.

- 2.3 The Council's statutory duty remains unchanged. It must provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, available to all who live, work and study in the borough, which meets local needs within available resources in an appropriate way.
- 2.4 The government has encouraged local authorities to think creatively about libraries. The Council is running one of 10 pilots under the Future Libraries Programme. Each pilot is pursuing its own ideas, but the range of options includes sharing services between Councils; reducing the number of buildings used and placing libraries in shops; putting more services online; transferring libraries and other cultural and leisure services to trusts; contracting out to the private sector; using volunteers to provide extra activities and services; allowing community groups to run libraries; developing fund raising trusts seeking to develop philanthropy by targeting high worth individuals.

### **3. THE CURRENT POSITION**

- 3.1 The group noted that in 2009/10 the Kensington and Chelsea Libraries Service had:

- 45,000 Members
- 1.2 million Visits
- 915,000 Issues
- More than 78,000 Public PC 1 hour bookings
- Wifi take up of 64,448 hours, of which 3,961 were new customers.

#### **Net Costs**

Controllable	£4.3 million, of which staffing is £3.1m and books and stock expenditure is £450,000
Uncontrollable	£1.9 million
Income	£315,000

- 3.2 In the 2011-12 budget, the service has already made provision to contain costs. In addition to the Imperatives and Opportunities reductions, costs include single status settlements for most staff (adding £225,000), Chelsea Sunday opening, unachieved income targets, Notting Hill Gate Library rent write off, radio frequency ID (RFID) maintenance costs (total approx. £455,000).
- 3.3 The service is on target by April 2011 to implement full restructuring, releasing £500,000 over two years to offset these costs. Since 2006, staffing has been reduced by 32.2 full time

equivalent (fte) posts from 117 fte to 84.8 fte in April 2011. 21.3 posts will have been lost this year alone.

- 3.4 Improvements to processes have been made, including speeding up orders and payments and driving down costs. The costs of selecting, acquiring a book and getting it ready for borrowing have been cut from over £5.50 to 65p.
- 3.5 Periodicals and reservations processes have been overhauled, leading to reduced costs and improved delivery.
- 3.6 The use of volunteers for value adding activities has been established, with between 12 and 15 volunteers available. Current volunteering activities include:
  - Basic IT training course (5 week programme operating in both Brompton and Chelsea)
  - IT Quick Fix 1:1 help (Monday – Friday Central Library)
  - Ride and Read support (North Kensington)
  - Library Events assistants
  - Reading Group Support/Admin assistant
  - Writers Group co-ordinator
- 3.7 Future developments will include tri-borough working and London libraries change programme support-work across London. Options for tri-borough working are being worked on. These range from merged management through to a fully integrated service. The aim is to save 10% or £1.5m across the three boroughs. The question of co-location of services will also be considered. It is possible that the boroughs could share each others' services where libraries were near to borough boundaries. In addition to considering approaches to service delivery, a range of governance models will be examined. Developing friends' groups and philanthropy were also other possibilities.

#### **4. THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

- 4.1 The group agreed that it was important to have a vision for the future and to consider what the libraries service might look like in ten years time, given the pace of technological change.
- 4.2 Relevant points will include:
  - The combined daytime population of Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster is about 1.1 million people. This provides a potential market which may be of great interest to sponsors, e.g. Amazon, Apple and Google.

- Although the demand for online services will continue to increase, the group recognises that library buildings are an important part of what people want. Buildings are a focus for community engagement and provide a safe, neutral and social environment and also a venue for public meetings and consultation events. Libraries provide a physical focus for people (some new to the borough) who want to find out about other services.
- Libraries provide access to the written word; the format might change (e.g. books to kindles) but it is the content that is important.
- Online services (virtual library) will continue to develop, particularly for communal access to expensive documents such as periodicals and national dictionaries, but personal service will continue to be important, e.g. being able to ask a knowledgeable member of staff for help and advice.
- The Council is bringing the various strands of its property management together and the Libraries Service will need to ensure that its voice is heard in discussion of future developments, e.g., the review of properties in the Westway area; the Notting Hill Gate development; the planning brief for Earl's Court. The more libraries are placed in a central location, and the more they are co-located with other Council services or with retail outlets, the more users they will get. Libraries will also add more value to other council and community services.

## **FOR INFORMATION**

### **Barbara Campbell**

Chairman

#### **Public background papers used in preparation of this report:**

None.

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