

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Report Title	Response to Comments of the Healthier Communities Select Committee on the Library and Information Service		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	3
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services		
Class	Part 1	Date: 19 February 2014	

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the response to the views of the Healthier Communities Select Committee arising from the officer report '*Update on changes to the Library and Information Service*', considered at its meeting on 11 December 2013.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mayor:

- 2.1 Approve the response from the Executive Director for Community Services, and
- 2.2 Agree that this report should be forwarded to the Healthier Communities Select Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Shaping the Future, the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy includes the following priority outcomes which relate to the work of the Library & Information Service and reflect the Council's aspirations for the service:

- Ambitious and Achieving – where people are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential.
- Empowered and Responsible – where people can be actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities.
- Healthy, Active and Enjoyable – where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and wellbeing.
- Dynamic and Prosperous – where people are part of vibrant localities and town centres, well connected to London and beyond.

3.2 The Library and Information Service also contributes to the following Council Priorities:

- **Community leadership and empowerment** – developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community.
- **Strengthening the local economy** – gaining resources to regenerate key localities, strengthen employment skills and promote public transport.
- **Active, healthy citizens** – leisure, sporting, learning and creative activities for everyone.

4. Background

4.1 On 11 May 2011, Mayor and Cabinet agreed:

- to the asset transfer of the library buildings in Crofton Park, Grove Park and Sydenham
- to instruct officers to continue to seek alternative users for the New Cross building
- the proposal from Age Exchange for Blackheath including the re-assigning of the lease on the library building to a third party and the transfer of the library facilities into the Reminiscence Centre, and
- to deliver Community Library facilities in the affected neighbourhoods.

4.2 Healthier Communities Select Committee received a report on 11 December 2013 which updated them on the performance of the Library and Information Service.

4.3 Following the Select Committee meeting, a referral was made to the Mayor and Cabinet on the 18 December 2013 because a specific concern had arisen.

5. Referral

5.1 'The Select Committee, having received an update on the performance of the Library and Information Service in Lewisham, welcomed the progress made by the Community Libraries since 2011. However, the Committee is concerned about the inequality of resources made available to the providers of Community Libraries. It therefore calls on the Mayor to consider a more generous settlement to assist New Cross Learning to meet the library needs for that deprived part of the Borough.'

6. Response

6.1 The Council allocated £200k to Age Exchange to support their fundraising to refurbish the whole Reminiscence Centre complex. Age Exchange successfully raised a further £700k and completed the work in December 2013.

- 6.2 Additionally, as the Council does not own any suitable buildings in the locality, Age Exchange's support allows the Library and Information Service to occupy part of the Reminiscence Centre for 10 years at no cost. The funding allocated to Age Exchange replaced substantial costs that the Council was sustaining for the old building. Rent was approx. £70k/year and repair and maintenance costs approx. £30k. Over the 10 years of the Agreement, the Council will have saved £800k.
- 6.3 Eco Computer Systems (now Eco Communities) have received no funding from the Council in relation to the provision of library services from the premises they occupy, but they were given three full repair and maintenance 25 year leases at no cost to them.
- 6.4 The Council however invested £60k per building to introduce self-service terminals. Furthermore, to date, Eco Communities have invested £120k of their funds in repairs to the three buildings bringing them up to an improved standard of décor. Given the direct investment into the three buildings at Crofton Park, Grove Park, and Sydenham, the Council has saved these building maintenance and repair costs.
- 6.5 In relation to New Cross, the Council sanctioned a short term Tenancy Agreement at no cost to Bold Vision while this organisation supported New Cross Learning in their first years of operations. The Council further invested £60k in the library to install self-service terminals, and allocated the Organisation a further £60k funding once the lease was signed. It was hoped that following an initial development phase any resulting organisation would be in the position of exploring with the Council a longer term solution for the provision of library services in New Cross on a basis similar to that of Age Exchange and Eco Communities. New Cross are about to sign a 3-year lease that includes an annual rent of £8,070. However, the provisions in the lease allow the tenant to off-set the rent against the cost of the remedial works listed in the schedule and the £60k grant aid provides resources to undertake these works.
- 6.6 It should be noted that each organisation is responsible for utilities and business rates in relation to the buildings they occupy. An individualised approach to resourcing the Community Libraries has been taken to respond to the different circumstances of both the buildings and the host organisations. The key difference is the period for the New Cross arrangement which is significantly shorter. This was done to enable the newly formed New Cross Learning to fully establish itself before taking on the liability of a long term lease. The most appropriate time to reconsider how to resource the community library in New Cross would be at the end of the current funding period.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this response.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this response, save for noting that the Council's Constitution provides that the Executive may respond to reports and recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 9.1 There are no significant and wide ranging implications arising from this response.

10. Equalities Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this response.

11. Environmental Implications

- 11.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this response.

Background Papers

1. May 2011 Report + EIA:

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=1443&ISATT=1#search=%22library%22>

2. Mayor and Cabinet Report from HCSC 18 January 2012

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=7306>

3. HCSC report 14 December 2011

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=6983>

4. Mayoral response to the comments of the Healthier Communities Select Committee on the Library & Information Service

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s8101/Response%20on%20Community%20Libraries%20to%20Healthier%20Communities%20SC.pdf>

5. "Update on changes to the Library and Information Service" report

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s26058/04Library111213.pdf>

6. Matter Raised by the Healthier Communities Select Committee

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s26362/Matter%20Raised%20by%20HCSC%20-%20Library%20and%20Information%20Service.pdf>

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