

Libraries service and reviews

Summary

This paper provides an update on the DCMS Libraries Modernisation Review and related issues, including the LGA's planned libraries modernisation conference on 14 December 2009.

Recommendations

That members note the report and the update at the Board meeting from DCMS.

Action

Subject to members' comments, officers to take forward appropriate actions.

Contact Officer: Steve Skelton
Phone No: 020 7663 3074
Email: Steven.skelton@lga.gov.uk

Libraries service and reviews

Background

1. At its 15 September 2009 meeting the Board heard from DCMS officials regarding the development of the department's Libraries Modernisation Review.
2. A statutory service, local authority spending on library services rose from £651m in 1996/7 to £965m in 2006/07. Usage remains reasonably consistent although the latest figures show evidence of a small reduction. There is no single model of library delivery: some services are very innovative in their approaches, using co-location, digital support and library resources to deliver many agendas including community cohesion, skills and learning support, business start up, third sector support or health promotion. Others still take a more traditional approach.

DCMS Libraries Modernisation Review

3. Following her return to the DCMS, Margaret Hodge written to stakeholders outlining that she wishes to take the Libraries Modernisation Review process in a new direction. The Department is now soliciting "short think pieces on 'how we might make libraries fit for the 21st century'". It is expected that the essay collection will be released as a consultation paper to stimulate further debate. Cllr Chris White has been invited to contribute on behalf of the LGA.
4. It is, therefore, unclear at present exactly what the end product of the review will be, although it is likely to be published early next year. Likewise, it is unclear what use will be made of the work undertaken to date, including the five initial workstreams and consultations with the CTS Board and local authority Chief Executives.
5. Officers believe, however, that further work to improve the final report may yet prove positive. Members had previously welcomed the review's direction of travel when they met with DCMS officials in March 2009, but drafts of the final report seen by officers more recently lacked ambition, and were overly cautious in their approach to the issues. The report did not articulate the clear vision for the public library service that is needed to inspire strong local and national leadership, nor did it sufficiently challenge the vested interests in the sector that will need to evolve in order to deliver a modernised service. The Minister's decision to restart the process is therefore sensible.

LGA Libraries conference – 14 December 2009

6. The LGA, on 14 December 2009, will host a conference to debate the future of the local library services. *1964 and all that: modernising you public library service* has been developed jointly with the MLA, and will bring together expert practitioners and policy makers from national and local government and partner agencies to

help local authority members and officers to get the best from their local library service. A copy of the conference flyer is enclosed at **Annex A**.

Independent review into the Wirral library service

7. Wirral Metropolitan District council, on 30 September 2009, wrote to Ben Bradshaw, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, outlining their plan to reverse the council's previous decision to close some local libraries as part of a service restructure. This decision had triggered an independent review, undertaken by Sue Charteris, into "whether the Council's plans are consistent with their statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service" as defined in the 1964 Public Libraries Act. This was only the second time the Secretary of State has used these powers to intervene at the local level.
8. The change in policy was ratified by the Cabinet on 1 October. The Leader of Wirral council, Cllr Steve Foulkes, has maintained that "our initial decision to invest £20m in the modernisation of our library service and the creation of 13 Neighbourhood centres was the right decision for the future of Wirral." In light of the wider modernisation review however, the council "did not want anything Wirral has done, or planned to do, to overshadow this debate, or create precedents which could cause real difficulties for other local authorities facing the same challenges as us". The report of the independent review has not been published to date.
9. The Chair wrote to the Minister on behalf of members of the Board, on 17 September. The letter cautioned against the Department publishing guidance on the back of the Wirral review, as this would inevitably open up a series of future negotiations between councils and the DCMS about the Department's likely attitude to any potential local decisions. Such an additional burden would be unacceptable to local authorities, and in particular can not be afforded during a period of intense financial constraints on local authorities and public services.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Libraries: report into the governance and leadership of the library service in England

10. The APPG libraries report was published on 7 October 2009 at the Public Library Authorities conference. Both the conference and the report are sponsored by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).
11. The report confirmed the view of APPG members that "local authorities should continue to carry the responsibility and accountability for the provision of public library services in their area." However, it also proposed the creation of a new libraries group and the publication of new libraries standards; neither idea is consistent with the approach that the Board has previously taken.

Financial Implications

12. The financial implications of this work can be managed from existing resources.

Implications for Wales

13. The Libraries Modernisation Review applies only to England.

Contact Officer: Steve Skelton

Tel: 020 7663 3074 Email: steven.skelton@lga.gov.uk

speakers include:



Dame Lynne Brindley
Chief Executive
British Library



Tracy Chevalier
Writer



Dr Liz Lyon
Director
UKOLN



Roy Clare
Chief Executive
MLA



Nick Hodgson
Chief Executive
Derbyshire County
Council



Margaret Hodge MP
Minister of State for
Culture and Tourism



Ed Vaizey MP
Shadow Minister for the
Arts

who should attend?

- Leaders and Chief Executives
- Frontline Councillors and portfolio holders responsible for libraries
- Directors and Heads of Library, Adult and Community Well-being, and Cultural Services

1964 and all that: modernising your public library service

Modernising our public library service is a hot political and policy issue right now, with the DCMS modernisation review imminent. Digital platforms have the potential to revolutionise the way we access information, co-location with other public services can make libraries more efficient for both users and local authorities and there is the continual challenge to make sure the rest are delivering as successfully as the best.

This conference will look at all these issues and more, and bring together expert practitioners and policy makers from the field to help you get the best from your local library service. It will also provide delegates with the opportunity to debate the issues and contribute directly to the Government's vision, via an interactive slot with the Minister.

The programme will examine questions such as:

- How can you get libraries onto the agenda of senior managers and elected members?
- how can you deliver efficiencies positively?
- how can councils deliver change management in the library service?
- how can we implement and influence recent review findings to best effect?
- how can we ensure libraries deliver for all communities?
- what does the digital future hold for libraries?

Workshop sessions will demonstrate the best practice that councils have to offer, and allow you to shape debate around the future of the public libraries in England.

The LGA is the single voice for local government. As a voluntary membership body, funded almost entirely by the subscriptions of our 424 member authorities in England and Wales, we lobby and campaign for changes in policy and legislation on behalf of our member councils and the people and communities they serve. We work with and on behalf of our membership to deliver our shared vision of an independent and confident local government sector, where local priorities drive public service improvement in every city, town and village and every councillor acts as a champion for their ward and for the people they represent.

We organise approximately 100 conferences, events and seminars every year attracting thousands of participants from local government and the business and voluntary sectors. Income from our conferences is ploughed back into the organisation in order to keep our subscriptions low and to benefit councils and communities.

To find out more about forthcoming LGA events, including booking online and signing up for our monthly e-bulletin, along with the latest updates on key developments in local government, please visit the LGA website: www.lga.gov.uk

For further information please contact:
LGconnect: 020 7664 3131 or email: events@lga.gov.uk

For details on LGA group services and events please visit www.local.gov.uk

23 4

The morning programme

09.30–10.30	Registration and coffee
10.30 – 10.45	1964 and all that: modernising your public library service Cllr Chris White , Chair, LGA Culture, tourism and sport board
10.45 –11.00	Managing Change in Libraries Roy Clare , Chief Executive, MLA
11.00 – 11.15	Questions and discussion
11.15 – 12.15	Workshops on future themes (<i>Refreshments in workshop rooms</i>) 1. Library membership in the 21 st century Fiona Williams , President, Society of Chief Librarians 2. Do professional alliances get in the way of better outcomes for communities? Martyn Allison , Improvement & Development Agency 3. Libraries as community hubs <i>Speaker tbc</i> 4. Libraries delivering informal adult learning <i>Speaker tbc</i>
12.15 – 12.30	How to get your Chief Executive to talk about libraries Nick Hodgson , Chief Executive, Derbyshire County Council Martin Molloy OBE , Strategic Director, Community and Cultural Services, Derbyshire County Council
12.30 – 12.45	Libraries: delivering for children and young people Catherine Blanshard , Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer, City Development Leeds City Council
12.45 – 1.00	Questions and discussion
1.00 – 1.20	For the love of books? libraries from a writer's perspective Tracy Chevalier , writer
1.20 – 2.05	Lunch

The afternoon programme

2.05 – 3.00	Panel Session: Doomsday for books? what are the essential elements of a modernised library service 1) Tracy Chevalier , writer 2) Roy Clare , MLA 3) Rachel Cooke , journalist, the Observer 4) Ed Vaizey MP , Shadow Minister for the Arts
3.00 – 3.35	The Digital Future for Libraries Dame Lynne Brindley , Chief Executive, British Library Dr Liz Lyon , Director, UKOLN
3.35 – 3.45	Questions and discussion
3.45 – 4.15	Contributing to the Government Vision: Margaret Hodge MP , Minister of State for Culture and Tourism
4.15	Conference close