

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

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COUNTY COUNCIL

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Agenda Item No.

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County
Council

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ANNUAL LIBRARY PLAN 2002 - 2005

Report of the Director of Community Information

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1. Purpose of the Report

To seek approval to the Annual Library Plan 2002 – 2005. The Plan forms part of the Policy Framework and therefore requires the approval of County Council.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Community Information has to produce an Annual Library Plan (ALP) for submission to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).
- 2.2 The format of the plan is prescribed by the DCMS and includes standing information about the library service together with reviews of past performance and medium term strategies, action plans and targets.
- 2.3 The Plan measures performance against the Public Library Standards (PLS) and is used to compare Hertfordshire's library service with other public library authorities.
- 2.4 The assessment of the draft Plan made by the DCMS informed the result of this year's overall Continuous Performance Assessment (CPA) of the County Council, and as a result all ALPs were assessed earlier than usual. Three assessments were made of each Plan which were marked on a scale of 0 poor – 1 weak – 2 fair – 3 good – 4 excellent. There was one for the Plan as a planning tool (our result 4), one for approach to meeting the public library standards (our result 3) and one for evidence that the quality of the library service is improving (our result 4). The overall conclusions of the DCMS about Hertfordshire's plan were:

"This is an excellent example of a well-thought-out and constructed plan. The national and regional policies are taken fully into account and users' views have been duly considered and acted on. The Authority is intent on improving its services year on year and with the exception of some of the standards on opening hours seems set fair to achieve or exceed all the Public Library Standards by 2004."

- 2.5 The Plan was discussed and amended by the Library Panel on 11th November 2002.

3. Conclusion

The Cabinet is asked to consider the Annual Library Plan and make an appropriate proposal to County Council.

4. Background

- 4.1 Since 1998 all library authorities have been required by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to produce an Annual Library Plan (ALP). These plans are intended to be a key element in helping the Secretary of State to carry out her statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to superintend and promote the public library service.

- 4.2 A five-page summary is attached in Appendix 1. The draft version becomes the final Plan when it has been agreed by County Council which is due to consider this matter on 13 February 2003.

- 4.3 The format of the plan is prescribed by the DCMS. It covers the three-year period April 2002 to March 2005 and has six main components:

1. Statement of service objectives
2. Service delivery, policies and resources
3. Performance appraisal, assessment against the standards in '*Comprehensive, Efficient And Modern Public Libraries*', marketing and customer response
4. Achievement of the Action Plan for the financial year 2001/2
5. Rolling 3-year medium-term strategy
6. Rolling action plans and targets

5. Performance against Public Library Standards 2001/02

- 5.1 The Public Library Standards (PLS) set the framework for the DCMS to measure performance of all library authorities across the country. Hertfordshire performs

well against most of the Standards, but has challenged their relevance from the beginning. In many ways they are backward looking, and are not relevant in a modern and changing service, and they would require significant budget growth to meet.

- 5.2 There are 19 standards split into 30 parts. These cover many aspects of library service provision for example, the proportion of households living within a specified distance (2 miles) of a static library, opening hours, Internet access, percentage of requests for books met within 15 days, percentage of library users rating the knowledge of staff as “good” or “very good” etc.
- 5.3 Last year Hertfordshire met or exceeded 14 of the parts and did not meet 6. The remaining 10 could not be assessed, as the measures had not been calculated by the DCMS.
- 5.4 This year we meet or exceed 21 parts, and do not meet 7. The remaining 2 parts have yet to be calculated. The parts not met remain the same i.e. total electronic workstations, number of library visits per 1,000 population, number of visits to the library website per 1,000 population, % of adult users reporting success in obtaining a specific book, number of staff with appropriate management qualifications and 2 parts on aggregate opening hours (one of which was not calculated last year, which explains the increase from 6 to 7 not met).
- 5.5 Of these, total electronic workstations, total aggregate opening hours and visits (virtual and physical) are significantly adrift from meeting the Standards and the gap cannot be closed on present funding levels.

6. Key Differences From 2001/2 Plan

- 6.1 Marketing and customer response
The development of an overall marketing strategy is a key element of this year’s Plan as part of our response to the challenges facing the service.
- 6.2 Meeting the Public Library Standards (PLS)
Assessment of this year’s Plan will focus on evidence that an authority has realistic plans to meet the PLS. Plans to meet the significant Standards not currently met include,
- a modest improvement in opening hours from January 2003 following public consultation
 - a capital bid will be made during the 2004/05 budget process to improve the number of workstations
- 6.3 Development of new services and seamless access to learning materials with other learning services

For example, the European Social Funded EQUAL Project. The Project will develop innovative approaches to providing training and support in public libraries to people disadvantaged in the labour market. Development partners will include amongst others Adult Learning providers, CSF, UfI, LearnDirect, community groups and Eastern Region Library Authorities.

7. Financial implications

Any financial implications contained in the Plan are dealt with separately through the normal revenue and capital budget planning processes.

Background papers used by the author when compiling this report

None

Appendix 1 Hertfordshire Annual Library Plan 2002-2005: Summary

1 Introduction

Explains this is a draft plan pending full County Council approval.

1.1 Local authority characteristics

Includes a brief description of the county and a topographical map. Provides demographic information on the authority's communities including the profile of statistical data and a socio-economic analysis. The implications of the demographic trend data for the development of the Library Service are noted.

2 Statement of objectives

2.1 Corporate and Library Service objective and plans

Includes the Library Service mission statement and subsidiary aims and objectives. Also identifies how the Library Service fits in with corporate objectives and plans. Explains how the authority responds to or is affected by key corporate plans or plans requested by other government departments which affect the Library Service e.g. the BVPP, cultural strategies, the Asset Management Plan, e-government plans, regeneration and plans to improve the health of the population.

3 Service delivery and resources

3.1 Access

Covers the location of libraries, both static and mobile, as well as opening times and availability. States the policy on provision of access outside the normal range of office hours and the policy for Bank Holiday closures.

3.2 Buildings and mobile libraries

Reviews the buildings and mobile libraries in relation to access policies in 3.1 and the Asset Management Plan in 2.1. Includes a statement on the overall level of adequacy of buildings and mobiles to meet user expectation, and identifies issues relating to any inadequacy of repair, furnishings or tenancy.

3.3 Services for adults, young people and children

States the service philosophy and the key points of policies in relation to services for adults, young people and children, including lending, information and reference services. Also incorporates services to schools and links to CSF.

It covers a wide range of provision e.g.

- stock selection, deployment and withdrawal
- stock conservation, including digitisation plans
- reader and audience development, including encouraging children to read
- outreach work and events programme
- study and homework facilities
- reservation services
- community information

3.4 Services for special groups

Identifies the special groups requiring special services, including service philosophy and key points of policies. Also describes the services provided. e.g.:

- people with physical disabilities and their carers
- services to minority ethnic communities
- people with mental health problems
- people with visual impairments
- services to Travellers
- low income groups
- those unable to visit libraries

3.5 Wider community use

States policies relating to use of library premises by community and similar groups, as well as services where library premises are used to give access to broader council and government services, including services from other local authorities.

3.6 Staff

Provides a breakdown of staff numbers (FTE) in salary grade bands and comments on the appropriate qualifications for staff. Includes a summary of the Training Plan.

3.7 ICT systems and services

Outlines our policies relating to the provision of ICT systems and services. Includes library housekeeping systems as well as direct public services. e.g. Electronic information sources, facilities for e-government, personal-computing services for the public and the provision of the People's Network.

3.8 Finance

Sets out the overall level of expenditure for the Library Service for the preceding 3 years and identifies proposed expenditure trends up to 2004/05. Covers the financial requirement identified in the 2001 Plan necessary to move towards meeting the Public Library Standards and the budget outcome for 2002/03. Includes: an assessment of the adequacy of the level of investment in books and other library materials; the resources allocated to training, including departmental and corporate expenditure, as well as external funding and the finances necessary to sustain ICT systems. Also states policies

to generate income and in kind support identifying any financial assistance provided by private companies or other bodies.

4. Performance appraisal, assessment against the standards in "Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries", marketing and customer response.

4.1 Public library standards and trend data

A table shows figures for the last 3 financial years and covers various indicators e.g. population under 15, % of service points with CD-ROMs, proportion of adult stock on loan. BV indicators are also covered and include number of visits to public libraries and net expenditure per head of population. The table includes indicators where we are performing in the lowest or highest quartile within our statistical family of authorities. Contains a table for performance against local targets set in 2001/02.

4.1.2 Public Library Standards

A proforma shows the performance of the Library Service in relation to each of the Public Library Standards where measurements have been made.

4.2 Commentary on the approach to meeting the standards and local targets

Comments on the trend data, the performance of the Library Service against both the Public Library Standards and local targets and raises any areas of concern. In summary, there are 19 standards with a total of 30 parts covering various aspects of the service. Hertfordshire meets or exceeds 21 parts, 1 part has yet to be calculated and 1 part has data not available for 2001/02 (emergency closures). The service does not meet 7 parts. The 7 parts stipulate total electronic workstations, number of library visits per 1,000 population, number of visits to the library website per 1,000 population, % of adult users reporting success in obtaining a specific book, number of staff with appropriate management qualifications and 2 parts on aggregate opening hours. Of these, total electronic workstations, total aggregate opening hours and visits (virtual and physical) are significantly adrift from achievement.

4.2.3 Benchmarking

States how the service carries out benchmarking and the conclusions reached.

4.3 Public consultation and marketing

Outlines how the marketing of the Library Service is approached. Covers how users of the service are identified and the conclusions drawn from marketing activity. Summarises the outcome of public consultation and market research undertaken over the last 2 years and also summarises the authority's policy on complaints. Includes a review of the comments and suggestions received in the previous year.

4.4 Quality assessment

States the processes followed to assess the quality of the service and the principal conclusions reached based on the evidence gained through quality management systems. Also includes a commentary on the quality of library stock.

5 Review of preceding plans, and progress for the previous financial year

5.1 Achievement of the Action Plan for 2001-02

Lists the actions from the Plan for 2001/02 where a target was not achieved, why and whether it is being carried forward. A number of targets not met last year were due to staff recruitment difficulties or external factors, such as supplier delays in development of technology.

5.2 Achievement of the Action Plan where targets were exceeded by 10%

Outlines the targets that were exceeded by 10%. A notable example of these was the increase in access to the Automated Telephone Renewals (ATR) service from 68 to 147 hours per week (216% increase).

6 Rolling 3 year medium term strategy

6.1 Analysis of strengths, areas for development, opportunities and threats

Provides a SWOT analysis for the following key areas: -

- stock provision and deployment, including the quality of the stock
- reader and audience development
- meeting the Public Library Standards
- social inclusion
- lifelong learners
- customer response
- resource issues

6.2 Best Value Reviews

The Library Service BV Review will take place between Oct 2002 - Mar 2003. In July 2002, Audit Commission Inspectors completed a gap inspection of the service as part of a pilot CPA assessment. It achieved a 2-star rating, a 'Good' service. The forthcoming BV Review will address the recommendations from the judgement of uncertain prospects for improvement.

This section includes summaries of the findings of those BV reviews affecting the Library Service which have taken place in the preceding 2 years. These include an early pilot for the Schools Library Service, ICT services, Property Services, Reprographics, Voluntary Agencies, Home Library Service (as part of Adult Care Services review on adults with physical and sensory disabilities).

6.3 Service and ICT improvements and variations

Uses the SWOT analysis and the outcome of any BV Reviews to provide a medium term strategy for improving or varying Library Services. The main areas for improving services over the next 3 years will incorporate the outcomes of the CPA inspection and the BV Review. The service will focus on:

- increasing efficiency and effectiveness by benchmarking against authorities in the top quartiles
- accelerating service improvement and the rate of change
- implementing marketing and other strategies to halt the decline in falling issues, visitors and active borrowers, developing realistic yet stretching targets

Particular attention will also be paid to developing ICT, e-government, access, social inclusion, reader development and Lifelong Learning. Strategies will be implemented to

meet or move closer to the 7 Public Library Standards not met in 2001/02. Concerns remain about the desirability and sustainability of meeting the standard on opening hours. The service has responded to the recommendations from the HCC ICT BV Review and corporate ICT strategies as appropriate.

7 Rolling Action Plans and targets

7.1 Action plan for 2002/03 and 2003/04

Details action plans for the first two years of the 3-year rolling medium term strategy. Includes specific actions and targets, costs, timescales and identified responsibilities.

7.2 Action plan 2004/05

States major service initiatives with broad costs for the third year of the 3-year rolling medium term strategy e.g.

- extending the PC network through NOF funding
- continuing the roll-out programme to replace public use PCs every 3 years
- 3rd year tender and implementation plan for Mobile vehicle replacement through the rolling lease programme
- implementing, monitoring, evaluating the effectiveness of the Marketing Strategy

7.3 Local performance targets

This is the final section of the Plan. It contains local targets for the 3 years of the Action Plan that should be both challenging and achievable for example

Indicator	2001/2002	Target 2002/3	Target 2003/4	Target 2004/5
Decrease picture book turnover in libraries where too high. Target 9-13	33% of libraries within target range	50% of libraries to be within target range	75% of libraries to be within target range	75% of libraries to be within target range
EQUAL Learning project	N/A	30 EQUAL beneficiaries* registered and progress tracked	70 EQUAL beneficiaries registered and progress tracked	To be reviewed

* EQUAL beneficiaries include the following groups of people: -

- People from ethnic minorities
- Women returners to work
- People with physical and sensory disabilities
- Older workers
- People in remote/rural areas

- Unemployed people – particularly the young and long term unemployed

EQUAL is a European Social Fund project undertaken by Hertfordshire Library Service and partner authorities in the East of England.