

REPORT TO: Employment Learning Skills and Communities
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 25th March 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Communities

PORTFOLIO: Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport

SUBJECT: Library Services update

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 Purpose of this report is to present the Board with information on library service achievements for the period up to 31st March 2013.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The library service undertook a CIPFA evaluation of the service in October 2012. Overall satisfaction was shown that 94% of users rate the service as good/very good.

3.2 The following highlights have contributed to these positive results.

3.3 **Runcorn Library:**

Runcorn Library opened in the old market hall in April 2012; relocating from Egerton Street. This new facility is a centrally located, modern and vibrant space and has been a very successful investment. Since opening there have been more than 40,000 books taken out – 10,000 more than the previous year, and more than 1,000 new members – three times more than the previous year. The library now hosts a weekly story time for the under 4's, 1-2-1 computer support sessions and is a venue for events delivered regularly by the children's centres and well being partnerships.

3.4 **Supporting Change Lottery Funding at Halton Lea Library:**

The Supporting Change project aimed to help to reduce the social isolation of older people through engagement in a variety of social activities, and establish user groups to ensure we continue to provide and develop a service that reflects what the community wants. It has enabled us to bring in new partners who provide a range of activities, events and services from Halton Lea Library. We have established a self-sustaining programme of activities and

events through volunteers supporting and delivering added value sessions. These include a Reading Aloud group, dementia café, knit & natter sessions, IT classes, partner open days, tea dances & local history film shows.

This has raised the profile of the service overall and highlighted the role the service plays in providing a neutral, accessible and non-threatening community venue.

3.5 Community Pathfinders Project at Halton Lea Library & Widnes Library:

Halton libraries began the community pathfinders' project to enhance the services that they already deliver to job seekers and also to improve working with local partnerships. We set up 'digital job hubs' that aim to equip job seekers with the IT skills that they require in the 21st century to apply for jobs. Work clubs have also been established and partners from the National Careers Service, Halton People Into Jobs, the local voluntary group and others are invited to attend to talk to job seekers and provide advice. In February 2013, we launched a new scheme of work clubs, working closely with local children's centres the aim is to support parents back into work and to provide the general public with the opportunity to access advice and information on a fortnightly basis.

3.6 Reading Activists Project:

The Reading Activists project gets young people aged 11-19 to volunteer and organise creative reading and writing events alongside librarians. They gain new skills and meet writers, artists and other creative people.

Halton is one of only 18 authorities nationally engaged in this Lottery Funded Project. We currently have three groups, in Halton Lea Library, Widnes Library & Grangeway Community Centre. Events so far have included author visits, cartoon workshops, digital film making and a band night.

3.7 Reading Families Project:

The Reading Families project is part of a national scheme supported by The Reading Agency and publishers. They are working with a number of different library services to explore creative ways in which we can share reading with other readers online using Twitter, blogs and Facebook.

In Halton families from all libraries selected their favourite books to be displayed and use social media to promote this to other customers.

3.8 Library Strategy:

The strategy is currently in development and will be presented to PPB in June 2013.

3.9 Home Delivery Service:

Halton libraries provide a home delivery service to people who are either permanently or temporarily housebound. In partnership with the WVRS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service) books and audio materials are delivered directly to people in their own homes or care facilities. We are currently in the process of reviewing the service in order to extend take up over the coming months.

3.10 **Koha Library Management System:**

Halton Libraries migrated to the Koha Library Management system in 2011 in order to benefit from reduced costs associated with both maintenance and development. The costs have since reduced by a third.

This open source product has allowed the service to have much greater control of the product and we are currently working on creating a user-friendly online catalogue which will be ready for launch later this year.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Information has been fed into the Library Strategy review.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None at this time

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Reading Activists project provides volunteering opportunities for young people.

Reading Families has enabled families to promote their love of reading to the community.

New story session for the under 4s is now delivered weekly in Runcorn Library.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The community Pathfinders project has helped people learn online skills and supported job seekers in Halton.

The Supporting change project has encouraged older people to develop new online skills.

There is now increased PC access in Runcorn Library and Wi Fi in all libraries.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The supporting change project has established Halton Lea Library as a venue to deliver wellbeing events to older people, and through strengthened partnerships has improved the library role in meeting the health agenda.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

N/A

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Runcorn Library is now an established and vibrant community building.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 This is in line with all equality and diversity issues in Halton.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act