

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Agenda item:

Page no:

Meeting:	Education Consultative Forum Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee Cabinet
Date:	24 September 2003 7 October 2003 14 October 2003
Subject:	Public Library Position Statement
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Executive Director - People First
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning
Status:	Part 1
Ward:	All
Enclosures:	The draft submission of the Public Library Position Statement has been circulated in the Supporting Document pack

1. Summary/ Reason for urgency (if applicable)

- 1.1 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) no longer requires the submission of an Annual Library Plan, but now requires a more succinct Public Library Position Statement for submission by 30th September 2003

The report explains the background and a supporting document "Draft Public Library Position Statement 2003" has been prepared for approval by Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Education Consultative Forum:

Consider the draft public library position statement and refer any comments to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee and the Cabinet

2.2 That the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Consider the draft public library position statement and any comments from the Education Consultative Forum and refer any comments to the Cabinet

2.3 That the Cabinet

Consider comments from the Education Consultative Forum and the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee and approve the Public Library Position Statement for submission to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, prior to the portfolio holder for education and lifelong learning endorsing the document indicating the Council's strong commitment.

REASON: To meet the requirements to submit a Public Library Position Statement to DCMS for an assessment which will be included within the Corporate Performance Assessment process.

3. Consultation with Ward Councillors

3.1 None required

4. Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)

4.1 The statement is a development of previous Annual Library Plans approved by Council and submitted to DCMS in previous years.

5. Relevance to Corporate Priorities

5.1 The Public Library Position Statement addresses the Council's stated priority of promoting Harrow as a centre of lifelong learning, particularly by providing activities for cultural, artistic and leisure pursuits.

6. Background Information and options considered

6.1 Introduction

Annual Library Plans were discontinued as part of the Local Government White Paper implementation process. They have been succeeded by Position Statements for a maximum of two years by library authorities other than those with particularly high ratings in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of 2002.

The objective of public library position statements is to show how English public library authorities intend to shape and deliver their library services in line with the themes within "Framework for the Future : Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade", published by DCMS in early 2003, and to give an indication of their current service levels. An information item on the content of the Framework was submitted to the Education Consultative Forum (10.3.2003) and the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee (8.4.2003)

Library authorities have been advised that their internal library, cultural and community planning should be used as the basis for drafting their position statements. Work on annual library plans and the cultural strategy has informed this statement; however, the community planning process is still at a comparatively early stage. Authorities have also been advised to draw on previous reports on the development of public library services, including "Building Better Library Services" (Audit Commission, 2002).

6.2 Audience

The DCMS is the primary audience for the public library position statement. Others include Members, officers, the Audit Commission, Resource and other government departments. Authorities are encouraged to make the document accessible through their web-sites and/or in print; this will be done.

External auditors will verify the factual accuracy of the statement as part of their annual review of the Council and its services, following the submission of the position statement to DCMS and the return of the assessment.

6.3 Timetable

The statement has to be submitted for assessment by 30th September 2003. The draft has been produced for the Education Consultative Forum (25th September), the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee (7th October) and the Cabinet (14th October) and will be submitted to DCMS by 30th September. Any revisions to the draft made by the Cabinet will be submitted as a final version in October; DCMS is aware of this. The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee appointed a small group of members to provide input to the draft in August.

6.4 Presentation

Library authorities have been requested to concentrate on the performance of the library service, and to state how they are improving it. They have been encouraged to quote examples of evidence of the implementation of their policies and practices. The document is required to be succinct, using bullet points wherever possible, without appendices or policy papers and aimed to be kept within 15 pages.

The portfolio holder with responsibility for libraries is "asked to sign the position statement to indicate that the document has political backing within the authority". This will apply to the final submission sent to DCMS in October.

6.5 Standards

CIPFA is carrying out a survey of each authority's position with regard to the public library standards, the information from which will be made available to the assessors. The survey gives the authority's performance at 31/3/02 and 31/3/03 and its targets for 31/3/04 (the date by which the standards are to be achieved). This is commented on in some detail in section 3.1 of the position statement.

6.6 Assessment

Position statements will be assessed in relation to guidance issued by DCMS and information on authorities' performance in relation to the public library standards. A four point scoring system (1 - weak, 2 - fair, 3 - good, 4 - excellent) will be used. The assessors may ask for additional information to clarify aspects of the position statement.

Two scores will be given:

- The quality of the evidence that the authority is providing excellent policies and practices to implement "Framework for the Future", in line with local needs.
- The quality of the evidence that the authority is meeting the public library standards, including the realism of resource provision.

7. Consultation

7.1 The views of library users are sought through Public Library User Surveys and Feedback forms and taken into account in developing the library service (e.g. expansion of opening hours). Comments by assessors of the Annual Library Plan 2002 are also considered.

8. Finance Observations

8.1 The position statement refers to existing Council commitments or to growth bids that will be considered in the normal budget-making process. The position statement does not make any new financial commitments.

9. Legal Observations

9.1 The position statement has been drawn up to meet the guidance provided by DCMS to enable it to assess the quality of the library service. This requirement arises from the Public Library Museums Act 1964 Section 1 on superintending the public library service.

10. Conclusion

10.1 The draft public library position statement responds to the DCMS document "Framework for the Future" and the guidance on the statement, but within the framework of local needs and resources.

11. Background Papers

11.1 Public Library Position Statement 2003: Guidance - DCMS 2003
Framework for the Future, Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade - DCMS 2003.
Public Libraries Planning Profile 2003 - DCMS
Position Statement Library Standards Profile 2003 - DCMS
Framework for the Future Monitor - 2003/04 Addendum - CIPFA 2003.

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