

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Meeting:	Education Consultative Forum Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee Cabinet
Date:	23 rd September 2004 13 th October 2004 14 th October 2004
Subject:	Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report 2004
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Director of Learning and Community Development
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Education and Lifelong Learning
Status:	Part 1
Ward:	N/A
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 - The draft of the Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report 2004. (Supporting Document for Cabinet)

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 and Standards Report for submission by 30th September 2004.

The report explains the background and a supporting document "Draft Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report 2004" has been prepared for approval by Cabinet

2. Recommendations

2.1 Education Consultative Forum:

Considers the draft Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report and refers any comments to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee and the Cabinet.

2.2 Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Considers the draft Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report and any comments from the Education Consultative Forum and refers any comments to the Cabinet.

2.3 Cabinet

Considers comments from the Education Consultative Forum and the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee and approves the Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report (enclosed with supporting documents) 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 political backing.

REASON: To meet the requirements to submit a Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report 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 and the Public Library Position Statement 2003 approved by Council and submitted to DCMS in previous years.

5. Relevance to Corporate Priorities

5.1 The Public Library Position Statement and Standards Report addresses the Council's stated lifelong learning priority of improving the Borough's library provision.

6. Background Information and options considered

6.1 Introduction

Annual Library Plans were discontinued. 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. This is expected to be the last such position statement required by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

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)

The standards are being revised in 2004 and will be the subject of a separate report if there are significant variations. The revised standards are proposed to feature in baskets of measures in Best Value Performance Indicators for 2005/06 onwards

Library authorities have been advised that their internal library, cultural, corporate and community planning should be used as the basis for drafting their position statements. Work on Annual Library Plans, the Cultural Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy has informed this statement. 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 and standards reports. Others include Members, officers, the Audit Commission, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 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 may 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 and standards report to DCMS and the return of the assessment.

6.3 Timetable

The statement has to be submitted for assessment by 30th September 2004. The draft has been produced for the Education Consultative Forum (23rd September), the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee (13th 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.

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 25 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 has carried 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 31/3/03 and 31/3/04 (the date by which the standards were to be achieved). This is commented on in some detail in section 3.1 of the position statement. 24 out of 29 standards were met; and only one of the standards that were not met indicated a decline (for one-off reasons which are explained).

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.

Two scores will be given:

- The overall evidence that the authority is implementing "Framework for the Future", in line with local needs and the corporate vision.
- The evidence of the authority's response to public library standards (and local targets) by 31st March 2004 and progress since the introduction of the national standards in 2001.

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 Public Library Position Statement 2003 are also considered.

8. Finance Observations

8.1 The position statement and standards report 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 and standards report 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 and Standards Report 2004" 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 and Standards Report 2004: Guidance - DCMS 2004
Framework for the Future, Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade - DCMS 2003.
Public Libraries Planning Profile 2004 - DCMS
Public Library Standards Achievement Report 2004 (submitted to CIPFA July 2004)

12. Author

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