City of Westminster

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Title:	City of Westminster Libraries Advisory Board
Report of:	Executive Director, City Management and Communities
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Environment, Leisure & Community
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City For All
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1.   Executive Summary

1.1   The Council's over-arching policy plan, **City For All**, aims to ensure a **Global city, strong neighbourhoods, thriving community.** Now in its third year, it is arranged around three priorities and five programmes and **Civic Leadership** is one of both. It says: "We want to make sure that everybody believes they have a stake and future in the city and can actively contribute to their community."

1.2   As part of this commitment, the Council is committed to:

- Launch a new independent Libraries Advisory Board to build the positive case for the future of local authority libraries

The Board has been appointed and it will report back to the Council in mid-2018. The Board has to date held a plenary meeting to review terms of reference and work programme, and a first full session with external "witness" speakers.

1.3   Some background on context of the Advisory Board's work and the wider operating environment for public libraries is attached at appendix 1. This includes the government Taskforce for Libraries report (2016). The report sets out some key considerations for libraries, including the universal offers (what all libraries should provide), and a proposed approach, endorsed by the Local Government Association, that the Taskforce calls Libraries First. This means local government considering how it can make best use of its libraries as a

resource – particularly in engagement, improving health outcomes, improving lifelong learning linked to economic development, and better outcomes for children – as a first port of call rather than a last resort if indeed they are considered at all.

1.4 This report provides a first update on the Board's planned work programme and governance, and seeks the Committee's views on proposed approach.

2. Constitution and membership

2.1 The Board was set up at the request of the Leader, and as a key commitment made within year 3 of City For All. The Board is chaired by Mr Chris Cotton, formerly CEO of the Royal Albert Hall, appointed by the Leader, who was then invited to select Board members on the basis of knowledge, interest and availability, and to provide a breadth of experience, and challenge to the Council. Board membership and biographies are attached at appendix 2. The Cabinet Member, Cllr D Harvey, and minority group nominee, Cllr G Mckie, are observer members of the Board, and secretariat/support is provided by officers.

2.2 Additional members of the Board may be co-opted at any point during its work at the request of the Chair.

3. Governance

3.1 Terms of reference have been discussed and agreed by the Board and are attached at are also shown within appendix 1 for information.

3.2 The planned approach is that the Board will hold a number of "evidence gathering" sessions between October 2017 and March 2018. External guests – industry experts, practitioners, advocates – will be invited to present papers or other input and for the Board to be able to question them. A report with recommendations, outlining option(s) for a future libraries strategy for the City of Westminster, will be drafted, and the Committee will be invited to comment on a draft of this, before it is presented to Cabinet in May/June 2018.

3.3 Formal adoption of the report by Cabinet and Full Council, and endorsement of a libraries strategy for the City, is expected after the mandatory local election purdah period in 2018.

4. Planned work programme

4.1 The following is an outline of planned sessions. With the exception of dates passed which are reported for information, the dates, topics and speakers are provisional and subject to availability.

Date	Title	Outline	Suggested contributors
3 August 2017	Plenary session	Getting to know each other, terms of reference and ways of working	
10 Oct	Community	When we say "libraries at the heart of their communities" what do we mean? What is the role of volunteering? How are they different from other community facilities and what can we do to ensure they don't just survive but thrive?	Antonio Rizzo, Lewisham Libraries Nick Poole, Cilip: the library and information association Phil Storey, Hammersmith & Fulham Citizens' Advice Friends of libraries groups
20 Nov	Children, Environment and Leisure Policy & Scrutiny Committee (WCC)	Chair to present an overview of the Board's terms of reference and work programme, inviting comments on any areas the committee thinks should be investigated	
29 Nov	Digital	How is technology changing the operating environment, the publishing and knowledge trades and the cultural offer, and what libraries do? Bridging the digital divide and engaging non-users	Government digital specialist Tech entrepreneur or "disruptor" A library service with a track record of engaging digitally excluded people
16 Jan 2018	Delivery	What are the best models for delivering a sustainable and relevant public library service? What is the role of the local authority? How do we reconcile the universal versus the targeted? What is the role of library staff? The building vs people balance	Prof Tony Travers or Matthew Taylor/RSA officers Kathy Settle, Libraries Taskforce DCMS head of division Ciara Eastell, Libraries Unlimited (Devon) Sue Charteris, independent consultant and former DCMS libraries inspector Staff perspective
20 Feb	Audiences, users, culture and spaces	Who are the library's customers and should/how can we grow their number, diversity and engagement? What successful strategies can we learn from – in libraries, arts and culture, business and social media?	New libraries director Arts Council England James Daunt, Waterstones A commercially savvy arts space
20 Mar	Culture and heritage	How do they help communities cohere through shared activities and resources?	Isobel Hunter, National Archives Cultural consultant or key partner who has worked with library services to deliver cultural activity in libraries WCC cultural partnerships officer One of the library services that has achieved national portfolio (Arts Council funded) status Arts Council England

Date TBC	Making the assets work	Considering all we have learned so far: What is the best ownership vehicle? What is affordable, feasible and realistic in the current budget situation? What is the relationship to other council services?	Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Communities Opposition nominee to the Board Chief executive, WCC City treasurer Director of strategy and communications
May 2018 (date TBC)	Children, Environment and Leisure Policy & Scrutiny Committee (WCC)	Final session for committee to review a draft of the Board's report	
May 2018 (date TBC)	Board plenary session	Review of report draft and sign off by Board	

5. Questions for the Committee

5.1 To assist the Committee in its deliberations, it may be helpful to consider:

- Does the work programme appear appropriate for the Board, given its terms of reference?
    - are there omissions or areas for consideration that do not appear in the programme that the Committee would recommend the Board does consider?
    - are there elements of the programme that the Committee considers are beyond the scope of this Advisory Board?

- How does the Committee consider the Board should approach wider engagement on its work, with residents, service users and stakeholders?

- Can the Committee provide any general guidance and input for the Board?

5.2 The Board will consider the Committee's input at its next meeting and the Chairman will be advised of its response. There will be a further opportunity for the Committee to question the Chair of the Advisory Board prior to the report being finalised.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

As referred to in the body of report (see appendices).