

Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport
Date of meeting:	14 December 2012
Subject:	Portsmouth's Big Library Card
Report by:	Head of City Development and Cultural Services
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update the Cabinet Member on Portsmouth Library Service's innovative "Big Library Card" issue in July 2012 to all school pupils in the Local Education Authority and specifically
- To inform the Cabinet Member on library usage by children following this initiative.
 - To demonstrate the link between this initiative and the increased numbers of children participating in the Summer Reading Challenge.
 - To inform the Cabinet Member of the significant impact that this initiative has made to national library agendas.
 - To raise awareness of the importance of library service outreach and community work in making the scheme a success to date and its critical role in sustaining the level of library engagement.
 - To recommend that library cards continue to be issued on an annual basis to all Local Education Authority Reception pupils.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Library Service continues to issue library cards to Local Education Authority Reception pupils on an annual basis to ensure all school age children have direct access to library services.**
- 2.2 **That Portsmouth Libraries will participate in the Arts Council funded scheme to shared best practice and lessons learned based on 2012 project delivery.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In partnership with the Local Education Authority, Portsmouth Library Service issued a specially designed and personalised library card to every one of the city's 23,000 LEA pupils. The launch was timed for the end of the summer term, just before this year's Summer Reading Challenge. This was an initiative to address the two challenges of low-level book ownership and literacy in the city and was the first time in the United Kingdom that automatic library membership on this scale had been introduced to pupils.
- 3.2 There has been much interest at a national level in how we achieved this, which involved seeking agreement from schools and parents/carers of pupils to share data held by the LEA. This data was then uploaded to the library management system.
- 3.3 Portsmouth Library Service have shared our expertise with other library authorities and national agencies, including the Department for Education, Arts Council England and the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians. Additionally, The Reading Agency will be embedding automatic library membership in their National Library Offer developed in conjunction with the Society of Chief Librarians. Our pioneering work in this area has been cited as a model of good practice by both Arts Council England and the Society of Chief Librarians.
- 3.4 Locally, the impact on library issues of children's materials has been remarkable. In a three-month period this year, from 14 July 2012 to 14 October 2012, **91,252** items were issued, compared with **61,165** during the same period last year. This is **an increase of over 49%**. As the children's materials budget allocation was increased by roughly the same amount for 2012/13, libraries have been able to support the increased demand.
- 3.5 Before the issue of the library cards in July, 30% of Portsmouth children aged 5-16 were actively using libraries, that is, they had used a library to borrow an item in the previous twelve months. There has been a 42% increase in the number of active borrowers during the three-month period 14 July to 14 October 2012.
- 3.6 The Big Library Card issue made a significant impact on participation in "Storylab" - this year's Summer Reading Challenge - as we had effectively removed the barriers to library membership by children. **1305** children read six books or more over the summer holidays, an increase of **41.5%** on last year and a **58%** increase since 2009.
- 3.7 The purchase of library tickets and all related data sharing and distribution mechanisms have been achieved within existing library budgets. This success, in a climate of ongoing budgetary pressures, has been in no small measure due to the library outreach workers who managed to visit every primary school in the city to promote both the library card offer and the Summer Reading Challenge. Outreach workers have plans to target specific schools next year to ensure that at least 1500 children (ten per cent) of all primary school pupils will complete the Reading Challenge in 2013.

- 3.8 On the 14 November, Arts Council England announced the 22 library authorities that are taking part in an automatic library membership pilot. Portsmouth is one of these authorities and will receive funding for the issue of library cards to all 2012/13 Reception pupils. As a participating authority, we will also benefit from an evaluation and research process that will provide evidence of the impact of library usage on literacy levels.
- 3.9 Outreach workers will be liaising with primary school Reception classes to ensure that they all receive their library cards from January 2013. Classes will be encouraged to visit their local library for a special story time where they will receive their Booktime packs and be presented with their new library card. Those schools that find it difficult to get to a library will be offered a visit from an outreach worker.
- 3.10 As a public library service, we have a duty to make books as accessible as possible to all. Following the big library card issue, Portsmouth Libraries are uniquely placed to support schools in addressing the literacy challenges of this city and to improve outcomes for children and young people.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 To ensure that the delivery of full access to library services for all Local Education Authority pupils is maintained and mainstreamed in order to support literacy and learning agendas.
- 4.2 To share best practice with other library authorities regionally and nationally and promote the role of Portsmouth City Council in delivering this significant initiative.

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 5.1 A preliminary EIA has been submitted

6. Head of Legal, Licensing & Registrars' comments

- 6.1 The City Solicitor notes that the proposal constitutes a provision of information only, rather than a substantive decision. Accordingly, there are no legal implications to note.

7. Head of Finance's comments

The recommendations contained within this report will be funded from existing library budgets.

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Signed by: **Stephen Baily**
Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
None	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on 14 December 2012.

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport