

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport

Subject: Audio book Download Service

Date of meeting: 14 December 2012

Report by: Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Wards affected: All

1. Requested by:

1.1 Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport.

2. Purpose:

2.1 To provide an update on the development, launch and initial impact of the audio book download service.

3. Information Requested

3.1 The library service sought to introduce a download service for audio books in the spring of 2012 to widen the access to spoken word books to a wider audience and make them available out of library hours. Audio books can be downloaded to a computer and transferred to an iPod, MP3 player or memory stick. The advantages of moving to a downloads service were:

- To increase access to audio books
- Encourage new borrowers to access the service
- Partially address the issue of escalating costs for traditional CD and cassette audio books
- Partially address the issue of ongoing repair and replacement costs for traditional audio books

3.2 To this end library staff assessed the services that are available from library suppliers to provide the best, most cost effective offer to Portsmouth library members.

3.3 At the time there were two main suppliers in the field, Overdrive and W. F. Howes. These were assessed for: costs including the website and book purchases, availability and breadth of titles, support for library staff and end users and ease of

use. The costs for the Oneclickdigital service break down as £6,750 for the adult core collection, £405 for the children's collection and £270 for the self help collection bringing a total of £7,625. The subscription is renewable on an annual basis. The service from Overdrive would have come in at £12,000 and they would have looked at three year contract.

- 3.4 The service chosen was the Oneclickdigital service provided by W F Howes a long established publisher of audio books on CD. The range of books available from W F Howes includes all genres and there is material for all age groups.
- 3.5 W F Howes negotiate their own contracts with authors and publishers and so own the content of their offer unlike Overdrive. The titles include those from bestselling authors including crime writers Ian Rankin and Peter James, prize winners such as Hilary Mantel, classics from Jane Austen and Jules Verne, children's writers Philip Pullman and Meg Cabot.
- 3.6 The number of titles in the original offer was approximately 700 across both adult and children's books and there have been additions to the list of between 30 and 40 titles per month and the titles on the current list now number 1030 titles.
- 3.7 The biggest selling point for the W F Howes service is that any number of users can download the same title at the same time. The advantage to this is, no title is "out" and there is no need for a reservation service. The Overdrive offer operated on the system of one loan per copy purchased. Users would have to wait for an item to be "returned" before someone else could download the title unless the library purchased additional copies.
- 3.8 A further and significant advantage of this offer is to enable "Listening Groups" to all access the same title at the same time. This is very valuable for Vision Impaired groups. The mechanism will also enable the development of "One City Listen" events where large groups of people access the same material at the same time and have the opportunity to comment and discuss the material.
- 3.9 The service was launched early in summer 2012 with a publicity in libraries and other venues, such as train stations to catch commuters. A press release, posters and information postcards, highlighted the offer and the Libraries Vision Impaired Officer ensured that news of the service was relayed to the visually impaired across the city. The Community Library team have also offered support sessions to assist VI's in accessing the service. The library service is currently working with W F Howes on a further promotional campaign.
- 3.10 The use of the service has been encouraging with approximately 400 people signing up and over 1,200 downloads to the end of October. The most popular titles have been "salmon fishing in the Yemen" by Paul Torday, "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" by Steig Larsson and "The Naming of the Dead" by Ian Rankin.

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

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	