

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 28 April 2017

Subject: Library and Archives Service Website

Report by: Director of Culture and City Development

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member on Library and Archive Service plans to improve online engagement with customers, outline the wider strategic aims and objectives and to recommend the development of an external website which will help achieve these.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport approves the submission of a business plan to the PCC Web Board, supporting the development of an external website and related functionality to improve Library and Archive Service engagement with its customers.**
- 2.2 **That the Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport agrees to the underspend of £40K from the Schools Library Service being allocated to this joint project to convey benefit on Public Libraries and Archives as well as its own Traded Service.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Library and Archive Service comprises the School Library Service, nine public libraries and one mobile library plus the Portsmouth History Centre and Archive. Public libraries and archives are both statutory services.
- 3.2 Portsmouth School Library Service (SLS) helps primary, secondary and special schools develop high quality library collections to inspire reading and help learning. A book loan service, advisory service and reader development activities, such as the Portsmouth Book Awards, Literature Quizzes and 'Meet the Author' events are offered to schools. SLS is a traded service of Portsmouth City Council and each school has a choice to subscribe to the service.

The service is well regarded and enjoys a high level of 'buy-back'. However, schools are facing ongoing budgetary pressures and given that school libraries are not statutory, SLS needs to be even more agile, responsive to need and delivered in a way that makes the most of technological developments. The information available to current and potential SLS subscribers on the PCC website is insufficient to meet these needs.

- 3.3** Following a planned underspend of £40,000 in the 2016/17 financial year from SLS, permission has been obtained from the Culture, Leisure and Sport Portfolio Holder to authorise the release of funds in 2017/18 to develop a modern, attractive and accessible interface for the Library and Archive Service as a whole.
- 3.4** In 2013, the Archive Service was brought together with the Library Service to form the Portsmouth History Centre. Collections have been organised into climate controlled secure repositories above Southsea Library and within the Central Library. Following a procurement process, considerable aspects of the archive including registers, rate books and crew lists are now being digitised and will be made available on commercially accessible genealogy sites. This is in line with the National Archive Accreditation standard: that is to manage, secure and conserve the archive records and provide access to them. There are other collections in the Archive that could be made accessible and available online but the current PCC website limits the extent that this can be achieved.
- 3.5** Portsmouth Public Libraries continually seek to engage more widely with residents and those who work or study in the city, as well as visitors. Service provision is governed by the following Society of Chief Librarian offers: Reading; Information; Digital Access; Health and Wellbeing; Learning and Culture. Good communication is required to ensure libraries can properly support public need in all these areas. Over time traditional book lending and information services have been supplemented by a range of digital offers. These include e-book loans, e-audio book loans, music downloading, music streaming, access to digital magazines and comics in addition to a vast range of on-line reference works for study and personal enquiry. Currently the PCC site offers poor visibility to this very impressive range of offers, with limited opportunity to promote learning and cultural events and activities, including the annual BookFest literary festival, Summer Reading Challenge, World Book events, holiday activities for children and other significant events in the cultural calendar of the city.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1** Currently, there is very basic information on the SLS available to existing, or potential customers through the PCC website. The service requires a much more engaging 'shop-window' to better promote the services on offer to schools. For potential subscribers, there should be a gallery of images and other information, including a link to the Traded Services website. In addition, SLS would like to create a password protected area for existing customers so they can access book lists, online training and the eBook platform. School staff would also be able to request items and purchase additional books through the SLS bookshop. This site would be a 'one-stop-shop' so school library staff can access all the information they require, in one place.

- 4.2** In May 2017 Portsmouth Library and Archive Service will upgrade the library management system which will provide access to a range of new services and offers including an events booking system, access via an App, improved search facilities and a social media feed. These software developments acknowledge a customer base that is increasingly used to accessing information and services virtually. The Library and Archive Service is currently constrained by the limits of the PCC website and unable to capitalise on the opportunities available in the market to engage a more diverse demographic and serve all customers more affectively.
- 4.3** It remains a challenge for The History Centre to provide and enhance access to the collections regionally, nationally and internationally. Currently it is only possible to access catalogues from databases held within the Centre. With the new Library Management System, if a suitable website is provided to deliver access, there is a facility for records to be viewed digitally. The other significant benefit of digitally accessed records is that they can be viewed without the original sources being handled and damaged over time. A further advantage of improved online services would be to ability to provide income generation opportunities by offering reproductions of images and other documents for sale. The Centre would also become a much more interactive hub, providing links to other local history interest groups and a place where customers can upload their own research, reminiscences and comments.
- 4.4** In order to support Portsmouth City Council agendas and the ongoing, cultural, learning, reading, health and wellbeing and information remits of the Library and Archive Service, a website is required that can within very few clicks help enquirers find their local library, become a member and see what is on offer. In the digital age, customers expect to be able to access services, purchase tickets, undertake enquiries, manage their library account and communicate with the service and fellow users with a multi-functioning website that is attractive, accessible and easy to use. Our present inability to present services in this way significantly constrains usage and the opportunities to access new customers and generate income.
- 5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**
- 5.1** A preliminary EIA has been completed.
- 6. Legal comments**
- 6.1** There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.
- 7. Director of Finance comments**
- 7.1** Expenditure in 2016/17 has been held back to generate the funds necessary to progress the website project in 2017/18. Income has also been higher than originally budgeted contributing to the £40,000 funding requirement.

7.2 In the longer term, it is anticipated that the website will generate more income as the opportunity to engage with customers increases.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture and City Development

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Equalities Impact Assessment

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

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport