

**Title of meeting:** Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 29 July 2022

**Subject:** Portsmouth Libraries Stock Policy

**Report by:** Director of Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Member of how the library stock is managed and to make recommendations for its continuing management.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Library and Archive Service publishes its Stock Policy and collection management policy on the Library and Archive Service website - this will inform the public on how the Service seeks best value and that stock is acquired according to current legal guidance.**
- 2.2 That the Library and Archive Service will purchase stock within the current legislation pertaining to libraries and publications.**
- 2.3 That the Service continues to invest in digital offers- eBooks, eAudiobooks, eNewspapers and magazines and eMusic- as demand for these services continues to grow.**
- 2.4 That of the unsolicited, self-published titles donated to the Library and Archive Service, only those that are by local authors or about Portsmouth will be taken on for stock.**
- 2.5 That the Library and Archive Service continues to purchase reference books that develop the Portsmouth History Centre Collection.**
- 2.6 That a continuing programme of stock disposal is carried out.**

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Library and Archive Service manages access to a wide range of books, digital services, and other items. The Service has an annual book fund available, and this book fund must fund the purchase of all books, eBooks, large print books and spoken word packs for all ten libraries (nine libraries plus the Mobile Library), as well as subscriptions to digital resources, fees to borrow books from other library authorities and courier fees.
- 3.2 It is vital therefore that the book fund continues to be protected to allow the Service to ensure that it is meeting the recreational and information needs of Portsmouth residents, students, employees, and visitors.
- 3.3 The stock team of one Information and Stock Librarian and one Stock Assistant (managed by the Service Development Manager) manage all the day-to-day aspects of purchasing stock, responding to requests, gathering statistics, promotion, putting together collections and invoicing and processing.

### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

#### **4.1 Collection Management**

- 4.1.1. The library stock budget covers the purchasing of a wide range of book stock, digital services, newspapers and other items. It is crucial that the Service seeks best value so that the budget can meet customer demand. Portsmouth public libraries and Portsmouth Schools Library Service are part of the Central Buying Consortium. The Consortium is led by West Sussex Libraries who manage the procurement of the contract which is for the purchase of printed books. Being part of the Consortium enables Portsmouth to achieve discounts on book purchases and book servicing that we would not be able to negotiate on our own.
- 4.1.2 Using a book supplier who can service the books to library standards before sending them out is crucial. Our current suppliers will provide protective jackets on the books, add our own book date labels, and add Dewey classification labels where required. This saves time for the stock team and wider frontline library team and enables the books to be sent out to libraries quickly.
- 4.1.3 The stock team selects the books on a monthly basis. The book fund used to pay a fee to the supplier to select the books for us but as budgets have been reduced over the years the Library Service took the selection back in house so that staff are more able to select stock according to local demand.
- 4.1.4 The reservations and requests service is a fundamental mechanism for meeting local demand. Customers can make free reservations to obtain books from other libraries within the Service. This helps make the stock work harder and provides equal access for all in that customers can access the whole city's stock

for free regardless of where they live. This is important if someone has limited mobility or lives in an area with a smaller library.

- 4.1.5 Circulating book stock is an important way of making sure library branches have a regular input of new titles. When purchasing books, the stock team will decide whether to place the book on a circulating rota. There are several rotas which include smaller libraries and the four large libraries, and the book will be available for a number of months before moving on to the next library in the rota.
- 4.1.6 The requests service for items not in stock in Portsmouth Libraries is greatly valued. The Information and Stock Librarian will look at the requests every day and then either purchase the book (if it meets several criteria: it is in print and available to buy, it is an affordable price and it is likely to appeal to other customers). If the Librarian makes the decision not to purchase the book, then there is access to a nationwide inter library loans service that enables Portsmouth to borrow books from other library authorities for customers- we pay an annual fee from the stock budget for this service and again it helps us meet best value for money in that it means we don't need to purchase books that are unaffordable to us. The inter library loans service also enables Portsmouth to borrow music and playsets for local groups -something they would find very difficult without the support of the Library Service.
- 4.1.7 The Library and Archive Service also subscribe to a bibliographic records supplier. This enables the team to download bibliographic records for most titles, saving lengthy cataloguing processes for staff setting up a record from the beginning.
- 4.1.8 Digital services have become an increasing part of the stock budget spend. Demand for digital services such as eAudiobooks, eBooks and eNewspapers require the library team to allocate budget to spend on these each year. For eBook services this is a yearly platform/service fee and additional spend on each title. For eNewspaper services it is a yearly service fee and is the same for eMusic. The stock team regularly monitors the market to ensure we are providing best value and the eBook service goes through a competitive procurement process.
- 4.1.9 Large print and spoken word stock still sees demand in libraries for those who have not been able to move on to digital services. Therefore, it is crucial that we allocate funds to a small selection of new stock every month. To meet best value the Stock Team uses three suppliers to select stock on an ad hoc basis and the stock is circulated between libraries to maximise usage.
- 4.1.10 Although the traditional reference library of shelves of large volumes is a thing of the past now that many reference resources are online, there is still a need to allocate some stock budget to the purchasing of hard copy government papers and legislation.

## **4.2 Legislation and Censorship**

- 4.2.1 The Library and Archive Service follow the statement on intellectual freedom, access to information and censorship issued by The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals ("CILIP"). This statement was originally issued in 1963, revised in 1997 and 2005.

*'Intellectual freedom is the right to access and share information, to intellectual activity and creativity, to expression and debate. A fair and prosperous democratic society is built upon access to information and ideas, the ability to develop knowledge and communicate with others...When a library and information service is funded by the public it should provide access to all publically available information as far as resources allow. Access should not be restricted on any grounds but the law and the legal basis of any restriction should always be stated. Library and information professionals should have full control over collection development, management and access within broad policies set by their organisation'.*

- 4.2.2 The 2009 Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Guidance on the Management of Controversial Stock in Public Libraries provides guidance to library authorities on the provision of library stock that may be considered controversial in nature, i.e. inflammatory and extremist. To reject stock solely because it is considered controversial would not be in the interests of intellectual freedom. Portsmouth Library Service evaluates controversial material according to our selection criteria and the principles of this policy.
- 4.2.3 Portsmouth Library Service welcomes customer suggestions regarding our stock but we will not add or remove any item of stock from our shelves solely at the request of any individual or group. Library staff and volunteers do not label items to warn customers of "offensive" or "harmful" content (although publishers may print these messages on books, for varying reasons).

### **4.3 Digital Library**

- 4.3.1 Usage of the digital library offer has increased year on year since the introduction of the eBook service in 2015 and the subsequent addition of an eMusic offer in 2014 and eNewspapers in 2019. The pandemic led to an accelerated increase in people signing up to use these services and a huge increase in the number of downloads as people needed information and entertainment that they could access from home. Comparing January 2020 with January 2022, overall digital usage increased by 200%, including a 700% increase for PressReader. Therefore, it is vital the Library and Archive Service continues to invest in these services.
- 4.3.2 Borrowbox by Bolinda is the eAudiobook and eBook service that we currently offer in Portsmouth. Books are available to Portsmouth Library users with their library card 24/7 free of charge. The range of stock available is good, within the limits of what publishers will make available to libraries in this way. Most of the eBooks and eAudiobooks that are purchased are on the basis of one

borrower/one book e.g., buying one copy means one person can download and read the book at a time - it is not available for lots of people to download at once. To make the title available to more people the stock team would need to purchase more copies.

- 4.3.3 eAudiobooks are usually purchased on the basis that most remain in the library's Borrowbox collection in perpetuity. eBooks expire after either a maximum number of loans has been reached or a maximum time- period This means that when they expire the stock team either needs to purchase a new copy or loses access to the book. The publishers negotiate these arrangements with the supplier, so the Library and Archive Service has little control over what titles are available to our borrowers and for how long we keep them in stock. That said increasing numbers of publishers are becoming more open to the idea of making their bestselling titles available in this way and the market is changing all the time.
- 4.3.4 Borrowbox do have a small collection each month of 'Campaign titles'. These are eAudiobook and eBooks that can be downloaded by lots of people at the same time. These titles tend to be older bestsellers or lesser known/debut authors, but they do provide value in that reading groups can borrow the books and the stock team can promote these titles through our social media channels to maximise downloads.
- 4.3.5 The Library Service's eNewspaper service Press Reader is extremely popular in Portsmouth with an average of nearly 20,000 issues per month in 2021/22. It is an attractive offer with thousands of UK and international newspapers and magazines to download. When using the app once the customer downloads the title it is theirs to keep. Particularly popular in Portsmouth is the Portsmouth News and Sports Mail. The Library Service pays an annual service/hosting fee for Press Reader which gives Portsmouth customers access to all titles with their library card.
- 4.3.6 Freegal is a digital music service that allows customers 5 free tracks to download and keep each week and 5 hours streaming per day. The Library Service pays an annual hosting/service fee for Freegal which then gives Portsmouth customers access with their library card and library PIN.

#### **4.4 Self- published books, local authors and donations**

- 4.4.1 Portsmouth authors: Portsmouth Library and Archive Service has an important role to play in supporting local Portsmouth based authors. The Service endeavours to include one copy of titles by local authors in the Local Writers Room at Central Library- this is a reference collection. The Service may also take a limited number of donated copies of local authors' books for lending. Authors are also supported with Local Authors' Fairs in libraries and with opportunities to appear at Portsmouth BookFest, where space allows. The Service only has space to include self-published material by Portsmouth based authors who live or work within the PO postcode area.

4.4.2 Self-published books: except for authors with a local connection (see above), the library will not usually accept self-published books. Production standards tend to be lower and there is rarely any editorial oversight of content.

4.4.3 Donations: the library very much appreciates donations from the public, and they can provide valuable additions to library stock. However, not all donations are suitable, either due to age, condition, content or because the library already holds copies. Any donated items not required for stock will be sold, sent to a charitable organization, or otherwise disposed of.

4.4.4 Unsolicited books or other items sent by post will not be added to stock and due to the cost will not be returned to the sender.

#### **4.5 Portsmouth History Centre**

4.5.1. Purchasing books and online services for the Portsmouth History Centre offer is an important allocation of the stock budget. The History Centre pays an annual subscription to enable customers to access Ancestry Online and Find My Past online- two hugely popular online resources for customers wanting to research their family history. It is also crucial that any books about Portsmouth are purchased to maintain the local history collection for future generations and that the Naval collection is kept up to date. A hard copy of the Portsmouth News and Sports Mail are also purchased for the Archive.

#### **4.6 Stock disposal**

4.6.1 The Library Service purchases on average over 700 books a month with a commitment to saving some stock in the store and so a rigorous programme of stock work is needed so that there is space on the shelves to house the new stock.

4.6.2 Stock is removed from shelves for the following reasons:

- It is out of date- this is particularly important with non-fiction as older stock could give misleading information.
- It is not issuing well. We tend to use a guideline of no issues for 1 year- remove
- It is in bad condition- it has yellowing pages, or the spine is falling apart
- Changing fashions

4.6.3 After removal from the shelves, library staff will decide what happens next using the following criteria:

- If it is in bad condition, it should be removed and pulped as it is not suitable for sale. If it is a title that is still in demand despite its condition, staff should recommend to the Stock Librarian that a new copy is purchased.
- Can it be transferred to another library? It might not issue in one branch but may be popular in another.

- Should it be transferred to the Central Library Store? The working store is based in the basement of Portsmouth Central Library. The store holds 78,750 books and items and is the repository for stock that might be by authors who have gone out of fashion but may still be requested, books that form a series or for non-fiction that might be very specialised or may be dated but still valuable. The aim is to make sure the store is a working store and staff consider when transferring stock to it 'will people still want to borrow this stock in ten years' time?' The Stock Librarian will make a final decision on store items.
- If it is fiction that is in reasonable condition but is not issuing well or out of fashion, it can be kept for book sale in libraries.
- For non-fiction it can be sold on Amazon Marketplace. Marketplace will allow the stock to reach a broader audience when selling more specialist stock and to ask for a price that better reflects its desirability.

## **5. Integrated impact assessment (IIA)**

5.1 Integrated Impact Assessment attached at appendix 1

## **6. Director of Finance Comments**

6.1 Any costs associated with Library Stock will be met from within existing cash limits.

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 The recommendations are consistent with the Council's statutory duties and powers under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and in particular section 7 of that Act

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**Signed by:**  
**Stephen Baily**  
**Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services**

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Integrated 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:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Portsmouth Libraries Stock Disposal Policy 2013	<a href="#">Agenda for Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on Friday, 11th October, 2013, 1.00 pm Portsmouth City Council</a>
Freedom of Access to Information	<a href="https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/FreedomOfAccessToInformation">https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/FreedomOfAccessToInformation</a>
Guidance on the management of controversial material in public libraries.	<a href="https://nag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MLA-guidance-on-the-management-of-controversial-material-in-public-libraries.pdf">https://nag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MLA-guidance-on-the-management-of-controversial-material-in-public-libraries.pdf</a>

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 Economic Development**