

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE:	31 May 2013
DIRECTOR:	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT:	Libraries and Information Services and Community Learning & Development Audit
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/13/035

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides and update on the ongoing work to audit the provision of Community Learning and Development and Library and Information Services within Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the committee:

- a) Note the ongoing work in relation to this complex and comprehensive project.
- b) In relation to the asset review, confirm that the initial baseline assumption is that the overall level of provision of library and community facilities within the city remains static, and the project should seek to utilise weightings to assess whether the current provision is in the appropriate places.
- c) In relation to the asset review, instruct officers to develop weightings which take into consideration the needs of the community including demographics, space within schools, SIMD levels, and projected population growth.
- d) Following on from the initial modelling based on the current level of provision, to instruct officers to run the model based on variations of current provision according to benchmarking, and report back to committee on the outcomes of this modelling.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At the current time there are no financial implications in relation to this report. There are likely to be financial implications arising upon the

completion of the project, and these will be identified when this is reported to committee.

It is highlighted that the purpose of this project is not linked to delivering budget savings, but aims to ensure that services are delivered in appropriate ways and times to meet the needs of citizens in Aberdeen.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

The Scottish Government Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships, Community Learning and Development, places a number of obligations on Community Planning Partnerships and Local Authorities in respect of Community Learning and Development (CLD).

A draft SSI on Community Learning and Development has now been published which it is proposed will require Education Authorities to “initiate and, having done so, to maintain and facilitate a process by which Community Learning and Development is secured within the area of the education authority in a way that:

- Identifies target individuals and groups
- Has regard to the needs of those target individuals and groups for CLD
- Assesses the degree to which those needs are already being met
- Identifies barriers to the adequate and efficient provision of CLD.”

The proposed legislation requires the Education Authority to consult with identified target individuals and groups and bodies providing community learning and development in relation to securing CLD within the Local Authority area, and to publish a 3 year plan containing the information about how it will maintain and facilitate a process to secure CLD in line with the above requirements.

The local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 incorporates the existing legislation relating to public libraries. It sets out the powers of the new authorities as having all the powers of the Council(s) operating in the area of the new Council before 1 April 1996.

The legislation referred to is:

Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887, the Public Libraries (Scotland) Act 1955 and the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The 1887 Act defined “a library authority” (Section 2), and gave it powers to acquire and maintain land, buildings, and furniture and fittings for public libraries (section 10). It gave powers to manage, regulate and control libraries, including acquiring and disposing of books and other materials, to lend books, to provide reading rooms and to prepare and

sell catalogues of the collection (Section 21). Authorities may make byelaws to regulate business and impose penalties for breaches (Section 22). New libraries can be established (Section 31) and it is stipulated that all public libraries are to be open to the public free of charge, and that no charges be made for the use of books or magazines issued for home reading (Section 32).

The 1955 Act makes provision for library authorities' co-operation in delivering services (Section 2) and extended the powers in Section 21 of the 1887 Act to any other library material which library managers think appropriate.

In the 1973 Act local authorities had a duty imposed to secure the provision of adequate library facilities for all persons resident in their areas (Section 163, sub-section (2)).

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background

At the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 24 March 2011, the Director of Education, Culture and Sport was instructed to “carry out a detailed analysis of all funded activity (both externally and internally delivered), taking into consideration a social and economic impact analysis of each activity”. At the same committee, the Director of Education, Culture and Sport was further instructed to “review the provision of community facilities within Aberdeen City, as part of the wider Service Asset Management Plan for Education, Culture and Sport.”

As reported to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 20 September 2012, the Scottish Government, through its recently published document: “Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development”, places a responsibility on Local Authorities to audit the need for Community Learning and Development.

At the same meeting, the Education, Culture and Sport Committee also considered a report “Library and Information Service: New ways of working”, and instructed officers to consult on current and future delivery of library services including proposals for opening hours and services at community libraries to ensure that these meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Recognising that all the above requirements are inter-connected, officers have put in place a governance structure which would see all of these strands managed as part of one overall project. The overall project will consider the issues under three main headings: Investment in external provision; Community and Learning Assets; and, Audit of Community and Lifelong Learning Needs and Provision.

5.2 **Audit of Community and Lifelong Learning needs and Provision**

Remit: To provide an audit of the current provision of community learning activities. This will include activities delivered by the Council and delivered through other partners and independent organisations.

- Carry out a high-level audit across the city, and more detailed audit in three associated school boundaries: St Machar, Torry and Northfield.
- Oversee a three stage consultation.
- Deliver a comparison of the provision against needs and identify potential areas of over or under provision (gap analysis), and opportunities for different ways of working.

This analysis will inform, and be informed by the other strands of the overall project, and the outcomes of this analysis will be reported towards the end of 2013.

5.2.1 Consultation

A key aspect of the ongoing process of auditing community and lifelong learning needs and provision has been an extensive consultation with members of the public and stakeholder groups. The initial consultation phase (including survey and open café event is largely complete) and meetings with Community Learning Partnerships (CLP) have successfully raised awareness of the process and increased dialogue. Challenges are to keep this going and to widen the consultation to groups and individuals who are not involved.

- There were 1050 responses to online survey (phase 1). Phase 2 is ongoing
- 28 people attended on open session in the Town House in March
- To the 31 March 2013, 11 responses had been received from individual and stakeholder groups to the analysis email address and 4 written responses had arrived.

The majority of respondents to date have been adults over 40 years old and most are regular library users. The most common response overall has been that they value the existing services that they use both library and community learning. Many have praised the skill and expertise of officers; in particular library counter staff are often mentioned for their helpful approach. The majority of respondents value the signposting, informal learning and lifelong learning opportunities that these services provide; this however is to be expected as most responses are from regular participants.

The most frequently expressed concern is this analysis is about a perceived potential reduction in services and for many specifically a closure in library sites. Several recent comments have been in response to media articles about libraries closing. It is stressed that this project is not linked to a requirement to deliver budget savings, but seeks to

ensure that services are in delivered in appropriate ways and times to meet the needs of citizens in Aberdeen.

We are beginning to receive ideas on ways forward, these are not statistically significant as yet, however a flavour of comments include;

- *“library events not confined to library buildings but in community centres too”*
- *“Public bodies should work together to provide services”*
- *“More houses to be built, need facilities put in”*
- *“separate and better website that is more intuitive to use”*
- *“You need to promote and market your services especially as they are free”*
- *“like online renewals - would be great to have this for children as well linked to parent account”*
- *“Not everyone has internet access – everything on line”*
- *“free parking at Central Library”*
- *“drop-off boxes for when libraries closed”*
- *“encourage people who work during the day to come to the library in the evening” “open Sundays”*

5.2.2 Audit of current provision of community learning activities

The audit of current provision of community learning activities is progressing well. Area profiles are developing and there has been some positive feedback on the development of the Community Learning Partnership audit, the information coming from it and its potential future use continuing after the audit as a means to make strategic decisions about provision and needs in the local area.

A number of meetings are ongoing to directly engage key CLP partners (e.g. NHS, Police) to gather additional local data.

Over the summer period, the Community Learning Partnerships will each develop a high level area profile and evaluation of key features of local provision including a summary of perceived local need to be supported by a brief summary of relevant statistics from the data currently being collated.

Given the current progress of the Community Learning Partnership development and data collection the final, fully comprehensive, report is likely to be finished in tandem with a comprehensive impact assessment.

5.3 Community and Learning Assets Review

Remit: Undertake an audit of buildings, owned by the Council, which enable the delivery of a range of community & lifelong learning activities. These include community libraries, learning centres, community centres etc.

- Report on these sites considering each asset from four perspectives;
- Its physical condition
- Its fitness for purpose
- The cost of operating the site
- The context of the community the asset is in

5.3.1 Work is ongoing to assess the level of community and learning asset provision across the city. To assist in this process, assets have been categorised as Leased Community Centres (Managed by independent Management Committees), Learning Centres (Managed by Aberdeen City Council), Library and Information Centres and Other (which includes community flats and an exclusive childcare facility).

The assets have been considered within Associated School Groups as geographic areas and provision is measured by area of the asset (square meters).

Without any weighting being applied the current distribution would show that some geographical areas appear to have more than equitable provision and some appear to have less. Note - an initial assumption has been made that the overall level of provision within the city would remain static, and confirmation of this approach is sought from the Committee.

An example of the model with no weightings applied (linked to need of local communities), shows that:

- Dyce ASG would seem to have roughly the right amount of leased centre provision, almost twice the amount of library space and almost 10 times the amount of learning space compared to Torry, which has slightly less than the required amount on all three.

This leads to a question about whether this is appropriate, and whether the Council would wish to continue to concentrate this level of resource in Dyce at the expense of provision within Torry for example.

However, it is important to consider that there are other factors which would require to be assessed when planning for community and lifelong learning asset provision within communities. To address this, the working group are considering applying weighting factors to account for space within primary schools, SIMD, population increase, etc.

With this in mind, the Committee are asked to confirm that appropriate weightings should be used so that provision is targeted to areas of need.

Officers would then intend to run this weighted model, to identify the optimum community asset model. It would also be intended to run the model to compare against benchmarks.

Alongside this modelling work, officers are benchmarking levels of asset provision with other comparator Local Authority Areas, and this information will be brought to committee in a future report.

The outcome of this modelling exercise will be to identify any surplus assets, and areas of under provision.

5.4 **Review of Investment in External Provision**

Remit: To gather evidence and considering whether the investment currently provided in relation to the external provision of services meets the needs that are identified as being required across the city in an equitable way.

Officers are working with externally funded organisations (and their national office in the case of the WEA) to assess how each body operates and the delivery outcomes from each. From this, a summary report will be developed in respect of each externally funded organisation:

- Workers Education Association (WEA)
- St Machar Parents Support
- Printfield Community Project
- Fersands Family Centre and Community Project
- Middlefield Community Project
- Aberdeen Lads Club

The emerging themes from the work to date include:

- Internal Governance Issues
- Complexity of funding arrangements for projects (both internal ACC and external)
- Re-assessment of appropriateness of delivery being “in-house” or commissioned; and for the latter, the proposed process to secure.
- Reporting processes, including:
 - Development and use of Service Level Agreements to ensure managed provision
 - Reporting relationships within the Council including a corporate approach to reporting and lead responsibility determined.
- Inequalities in terms of geographic coverage of Projects and their impact upon SMID areas; Torry, as an example, an area which is not currently covered.

6. **IMPACT**

Corporate – This report relates to ‘Aberdeen – the Smarter City’

- We will work with our partners to seek to reduce the levels of inequality in the city.

- We will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self-esteem.
- We will provide a high quality education service within our schools and communities which will improve attainment and life chances of our children and young people to achieve their full potential in education, employment or training.
- We will improve access to and increase participation in arts and culture by providing opportunities for citizens and visitors to experience a broad range of high quality arts and cultural activities.
- Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop the knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.
- We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the cultural economy.
- We aspire to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts by promoting Aberdeen as a cultural centre hosting high quality and diverse cultural events for the whole community and beyond.
- We will embrace the distinctive pride the people of Aberdeen take in their city and work with them to enhance the sense of well-being here, building strong communities which look out for, and look after one another.

This report also relates to the Combined Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement as follows:

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults
- People of all ages take an active part in their own learning to achieve their full potential. Learning and training is appropriate and accessible to learner's needs
- Children and young people access positive learning environments and develop their skills, confidence and self esteem to the fullest potential
- Children, young people and their families/carers are involved in decisions that affect them. Their voices are heard and they play an active and responsible role in their communities
- Educational attainment in Aberdeen is continuously sustained and improved
- School leavers enter positive destination of employment, training or further and higher education with a focus on and support for young people who require More Choices and More Chances
- Children and young people actively participate in their communities and have optimum involvement in decision making
- All children, young people and their families have access to high quality services when required and services provide timely, proportionate and appropriate response that meeting the needs of children and young people within Getting it Right for Every Child, (GIRFEC) requirements
- Improve the quality of life in our most deprived areas

- Citizens are increasingly more active in their communities regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, where they live, disability or faith/religion/belief and contribute to 'active citizenship'
- Develop pathways to participation which enhance the diversity of local representation at, and engagement with regional, national and international arts, heritage and sporting events
- Our public services are consistently high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

Public - This report will be of interest to funded organisations and Leased Community Centre Management Committees, and may be of interest to the wider public as users of these services.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The project governance structure includes a project board and project teams. There is a comprehensive risk register with mitigating actions, which is considered at each monthly project board meeting.

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment will be completed as a key project component.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

22/11/12 Education, Culture and Sport Committee, Audit of Community Learning and Development and Library Provision
 20/9/12 Education, Culture and Sport Committee: Scottish Government: Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships, CLD
 20/9/12 Education, Culture and Sport Committee: Library and Information Service: New Ways of Working
 6/7/12 Education, Culture and Sport Committee Information Bulletin: Library and Information Service Update
 10/9/11 Education, Culture and Sport Committee: Library and Information Services New Ways of Working
 24/3/11 Education, Culture and Sport Committee: Implementation of Budget Decision – Reduce Communities Team
 24/3/11 Education, Culture & Sport Committee, Implementation of Budget Decision – Reduce Communities Team

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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