

TOURISM & THE VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	23/11/2023
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Review of Library and Archives Service
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The review of our Library and Archives Service will contribute to priorities across the Council's Outcomes Framework supporting the delivery of our 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Communities'. The review process will inform the future development of the Library and Archives Service, based on consultation with local communities, and how the service contributes to the objectives as set out in the Council Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review of our Library and Archives Service will be completed in consultation with local communities and support our assessment of future needs from these services. The review will be completed in collaboration with our Library and Archives Service partner Lincs Inspire Limited and include engagement with local stakeholders and two stages of public consultation. The review will support the development of a long-term plan for the Library and Archives Service that will set a vision for the services, outlining what the services should achieve and deliver over the next five years.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The report has been submitted at this stage to seek the panels involvement and view on the opportunity to provide oversight on the Library and Archives Review. The panel are asked to consider how they would be involved in the review and the option of a future informal workshop as part of the proposed process.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 North East Lincolnshire Council has a statutory duty (outlined in Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who work, live and study in the area. The Council currently partners with Lincs Inspire Limited to deliver this service to its residents.
- 1.2 The current statutory library service operates from four sites across the borough, Grimsby Central Library, Cleethorpes Library, Immingham Library and Waltham Library. In addition, a range of services are available including the home delivery service and online resources. The library service supports the delivery across the 'Universal Library Offers' covering reading, information & digital, culture & creativity and health & wellbeing.
- 1.3 The pandemic has led to changes in the way people use our libraries. In 2022-23, there were 160,783 in person visits to our statutory library service across North

East Lincolnshire. This was a reduction from pre-Covid figures where in person visits were at approx. 240,000 visitors per year.

1.4 The North East Lincolnshire Archives (Archives) is the custodian of a large collection of original documents relating to the area, covering the period from the 13th Century to the present day. There are a range of regulations and legislation that relate to, or have an impact on, archives and records management. Users can look at items such as local & family history, legal rights & titles and utilise services such as conservation & binding. The public can undertake research into local and family history using a variety of sources, including wills, cemetery records, school records, title deeds and maps. The Archives also holds a large collection of records relating to the port of Grimsby and the fishing industry. Across the year of 2022/23 the service answered 1,369 enquiries and 2,626 documents were issued in the reading room.

1.5 All local services are working with rising costs, meaning that the Council must invest carefully in its services to get the best value for money for our residents. That is why we need to ensure the services provided are modern, efficient and fit for purpose for years to come. Therefore, given the changes in user habits and to continue to develop the service to best meet future needs, it is important for the Council to reviews its Library and Archives service.

1.6 The review of the Library and Archives service is proposed to be completed with two stages of public consultation, as well as data analysis and engagement with stakeholders:

- Stage 1 Public Consultation – firstly, finding out how people use (or do not use) library and archives services, what is important to them and what people see as the priorities and opportunities for the services in the future.
- Stage 2 Public Consultation – secondly, look at how the Council may need to develop, and potentially change, elements of our archives and library services. Stage two will be informed through work and analysis from stage one.

1.7 The review is planned to start during January 2024 and the indicative timeframe for completion is during the summer period. It will support the Council and Lincs Inspire Limited in:

- Understanding how current user behaviour has changed and what are service delivery requirements for the future.
- Understanding what residents want from the service for the future, covering both user and non-user public consultation.
- Looking at how the area's demographics influence demand for services.
- Considering the strategic fit of library and archive provision and how it complements wider outcomes and collaboration with other services such as health, business / resident support, internal council services and leisure.
- Understanding trends and the approach to library service delivery and how this compares to industry practice.
- Understanding the future local priorities for funding resources and how this

is best utilised across the library and archives service.

- Developing a long-term plan for the future of library and archive services.

1.8 The findings of the review and any proposals and recommendations will be presented to this scrutiny panel for consideration as part of the consultation process.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 The review of Library and Archives Service will be open to public consultation through focus groups across local networks, cross sector input, resident survey and engagement with stakeholders. This approach will both maximise the opportunity for participation and minimise the risk of lack of access or under representation in the development of the long-term plan for the Library and Archives Service.

2.2 The review will support identifying future needs and priorities, informing effective decisions on investment in facilities and services over the coming years.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 There are both potential positive and negative reputational implications for the Council in completing the review of Library and Archives Services. If, following consultation there are recommendations for changes there will be a need to properly demonstrate the rationale behind such proposals to mitigate potential reputational risks.

3.2 To support communications throughout the review an action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service, covering communication, consultation and information requirements and channels to be used.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The review will support identifying future financial requirements for the services and inform effective decisions on investment in facilities and services over the coming years.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The review of Library and Archives Service will cover a wide range of groups across the population. This will include considering opportunities for connecting children and young people with learning, literacy and wider enrichment activity across services and facilities. There is an opportunity for cross sector working with education, social care and health services to deliver wider outcomes that includes children's health, literacy and social interaction.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The review of Library and Archives service will consider environmental implications and opportunities to ensure sustainability and low carbon initiatives are incorporated. This will include priorities such as promoting learning around our low carbon future and opportunities for low carbon solutions for facilities.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The review of the Library and Archives Service will cover all wards across North East Lincolnshire.

9. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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