

To: Cabinet

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Subject: Involving the Whole Community; the Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

This report updates Cabinet on activity relating to the “*Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading – Involving the Whole Community*” and seeks their comments on, and suggestions for, the content of a strategy document which will encapsulate the approach.

FOR CONSULTATION

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. In March 2009 Cabinet acknowledged the success of National Year of Reading in Kent and endorsed the need for a future approach recognising that reading is fundamental to Kent’s economy and community health and wellbeing.

1.2. Reports were taken to Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2009 and January 2011 and to CFE Learning and Development POSCs in February 2010 and March 2011. Cabinet Members also endorsed the need for Kent Reading Champions to support the Kent Approach in January 2011.

1.3 2011 is National Year of Communication which provides the ideal opportunity to roll out “*Involving the Whole Community; the Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading*”, a long-term, yet simple, strategy to maintain the momentum and achieve our aims.

2. AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE “KENT APPROACH”

2.1 The Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading does not seek to advise on how literacy should be taught. It aims to support those whose role it is to develop literacy skills and promote the enjoyment of reading. The ultimate twin goals of the strategy are to improve standards of literacy and to engender a love of reading. Literacy is essential to the achievement of all three ambitions of *Bold Steps for Kent*.

2.3 The intention is to establish and consolidate a simple and sustainable approach to achieve the aspiration of 100% literacy by raising awareness of skills needs, by promoting the benefits of reading, and by raising awareness of the excellent good practice that already exists. In so doing Kent County Council and a growing number of partners will aim to promote a culture where everyone aspires to read and also to provide excellent signposting to skills development opportunities, services and support.

3. PROGRESS

3.1. A Strategic Manager in Libraries and Archives, is managing the project and reports to a KCC Project Board chaired by the Director of Customer Services. Board Members include the Area Management Team Support Manager (Families and Social Care), the Senior Adviser Teaching and Learning/Curriculum (Education, Learning and Skills), the Head of Adult Learning, the Head of Libraries and Archives and the Skills Manager of the Kent Economic Board. A draft document is attached at Appendix One.

3.2 An Implementation Group has informed, supported and championed the development of the project. The Group includes managers from across KCC including Business Strategy and Support; Customer and Communities; Education, Learning and Skills; and Families and Social Care. It includes a growing number of external partners including AimHigher (a partnership of Kent's universities and the Open University, 7 FE colleges and around 60 schools), AmicusHorizon Housing Association, Canterbury Christchurch University, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Kent Association of Training Organisations, Maidstone District Council, the Probation Service, Volunteer Reading Help and West Kent NHS.

3.3 Partners have identified 15 priority audiences. These are:

- Early years children and their families
- Children at Key Stage 2 Transition and their families
- Looked After Children
- Deaf children
- Men and boys
- Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)
- Children and young people excluded from school
- Gypsy Roma and Travellers
- Families whose first language is not English (ESOL)
- Adults with literacy skills below Level 2
- People who are out of work or on working age benefits
- Health patients in particular people with mental health issues
- Adults with learning disabilities
- People on probation or at risk of offending including young offenders
- People living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage

3.4 The project has attracted national recognition and endorsement including the opportunity to engage with 2 national pilots led by the National Literacy Trust on behalf of the Department for Education. *Partners in Literacy* sought to increase reading in the home during a child's early years. *Words for Work* has engaged local businesses to support communication skills development in 9 secondary schools through a mentoring scheme. Paul Carter addressed the National Year of Reading Conference in October 2008 and Rosalind Turner, was invited to address the National Literacy Trust's Partners in Literacy Conference in December 2010. A range of good practice in Kent is showcased on the National Literacy Trust's Wikireadia at www.wikireadia.org.uk/index.php?title=Main_Page

3.5 Presentations have been given to a range of organisations including the Kent Community Development Managers Group, Kent Housing Officers Group, Kent Public Health Board and Sevenoaks LSP all of whom have endorsed the approach being taken.

3.6 Pilot projects have also been identified to inform the on-going development and roll out of activity and these include:

- AmicusHorizon partnership to target families in Swale
- KCC Employee volunteering to support Literacy
- Kent Rapid English Forum which is testing an on-line tool with children, NEETs, and adult learners
- Kent Reading to Dogs in Schools scheme which has featured on BBC Breakfast
- Libraries' Summer Reading Challenge targeted at Reading Recovery schools
- Youth Offending Service Literacy and Numeracy scheme to raise the attainment of high-end offenders

3.7 A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. The project will promote positive images of reading and of our target audiences and we will seek to benefit and involve everyone who lives or works in Kent, regardless of first language, ability, gender, age, race, religious belief, gender identity or sexual orientation. The Kent Approach also meets the needs of the Duty to Involve as it is based on the need for public involvement to achieve success

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Working with the Implementation Group, the Project Manager will:

- develop pages on kent.gov.uk to host the Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading and act as the vital signpost that is required to ensure everyone is aware of the help and support that is available through Children's Centres, Schools, Skills Plus Centres and Libraries
- promote the Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading at significant events to reach target audiences, new partners and volunteers
- harness the use of social media and other new opportunities to engage partners, volunteers and target audiences
- establish a Kent Literacy and Reading Partnership Forum to continue the dialogue and take a shared approach to ensure the long-term success of the project
- identify Kent Reading Champions to act as ambassadors for literacy and reading across the county and in their communities
- identify ways to address the skills needs required to deliver the Kent Approach including use of Plain and Easy English, storytelling and skills needed to engage a wide range of audiences from early years to adults with learning disabilities.
- continue to link literacy and reading to Kent's highest priorities including engagement with the new Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), with the Health Service requirement to '*provide access to alternative therapies for psychological disorders*', and with the Community Safety priority to reduce re-offending. The Kent Approach is referenced in the Kent's Sustainable Community Strategy (Vision for Kent), the Kent Cultural Strategy and other strategic documents
- establish a system for monitoring and evaluating the success of the initiative including social and learning outcomes

5. RESOURCING

5.1 Literacy is even more vital during an economic downturn. The Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading supports the aims of Bold Steps and the ambitions of the Vision for

Kent. It will be achieved through prioritising and focussing existing services, including library services, and resources on supporting this work. Most importantly the human resources also exist; not only teachers, tutors and librarians but also the people of Kent who love to read and the organisations which work with our target audiences including the Probation Service, Health Service and the District Councils. Our partners bring a range of skills and access to other resources as well as energy, enthusiasm and new ideas. Maximising access to, and synergy between, these resources will be critical to success.

5.2 Existing forums and events will be used wherever possible to engage audiences and ensure sustainability. The Kent Approach will also link to existing initiatives where appropriate e.g. Early Reading Connects, Six Book Challenge, and Every Child a Talker.

5.3 Additional investment has already been attracted including funding from:

- Department for Education/National Literacy Trust for Partners in Literacy
- Department for Education Innovation Fund to support work in Swale and Thanet
- AimHigher to initiate Local Legends storytelling initiative
- AmicusHorizon to reach families in Swale
- YMCA to support work with NEETs in Kent Thameside

5.4 Further investment opportunities will be explored including sponsorship for high profile promotional events and seedcorn funding to test different approaches to engage audiences and attract new partners.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Cabinet Members are asked to:

(i) NOTE this report and COMMENT on the draft text in the document attached at Appendix One.

(ii) ADVISE on ways in which Local Members can get involved

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