From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory
                   Services

                   Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment
                   & Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet
                   Committee – 17 January 2020

Subject: Library Registration and Archives Strategy
                   Implementation Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report updates on the progress being made to take forward the Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) strategy since its implementation in March 2019.

Recommendation: Cabinet Committee is asked to comment and note the progress made on the delivery of the LRA strategy.

1. Introduction and background

1.1   The Libraries, Registration and Archives Service (LRA) is a statutory and highly valued public service delivered through a network of 99 libraries, five register offices; five mobile libraries; an archive centre; the stock distribution and support function building at Quarrywood; the information service - 'Ask a Kent Librarian' as well as the 24-hour accessible online services. LRA also delivers the Record Management Service on behalf of KCC, the Prison library service in Kent and is commissioned to deliver the registration service for the London Borough of Bexley.

1.2   LRAs three-year strategy was developed in 2018, consulted upon in late 2018 through to early January 2019 and the decision to implement the new strategy was taken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services in March 2019.

1.3   This report updates on the progress made to date and highlights key developments that will be delivered over the next year.

2. Library Tiering Model

2.1   The first major change put in place was the proposal to adopt the tiering model. This changed the library opening hours across the county using evidence of

activity and usage to develop a new model. Following the decision to implement local engagement was conducted in all the libraries where opening hours were changing. Customers' preferences on the new opening hour patterns were gathered and used to shape the final opening hour patterns that came into effect on 30th September 2019.

2.2 In parallel a staff restructure was completed, reducing the number of staff working (39.35 FTE) in our front-of-house roles. Through prudent vacancy management and engagement with staff throughout the process these were achieved without the need for compulsory redundancies. Staff timetables were also completely redesigned to work with the new hours.

2.3 This was an uncertain and difficult time for staff. The LRA Management team want to put on record our thanks to all staff affected by this review for their engagement, willingness to change and unfailing focus on delivering superb service to our customers while the changes were progressing.

3. LRA and Turner Contemporary: Bringing the Turner Prize across Kent

3.1 Having secured funding from the Arts Council, Kent Libraries worked in partnership with Turner Contemporary and KCC Arts Culture and Creative Economy service on the Turner Prize 2019. The aim of the partnership was to celebrate the Turner Prize not just in Margate but to maximise awareness and participation across the whole of the county.

3.2 LRA was involved in the creation of digital artist Yuri Suzuki's 'The Welcome Chorus' which gives everyone who visits the Turner gallery a 'Kent welcome' when they arrive. Twelve horns each representing a district of Kent sing lyrics generated by artificial intelligence software.

3.3 Workshops took place at Kent libraries in all districts which generated words about Kent that were then fed to the artificial intelligence to turn into the chorus. The groups involved included Beyond Words book groups for people with learning difficulties, Talktime groups for older people, Knit and Knatter groups, secondary school art classes and creative writing groups. All the participants were given the opportunity to join a coach trip to Margate and have a tour of the Turner Prize Exhibition.

3.4 Twelve libraries received an additional 50 books on contemporary art and the Turner prize nominated artists. Alongside these is also an I-pad and display, which is showing information about the Tuner Prize exhibition and highlighting a film about JMW Turner's links to the gallery and to the prize.

3.5 This is just one example of the innovative work LRA is now delivering in relation to art and culture, a role that will be developed over the next two years. LRA has a unique reach and access to people and communities across the county and is keen to act as a window for a host of experiences customers can enjoy.

4. Library Branding

4.1 One of the top priorities identified by customers, the cross-party member working group and through staff engagement has been the need for the service to have better branding and marketing material.

4.2 Four brand concepts have been developed for Kent Libraries and these are now being tested with focus groups including the cross-party member working group, staff and customers. Customer feedback is key, so we have engaged with community groups who meet in libraries, as well as hosting a public feedback event at Oakwood House on 11 January 2020.

4.3 The final brand will be agreed in February 2020. This will enable us to complete a new marketing plan including reviewing our buildings to improve the signage and overall external look of our buildings with the aim of encouraging more visitors. A new, consistent look will roll out across 2020/21, helping to create a recognisable Library brand. We will then review the branding for the Kent Archives.

5. New Mobile Library Vehicle

5.1 The condition of the current mobile library fleet means that we are seeing an increased frequency of breakdowns. One of our key commitments is to replace the old unreliable vehicles with a new mobile library fleet, better suited to Kent's roads, more cost effective and reliable.

5.2 We have developed a new specification for the mobile library vehicle. It is a smaller vehicle and whilst it will carry fewer books, data and evidence has shown that not all the stock on our existing vehicles is well used and can be reduced by 30% without affecting issues.

5.3 We have now completed the tender process and ordered replacements for all five mobile vehicles. While an electric mobile library is not yet possible to source, reducing the environmental impact of the vehicle has been considered every step of the way. This will see, for example, the inclusion of solar panels which will assist in generating the vehicles power.

5.4 The first new vehicle is expected at the beginning of next financial year with new vehicles being delivered throughout the financial year 2020/21. Customers can look forward to a more sustainable and more reliable mobile library service.

6. Fit for Purpose Public IT and Developing our Digital Offer

6.1 As part of the strategy, LRA committed to keep developing the IT infrastructure and the digital offer for customers. The table below highlights the key developments customers will see over the coming months.

What is being introduced	Information	Start of rollout
Wi-Fi Printing- New to all 99 libraries	This will enable customers to print from their own device e.g. phone/laptop/tablet	Pilot Jan 2020 full rollout March
Upgraded Public PCs- 504 across all 99 libraries	With more people bringing their own device and use of the PCs declining we will be reducing the number of public PCs from 667. They will now be a new model which includes Windows 10.	January 2020
Replacement of our public printers and photocopiers	Rather than separate printers and photocopiers we will now have one device to cover both needs.	Rollout started November 2020
New Registration booking system	This will include an improved online customer booking system	Expected to be implemented at start of next financial year- 2020/21
Simple on-line Library Joining	Soon it will be even quicker to join the library with a complete online membership. Customers will be able to join at home or wherever they are and get immediate access to our virtual services e-books, e-magazines, e-newspapers and our online resources will be fully accessible.	February 2020
Access to IT courses that give an industry recognised standard qualification- CISCO academy.	In partnership with the CISCO academy we will be providing through our public PCs the means to complete online professional level IT courses.	April 2020
Improved Self-service technology	We will be upgrading our library self-service units with a new upgraded PC that includes Windows 10 as well as a new customer interface allowing us to better promote events and activities.	February 2020
Continuation of Archive Digitisation	Our partnership with Find My Past has been a great success with the Parish Registers digitised- 154,036 digital images now online. Over the next two years this will continue and collections, Canterbury Diocese Consistory and Archdeacons'	Ongoing

What is being introduced	Information	Start of rollout
	court books dating 1364-1735 such as our local studies postcard collections and KCC school registers will be added to our growing digital archive via our website and Find My Past.	

7. Welcoming Spaces

7.1 LRA is committed to providing safe, attractive and welcoming spaces to everyone who visits a library or register office. The following projects to improve our internal LRA spaces have been agreed for completion over the next year;

- Cheriton library (2019/20)
- Cliftonville registration room (2019/20)
- Gravesend library local history collection storage and display (2019/20)
- Greenhithe library (2019/20)
- Lenham library (2019/20)
- Pembury library (2019/20)
- Sandwich library community room (2019/20)
- Herne Bay Library (2020/21)

8. Equalities Implications

8.1 While we have not completed an EQIA for this paper these are being completed for each individual area of work and are available to review if requested.

8.2 All the areas highlighted have improving access or awareness of LRA services at their heart and are all in line with our ambition of making everyone welcome. This applies to however people choose or need to access our service - through our physical buildings, our digital service or outreach services.

9. Budget Implications

9.1 LRA is on target to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) targets the strategy was tasked with delivering by the end of 2020/21. In addition, the new mobile vehicle and public printing solutions will enable some further efficiencies to be delivered next financial year as a direct result of the strategy implementation.

Area	Full year saving £000
Library tiering saving	870
Additional savings from LRA non-staffing budgets	90
Original Total	**960**

Area	Full year saving £000
Expected efficiency saving 2020/21 from new mob Vehicle needing less maintenance	20
Expected efficiency saving 2020/21 from new pub printing solution	20
Revised total of strategy savings achieved by end financial year 2020/21	**1,000**

10. Conclusion

10.1 LRA have started an ambitious programme of work that has laid a firm foundation to put the service on a path of continued evolution and sustainability. While challenging to take a strategy document and make it real, LRA has made a good start in year one and looks forward to continuing this over the coming year.

Recommendation: Cabinet Committee is asked to comment and note progress made on the delivery of the LRA strategy.

11. Contact details

Report Author:
James Pearson
Head of Service Libraries, Registration & Archives
Tel: 03000 414923
Email: james.pearson@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:
Barbara Cooper
Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport
Tel: 03000 415981
Email: Barbara.cooper@kent.gov.uk