From: **Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services**

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To: **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 21 June 2017**

Subject: **Update on Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary:
This report summarises the key points from the national Libraries Taskforce strategy document 'Libraries Deliver' and articulates how the Library, Registration & Archive (LRA) service proposes to respond to it.

Recommendation:
The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

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1.   Introduction

1.1   'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021' was published in December 2016 by the Libraries' Taskforce and was jointly commissioned by the Department of Culture Media and Sport and the Department of Communities and Local Government. The full document can be accessed using the following link;

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

1.2   The document was drafted following extensive consultation, including with KCC's LRA team. LRA provided detailed feedback on the initial consultation proposals and hosted a visit of the Libraries minister Mr Rob Wilson MP, Minister for Civil Society.

1.3   The document is aimed at assisting decision-makers across local and central government to understand the importance of libraries to local communities;, how they help achieve positive outcomes across a range of social policy areas and thus enable library services to become more resilient long-term by better meeting local community needs. This report summarises the key messages from that report.

2. 'Libraries Deliver': A summary

2.1 'Libraries Deliver' acknowledges the challenging times that local authorities are facing and that the way people use libraries and expectations of how services are used has changed. As the report states, in order for libraries to 'thrive not just survive,' the service needs to adapt and be more resilient and ready for change.

2.2 The document outlines a clear vision for libraries:

"We see libraries as vital community hubs - bringing people together, and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better. Our ambition is for:

a) everyone to:

- choose to use libraries, because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so;
- understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what's available to them;
- be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills and information they need to improve their quality of life;
- receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world;

b) Communities to have:

- a library service that helps different groups come together, co-designed with local people to meet local needs and strengthen the local community;
- local services available through well designed and well regarded community hubs' bringing together different partners' offerings in a seamless way;
- safe, welcoming and accessible physical and victual environments freely open to all, which encourage participation, creativity and mutual learning and support;

c) Public services and other partners to:

- Understand what libraries have to offer them, and how, by working together, they can achieve better outcomes in a more efficient way;
- regard libraries as their natural first choice to provide information and services within local communities;

d) Library service to:

- Be valued for the positive impact and outcomes they achieve for individuals, communities and partners;
- Develop an evidence base so they are recognised as a strategic national and local resource, and achieve more investment and financial resilience as a result;

- Actively adapt their funding and delivery models and services to meet new circumstances and changing user needs;
- Work together as a vibrant network, sharing knowledge, resources and insights, building on a consistent core offer and improving the way they work with partners and suppliers;
- Continue to provide core services free for users, but develop and use commercial skills to generate income so they can offer new services while maintaining neutrality;
- Help build and maintain communities, supporting everyone in them to flourish and grow;
- Be digital leaders in their communities, sparking innovation and building capability;"

2.3   The report then describes how this vision can be achieved by focussing on 7 outcomes;

2.4   The report explains that to achieve these outcomes, and to protect frontline library services in challenging times, radical thinking is required and the report challenges both central and local government to think and act differently to transform library services. The report calls for strong local leadership. The taskforce will provide support by:

- establishing a sector-led benchmarking framework that councils can choose to use to support self-assessment, promotion, planning and improvement;
- establishing a core data set to support decision making;
- strengthening partnership working;

- promoting good practice on assessing and adopting different delivery models;
- exploring ways for libraries to develop revenue streams so they can then use new finance approaches such as social investment; and
- developing a public libraries skills strategy.

2.5   'Libraries Deliver' acknowledges that since many library services first developed, local contexts have changed dramatically both in terms of demographics and technology. The report states that a robust evidence led approach is required to develop the service needed for the future. Key to this will be gaining an understanding local need and considering opportunities for co-locating/collaborating with other services across sectors.

2.6   Alongside 'Libraries Deliver', DCMS has launched the 'Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone' innovation fund, with £4 million to allocate to library services for pilot projects that tackle local needs and provide disadvantaged people with opportunities that they might not have otherwise. Kent submitted a successful bid to fund, securing £100k to deliver the Kent's Digital Playground project.

2.7   The report acknowledges that a growing number of authorities are using different models to deliver their library services. To ensure that they have robust evidence available to help them in their decision making the Libraries' Taskforce have commissioned research into the sustainability and effectiveness of community managed libraries which will be used to improve the existing Community Libraries toolkit.

2.8   The Libraries shaping the future toolkit provides information on different approaches to income generation, and, with the Office for Civil Society and Innovation (OCSI), the Libraries' Taskforce will further explore how libraries can build new income streams. LRA is keen to learn from this work as it continues to explore opportunities to generate greater income.

2.9   Making the case for libraries is another area highlighted. The report focuses on the need to explore how to improve the image of libraries and raise awareness of the services they have to offer; explore ways to reach non-users and to better promote how services across the country can be better co-ordinated around n national events and campaigns.

2.10   The Libraries' Taskforce have published an Action plan for how it proposes to deliver against these ambitions and progress will be reviewed regularly and 6 monthly progress reports published

3. KCC LRA - Progress next steps

3.1   Several LRA officers attended the 'Libraries Deliver' workshop in London in January 2017 to learn more about the action plan and discuss the themes in the document. LRA has also developed links with the Office for Civil Society to continue to influence developments.

3.2   KCC LRA s engaged in supporting and aligning itself to contribute to the delivery of these ambitions;

- LRA's internal commissioning approach and focus on outcomes is a step towards making a better case for the difference Kent libraries make to peoples lives. There is still work to do to refine this approach and to develop better evaluation techniques. The update to this Cabinet Committee in December 2016 and also the end of year report to this June Cabinet Committee has highlighted some examples of LRA's achievements to date in gathering this type of feedback which is focused on the quality and positive impact of what we do rather than just numbers. An example is this comment from a member of the public who receives our outreach service: "I can't get out so much, this is a very convenient way of keeping in touch – I don't feel so isolated."

- The LRA service plan for 2017 highlights the links between its activities and the 7 key outcomes from 'Libraries Deliver' which can also be applied the other areas of the LRA service. Integral to the service plan is the principle that the service should reflect local need.

- LRA has contributed a guest blog on commissioning library services in Kent which is available from the Libraries Taskforce website

- LRA has an officer representative on the Libraries' Taskforce's Communications Working Group to help learn about different approaches to promotion as well as feeding in ideas from Kent.

- LRA is working with corporate communications to redesign the look of the LRA webpages to make it more customer focused, user friendly and serve as a promotional tool that encourages more people to use our services

- Members of LRA regularly engage with Libraries' Taskforce members, most notably Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) and the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP)

- The service will continue to work with the Infrastructure team to explore opportunities for co-location and co-production of services, recent examples include Sandgate Library with the Parish Council commissioned to deliver library services and the ongoing development of the Southborough Hub and Tunbridge Wells Cultural Hub projects.

3.3 Now that the national strategy report has been published it is timely that KCC looks at how LRA can further develop its service. It is proposed that a first step would be to develop a new ambition for the service, not just for libraries but for Registration and Archives services as well.

3.4 Any new LRA Ambition will be aligned to the 'Libraries Deliver' strategy as well as the approaches and strategies of The National Archives and General Register Office. The Ambition should aim to be transformational, evidence led, based on locality based needs, outcome-focused and build long-term sustainability for LRA and the communities served by the service. Member input to this process will be fundamental and an approach for how this will be taken forward will be considered at the next meeting of this Cabinet Committee.

4. Recommendations

4.1   The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

5.   Contact details

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