

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**EXECUTIVE MEETING
22.09.03**

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ARTS & LIBRARIES

NAME OF WARD(S)
ALL

REPORT TITLE: Library Service Position Statement

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces Brent's Library Service Position Statement, which must be submitted to the Government's Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) by the 30th of September 2003. The Public Library Position Statement replaces the Annual Library Plan within the context of the Local Government White Paper and the move to Freedoms and Flexibilities. It will contribute to the Libraries and Leisure rating of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The Position Statement is to be submitted to the DCMS for a maximum of two years from 2003.
- 1.2 The guidelines issued by the DCMS state that the Public Library Position Statement should be 'signed by the elected member with the main responsibility for the library service' to indicate that the document has political backing within the authority. So the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries should sign it once it has been approved by the authority.
- 1.3 The Position Statement sets out Brent's intentions in regard to those Public Library Standards which have not yet been met. A full survey on Brent's performance against all the standards has been submitted separately to the Institute of Public Finance (IPF).
- 1.4 This report makes specific references to Report No 0110, *Implications of the National Public Library Standards*, presented to the Education, Arts and Libraries Deciding Committee on 31st July 2001 and Report No 0000R *Arts and Libraries Growth 2002/3* presented to the Executive Committee on 15th July 2002.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Library Service Position Statement 2003 be approved and the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries be authorised to sign on behalf of the Council.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Plan assumes a revenue budget for 2003-2006 based upon approved growth of £910,000 towards meeting the national Public Library Standards and making cultural provision already included in the Council's four-year budget strategy. Service targets for 2003-2006 have been set on the basis of this level of resource.

- 3.2 The report presented to the Education, Arts and Libraries Deciding Committee on 31st July 2001 set out in detail officers' assessment of the full financial implications of meeting the public library standards. At the meeting members agreed :

“That the public library standards be endorsed and it be agreed in principle that Brent sets targets to meet the required levels;

“That the financial implications of meeting the standards are taken into account during the budget setting process for 2002/3 and beyond “

- 3.3 The report presented to Executive Committee on 15th July 2002 reinforced the impact of the Public Library Standards and growth of £250, 000 (of which £125,000 has been allocated to Cultural Services) is included in the EAL budget for 2003/4 in acknowledgement of the need to phase in growth to meet the standards.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Plan incorporates staffing implications.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Under section 1.2 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964, local authorities have a duty to “furnish such information, and provide such facilities for the inspection of library premises, stocks and records” as are required by the Secretary of State to enable him/her to fulfil his/her duty under the same Act “to superintend, and promote the improvement of” library services.

- 5.2 The DCMS report '*Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries*' set targets and national standards for public library services that must be met by April 2004. The Secretary of State has powers of inspection/intervention under the Local Government Act 2000 if authorities are deemed to be failing to meet the Standards or working towards meeting them.

- 5.3 By Brent Constitution, Part 4, Table 3, the Executive is responsible for formulating or preparing the Annual Library Plan and it must then submit the Plan to Full Council for consideration or approval. However, the Position Statement is significantly different from the Annual Library Plan. The guidance from the DCMS is that it is sufficient that the elected member with main responsibility for the library service sign the Position Statement to indicate that the document has political backing within the authority. In the context of Brent's constitutional arrangements and given that we do not usually give lead members authority to sign documents, it is appropriate that the Executive approve the Position Statement and thereafter the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries should sign it.

6.0 DETAIL

- 6.1 Each authority, other than those which received either an 'Excellent' overall Comprehensive Performance assessment or a 'Good' overall assessment with an 'Excellent' Libraries and Leisure score, is required to produce a Library Service Position Statement for a maximum of two years from 2003. These statements replace Annual Library Plans, which were discontinued as part of the implementation of the Local Government White Paper. The structure and contents of the Position Statement are closely defined by the guidelines issued by DCMS. The guidelines include the requirement for library authorities to report their progress against the public library standards as well as against local targets.
- 6.2 The purpose of the Position Statement is to enable library authorities to demonstrate their current service levels and to show how they intend to shape and deliver library services in line with the strategies in '*Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning & Information in the Next Decade*'. This document, published by the DCMS in February 2003, outlines the Government's strategic vision for the public library service for the next ten years. All Plans are assessed by independent assessors appointed by the Institute of Public Finance (IPF), which has been contracted by DCMS to manage the Public Library Position Statement process. Plans are scored by the assessors and detailed feedback provided to each authority. The Position Statement will also be considered as part of the Corporate Performance Assessment process and the individual authority rating will be published on the library plans website.
- 6.3 'Framework for the Future' outlines three areas of activity which should be at the heart of libraries' modern mission:
- The promotion of reading and informal learning
 - Access to digital skills and services including e-government
 - Measures to tackle social exclusion, build community identity and develop citizenship

In addition, there is an emphasis on the convenient location of library buildings and on them being well-appointed, open and welcoming places. Libraries should play a clear role within local authority strategies to promote learning and social cohesion.

- 6.4 DCMS's appraisal of Brent's Annual Library Plan for 2002 awarded the authority the score of three (good) for all three assessment criteria and Brent's plan was in the top

quartile of performance in London. The assessment commented that the Plan was well presented and showed 'a clear direction for the service towards the achievement of the Standards and to improving services'.

6.5 The Position Statement follows the guidelines supplied by DCMS and sets out

- Corporate vision for the library service
- Response to 'Framework for the Future'
- Public Library Standards: Information relating to performance up to March 2003
- Resources – analysis of key strengths, constraints and challenges and response to these

6.6 The major priority for the Library Service is to achieve the target of meeting the Public Library Standards by April 2004 and to implement the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Libraries, Museum and Archive, 2003.
In particular, this means improving performance in the following areas:

- a) Opening hours
- b) Number of visits made to libraries
- c) The quality of stock and expenditure on new stock
- d) User satisfaction
- e) Condition and accessibility of library buildings
- f) Staffing structure

6.7 The key actions set out in the Position Statement are aimed at addressing the improvements required, and are to:

- a) improve access to library services
- b) increase levels of library use
- c) improve the quality and range of stock available in libraries
- d) increase the range of ICT services available in libraries
- e) encourage the effective use of libraries by children and young people
- f) improve access to Council and community information
- g) ensure appropriate staffing structure to deliver quality services

7.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following papers were used in the compilation of this report:-

- i) Comprehensive, efficient and modern public libraries – standards and assessment. DCMS January 2001
- ii) Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the next decade. DCMS, 2003
- iii) Appraisal of Brent's Annual Library Plan 2002. DCMS, 2002
- iv) Public Library Position Statement: guidelines for the preparation in 2003. DCMS, May 2003

- v) Report no 0110 from the Director of Education, "Implications of the National Public Library Standards", to the Education, Arts and Libraries Deciding Committee, 31st July 2001
- vi) Report no 0005R from the Assistant Director, Libraries and Lifelong Learning "Arts and Libraries Growth 2002/3" to the Executive Committee 14th July 2002.

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact:

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