DARLINGTON LIBRARY PLAN 2012-2015

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Nick Wallis,
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Richard Alty, Director of Place

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present a Library Plan for 2012 – 2015 which is attached as **Appendix 1.**

Summary

2. In the 2011-15 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that was approved by Council in March 2011 a commitment was made to realise savings within the Library Service budget of £130k per annum by 2011-12 and £250k per annum by 2012-13. A Transformational Review of the service is complete and has delivered £242k of savings through management and operational staffing consolidation.

3. Libraries are a statutory service under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964, however, the scale and scope of libraries services are not dictated by statute. To demonstrate that Darlington's proposals meet local need, and therefore the requirements of the 1964 Library Act, a thorough 'Assessment of Local Need' was completed in 2011. The Authority has also sought guidance from and involved the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) during the Libraries Review and the MLA has expressed their support for how the review process has been completed.

4. Based on the findings of the Assessment of Need and the priorities identified in Darlington's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) six key principles for the Library Plan were identified as outlined below:

    (a) Environments which are accessible to the community and provide sufficient space for borrowing and reference material
    (b) Provision of an outreach service to ensure that the most vulnerable and difficult to reach individuals have access to the Library Service
    (c) Supported learning space with access to ICT services
    (d) Continued investment in borrowing and reference material
    (e) Provision of an intergenerational learning environment
    (f) Delivery of a service which is integrated with and enables the delivery of a wide range of local priorities and services

5. The findings from the Assessment have guided the writing of the Library Plan.

6. The Assessment of Local Need and the Libraries Plan provide context for future decisions by Members about the Libraries Service.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that Council approve the Library Plan.

Reasons

8. The recommendation is supported as the Libraries Plan reflects the Assessment of Local Need, as well as One Darlington : Perfectly Placed and the Council's Business Model, and provides context for decision on the Libraries Service.

Richard Alty
Director of Place

Background Papers
Assessment of Local Need

Lynne Litchfield : 349601

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no significant impacts.
Health and Well Being	The Library Service provides a safe environment for a number of specific users groups, for example mothers and children and older people.
Carbon Impact	There are no significant impacts.
Diversity	The Library Service will continue to focus on providing opportunities for all sectors of the community.
Wards Affected	Residents from all wards use the Library Service. The Library buildings are located in Central Ward and Cockerton West Ward.
Groups Affected	Specific groups using the Library Service include housebound residents, mothers and young children, school children and people without access to the internet at home.
Budget and Policy Framework	The Libraries Plan is part of the Council's Policy Framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Library Service contributes to learning and cultural life in Darlington, supporting outcomes around education and skills and providing opportunities for all members of the community to access literature, music and the internet.
Efficiency	The review of the Library Service has identified substantial efficiency savings. The Library Plan recognises the need to continually review efficient delivery of services.

DARLINGTON LIBRARY PLAN 2012 – 2015

Introduction

1. The core business of lending, access to quality information and pc's for digital inclusion is justification enough for the provision of the library service. However, libraries do much more in support of local and central government priorities. They help raise standards in schools, provide books for babies, encourage family reading, offer reader development, homework support and help and support for lifelong learning. They improve the quality of life for older people, support the economic health of the town, and support health agendas like NHS Choices, books on prescription and access to health information. Libraries provide valued, accessible, public space, neutral, trusted and egalitarian. That space is valued not just by our users, but by our partners within the authority and within the wider community providing services for Darlington people.

2. Based on the findings of the Assessment of Need and the priorities identified in Darlington's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) six key principles for the Library Plan were identified as outlined below:

    (a) Create environments which are accessible to the community and provide sufficient space for borrowing and reference material.

    (b) Provide an outreach service to ensure that the most vulnerable and difficult to reach individuals have access to the Library Service.

    (c) Support learning space with access to ICT services.

    (d) Continue investment in borrowing and reference material.

    (e) Provide an intergenerational learning environment.

    (f) Deliver a service which is integrated with and enables the delivery of a wide range of local priorities and services.

3. The Plan also takes into account the Council's Business Model.

Environments which are accessible to the community and provide sufficient space for borrowing and reference material

4. Crown Street Library offers good physical access via a lift, and Cockerton Library has level access from the street and throughout the Library Space. Both branches are readily accessible via public transport, whilst the Mobile library provides stops for areas of the town where transport is more limited or travel time to static libraries is particularly long. Users who are housebound or in residential care also have access to a delivered service via a contract with the WRVS, for which the service usually pays an agreed fee, or via direct van delivery from the Central Library.

5. Opening hours are set to reflect demand, and regularly reviewed. Within the constraints of available staff time the service attempts to meet demand for out-of-hours usage with late nights at both static libraries.

6. Accessibility is of course about much more than users being physically able to get into a building at a time which is suitable for them. It is about the ethos of the service, the 'feel' of the space, the attitude of the staff. Libraries were conceived as the ultimate social leveller, where everyone could access public knowledge which the collective community purchased. This role is particularly important at times of economic difficulty.

7. Digital access is an important part of the remit of the 21st century library service. Darlington was the first library service in the region to offer self-reservation to users, way back in 1998. In 2012 users can browse the library catalogue, reserve and renew books from home, and access a range of on-line resources.

8. Space has always been at a premium in Darlington libraries. Issues per lending stock item are the highest in the country, because there is so little shelf space for the size of the issue that the service is achieving.

9. Crown Street library has a comprehensive reference collection, in part because Darlington reference library serves the whole of the south Durham area. More and more reference materials are now being made available on-line, and in some cases the print versions are no longer available. The service has re-aligned its spending on reference materials, with increasing costs being attributable to on-line resources. The reference library was re-furbished in 2008 and additional pc's were placed in that part of the library for access to specialist materials.

10. The reference library provides a fairly quiet space for people to read, do research and to study. Users can bring their own laptops, access to power supplies is offered, so that they can type their work in the space as well. The reference library has been busier in the last few months than for some time. This may well be a sign of the economic times, with more people wanting a warm safe place to read newspapers and magazines, and in which to study. Therefore space is needed not just for the stock, but for pc's, for study and for comfortable chairs for reading.

11. The Centre for Local Studies houses a huge and invaluable range of historical research resources for the people of Darlington and the sub-region, and answers queries from all over the world. The collection is well managed but access to large parts of it are not available digitally, and the majority of the collection is stored in closed access areas in the basement of the central library. The space for those

large closed collection is sufficient, but does not offer perfectly controlled environmental conditions for the storage.

ACTIONS	MEASURES
• Investigate the business case for further service and efficiency improvement through self service technology.	Complete business case by December 2012.
• Ensure by training and development that all library staff are able to support user demands for information and advice.	Levels of customer satisfaction measured through the Cipfa PLUS survey.
• Increase levels of digital access to service, with increased digitisation of materials and new ICT channels developed.	Annual measure of use.
• Review usage of PC's and ensure that properly managed access to digital resources is available.	Usage levels for both pc's and on-line resources.
• Review policies for the reference collection and if required realign to reflect the changing nature of the use of resources.	Complete review by August 2012.
• Re-shelve and re-sign the entire lending collection to use newly available reference space and allow more on-show stock	Complete by December 2012
• Engage more volunteers with the service to improve the speed of digitisation of research materials	Measure of volunteer hours in Cipfa statistics. Measure of the proportion of materials digitised.

Provision of an outreach service to ensure that the most vulnerable and difficult to reach individuals have access to the Library Service

12. Outreach can be achieved in many ways, from delivering individually chosen books to those who cannot access the service, to providing story sessions and author visits encouraging children and their parents to read together, and to borrow books from the library.

Mobile Library

13. The mobile library serves the remoter parts of the Darlington community with a state-of-the art vehicle with satellite access for both the library management system and internet terminals provided for public use. In the first half of 2011/12 the mobile generated 8.4% of the total issue.

14. The routes and stops that the mobile serves are constantly monitored and regularly revised by the Driver/Assistant.

15. The mobile library also attends events, like the Community Carnival, and has been used, for example, as a base for councillor ward surgeries, local authority and partner organisation consultations and as a polling station.

Residential Services

16. The central library provides a deposit collection of books to residential care establishments where clients are interested in borrowing library books. This is facilitated by library staff at Crown Street choosing books and delivery by the attendant. There are currently 11 establishments taking up this service – with almost 1000 books on loan to them. This is a valuable service, use of which should be maximised within available resources.

Housebound Users

17. Where members of the community are housebound, or cannot get to the library, and have no-one else who can get books for them, the service has a contract with the WRVS to deliver books. The books for each user are chosen by library staff based on profile information gathered by a home visit by a WRVS volunteer, and packed in a bag with a notebook for the user or volunteer to provide feedback. There are currently some 80 users of this service, with just under 700 books on their tickets. Whilst we have been constrained in the past by the number of WRVS volunteers available to deliver books, evidence suggests there are more potential users who need this service, the library service needs to work with the WRVS to maximise uptake of the housebound users scheme, within available resources.

Library Access Points

18. There is no doubt that more people across the generations now use the internet with confidence, although there is less certainty about the penetration of internet access in the home. Setting up Library Access Points in some parts of Darlington initially appears to be a good solution to our lack of physical libraries, delivering a virtual, or semi-virtual service by offering access to a PC connected to the library catalogue from which users can request books. Those books can then be delivered to the

access point and returned books collected from them. Unfortunately as our experience in offering pc access for several years in the e-library shows this offer may well marginalise as many people as it includes, as using a pc may not be easy for them. A library is a collection of books, and for most people the act of going to the library is a social event, as well as being able to choose from a good selection of books, it offers access to trained information professionals. The sense of community which develops around a local library is much less likely around a computer screen.

19. This assessment has not stopped the service from experimenting with this kind of service delivery. An initial library access point has been developed at Carmel College, with the school library open to the public for an hour a week to use a pc to choose books which can subsequently be delivered by the library van. This has not been a great success, with very few users, most of whom are staff or pupils of the school.

20. In order to evaluate the potential of an access point with a different community of users, the service is now in negotiations with Teesside University to offer an access point in the library on their Darlington campus. Whilst it is not far from the central library, this site will be drawing students from the whole town and further afield, it provides us with the opportunity to open up the public library service to this academic community. Whilst the detail of the solution is still to be worked out, this is an exciting opportunity to test an access point that will be available for more hours than the central library, and which will have University staff on hand to help people.

Other Outreach Work

21. The Bookstart and Library Literacy Co-ordinator spends a large proportion of her time delivering outreach sessions in schools, nurseries and children's centres. Bookstart Rhyme time sessions are the first introduction for many babies and children to books and the delights of reading. She also works with the Book Trust to ensure delivery of the national Bookstart programme and associated initiatives. All of this work is crucial in preparing babies and young children for the introduction of reading at school. It also, of course, introduces them and their parents to the library service.

ACTIONS	MEASURES
• Evaluate the costs involved in extending the mobile library hours, making it available on Saturdays and for more evening stops.	Cost / expected benefits of extending service. Evaluation report completed by end 2012.
• Seek to extend the reach of the service to residential homes.	Use of service. Implement a satisfaction survey for users and staff in residential care homes.
• Seek within the contract with the WRVS to extend the reach of the service to housebound users.	Increased take-up of service.
• Complete business case for new Library Access Point at Teesside University Darlington Campus	Complete business case by end of March 2012.
• As the national contract for Bookstart and associated initiatives develops over time, take advantage of the national funding and the demonstrable difference this makes for the young children of Darlington • Deliver Bookstart packs to all children within target age ranges, and support partners to achieve their targets.	Bookstart report produced annually for the Book Trust. Continue to monitor library service delivery of packs, to ensure the service meets targets set nationally Support Health and other colleagues to meet their target of for delivery of all Bookstart packs. Levels of library usage by young children, aged under five.

Supported learning space with access to ICT services

> *"For more than 150 years, our public library service has stood for social inclusion: a haven of peace at the heart of our communities, providing key access points to a world of information and education for anyone who wished to step inside."* *James Farquharson TJ Online, February 2008.*

22. Libraries have always supported people to learn. It does not matter whether it is someone wanting to learn about their family history, a young person wanting information for a school project, an adult returner to learning needing help with a course essay, or someone looking for bus times, this is what we do.

23. Books are still a central plank of our information provision, but more and more information is being made available via the internet. This poses a problem for libraries and users alike. At one time information professionals would have sourced information for users, now users want, and indeed need, to find it for themselves but often lack the skills and knowledge to do so. Many users do not have access to the internet, some have never used a pc and mouse before, few have the skills to ensure that the information they find is accurate and from a reputable source.

24. Darlington library staff have always recommended that complete beginners to technology enrol for courses provided in the library by the Adult and Community Learning team, but they also try to help users to access the technology, and thus the correct information they want. This is time consuming and sometimes challenging.

ACTIONS	MEASURES
• Support learners by extending expertise in current ICT issues and developments to all staff.	Complete a course of staff training sessions by end of 2012.
• Continue to support pre-accreditation and accredited learning for users by offering pc use and space for Adult Learning	Measure PC usage, for both general use and for courses. Ensure sufficient availability for peak time usage.

Continued investment in borrowing and reference material

> *Alongside good customer care from staff, a good choice of books is the biggest driver of satisfaction with libraries, particularly amongst younger users.* MLA "What the public want from libraries" 2010

25. The total expenditure on materials for the library service is a little below the average for unitary authorities. The service is, however, a net lender of books through the inter-library loan system, indicating good collections management. The issue per thousand population are well above average.

Lending stock

26. Darlington libraries have a stock policy which is revised annually. Purchase of the majority of the lending stock is through a regionally negotiated contract, tendered on a five to seven year basis. Other stock is purchased via standing orders with publishers, through single orders to small local publishers and sometimes via local and on-line bookshops. In all cases the service is looking for best value and efficiency.

27. Because the service has less public access shelves than others doing a comparable level of issues the stock works very hard, achieving more issues per item than in any other authority. This means that stock has to be moved, exchanged and managed more than elsewhere to keep the collections fresh and appealing. Wherever possible only single copies of titles are purchased to ensure wider title coverage within the budget available. Stock is moved between the three service points to ensure breadth and depth of collections is appropriate to the users served at each. Borrowers can request any book, and where that title is not in stock they are considered for purchase or sourced through the national inter-library lending and British Library schemes.

28. E-books for lending are being offered by a number of library authorities and are popular with some users. There is only one provider in the UK at the moment, and their offer is USA biased, not available for users of the Amazon Kindle, the most popular and widespread e-book reader, and is expensive. Consideration has to be given to the value of purchasing stock for an e-book lending offer, where the stock is not available in subsequent years if the contract is not continued. Publishers are still getting to grips with e-books as a format, and are far from clear about their policy with regard to libraries lending e-books. Penguin, for instance, are not prepared to licence their e-books for public lending.

29. Amazon is developing their relationship with their Kindle customers by offering the facility to lend an e-book to another Kindle user for a two week period. This service is currently only available in the USA, but will surely follow in the UK if it is a success and if publishers will allow it. Amazon is also developing their links with e-book providers to public libraries in order to allow users with Kindles to access their titles. The regional library book supply contract is currently with a company which is developing its own e-book lending management system.

30. It is clear that lending of e-books must be part of the public library offer in the future, and that users are already asking for e-books. E-books will certainly address some

of the issues of space for physical books in the long term. It is not clear how long it will be until the formatting and licensing issues are resolved by publishers and providers.

Reference Stock

31. There is still demand for hard copy reference resources, but more and more material is moving to a digital, on-line accessible format, and some publishers are no longer publishing physical copies. Digital reference books can be more up-to-date, can be accessed by multiple people at the same time, but are rarely cheaper. Costs are based, usually, on population served by the service and pricing bands vary from supplier to supplier.

32. In reality there are additional costs to the library service, for the pc's and telecommunications to access the materials, and for staff to help users access the pc's and to find the material they want. Some suppliers allow access from home for registered library users; some will only allow access within the library.

Local and Family History Resources

33. The budget for purchase of new materials in the Centre for Local Studies is small, with a lot of new material being added by donation. The Centre has never had funds for digitisation of material, but is using volunteer support to digitise indexes and some items from the collection for a Flickr site.

34. The total expenditure on materials is a little below the average for unitary authorities.

ACTIONS	MEASURES
• Continue to deliver value for money by re-negotiating the book supply contract, in partnership with other services in the region	Successfully renegotiate contract as part of regional consortium, within timescales agreed regionally and with NEPO. Use Cipfa data to Benchmark cost of books against other library services
• Increase on-line and in-house promotion of digital reference materials	Measure take up of digital services
• Review both hard copy and digital reference purchasing, in relation to usage of materials in both formats	Review completed by December 2013
• Review options for e-book offer as soon as a second supplier becomes available.	Review completed within 3 months of the offer being made available.

Provision of an intergenerational learning environment

35. The library service has always provided a learning space for everyone. It is one of a very few facilities, public or commercial, where all ages and all classes of people can be found using the services. Most inter-generational work that currently happens in Darlington libraries is based on families – where parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren attend the library to borrow books or enjoy Bookstart rhymetime sessions. Some successful work has been done connecting school children and older people as part of the 'Their Past, your Future' programme in partnership with the BBC. The Book Trust 'Boys into Books' initiative involved older 'reading buddies' working with younger children on their reading.

ACTIONS	MEASURES
• Deliver Bookstart rhymetime sessions	Take-up of rhymetime sessions.
• By exploring a Darlington Together approach to future inter-generational projects, facilitate use of library space for any future inter-generational projects	Successful implementation of any new project using volunteers. All new projects evaluated against targets and priorities as agreed (see Section 7 below).

Delivery of a service which is integrated with and enables the delivery of a wide range of local and national priorities and services

<u>**Darlington Together**</u>

36. The library service works with partners locally, regionally and nationally to deliver across a range of priorities. The service is working to create the right conditions for people to take collective responsibility, a 'Darlington Together' approach, contributing to the future success of Libraries. Some examples are:-

<u>**Race Online 2012**</u>

> *"Promoting digital inclusion is essential for a dynamic modern economy and can help to make government more efficient and effective"*

37. There are 8.4 million adults in the UK who have never used the internet, and four million of those are amongst the most disadvantaged, 39% are over 65, 38% are unemployed and 19% are families with children. Darlington libraries are part of this national initiative to get more people on-line and using the internet in 2012.

<u>**GEM Sessions**</u>

38. The library service has a member of staff who is trained and delivers GEM sessions every week as part of the local initiative to improve health and well being.

<u>**Health support and promotion**</u>.

39. North-east libraries are working in partnership to develop a shared 'Books on Prescription' service, integrated with creative reading. The aim is to pilot a health reading offer across England in order to demonstrate at a national level the major contribution public libraries make to the health, especially the mental health, of the nation.

40. Both static libraries have 'fit-labs' for the public and have supported PCT staff offering sessions on the use of the labs.

41. The Library service has offered internet access and support to users of NHS Choices, the scheme allowing patients to access information about the NHS and to choose a hospital for any treatment.

42. The Library service has offered PC access and support to patients whose GP's have given them a log-in to 'Beating the Blues', a cognitive behavioural therapy web site.

43. With responsibility for public health passing to local authorities from 2013, there is an opportunity for libraries to strengthen their role in providing a welcoming, non-threatening and popular environment in which to support users with a number of health-related issues and promotions.

Parent support

44. The service offers support to breastfeeding mothers with a quiet place to sit, drinking water and wipes. Bottle warming is also available for parents who are bottle feeding.

Smoking Cessation Sessions

45. This is an example of the service making its wide audience available to an external partner organisation for advertising a service, and its community space available for sessions.

46. The move to national offers across all public library services, ensuring that users can access a consistent basic level of library service, wherever they live, will inform some of the decision making about the Darlington library service in the coming months and years.

ACTIONS	MEASURES
• Within the context of the Sustainable Community Strategy and key principles of the Library Plan, develop a new priorities and targets business case, outlining the areas where the service could consider additional 'free' services, and where services would have to be self-financing.	Priorities and targets agreed and documented by end 2012. Managers clear about the priorities and targets, delivering and developing services in line with them.
• Develop a 'Darlington Together' strategy and action plan, for involving the community (individuals, community organisations, public and private sector partners) in achieving positive change and outcomes for Libraries in Darlington. This will include a volunteer strategy, looking at opportunities for people to support the library service. Key stakeholders include Friends of Cockerton Library, Schools, Further Education and adult and community learning providers.	Strategy agreed and documented by end of 2012.