

MEETING:	SCHOOLS FORUM
DATE:	10 JUNE 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE OFFER 2011/12
REPORT BY:	Principal Officer Outreach and Access

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To update the Schools Forum on the Schools Library Service (SLS) offer to schools 2011/12 with funding arrangements plus information on the new cultural offer to schools that will be available in 2012.

Recommendation

THAT:

Schools Forum revises the scheme of delegation for Schools Library Service (SLS) so that the funding arrangement is in line with that for other services for 2011/12.

Key Points Summary

- The Schools Library Service (SLS) recognises the financial pressures faced by schools and by making savings in the service has revised its charges for 2011/12 to offer a competitive price, a wider choice of options and a discount scheme to help schools buy their own books
- From March 2012 SLS will be part of a new cultural offer to schools encompassing Libraries, Heritage, Arts and Archives. This will be a traded service
- For the interim period 2011/12 SLS needs sufficient income in order to continue operating and to make the transition to the new service
- The interim Director for People's Services and the Director for Places and Communities have agreed that for 2011/12 schools should be able to use money delegated to them in line with the general scheme of delegation, and not be held to the current wording of Herefordshire's scheme of delegation

Alternative Options

- 1 The alternative option is that the funding arrangement for SLS continues for 2011/12. There

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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is a risk that without sufficient funding this year SLS would not be able to operate for the schools that do wish to purchase the service and it would have an impact on the new cultural offer. However, this option would prove untenable in terms of the requirements and ethos of locally managed schools and the scheme of delegation. A number of schools have raised the issue of the current wording of the scheme of delegation, and the application of this current scheme for SLS as being a disincentive to buy the service.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 The recommendation gives schools the freedom to use delegated money to purchase a range of services, in line with all other service areas.

Introduction and Background

- 3 The Schools Library Service (SLS) supplies a range of resources, events, expertise and training to support the curriculum, children's literacy and CPD for staff in school. Since 2000 the funding has been delegated and earmarked for primary and special schools. This arrangement was reviewed at the request of the Schools Forum in 2008/9 with the result that the majority of the schools responding opted for the status quo. However, changes to school organisation and funding mean that the arrangement needs reviewing again.

From 2012 SLS will be part of a wider cultural offer to schools that will include Libraries, Heritage, Arts and Archives. This new offer will be a traded, subscription service.

Key Considerations

- 4 The Schools Library Service (SLS) recognises the financial pressures faced by schools and by making savings in the service has revised its charges for 2011/12 to offer a competitive price, a wider choice of options and a discount scheme to help schools buy their own books.

At the same time the SLS needs a guaranteed level of income to be able to continue operating until the new cultural offer is available. SLS also has a commitment to the schools that have already signed up for 2011. It is currently engaged in existing programmes with schools i.e. book groups, 2011 Carnegie/Greenaway shadowing; schools are ordering resources for this year and advisory work is in progress with schools who are working on their libraries.

It has always been the intention that this service would be offered as a traded service from 2012 as part of a wider cultural offer and work on this offer started in 2010 in consultation with schools.

Community Impact

- 5 The recent consultation demonstrated that the value to schools of SLS falls in the following areas:
 - Professional expertise to support the school library and pupil's use of it, disseminating best practice and offering CPD for school staff
 - Supporting learning across the whole curriculum and being responsive to the needs of individual schools e.g. bespoke project collections

- Giving rural schools access to a range of resources by taking them to the school
- Enriching literacy and reading with resources and events

Financial Implications

6 SLS will be part of the new cultural offer that will have its own charges. During the next 6 months the content of the new offer, costs and staffing will be completed. However, SLS does require a high degree of buy back this financial year to allow the transition to be made to the new service.

Legal Implications

7 None, this is a local decision for the Schools Forum.

Risk Management

8 There is a financial risk if sufficient funding is not generated by buy back in 2011/12. By making savings within the service and offering a competitive price to schools then schools will be able to purchase SLS to support their needs and have funding for their own resources. SLS is also offering a discount book purchase scheme for schools that sign up.

A decision has to be made on the future of the schools mobile library vehicle in 2011. This has now come to the end of its lease and will either be purchased or re leased as there is no funding to purchase a new vehicle. Purchase of the existing vehicle will be the most cost effective option. Consultation with schools in 2009 demonstrated that was a highly valued part of the service and will be included in the new cultural offer. Sufficient income in 2011/12 will allow SLS to purchase the vehicle and achieve further financial savings in the future.

There is a risk that the new cultural offer could be weakened and less effective if a key element is lost. This would result in the continuation of a fragmented offer to schools that the consultation process has identified as a barrier to schools being able to make the most of the opportunities offered by Libraries, Heritage, Arts and Archives at a cost effective price. A risk assessment is being completed for the project.

Consultees

9 A number of schools were consulted as part of the development process for the new cultural offer. The feedback has been used to inform the framework of the new offer and the school consultation has resulted in the new joined up approach to a cultural offer that incorporates a number of services. Schools will be consulted in the summer term about the content of the new offer.

Appendices

10 None

Background Papers

- None identified

