



# Connecting Communities

Library strategy  
2011-2014

# Foreword

The Council believes strongly in the value and importance of its library service. As individuals and communities we need vibrant and modern libraries to provide us with books, information and technology so that we are able to pursue our interests and enthusiasms or develop our knowledge and skills. Libraries also play an increasingly significant role in providing a shared public space and opportunities for people to meet together and participate in local life.

Richmond upon Thames has long had a highly-regarded and well-used library service. This was confirmed earlier this year in the All in One survey of all households in the borough which showed that libraries were one of the most popular services that the Council provides for its residents. We want to build on this foundation and strong public support to develop the library service, so that it can meet the evolving needs of all residents – whether they currently use libraries or not. This will involve: including local people in decision-making and the management of library services; updating our buildings and making them more accessible; retaining

a strengthened focus on our core mission to promote reading and support lifelong learning; expanding the range of public-benefit services provided in and through libraries; seizing the exciting opportunities provided by new technologies; and ensuring that cost-effective management and governance arrangements are in place to ensure these essential library services can be sustained and developed in the future.

In the current financial climate it is more important than ever to have a strong sense of our priorities so that our financial resources are targeted where they are most needed and will be most effective. This strategy describes our vision for libraries and sets out our aspirations for the next four years. It has been developed in partnership with residents and library customers through a programme of public consultation and engagement. I am confident that the priorities and commitments set out in this strategy are responsive to needs and will guarantee that our libraries continue to innovate and develop in order to deliver first-class services to all residents.

**Cllr Pamela Fleming**

Strategic Cabinet Member for  
Community, Business and Culture  
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

# Vision

**By 2014 our libraries will be the focal points of their communities providing accessible and enjoyable services that are tailored to the needs of local residents and delivered in partnership with them. We will use our buildings, collections, technology and expertise to promote reading, support learning and encourage full participation in the rich cultural and community life of the borough.**

Our vision is supported by six key themes which set out the strategic priorities for the library service:

- **Providing a relevant and responsive library service**
- **Inspiring a community of readers and learners**
- **Putting partnership at the heart of service delivery**
- **Including local people to create improved community spaces**
- **Extending access through innovation and new technology**
- **Ensuring services are well managed and efficient**

# Context

**This strategy has been developed following six months of public consultation and engagement with residents and library customers about the future of the library service in Richmond upon Thames. It has also been informed by the national and regional policies that are currently driving change in library services as well as the key trends and opportunities likely to influence and shape public libraries over the next four years.**

The **falling price of books** and their wide availability through bookshop special offers and online bookstores, such as Amazon, has led to a steady decline in book borrowing from libraries. Despite this national trend the ability to borrow books and other resources free of charge will remain the most widely used and valued library activity over the next four years. Books in a range of formats will remain the bedrock of the library service. There will be a renewed focus on improving the range and quality of the library book stock because this is the highest priority for library customers.

The value placed on **local and accessible library buildings** is high. Modernising library buildings and making them more accessible by extending their opening hours were the areas identified as most in need of improvement by local residents. This reflects the changing working patterns and lifestyles of residents who increasingly expect services to be available outside of traditional working hours and even 24/7. In order to meet this demand there was support for co-locating libraries with other public services and also for extending the range of Council and other public services available in library buildings. There are also increased opportunities for libraries to partner with commercial operators.

The **population is ageing**. By 2014 20% of the local population will be aged over 60 and an increasing number of people will be aged over 80. The dominant household type will marginally remain couples with children and there will be an increase in the number of school-aged children. However, by 2014 it is projected that the number of households without children will increase and a greater proportion of borough residents will be living alone. Fifty four percent of residents currently use their local library. Levels of use are highest amongst families with children and older people and this is likely to remain the trend over the next four years. A key priority for the library service must be to attract new audiences, notably working-age adults, whilst ensuring that it continues to meet the evolving needs of its traditional users.

The Council set out its commitment to **listening to the views of residents** and involving them in shaping local services through the All in One household survey and village planning events. The use of formal consultation and informal feedback will help to ensure that library services are relevant and responsive. This will include a greater focus on engaging people who do not use library services through targeted outreach programmes. There is a rising demand from residents for libraries to develop as **community**

**and cultural spaces** by providing a broad range of creative events that bring individuals and communities together, including reading groups, live literature events, heritage talks, exhibitions and performances. There was a particular recognition of the value that libraries play in encouraging children to enjoy books and reading through a creative programme of activities and events for family audiences.

The **UK is facing a long-term skills shortage**. Libraries have a long tradition of supporting learning and therefore have a clear role to play in helping to develop the skills required in the future workforce. This sits alongside the library service's continuing mission to support mainstream education and to facilitate informal community learning in partnership with local adult education providers.

There is growing desire in central government for **greater collaboration in the provision of public services**. The 2010 Future Libraries Programme has implemented a radical rethink of how public library services could be better delivered through a greater focus on shared services and new governance models, as well as through partnerships with community organisations and volunteers as part of the Big Society.

Similarly, the 2011 London Libraries Change Programme has commissioned an exploration into new delivery and governance models for public libraries including a focus on collaborative services. These initiatives fit closely with the Council's decision to become a strategic commissioning organisation with a reduced role in the direct delivery of services.

The **digital revolution** is changing the way that people create, share and access information and creative works. More than three-quarters of residents now have a connection to the Internet and this is likely to grow over the next four years. There is a steady move from desktop computers to handheld and tablet personal computers and from fixed networks to wireless access. Mobile telecommunications technology is developing fast and quickly becoming more affordable. The e-book is growing in popularity and downloads for music and film have become commonplace. Perhaps one of the most profound digital developments has been Web 2.0. This has fundamentally changed the way that information is shared and has essentially turned the Internet into a giant collaboration and conversation. Residents have indicated that libraries should be at the front of technological developments

so that they have 24/7 access to information and creative works in digital formats and are able to develop or update their digital skills.

The local authority is in a significantly different **financial environment** as a result of the Government-led drive to cut public spending and reduce the national deficit. This means that the library service will need to make significant cost reductions and actively seek out opportunities to diversify its future income streams.

# Strategic Priority 1

## Providing a relevant and responsive library service

We will ensure our libraries are modern and vibrant public spaces that are easy to access and convenient to use. The library workforce will be welcoming and highly skilled so that using libraries is an enjoyable and enriching experience for everyone.



## Our commitments

- Residents will be aware of their local library and the range of services it provides. Membership and library use will grow through a clear articulation of the library offer and through effective promotion and a sustained marketing effort.
- Library buildings will be easily accessible in visible and convenient locations and will be open at convenient times. They will be well maintained, welcoming and inspiring places that are focal points for their local communities.
- The experience of using libraries will be excellent with high levels of customer satisfaction. The workforce will be highly skilled and will respond to changing patterns of library use by delivering more personalised services for customers.

## By 2014 we aim to have:

- **Grown library membership** by 10% by implementing an innovative marketing campaign to promote the library service and its core offer to local residents and by introducing a borough-wide loyalty card scheme.
  - **Delivered significant building improvements** to Whitton Library to improve access and the internal layout, decoration and furnishing; we will have explored options to co-locate other public services in the re-designed library building.
  - **Made significant progress in co-locating community libraries** with other public services in order to improve their locations and opening hours with a particular focus on the co-location of Kew Library and Ham Library.
  - **Developed plans for an integrated library in Richmond**, bringing together Richmond Lending Library and the library services at the Old Town Hall into a modern all-purpose library building in the heart of the town.
  - **Fully implemented RFID self-service technology in all libraries** in order to extend opening hours, grow the range of services available and enable the library workforce to focus on more personalised services to customers.
  - **Enhanced the skills of the library workforce** by ensuring that all frontline members of staff have completed bespoke customer services and reading promotion training.
- 

# Strategic Priority 2

## Inspiring a community of readers and learners

We will engage people with books, reading and learning by providing them with inspiring collections and high-quality information content. We will create opportunities to share the enjoyment of reading and learn together in a relaxed and informal environment.



### Our commitments

- Residents will have access to an excellent range and choice of books and other library materials in and through their local library which meet their reading and information needs.
- Reading for pleasure will be encouraged by means of a full programme of creative reading promotions and events which provide opportunities for people to come together to share and extend their reading experiences.
- Libraries will widen participation in learning by ensuring that residents are able to study, acquire new skills and actively participate in informal learning. Libraries will also play a key role in enhancing digital skills and digital citizenship so that residents are able to access essential public services online.
- Information will be made available in printed and digital formats; the library workforce will act as information navigators to ensure that residents are able to make well-informed judgements about information quality and accuracy.
- Libraries will be the repository of local history and will act as the collective memory of the borough by collecting, conserving, interpreting and making accessible historical documents and other published resources relating to the local area.

## By 2014 we aim to have:

- **Increased the proportion of the library service budget spent on new books** and have implemented evidence-based stock management to ensure that a high-quality range and choice for books is available in each library.
  - **Delivered a revised national Bookstart offer to families** in the borough to ensure that young children have access to books and are encouraged to read for pleasure from the earliest age.
  - **Extended the range of creative reading opportunities for children and adults** by supporting self-managed reading groups for adults, delivering the Summer Reading Challenge for children, developing an online reading portal, and programming live literature events.
  - **Created a programme of learning experiences** at each library which enable residents to develop their digital skills and boost their confidence in using new technologies.
  - **Reviewed information services and resources** including re-balancing print and digital resources and implementing plans for improved business information services.
  - **Digitised important local history resources** including the historic building plans collection and the theatre playbill collection to ensure that they accessible to historians and researchers both onsite and online.
- 

# Strategic Priority

# 3

## Putting partnership at the heart of service delivery


We will expand the range and number of library services we are able to provide by establishing beneficial partnerships with individuals and organisations that share our values and can help us deliver our ambitions.



## Our commitments

- Libraries will extend the range of public-benefit services that are available to residents in their local communities by actively seeking out partnerships with the voluntary and community sector and beneficial commercial organisations.
- Volunteering in the library service will be encouraged and supported. There will be a clear volunteer programme that encourages and supports residents to participate in the library service by sharing their enthusiasm, skills and interests.
- Residents who are unable to visit their nearest library will have their reading and information needs met through the Home Library Service. Targeted outreach will be used to engage low-participant groups in the services offered by their library.

## By 2014 we aim to have:

- **Franchised community library buildings** to voluntary sector or community groups to manage. This would involve local communities and the library service working together to extend opening hours and enhance the range of public and community services operated from the library building in line with local needs and requirements.
  - **Increased the number of volunteers** working in partnership with the library service with a particular focus on enhancing the range of services offered in the community libraries and through the Home Library Service, as well as supporting the delivery of reading and learning events and the digitisation of local history collections.
  - **Expanded the number of Council services and outreach services delivered in library buildings**, including advice surgeries and job clubs as well as commercial services, such as post offices, bookshops and coffee shops where there is an identified need.
  - **Targeted library outreach services to those children and young people not accessing library services** by developing improved partnerships with children's centres, schools and the youth service.
  - **Maximised the number of library services that are shared with neighbouring local authorities** or that are delivered through consortia arrangements, to improve the range and quality of services available to local residents.
  - **Developed touch-down business units** in libraries which provide work and meeting space for business start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises.
  - **Established libraries are a key partner in delivering tourist information** to visitors to the borough.
- 

# Strategic Priority

# 4

## Including local people to create improved community spaces


We will work with local residents to make libraries the focal points of their communities - as places to meet socially and participate in cultural events. We will use our buildings and the expertise of our workforce to lead and co-ordinate activities that develop and strengthen local communities.



## Our commitments

- The library service will seek out and listen to the views of residents to ensure that services are developed and improved in line with local needs and requirements.
- Libraries will be vibrant public spaces that connect people and communities, providing opportunities for people to meet together and participate in the social and cultural life of their local communities.

## By 2014 we aim to have:

- **Implemented consultative groups at each library** so that residents are able to inform the shape of their library service and feed back on required service improvements.
  - **Designated library managers as community champions** with an enhanced role in bringing together local communities and leading on local community development initiatives.
  - **Improved meeting rooms and community spaces** and have promoted libraries as 'local living rooms' and as key venues for community meetings and events.
  - **Established coffee shop facilities** and social spaces in libraries by working in partnership with a commercial provider.
  - **Developed libraries as performance and exhibition spaces** with a full programme of arts and cultural events that attract new audiences to the service and showcase the talents of local artists and performers.
- 

# Strategic Priority 5

## Extending access through innovation and new technology


We will improve our IT network and grasp the opportunities offered by new technology to widen access to the library service and attract new audiences. We will put more information resources online and create new digital content so that more people are able to discover, access, share, download and re-use our collections and services.



### Our commitments

- Libraries will provide public computers and fast broadband access to the Internet for those residents who are not online.
- Technology solutions will be employed to improve access to the library service. Residents will have 24/7 access to downloadable resources, online subscriptions and digitised collections through an innovative virtual library portal.
- Libraries will keep pace with technological developments in publishing, information provision, social networking and mobile communications to ensure that services are responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of residents.

## By 2014 we aim to have:

- **Extended the range of e-books and online subscription services** available in libraries, and provided information and advice on e-reading devices (including an e-reader try-before-you-buy scheme).
  - **Installed wireless networks (Wi-Fi)** in libraries providing touchdown IT access for customers.
  - **Created a virtual library portal bringing together all electronic resources into one online location**, including implementing a smart-phone app for the library service and a Virtual Learning Environment to provide online learning sessions.
  - **Enhanced the library catalogue** by introducing interactive and personalised features such as book reviews, ratings, discussion threads and social tagging.
  - **Exploited mobile telecommunications and web 2.0 social networking** (Facebook, Twitter and Skype) to engage new audiences for reading, create online communities of readers, and keep customers informed of service developments and events.
  - **Digitised unique resources from the local history and archive collections** to increase their availability to historians and researchers with a specific focus on digitizing the borough's historic building plan and theatre playbill collections.
- 

# Strategic Priority 6

## Ensuring services are well managed and efficient


We will deliver a library service that is valued and highly rated by local residents for its effectiveness and efficiency. Excellent value for money will be achieved by reducing management and administrative costs and by putting in place devolved governance and management arrangements that enable the Council to maintain and improve frontline library services.



## Our commitments

- Residents will get excellent value for money from their library service. Financial resources will be targeted at protecting and enhancing frontline library services. Management and administrative costs will be reduced.
- Library services will be focused on continually improving services to customers by collecting and using key performance data to inform service developments. Data will also be used to communicate the value and impact made by the library service.

## By 2014 we aim to have:

- **Implemented a portfolio management structure** to ensure that managers have the capacity to deliver the library service's six strategic priorities.
  - **Delivered excellent value for money** by reducing the revenue budget by 10% and deploying financial resources where they have the greatest potential to improve library services for customers.
  - **Increased the income generated by the library service by 25%** by focusing on new income streams to replace the declining income from audio-visual hire.
  - **Established an effective performance management framework** to demonstrate the value and impact of the library service on local communities.
  - **Implemented a new governance model** by transferring library services to a cultural services trust which will maintain high-quality services and deliver good value for money to residents.
- 



# Consultation

**Public consultation on the future provision of the library service was carried out in October and November 2010. The consultation collected information on residents' current use of libraries and their preferences for the future delivery of the service. It also asked residents to identify up to three services which should be prioritised over the next four years. Four priorities were clearly identified and have informed the strategic priorities set out in the library strategy.**

**29%** of respondents to the public consultation wanted the library service to focus on providing high quality collections of books and other resources for loan. There was widespread agreement that the service should aim to extend the selection and choice of books available at all libraries.

**25%** of respondents wanted the Council to develop the programme of cultural and community events on offer in libraries. Libraries were seen as the ideal locations for exhibitions, talks and performances and as accessible venues for community meetings, advice surgeries and informal learning events. They were also identified as effective access points for Council and other public-benefit services.

**18%** of respondents wanted the library service to maintain a network of modern library buildings across the borough at the heart of each local community and staffed by a well-trained workforce. The public consultation identified that some building improvements were required to make libraries more accessible and welcoming and easier to use.

**16%** of respondents wanted longer and more convenient opening hours at their local library. There was general agreement that the existing pattern of opening hours was restrictive especially for working adults. There was a positive response to co-locating libraries with other public services where this would enable libraries to increase their opening hours.

Please contact us if you need this leaflet in Braille, large print, on audio tape or in another language.

Phone: 020 8831 6107  
Minicom number: 020 8831 6001