

**RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SCOTTISH PUBLIC
LIBRARIES WORKING GROUP - Report by Chief Executive**

Summary

The Scottish Government has established a Working Group to develop Scotland's first ever National Strategy for Scottish Public Libraries. The Working Group is consulting stakeholders including Local Authorities and The Highland Council has asked High Life Highland to draft its response.

It is recommended that Directors:

- i. Comment on and agree the draft response to the National Strategy for Scottish Public Libraries Working Group for submission to The Highland Council contained in **Appendix A**.

1. Business Plan Contribution

- 1.1 This report supports the highlighted Business Outcomes from the High Life Highland (HLH) Business Plan.

1. **A positive company image**
2. A growing company
3. **Delivery of the contract with THC**
4. Increased awareness of HLH products and services
5. Increased customer satisfaction
6. Increased financial sustainability
7. Increased internal collaboration
8. Increased staff satisfaction
9. Safety & environmental compliance

2. Background

- 2.1 The Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) has convened a working group to lead the development of a national strategy for Scotland's public libraries.
- 2.2 The strategic working group, chaired by Martyn Evans, Chief Executive of the Carnegie UK Trust, comprises public library managers as well as a range of representatives from key stakeholder groups. The inaugural meeting of the strategic group was held at the National Library of Scotland on Monday 7 July 2014. The strategic group aims to present a draft strategy proposal to COSLA in the first quarter of 2015. The Scottish Government and COSLA are acting as observers throughout the process of strategy development.
- 2.3 The development of the national strategy is supported by two further working groups:

- i. one drawn from Councilors who are members of the COSLA Sports, Arts and Culture Working Group; and
 - ii. one comprising a group of public library managers.
- 2.4 HLH and The Highland Council (THC) have representation on both of these groups through the managers' group and COSLA respectively.
- 3. **Draft Response to National Strategy for Scottish Public Libraries Working Group**
- 3.1 When HLH was established, THC transferred its Public Services Obligation (PSO) to HLH which means that HLH is responsible for the provision of strategic advice and guidance to THC as well as delivering services to the public on its behalf. THC has, therefore, requested that HLH prepare a response for submission by THC and this has been drafted in **Appendix A**. The response, following consideration and agreement of HLH Directors will also be submitted from HLH.
- 4. **Implications**
- 4.1 Resource Implications – There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. The strategic vision will, in due course, influence how services develop and resources are allocated.
- 4.2 Legal Implications – There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
- 4.3 Equality Implications – There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 4.4 Risk Implications – There are no new risks arising from this report.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Directors:

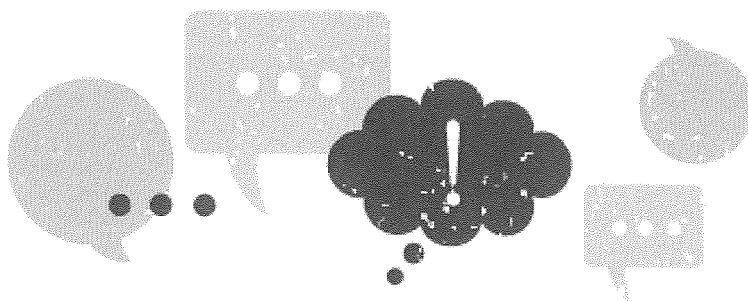
- i. comment on and agree the draft response to the National Strategy for Scottish Public Libraries Working Group for submission to The Highland Council contained in **Appendix A**.

Signature:

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 10 October 2014

Your views on Scottish public libraries



We would like to hear your views on public libraries in Scotland. We have posed 11 questions. Please respond to as few or as many of them as you wish. We would be happy to hear about anything that you feel falls within the scope of the questions. There is space for adding comments at the end of this form.

Name of the organisation or library that
you work for:

The Highland Council

Role

I work for the:

public sector

I am responding as:

☐ an individual

☒ an organisation

If relevant, please indicate the type
of library service in which you work:

Public library - rural

If relevant, please indicate how your
public library service is run:

Arms-length body

Contact name **(optional)**

Fiona Palin

Contact email **(optional)**

Head of Adult Services

Contact phone number **(optional)**

(01463) 702874

Please submit this form by **5pm on 2 December**. If you have any queries please contact the Scottish Information and Library Council at info@scottishlibraries.org

Please select one of the following options in regard to the anonymity of your response:

- ☐ I am an individual and would not like to have my response published on SLIC's website
- ☐ I am an individual and am happy to have my response published on SLIC's website as long as I remain anonymous
- ☐ I am an individual and am happy to have both my response and personal details published on SLIC's website
- ☐ I am responding on behalf of an organisation. We would like our response to be published on SLIC's website but for the organisation to remain anonymous.
- ☒ I am responding on behalf of an organisation. We would like our response and organisation name to be shared on SLIC's website.

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Part 1: Visions and Aims

We are keen to hear your opinion about the values, visions and aims that should underpin public libraries and permeate their working culture and ethos. These will enable public libraries to deliver fit-for-purpose services for communities and meet the needs of future generations.

When responding to the questions below please think as broadly as possibly about the contributions public libraries could make to their communities.

Question 1

What should be the aims of public libraries in the 21st century?

Some examples of aims and visions from strategies beyond Scotland include:

- *To facilitate experience, discovery, participation and creation.*
- *To promote community cohesion and well-being, economic growth, and cultural identity.*
- *[To welcome] all people ... [with] vital and exciting libraries that are centres of community life and lifelong learning.*
- *To foster literacy and engagement with literature as a key tool to create a more informed, culturally aware and imaginative society.*
- *To expand the learning capacity of the nation so as to enhance national competitiveness and to promote a gracious society; and to bring the world's knowledge to the country to create a positive social and economic impact.*

Please note that the box below expands.

*To improve people's lives and help build strong, resilient communities.

*To champion social and digital inclusion and contribute to building a healthier, wealthier and fairer society.

Question 2

What outcomes should public libraries seek to achieve for their communities?

Some examples of the outcomes listed in strategies outside Scotland include:

- *Better public service.*
- *A more competitive and productive economy. (Examples of how public libraries contribute to economic wellbeing can be viewed [here](#).)*
- *Cohesive, healthy, safe and resilient communities.*
- *Communities that value our heritage and embrace diversity and creativity.*
- *Sustainable communities both financially and in their practices and systems.*
- *Improved access to library resources that advance and enhance users' personal, educational and working lives.*
- *New and improved library programs that anticipate and meet users' constantly changing needs for library services.*
- *Higher literacy rates.*
- *Greater engagement with literature and reading.*
- *Users of all ages perceive libraries as community learning spaces offering high-quality lifelong learning, literacy and knowledge creation opportunities that enhance civic engagement and economic vitality.*
- *Library development that will have a supportive work environment that enables all staff to provide high-quality, cost-effective services to customers in a timely manner.*

Please note that the box below expands.

A national strategy should focus on national priorities. Outcomes for the strategy should therefore support the wide range of community planning (SOA) outcomes that reflect these national priorities. For example:

- *Economic recovery and growth
- *Improved early years outcomes (supporting the prevention agenda)
- *Addressing inequalities
- *Improved outcomes for older people
- *Inclusion (social and digital)
- *Helping build safer, stronger communities

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Part 2: Delivery

In order to fulfil their aims and visions, it is necessary to consider the services that public libraries will deliver.

Question 3

Do public libraries need to change to make these aims and outcomes a reality in the 21st Century?

Please note that the box below expands.

The process of change is already underway in public libraries nationally, and this requires focus and direction. A key purpose of the new national strategy should be to consolidate a shared high level vision for public libraries that will allow services and stakeholders across the country to channel resources appropriately and concentrate their efforts into achieving this vision.

Question 4

If public libraries need to change, what are the key areas for change? Please think about the things libraries need to develop, initiate and/or stop doing.

Please note that the box below expands.

Investment in infrastructure. Ensuring libraries are in the best locations to deliver key outcomes and that these libraries are fit for purpose.

- *Improving the capacity of libraries to support communities and partners through effective programming.

- *Co-location with other services to offer multiple benefits to individuals and communities.

- *New learning and development opportunities to support new ways of working including improved customer care, digital development, community engagement and planning and project management.

- *Developing a national toolkit designed to equip staff at all levels with the skills necessary to deliver a dynamic 21st century library service.

Question 5

What should the priorities be for the 21st century public library service? Our discussions to date suggest the following as priorities.

- General and lifelong learning
- Safe community hub
- E-book lending
- Curating information
- Access to public services
- Digital and information literacy
- Opening hours in tune with individual and community needs
- Access to wifi
- Cultural heritage
- Staff development, training and support
- Book lending
- Access to digital resources and digital inclusion
- Family and local history

Which of these do you consider to be the top three priorities for public libraries? You do not have to limit yourself to this list. Please feel free to include additional suggestions.

Please note that the box below expands.

Priorities should relate directly to delivering the national vision while supporting locally identified community planning outcomes (Single Outcome Agreements).

*Providing community hubs that reflect community needs

*Digital inclusion

*Supporting the early years and health and wellbeing agendas

Question 6

What actions could public libraries take to develop the top priority you have selected above?

Please note that the box below expands.

*Develop shared buildings in line with school improvement and other capital programmes which will allow services to be delivered in an integrated way which are relevant to local communities, e.g. with: leisure facilities, archives, cultural activity providers, schools, etc. This will enable libraries to expand the services which they offer, increase opening hours and improve the cost-effectiveness of library and partner service provision.

* Improve access to digital resources through the provision of wi-fi and other services - libraries are uniquely placed to deliver outcomes in the heart of communities as well as providing a trusted source of information and assistance (through both physical and digital resources).

Question 7

Can you think of areas where public library services could cooperate or share services? Equally, can you think of areas where it would be inappropriate for services to cooperate? Where possible, please give reasons for your answers.

Please note that the box below expands.

*Develop shared buildings in line with school improvement and other capital programmes which will allow services to be delivered in an integrated way which are relevant to local communities, e.g. with: leisure facilities, archives, cultural activity providers, schools, etc. This will enable libraries to expand the services which they offer, increase opening hours and improve the cost-effectiveness of library and partner service provision.

*Closer links with other information services e.g. tourism - libraries are often first port of call for visitors.

*Improved partnerships with higher and further education for signposting/promotion of learning opportunities and for delivering learning.

*Closer links with health services. Delivering key health outcomes in the heart of communities through customers accessing services as well as well as information.

*Closer integration with other cultural partners e.g. leisure centres, museums.

*One stop shops offering people multiple reasons to visit and derive more benefit from their visits.

Question 8

Public Library services are currently delivered by a range of different models (including local authorities and arms-length trusts). Are there other models of provision that would meet the aims and outcomes?

Please note that the box below expands.

While there may be a range of models which will achieve the outcomes identified through the development of a new national strategy, the model of provision in the Highland Council area of service delivery through a multi-service ALEO is effective and efficient. The Local Government Benchmarking Framework: National Benchmarking Overview Report 2014 ranked Libraries in Highland as first in Scotland for number of visits per 1000 population and as having the lowest cost per visit.

Question 9

Are there other public, voluntary or private sector services that could be included in a public library service? Are there any services it would be inappropriate to collaborate or partner with?

Please note that the box below expands.

As community hubs Libraries make ideal partners for a wide variety of services. Tourist information centres, CAB, council services but perhaps equally importantly is building capacity into libraries (space and programming) for partners/agencies to utilise libraries for outreach purposes to work with customers/clients in the heart of their own communities. This includes providing flexible library layouts/community rooms/small meeting spaces and looking at reviewing how services may be best accessed when libraries are "open" and out-with these opening hours.

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Part 3: Measuring Impact

It is important to evidence and assess the impact of public libraries.

We are keen to hear about any ideas, relevant experience or resources that you are aware of that might be helpful in formulating a framework for measuring and reporting public libraries' impact.

Question 10

What measure should we use to assess the impact of public libraries?

Please note that the box below expands.

A range of impact measures should be agreed nationally and focus directly on agreed outcomes. Examples are as follows;

- *Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix - "How good are our public libraries?"
- *A nationally agreed Return On Investment framework (along the lines of the recent Arts Libraries Museums Alliance commissioned ROI report).
- *The Public Library User Survey (PLUS) should be updated and expanded to incorporate questions that measure how people use libraries and what benefits they derive from them.
- *In the Highland Council area, a customer survey that will extend the national Cipfa PLUS survey and focus on strategic priorities e.g. services for older people, young people and families, the role of libraries in community capacity building and supporting employability, digital inclusion etc. is being developed. The survey will also include all of the equalities questions recommended by the Scottish Government.

Question 11

Should there be consistent measurement used across all Scottish public libraries?

Please note that the box below expands.

*Yes. Benchmarking is critical to establishing how libraries are performing and if they are providing value for money. Measures, both quantitative and qualitative, should demonstrate impact clearly in terms of delivering outcomes and be direct and jargon free for the public as well as policy makers. Through benchmarking, service providers will be able to measure their progress clearly.

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Part 3: Additional Information

We would be keen for you to share any information, insights and experiences that you feel it is important for us to hear.

Please note that the box below expands.

The national strategy should recognise the importance of having professionally qualified staff who are able to work with the public, other library staff and community planning partners. This will ensure that the new National Libraries Strategy will be implemented by staff who can deliver core services, innovation and partnership working, and do this on an equal footing with other community planning partners. This will help ensure that library services remain focused on delivering key national agendas such as prevention, supporting informal and informal education, employability and tackling poverty and that Return on Investment can be demonstrated and recognised.

Thank You.