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THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES: EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE IN CHALLENGING TIMES



What I want to cover

- What is SCL
- Some basic facts
- Future role and purpose of libraries
- Models of Governance
- Tri-borough
- What SCL is doing next





Some facts

- More than 34m people, 60 per cent of the UK population, have a library card.
- 35% of the population visits public libraries at least once a month.
- There are more than 4500 library service points in the UK.
- 40 new or refurbished public libraries will open in 2012.
- There are 98 million books in the public library service.
- Public libraries lent over 300 million books in 2010/2011
- Library staff answer 60 million enquiries a year.





More facts

- Libraries provide over 60 million hours a year of high speed internet access.
- Public Libraries helped 2 million customers who had never used the internet (or never used it confidently) to go online in the past year--more than any other group or organisation in the UK.
- Use of public libraries' online resources is going up, with library web visits up by 79% since 2008.
- 76% of 5 to 10 year olds use their library.
- Bookstart has helped over 90% of parents to get their babies and toddlers started on the reading path.
- There are at least 10,000 library linked reading groups.
- Libraries cost just 5p per person/per day to run, on average.
- Cost is 35p per week/per person: less than a bag of crisps or a pint of milk.





Carnegie UK Trust report: A new chapter

- 74% of those surveyed in England thought libraries were very important or essential to communities and 44% to them personally.
- Things that would change or improve library use – range and quality of books; the online offer; and better info about what libraries offer.
- Distinction between public library service and public library buildings
- Cannot look at public library services in isolation
- But core purposes remains broadly the same – the means of delivery will however be different
- Carnegie doing more work to explore these questions over the next year




Vision and purpose in a digital age

- The public library is not dead or dying – but it does need to adapt to new environments
- Still a focus on books, reading, information and learning
- Digital literacy and resources are increasingly important
- Physical space for people and communities to get involved
- A broad interpretation of information and resources
- Mediated access provided by expert staff.
- Human connection is more important as we move more to digital
- Serendipity is also vital – and most digital media actively work against this with increasing specialisation /narrowing of search





Effective governance?

- **Current governance is derived from 1964 Act**
 - Over 150 public library authorities with a duty to provide
 - Secretary of State duty to ‘superintend’
 - Provision based on an assessment of local needs – Charteris report clarification
 - **Are there too many library authorities?**
 - **What alternative models are there?**
 - **What is the distinction between the delivery model and local accountability and governance?**
 - **Who provides the national overview – and what does that mean?**
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Emerging governance models

- Trusts, private sector and other outsourcing
- Community governance;
- Volunteer-led;
- Integrated services under joint governance;
- Shared services under sovereign governance
- 1 service for London and other major metropolitan areas?
- Triborough and others





SCL view of future library governance

- Be designed to meet the needs of local communities and involve those communities in their planning and delivery.
- Be a professionally delivered service.
- Be a key delivery mechanism for local solutions to the problems faced by disadvantaged communities, in partnership with other providers.
- Not overlook the importance of the traditional elements of the service: quality book stock, current and historical information sources; expert staff to support customers; and safe and neutral community space.
- Be led nationally and locally.
- Do all this efficiently by ensuring that the best possible services are available at a cost that is acceptable to local taxpayers.





Triborough

- A single integrated service, with a comprehensive core offer and a range of locally commissioned services
- Each borough has a clear Mandate of what it wants from the service and defined minimum standards in relation to opening hours and other key matters
- Focus on Cost savings AND Service development
- One Tri-borough Director and a Senior Management Team with Tri-borough responsibilities
- A new Tri-borough organisation structure combining and streamlining specialist roles and functions
- No senior borough – specific roles
- Savings of £1.1m, from staff reductions
- Identification of further savings from smarter procurement
- Consideration of options for alternative delivery






So what has SCL been doing?

- **Briefing the Minister, the LGA and others**
 - Quiet diplomacy
- **Developing a range of national offers** – frameworks that can be adapted locally on core aspects of the service:
 - Universal reading offer
 - Health offer
 - Digital offer
 - Information offer
- **Working with ACE** on Envisioning the future
- **Supporting individual members** in their local situation





Effective governance – what we need to do

- The tough financial situation is not going away
- Whatever the model of delivery, the role and purpose of the library service needs to be promoted
- Efficiency and effectiveness – meeting people's needs at an affordable cost -should be the norm of people's expectations
- The service has to move with the times, innovating, exploiting new media, new forms of communication and knowledge capture, and helping people to connect , building on the existing legacy and services
- We need to advocate the best of what we do now, relate it to the changing environment and make bold choices to help shape the future



Advocacy is not a campaign, it is a way of life – one to which SCL and its members are committed

