

Committee: Cabinet	Date: 29 July 2009	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:	Agenda Item:
Report of: Stephen Halsey, Corporate Director Communities, Localities and Culture Originating officer(s) Robin Beattie/ Thorsten Dreyer		Title: Ideas Store Strategy Wards Affected: All		

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report presents the review and update of the Idea Store Strategy. It presents an updated model for the provision of library and lifelong learning services through the Borough's Idea Stores and Libraries. It also makes a case for increased efficiencies across the Council by co-locating other services within appropriately located Idea Stores.

1.2 The Idea Store Strategy

- Identifies gaps in existing network provision and, without committing the Council to any expenditure at this stage, provides a priority based decision making framework for exploring options to close those gaps.
- Presents a new core service model that reflects key stakeholders' priorities whilst maximising the opportunities for more efficient and effective partnership working, specifically in relation to worklessness and health.
- Sets out priorities for service improvement focused on improving the customer experience and improving perceptions.
- Provides a robust needs analysis that will support the Local Development Framework Policies that promote access to library and lifelong learning and Town Centres.

1.3 The key objectives of the updated strategy are as follows:

- Improve the quality of core library and information services
- Improve the quality and scope of core adult learning services
- Expand the provision of high quality health information, advice and support
- Expand the provision of high quality employment information, advice and support
- Improve the provision of high quality, accessible ICT/ILT infrastructure, services, training and support

- Strengthen inclusion and accessibility
- Co-locate cultural, leisure, and other council services where this will increase efficiency, effectiveness and value for money and enhance the Idea Store offer

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Note the analysis and strategic objectives identified in the Idea Store Strategy
- 2.2 Agree the Idea Store Strategy and the associated Action Plan in Appendix 1.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Communities, Localities & Culture Directorate have undertaken a review of the Idea Store Strategy. The review was considered necessary for the following reasons:

3.1.1 *National Issues*

- Localisation – Government has been pushing for greater devolution of decision making and local empowerment for a number of years. A clear localisation agenda is emerging. It is important to determine the role that Idea Stores can play in the delivery of that agenda.
- The funding system and national / regional priorities for lifelong learning have changed radically from those which existed when the full network of Idea Stores was first conceived in 1999.
- National School Investment Programme - The BSF programme and The LEP commissioning infrastructure provide new opportunities that should be properly examined.
- Local Government Finance - We are entering a period where funding for local government will be much tighter than previous years and both capital and revenue resources will be under intense pressure.
- Government has recently published a range of research documents in preparation for a national digital inclusion strategy, which identify excluded groups, link digital exclusion to wider social exclusion and identify the long-term economic risks associated with digital exclusion.

3.1.2 *Regional Issues*

- The London Libraries Improvement Programme – Is seeking to promote and establish greater cooperation and shared service provision across the Capital whilst maintaining individual local library authorities.

3.1.3 *Local Issues*

- As population continues to grow the emerging Local Development Framework seeks to set out a clearer rationale for the location of core local services – within existing and emerging social and economic ‘centres’.
- The Council is advancing its thinking regarding strategic asset management and customer interaction (e.g. Channel Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan).

- The Council has developed new ways of working with a strong local strategic partnership in place which, itself, has just been refreshed and updated.
- The Olympics - The 2012 agenda is pushing exploration of shared cross boundary services in the newly emerging communities around the Olympic Park.
- Effective planning for efficiency is now a central theme of everything we do.
- A Lifelong Learning Service Review is under way which needs to be aligned to the outcomes of the Idea Stores Strategy review.

4. REPORT

4.1 The award winning Idea Stores concept remains the most complete example of an effective modernising strategy for libraries and lifelong learning in the country and is certainly one of the very best in the world.

4.2 Idea Store Recognition

4.2.1 Idea Stores continue to be recognised nationally and internationally as a best practice model in the delivery of library and lifelong learning services. Recent examples include:-

- The publication of *Living Places: Stronger communities through culture (November 2007)*, a joint publication by the DCLG and DCMS which cites Idea Stores as a best practice example.
- The Dutch Government, in their recent review of their national library service *The future of the Dutch public library: ten years on (June 2008)* The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, are choosing to model their national approach to Library development on only two concepts one of which is the Idea Store Model.
- The Academy for Sustainable Communities (now the Homes and Communities Academy, part of the new Homes and Communities Agency) have awarded Idea Stores the Sustainability Award. Idea Stores are the only library sector example cited in their resource data base and the only library/lifelong learning service to have won the award to date.

4.3 Customer Satisfaction and Visits

4.3.1 The development of the initial four Idea Stores has transformed our library performance from being the worst in London to one of the very best. Visitor numbers continue to buck the national trend and have risen to around 2m. In eight years we have gone from having the service with the lowest visitor figure in London to now having the 6th highest. The Service has the second highest

number of visits per 1000 population in London. We have achieved the targets we set ourselves for the full network of seven Idea Stores with only four in place.

- 4.3.2 Not only do the Idea Stores achieve some of the highest visitor figures in the country, they are also highly successful in attracting the highest number of the overall population. Tower Hamlets is third in London and fourth in England for the percentage of residents using library services (NI 9).

NI 9: Percentage of the population using libraries	
Tower Hamlets	56.6%
London average	51.9%
England average	48.5%
London rank	3 rd
England rank	4 th

- 4.3.3 Satisfaction amongst users is high. 88% of users rate the service as good or excellent placing us 4th in inner London and 14th overall in London. However, more could be done to target perceptions amongst non users.

- 4.3.4 Performance varies significantly between sites in terms of visitor figures, cost per visit and user satisfaction with Libraries lagging behind Idea Stores. The table below sets out these key comparators for each site.

Site	Visits 07/08	Satisfaction Rating (PLUS 2006)	Cost Per Visit
<i>Idea Stores</i>			
IS Whitechapel	649,203	85.80%	£3.00
IS Chrisp Street	461,714	90.20%	£2.29
IS Canary Wharf	334,986	95.40%	£3.19
IS Bow	315,691	90.70%	£3.43
All Idea Stores	1,761,594		£2.93
<i>Libraries</i>			
Bethnal Green	109,882	81.30%	£8.47
Watney	107,793	78.60%	£6.66
Cubitt Town	68,505	81.60%	£6.16
Dorset	7,099	76.00%	£8.47
All Libraries	293,279		£7.26

- 4.3.5 Visits are at least 200% higher at Idea Stores and satisfaction ratings with libraries lag behind those for Idea Stores. The cost per visit to Idea Stores stands at £2.93 compared to more than double that in the remaining libraries at £7.26.

5. THE NEW MODEL: MORE AMBTION, MORE IMPACT, LESS COST

- 5.1 It is clear from the work completed that the model can be further developed in order to realise untapped potential and deliver a more sophisticated service offer. This new model should address a wider social policy agenda to ensure that it links more effectively to the Council's strategic aims for the community. There is also more to be done to improve the quality of existing front line services.

The following outlines the key recommendations of the refreshed Strategy.

5.2 Size and Shape of the Future Network

- 5.2.1 The original strategy made a commitment to completely overhaul library service provision. We have already achieved our ambitious original target outputs for a network of seven Idea Stores with only four stores in place. However, research findings suggest that the original number of seven service points would still be required
1. to make the most effective contribution to the delivery of community plan outcomes; and
 2. to effectively cover gaps in service provision.
- 5.2.2 The refreshed Idea Store Strategy is based on a detailed analysis of performance information and recognises the need to deliver efficiencies in service delivery. At the same time, it also acknowledges the significant investment in physical infrastructure the Council and its partners have made to date and proposes a partnership approach to "sweating" these assets. This will help to further drive down cost while providing efficiencies to other services by accessing a ready-made audience.
- 5.2.3 Idea Stores' cost per visit compares favourably with the London average and demonstrates that high quality services have a significant impact on participation figures.
- 5.2.4 Whilst cost per visit is one indicator, the overall cost envelope for Idea Stores and Libraries has also been subject to detailed review and a number of activities are proposed to deliver further efficiencies, including a review of opening hours to ensure appropriate staffing levels, the introduction of further self-servicing systems, and the realisation of benefits derived from the introduction of consortium procurement and cataloguing systems.
- 5.2.5 This Strategy does not propose the closure of any existing libraries. As it is a decision making framework it recommends that performance and efficiency is reviewed on a network basis as part of the decision making process for considering any capital investment in the service. The business case for any part

of a reconfigured network would have to be made as part of the service analysis underpinning any investment proposal.

- 5.2.6 A much smaller generation of Idea Stores and more flexible Idea Store network model is required if the network is to be completed within available resources and in a way that will allow the service to fully realise its potential to meet the needs of the community in the coming years.

5.3 *Idea Store Local*

- 5.3.1 The Idea Store 'Local' concept builds on the convenience store model developed by major supermarket chains. An Idea Store 'Local' provision would be smaller in size and would focus on a slightly reduced core service offer whilst maintaining key services and high quality service presentation. These services would include book and audio-visual lending, advice and information, family and community learning, ICT access and cultural events and activities. Idea Store 'Local' can be easily located within existing town centres as the space requirement would be significantly smaller. They do not have to be purpose built facilities but could be located in existing retail units on high street frontages.

- 5.3.2 The strategy does not commit the Council to building any further Idea Stores but rather sets out a framework for decision making based on a series of tests and targeted areas for project development. Any related project will need to develop within existing corporate governance frameworks and with relevant decisions being made at the relevant times by Elected Members.

5.4 *Co-location with other services*

- 5.4.1 As part of the localisation of services, Idea Stores present an opportunity for co-location or shared 'back of house' services with other public services where such alignment would not conflict with the strategic objectives of the Idea Store Strategy.

- 5.4.2 Consideration will need to be given to the degree to which potential co-locations provide added value without undermining the notion of Idea Stores as safe and appealing community spaces offering a strong retail style quality experience. Services of a more confrontational nature (e.g. parking or housing) are likely to be considered unsuitable by residents and would have a detrimental impact on engagement.

- 5.4.3 However, where co-location can be achieved without undermining service performance and can provide efficiencies and enhanced customer experience they should be pursued. The Idea Store Strategy has taken account of the emerging Channel Strategy, and vice versa.

5.5 *Local Development Framework (LDF) and Building Schools (BSF) for the Future/Primary Capital Programme Opportunities*

5.5.1 The emerging LDF Core Strategy identifies the need to focus community and cultural facilities in town centre locations to ensure the sustainability of those centres and make facilities accessible to the widest number of people.

5.5.2 The schools investment programmes BSF and Primary Capital Programme provide potential opportunities to deliver value for money in capital project delivery.

5.5.3 Potential physical locations for the Idea Stores 'Local' have been assessed against customers' preferred engagement channels as identified by market research and the emerging strategy contained in the LDF and also backed up with robust research.

5.5.4 Where BSF/Primary Capital Programme sites are aligned with town centre locations, school developments may provide excellent opportunities for future Idea Store Local provision.

5.6 *On-line and ICT Services and Remote Service Access*

5.6.1 Opportunities for the wider use and development of IT based delivery channels and products are being identified by this strategy where they align with the guiding principles. The emerging Channel Strategy is seen as particularly important for this area of the review and there is considerable potential for new access channels to be opened up within Idea Stores.

5.7 *Idea Stores and Lifelong Learning*

5.7.1 The original Idea Store Strategy brought together library and lifelong learning services under one roof to deliver a comprehensive offer. It aimed to harness the user benefits by bringing these elements together, such as seamless services and access to a broad range of formal and informal learning opportunities. The revised Strategy continues to place great emphasis on the continued offer of adult and lifelong learning within Idea Stores.

5.7.2 Discussions with Children's Services have highlighted that some or all Lifelong Learning services activities may need to be reviewed in the light of new funding priorities set by the Learning and Skills Council. As a non statutory service it will need to review its service offer and market position and look to reduce costs.

5.7.3 Revenue budgets and costs between lifelong learning and library service provision are closely linked. Consequently any reduction in the level of use by the Lifelong Learning Service will have an impact on the overall budget position. Children's Services and Communities, Localities & Culture are currently working

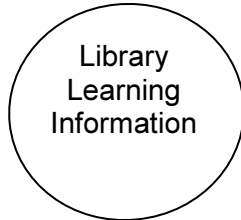
together to explore the extent to which there is scope for the forging of partnerships with other adult learning providers and other partners.

- 5.7.4 In order to keep Idea Stores ahead of the game and in view of the changing funding landscape for Lifelong Learning Services, wider joined-up working outside the immediate core services should sit at the heart of the new generation of Idea Stores. Market research has provided some clear future priority areas for joined and shared service provision, in particular in relation to **employment skills, support and job brokerage** as well as **health advice and information**.
- 5.7.5 Work has already commenced with Adults, Health & Wellbeing to exploit the unique position of Idea Stores as a forum for delivering elements of the Transformation of Social Care agenda, in particular in relation to universal advice and guidance services for older people.
- 5.7.6 Discussions have also commenced with the Primary Care Trust and the Department of Health in relation to the potential to support and deliver key elements of public health programmes.

5.8 *The new model characteristics*

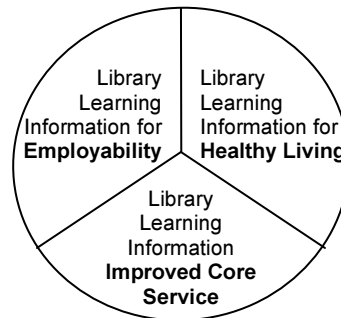
- 5.8.1 The diagram below demonstrates the key characteristics of a future Idea Store service and how these differ from the original Idea Store concept:
- Expand the service offer. Provide targeted advice, information and learning services in partnership with other agencies (e.g. health and employment) and key service access channels where compatible with the service environment.
 - Retain core service but with a reduced focus on learning for personal development and more emphasis on employability.
 - Re-configure the proposed network to consist of anchor stores and satellite Idea Store 'Local' sites.
 - Co location of new service points with other services where this meets residents' preferences and is consistent with the emerging LDF Core Strategy.

Idea Store Strategy 1999



7 x large Idea Stores providing general learning, information and library services

Idea Store Strategy 2009



4 x Anchor Idea Stores plus 2/3 additional Idea Stores Local providing targeted learning, information, library and advice services in partnership with other LSP agencies

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 6.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Idea Store Strategy which is outlined in Appendix 1 of the report. The major aspects of the strategy are detailed in section 5 and concentrate on ;
- Size and Shape of the future Network
 - Idea Store Local
 - Co-location with other services
 - Idea Stores and Lifelong Learning

At this stage members are not asked to consider the resource implications of the strategy but are requested to confirm their approval to the proposals to enable options to be pursued. As projects are developed they will undergo detailed options appraisals to enable Members to take clear and informed financial decisions.

- 6.2. Members should be aware that at this stage no Council resources have been identified in terms of Capital and Revenue to support the proposals within the strategy. Any funding proposals would need to be considered alongside other priorities as part of the strategic and resource planning process, and taking account of the need for efficiency savings that has been identified in the medium term financial plan. Year 1 and 2 activities in the Action Plan will be met from within existing resources.

7. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

- 7.1 The Council is the library authority for Tower Hamlets and, as such, has the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use of such a service: *Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964*. The Council has the power to provide such a service to persons who do not live or work in Tower Hamlets or are not undergoing full time education in Tower Hamlets, but is not under a duty to do so. The adoption of the Idea Store Strategy may be viewed as an appropriate step towards delivering the Council's function as a library authority.
- 7.2 The Strategy makes reference to respects in which Idea Stores are more than just library and information services. The whole of the strategy may still be underpinned by the Council's function as a library authority. However, the Council is also empowered under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which it considers likely to promote the social, economic or environmental well being of Tower Hamlets, provided the action is not otherwise prohibited by statute. The power may be exercised in relation to, or for the benefit of: (a) the whole or any part of Tower Hamlets; or (b) all or any persons resident in Tower Hamlets. In exercising the power, regard must be had to the sustainable community strategy (the Community Plan). In this regard, the Idea Store Strategy draws links to the theme in the Community Plan of One Tower Hamlets.
- 7.3 The Strategy contains a year 1 – 2 action plan. It will be for officers to ensure that any actions taken in accordance with that plan are carried out according to law and the Council's procedures.

8. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 'One Tower Hamlets' sets out Council's commitment to work for greater community cohesion. Idea Stores and Libraries play a major role in bringing the community together. They are a natural meeting place for the community, as they are perceived as a safe and appealing community space.
- 8.2 Recognising the need to provide facilities in the most accessible locations for all residents, the Strategy focuses on the provision of possible new facilities in town centres and with good transport links.
- 8.3 The roll-out of the 'Idea Store Local' is an efficient way to give more access to libraries, IT services and lifelong learning opportunities to a wider selection of residents, thereby helping to reduce inequalities. For instance, wider provision of IT services will enable residents to access information and services which are increasingly being offered in an online environment. Idea Stores are also a key location for the provision of information about Council services that residents can access

- 8.4 The proposals put forward in this strategy are based on detailed market research carried out through 1,200 face to face interviews and take into account the views of all sections of the community.

9. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 9.1 Libraries and Idea Stores by their very nature are essentially about the sharing and re-using of resources.
- 9.2 The creation of new sites for Idea Stores under the Idea Stores Local banner, will impact on the Borough's overall energy use. As these sites will not be developed for at least two years, an assessment of the magnitude of this impact is not possible at this stage. An environmental assessment will be part of any specific project scoped under this Strategy.
- 9.3 The location of service points within town centres makes them more easily accessible and therefore should positively impact on the number of journeys made as residents will be able to combine activities.
- 9.4 Conversely, it is possible that energy efficiency gains will be made by bringing various services under one roof. This aspect will be included in any environmental assessment completed as part of options development.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Strategy comprises a decision making framework built around a detailed needs analysis and market research into what residents want. Adoption of the strategy does not commit the Council to any capital outlay but rather identifies a prioritised set of opportunities for further investigation. The Development of new partnership business relationships to deliver new forms of lifelong learning to better meet the needs and aspirations of residents is also recommended. These recommendations provide a necessarily flexible response to any changes to the mainstream funding of Life Long Learning in the future. As these opportunities are developed their risks will be taken into account by the corporate risk management infrastructure. Individual risk implications will be reported to Members on a project by project basis as strategic outline solutions are presented for further detailed decision making.

11. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

- 11.1 Efficiency is at the heart of this strategy which sets out a range of measures designed to rationalise and reduce costs across the network via new partnerships, delivery of efficiency programmes, improving still further visitor numbers and driving down costs per visit and developing a network solution that enhances service access in areas of deficiency.

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)
List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

Brief description of “back ground papers” Name and telephone number of holder
and address where open to inspection.

To be completed by author

To be completed by author ext. xxx

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Idea Store Strategy 2009