

Regulatory and Other Committee

Open Report on behalf of Pete Moore, Executive Director for Finance and Public Protection

Report to:	Audit Committee
Date:	26 January 2015
Subject:	Organisational Learning - Libraries Project

Summary:

This report provides the Committee with independent insight on the facts surrounding the decision making process associated with the Libraries Project and identifies suggested areas for improvement.

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee notes the findings of the audit and identifies / recommends any actions or improvements it requires to the Council's governance framework.

Background

This audit was commissioned following the outcome of the Judicial Review around the lawfulness of the Council's decision making process to reduce the Library Services within Lincolnshire. The Court ruled that the Council's decision making process was flawed due to:

- flaws in the consultation process
- not considering a proposal by Greenwich Leisure Limited as an expression of interest under Section 81 of the Localism Act

Our report provides a chronology of events and a comprehensive examination of the decision making process throughout the Libraries Project, leading up to the Executive Decision in December 2013. The Executive Summary provides an overview of the findings in five key areas:

- option appraisal
- consultation
- alternative proposals
- Localism / Open Public Services
- effective scrutiny / decision making

In order to ensure the Council gets the most out of the contents of this review, we have emphasised the context – recognising what is involved in the taking of difficult decisions in challenging times. We have also focused on the organisational learning which we believe will enable and support future good governance. Section 5 of the audit report therefore provides suggested areas for improvement in the key areas detailed above – we recommend these are considered alongside the output from the lessons learned exercises completed by the Libraries Project Team.

Conclusion

The review of the Library Service involved a complex range of political, economic and social objectives – the decision around the future delivery of libraries was sensitive, difficult and multi-faceted – the proposed changes were significant.

There is no doubt that there was substantial analysis and intelligence gathering by Officers and the FSR Board between 2011 and 2013 – Officers and Members worked hard to deliver the project on time. The circumstances generated a different and sometimes conflicting set of external and internal constraints, which in our view, had some influence on the governance arrangements and decision making during that period. These are explored more fully in our Executive Summary.

There are lessons arising out of this project and our report includes some suggested improvements which should help the Council move forward and strengthen its governance framework.

Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

N/A

Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Internal Audit Report: Organisational Learning - Libraries Project

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Lucy Pledge, who can be contacted on 01522-553692 or lucy.pledge@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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