

Statement concerning the Cultural and Community Services Review

The Cultural and Community Services Review is intended to involve the citizens of Milton Keynes in the future shape and scope of a range of services, principally the library service, children's centres and youth services. The opportunities offered through these services benefit all citizens and contribute to enriching the social fabric of Milton Keynes as well as including activities for particular groups. The current administration is totally committed to these services and to the principle of being a co-operative council as unanimously agreed by the full council in 2014. However, it is clear that, given the current financial constraints, the council can no longer sustain these on its own.

The Review will consider a whole range of synergies between these services and others across the city and in localities. At senior officer level a project board has been established to oversee the review chaired by Michael Bracey, Corporate Director for People, demonstrating the council's commitment to an open and rigorous process. The administration is committed to the widest possible engagement and as a start has taken the decision to establish a Cabinet Advisory Group.

In February 2012 a report was published entitled 'Future Libraries – Milton Keynes. A Strategic Review of Milton Keynes Libraries and Vision for the Future'. The direction of travel in the report includes considerable modernisation and a more visible role for libraries across Milton Keynes. Modernisation is leading to the installation of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Device) in the local libraries during the next 6 months to facilitate self- service and there are also ongoing improvements in the available IT. RFID inevitably leads to changes in the role of library staff.

In addition, the scale of the budget reduction required of the council as a whole means that there will have to be significant further cost savings over the next two years (2015/16, 2016/17). Rather than implement those in April 2015, transition funding has been secured to provide: time for local discussion about the role and contribution of the services to a civilised society; and time to find both new ways of providing the services and increasing the impact while reducing the cost to Milton Keynes Council. Parish and Town Councils and other interested parties will be involved in these discussions and decisions will not be taken without their involvement.

The aim is to achieve that more visible role for a thriving library and community service across Milton Keynes but it can only be done with the strong commitment of the community it serves.