

**London Borough Waltham Forest**

**Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006 - 2012**

## 1 Foreword

I am very proud that over the last year the Library and Information service has achieved significant improvements through the commitment and hard work of both staff and management. Councillors have enthusiastically backed these improvements and would like to use this opportunity to make very clear the Council's commitment to the future of the library service, a service that we see as truly being at the heart of our community.

The service gained Investors in People accreditation in March of this year receiving an excellent report. The assessor found genuine commitment to the development of staff along with a strong improvement culture. We have developed effective change management skills; performance management, communications and planning are much improved within the service and the identification, planning and implementation of development activities is in place and linked to our objectives.

It is very pleasing that the latest Association of Local Government survey of Waltham Forest residents showed a 9% increase in residents' satisfaction with library services and this has been further backed up by the recent increase in the number of visits to our libraries. The service has continued to increase its excellent work with the council's partners, from Bookstart bags being delivered to babies to the newly adopted 'Book prescribing' initiative. Libraries also work with SureStart and I am particularly looking forward to our services working more closely with Children's Centres. This year also saw the start of a new partnership with the voluntary sector in providing support for library clubs for people who are homebound.

We have achieved a great deal but recognise that we have much to do. Our initiatives will grow so that we can become one of the best library services in the country. We want our libraries to be used by all in the community providing a pleasant, welcoming and friendly space for people to meet and socialise. Our libraries must become places where information of all kinds will be easily available, where specialist advice can be obtained, with access to computers for information and learning, supported by knowledgeable and well-trained staff. Our children and young people along with their parents and carers must feel welcome to come for books, information, enjoyment and help with learning. In short this strategy will help ensure that our libraries continue on their path to excellence providing a service that listens to residents and meets their needs.



Councillor Chris Robbins – Cabinet Member for Culture, Learning and Leisure

## 2 Our vision

Our vision, therefore, is to provide the best possible opportunities for people to reach their potential through promotion of reading, informal learning and access to information and digital skills, particularly for those facing social disadvantage.

In order to achieve this we will work in partnership and deliver services in modern, accessible, exciting buildings.

## 3 Our key outcomes

To deliver our vision we aim to achieve the following key outcomes:

<b>Key Outcome one</b>	<b>Residents will be able to access excellent libraries with opening hours tailored to their needs, speedy provision of requested items and good quality relevant stock.</b>
<b>Key Outcome two</b>	<b>Residents at risk of social exclusion will be able to access services targeted to their expressed needs.</b>
<b>Key Outcome three</b>	<b>We will increase the number of people reading and learning in Waltham Forest</b>
<b>Key Outcome four</b>	<b>Residents will benefit from friendly and exciting libraries where they find services that encourage more people to come and spend time in attractive surroundings.</b>
<b>Key Outcome five</b>	<b>Users and stakeholders will be involved in determining the type and range of services and participate in shaping the development of the service</b>

These outcomes link to the national and regional strategies as outlined in the Context section of this document and to our Community Strategy priorities, which are to:

<b>Community Priority one</b>	<b>Improve learning opportunities to help individuals achieve their potential.</b>
<b>Community Priority two</b>	<b>Increase community understanding and participation.</b>
<b>Community Priority three</b>	<b>Decrease crime and improve the safety and quality of the environment.</b>
<b>Community Priority four</b>	<b>Improve the local economy and infrastructure.</b>
<b>Community Priority five</b>	<b>Improve the health and well being of local people.</b>

## 4 Context

All services provided by the Council are affected by national priorities and to succeed in our drive towards excellence it is essential that we are aware of, understand and contribute to these priorities. This section contains a brief outline of the national framework within which the library service works. National lead bodies such as the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) are focussing on improving the quality of life for local residents and their '*Inspiring Learning for All*' initiative aims at providing a way for museums, libraries and archives to demonstrate their excellence in supporting socially and culturally relevant opportunities for learning. It aims to encourage library services to reach all communities.

*The Framework for the Future* (MLAC) document sets three key priorities for libraries:

- The promotion of reading and informal learning
- Access to digital skills and services including e-government
- Measures to tackle social exclusion, build community identity and develop citizenship

There are also opportunities for libraries to contribute to:

- a new measure of child poverty proposed by the Department of Work and Pensions which will include lack of access to leisure, hobbies, swimming and other cultural activities as an indicator of deprivation
- the implementation of the *Every Child Matters* agenda which shows the need for government and local authorities to provide a wide array of structured and unstructured free-time activities for children and young people
- our Crime and Disorder Reduction partnership and strategy which gives a basis for cultural activity and provision in the form of diversionary activity, for young people in particular

## 5 Consultation Summary

Finding out what our customers want from cultural services helps us to carry out our work more effectively and efficiently. It is essential for us to know what our customers think of our services and to listen to ideas about how we might make improvements. To do this, we use a wide range of techniques, including surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, public meetings and face-to-face interviews. The information we have collected has helped us to develop this strategy and is summarised below.

### 5.1 **The last adult user satisfaction survey for libraries conducted in October 2004 showed:**

- 80% found the overall service to be good or very good
- 92% said staff helpfulness was good or very good.
- 86% rated staff knowledge as good
- 80% were happy with the opening hours
- 83% were satisfied with the information services

#### **Users were less satisfied with:**

- the external appearance of libraries
- library stock
- provision of seating and tables
- internal layout and arrangement
- signs and guiding

5.2 During the summer of 2005, 1,200 face-to-face surveys and four focus groups were used to assess residents' priorities and requirements of the library service as well as seeking information about residents' requirements for the refurbished libraries in Leytonstone and Walthamstow. One focus group was targeted at the under 25's and another was held away from library premises to attract non-users. Two of the groups attracted 50% attendance from BME groups.

- The main reasons for not using libraries given by lapsed and non-users was a lack of time. Others also felt that they had no need to use libraries and some found that reading did not come easily to them.
- The findings of the focus group generally echoed those in the main survey with the younger age groups focusing on the need for computer access and study space and older groups more interested in book stock and services for children and parents.
- The school groups were keen to have more study space and access to computers and also raised some concerns about staff willingness and ability to help them with their

specific needs. Local groups were more focused on the facilities available at their local library and commented on poor quality buildings and external and internal access issues, as well as levels and quality of book stock.

**5.3** A meeting was held with the Disability Action Waltham Forest Management Committee and they suggested:

- Trial of Supernova (accessible software for visually impaired users) at Wood Street Library with a view to installing elsewhere if popular
- Appointing an access consultant
- Setting up library user groups

We have taken these views and survey results into consideration when developing our key outcomes and highlights of our plans to take them forward are contained in the three year action plan – section 10 of this strategy, the full range of actions we will take to achieve the outcomes will be included in our service plan to be published in February 2006.

## **6 Our current performance**

No service can improve consistently without knowing how well it is doing and using that knowledge to drive change. We are determined to use our performance information to improve our service, month on month, year on year. We will also ensure that our performance makes real improvements to our residents' lives.

### **6.1 We have performed well in 2005/06 for the following public library standard performance indicators:**

- Proportion of households living within a specified distance of a static library
- % of static libraries providing access to electronic information resources connected to the internet
- Requests: % of requests for books met within 7, 15 and 30 days

### **6.2 In the following areas our performance is satisfactory:**

- Aggregate scheduled opening hours per 1,000 population
- Total number of electronic workstations with access to the internet and the libraries catalogue available to users per 10,000 population
- The number of physical visits to Libraries per 1,000 population
- Stock level per 1,000 population

### **6.3 We need to improve in these areas:**

- % of library users 16 and over who view their library service as very good or good
- % of library users under 16 who view their library service as good or very good
- Annual items added through purchase per 1,000
- Time taken to replenish the lending stock on open access or available on loan
- Active library borrowers as a percentage of the population

We have made other significant improvements including an additional 134 hours of provision per week offered across the borough, equating to 6,000 more opening hours each year. Visitor numbers increased by nearly 25% last year following this initiative.

In addition cost per visits to libraries was £2.97 in 2004/05, which is significantly better than the government lower threshold of £3.15.

In striving to achieve our outcomes we aim to meet or exceed all the public library service standards by March 2007.

## **7 Our approach**

The library service in Waltham Forest has something to offer everyone and we are committed to making our services available to all. To achieve these ambitions we will ensure that buildings are fully accessible; that staff are well trained and provide excellent customer care; that as many services as possible are provided on a 24/7 basis and that stock is relevant to local communities.

We also believe that our buildings must be used to deliver not only both the traditional and newer elements that combine to make a modern library service but must also offer the public the widest possible range of council services as well as those of our partners. Our commitment to achieve this outcome is demonstrated by the existing co-location of two libraries with local service centres with a third planned. Discussions are also underway to share facilities in three libraries with the borough's adult education service, ClaSS, and further joint working will be undertaken with other services including the planned children's centres. The development of joint working will be a key element of our approach during the lifetime of this strategy.

**7.1** We see our role as one of enabling and facilitating people to access and participate in learning and information activities for their personal benefit and for wider community benefits. The library service will also contribute to the achievement of the following local strategies and plans:

- Our sports, museums and arts strategies
- Older Peoples' strategy
- Children and Young Peoples' plan
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy
- Health & Well-Being Action Partnership action plan
- Green Space Strategy

**7.2** We already have active partnerships with other services, for example, we:

- Work with the Primary Care Trust to deliver Book-start bags to babies at their 8-9 month check. This service will be extended in November 2005 to 18-month olds and in February 2006, to 3 year-olds
- Established the Book Prescribing Initiative with local medical practices - one of the first London boroughs to do so
- Work in partnership with the voluntary sector to provide a housebound readers service which involves a home visit every 3 weeks for people who are unable to use a library independently. Accessible transport is provided in some areas to bring people to a library once a month
- Run joint events with the Friends of Friendship Garden, a local library friends Group at Lea Bridge Library

Our approach to developing the service is therefore underpinned by our commitment to asking local people what they want from our services, listening to their answers and responding to their views.

## **8 Delivering the Strategy**

The Libraries and Information strategy will be delivered through the Council's Service and financial planning process

The strategy will inform our 3 year Service Plan for Cultural Services, which is reviewed annually.

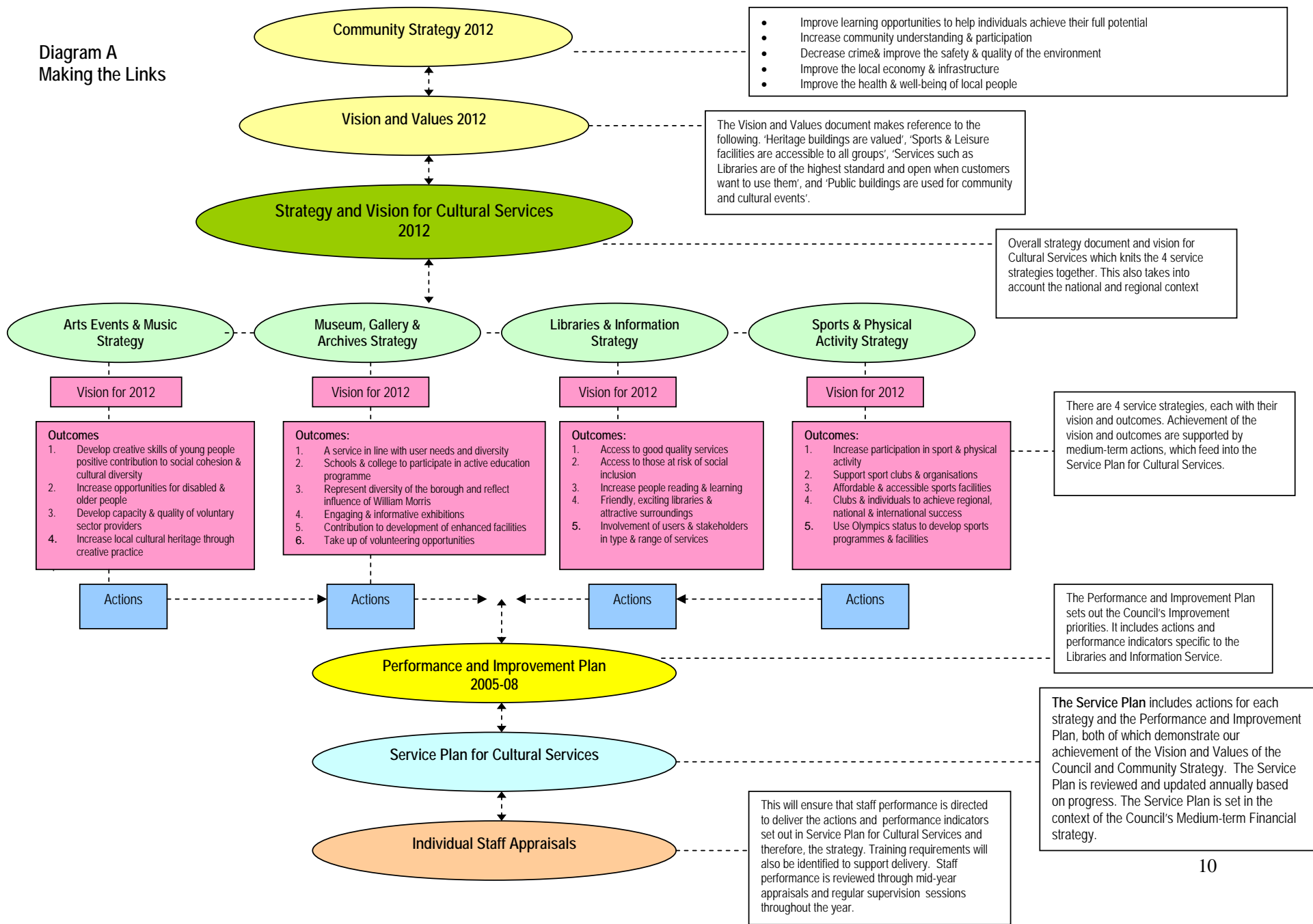
The Service Plan provides detailed information on how the actions contained within the strategy will be achieved. Each action will be supported by milestones, which set out the key steps required to achieve the action along with dates showing when each action is to be delivered. Named officers responsible for ensuring delivery will also be identified. The use of performance indicators (both statutory and local) and targets will provide a measure of progress towards achieving our outcomes.

The appraisal system will ensure that staff performance is directed to deliver the actions and performance indicators set out in the Service Plan for Cultural Services and therefore, the strategy. Training requirements will also be identified to make sure delivery is fully supported. Staff performance will be reviewed through mid-year appraisals and regular supervision sessions throughout the year.

We will establish a libraries improvement board, to help drive our transformation – this board will involve the public, councillors and partners along with staff and managers of the service.

How this all fits together is shown in the 'Making the Links' Diagram A

**Diagram A**  
**Making the Links**



## **8.1 Resourcing the strategy**

Equally important is how the service intends to resource the strategy. As well as driving the production of the Service Plan for Cultural Services, the strategy will inform the budget-setting process. Budgets are set annually in the context of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The service will continue to look at ways to improve its efficiency and effectiveness to deliver the same quality and range of services for less money, or to deliver more for the same level of expenditure. This approach will maximise the range and level of service that can be provided. In order to do this we will explore different ways to best meet our customers needs – including the use of external providers and partnerships.

Against the background of the council's commitment to a range of statutory services there is no expectation of significantly increased mainstream revenue funding for the library service. The Library service will seek to transform the service through increased efficiency, knowledge of service users, better customer care and effective use of new technology.

Funding for new and enhanced services will however be sought from a variety of funding sources including:

Comment [MSOffice1]: Split it in the tables above

### **8.1.1 Sponsorship and external grant funding:**

Suitable activities include the summer reading challenge, homework clubs and children's activities generally along with Friends and reading groups.

### **8.1.2 Joint Initiatives:**

Working with other council departments, statutory partners and community groups or voluntary organisations offers opportunities for shared costs and better targeted services, enhancing and extending services by obtaining resources in either cash or kind.

### **8.1.3 Volunteering:**

The inventive use of formal volunteering schemes can provide significant additional resources to the service. The service is seeking to enter into a formal partnering arrangement with the Waltham Forest Volunteer Centre to deliver a range of additional services using well-trained and supported volunteers.

### **8.1.4 Capital Investment**

£7m is to be invested in the transformation of Walthamstow and Leytonstone libraries, and further funds are being sought for the refurbishment and extension of Lea Bridge and the relocation of Leyton libraries. In addition, plans are in place to rebuild Chingford library and major adaptations are planned at Hale End to improve accessibility and upgrade facilities. These works will provide buildings fit to deliver the Waltham Forest library services of the future.




The library service is also purchasing a new library management system. This system will not only allow a streamlined and more efficient service for visitors to libraries but will also deliver a wide range of 'remote' services including on-line reservations.

## 9 Monitoring the strategy

Robust performance management arrangements are an integral part of determining the success of delivering the Libraries strategy. Progress against actions will be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis and we will ensure swift action is taken to address areas where activities have slipped and/ or where performance targets are unlikely to be achieved. This will also include performance against budgeted spend and customer service standards. Any areas or performance indicator(s) seen as critical will be monitored on a monthly basis.

This approach is in line with the Corporate Performance Management Framework. The service is currently monitored monthly on two of its performance indicators and its actions against the Council's Performance and Improvement Plan for 2005-08.

A traffic light system of reporting will be used and the service will identify a course of action to remedy adverse performance.

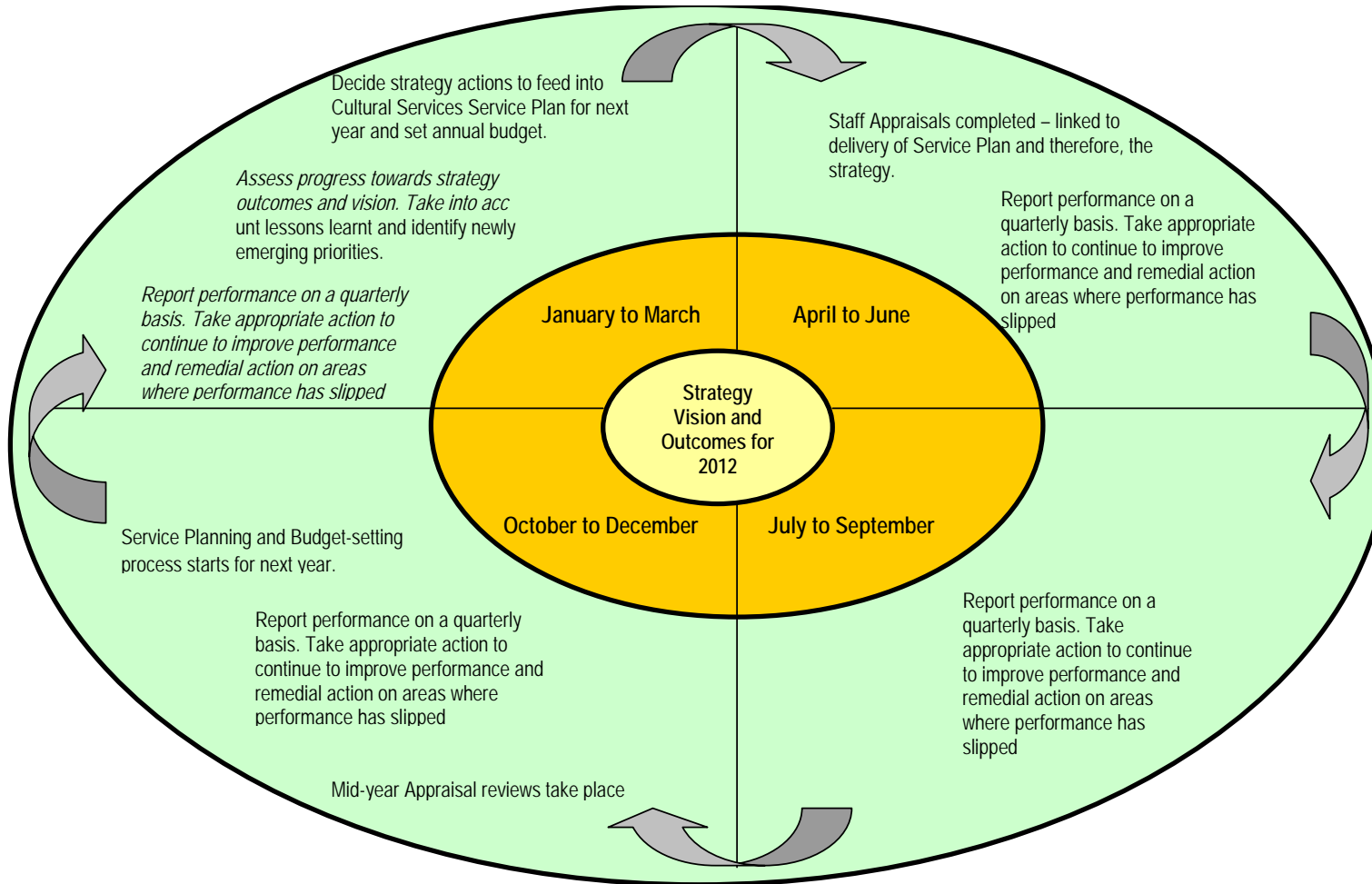
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
	Action achieved or on course to be achieved.	The indicator is above or on target.
	Work underway but action not on course however likely to recover. <b>Corrective action to be reported.</b>	The indicator is below target, but is expected to recover. <b>Corrective action to be reported.</b>
	Action unlikely to be achieved or work not started. <b>Corrective action and consequences of non-achievement to be reported.</b>	The indicator is below target and is not expected to recover. <b>Corrective action and consequences of non-achievement to be reported.</b>

Each quarter, the Head of Libraries and Information will report performance to the Head of Cultural Services. This report will inform the quarterly Performance Book for the Lifelong Learning Directorate, which is reported to the Lifelong Learning Management Team. A summary of the Performance Book, highlighting good and poor performing areas is then reported to Management Board and Cabinet.

Annually, progress against actions and performance indicators will be reviewed and discussed taking into account lessons learnt and the emergence of new priorities. This process will then be used to inform next year's service and budget-setting process.

The relationship between delivering and continuously monitoring the strategy is set out in the 'Delivery & Monitoring the Strategy' Diagram B.

Diagram B  
Delivering & Monitoring the Strategy



## 10 Implementing the outcomes

Our three-year action plan is designed to deliver our vision which links closely with the borough's five Community Strategy priorities. The plan outlines measurable activities and highlights with which of the five priorities each action directly links. Delivery of all 5 priorities is of equal importance to us as a service. However, in order to demonstrate how each action contributes to their achievement and for ease of reference, we have numbered them.

### The Community Strategy priorities are to:

1. Improve learning opportunities to help individuals achieve their potential
2. Increase community understanding and participation
3. Decrease crime and improve the safety and quality of the environment
4. Improve the local economy and infrastructure
5. Improve the health and well being of local people

<b>Outcome 1: Residents able to access excellent libraries with opening hours tailored to their needs, speedy provision of requested items and good quality relevant stock</b>	
<b>Actions Year 1</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Agree integrated library service improvement plan to be monitored and driven by the Libraries Improvement Board	<b>1,4,5</b>
Implement introduction of new libraries management system resulting in improved services and knowledge of library users and performance	<b>1,2</b>

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

Purchase appropriate and relevant stock to increase user satisfaction using information obtained from customer consultation and user groups and seek to maintain the number of books added to stock by focussing stock purchases in order to meet the standards for reservation supply time	1,2
Work with Libraries Improvement Project Team to provide improved environmental conditions within libraries and their external appearance as highlighted by consultation	1,3
Quarterly surveys of customer satisfaction to identify progress and areas for further development and quarterly monitoring of achievement against all the standards to identify areas for further development	1,2
Open one library on Sunday as a pilot scheme	1,4
Implement temporary relocation of services during refurbishment programme to maintain opening hours standard Ensure all branches open for at least one evening per week	1, 4
<b>Actions Year Two</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Use the automated stock rotation facility of the library management system to ensure that users are able to access the widest range of books possible, increasing customer satisfaction	1
Implement a maintenance plan that will ensure that basic maintenance levels are in place at all buildings in order to decrease the likelihood of unplanned closures	1,3,4
<b>Actions Year Three</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

Continue with staff development concentrating on areas that have been identified through public surveys, consultations and staff appraisals	1
Further Sunday and evening opening to be implemented Further review of the opening hours	1,4
<b>Outcome 2: Residents at risk of social exclusion to be able to access services targeted to their expressed needs</b>	
<b>Actions Year One</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Produce community profile and agree neighbourhood delivery plan for each library	2
Begin refurbishment of Walthamstow and Leytonstone Libraries	4
Implement new reading group, working with a local secondary school.	1,2,3
Using the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council grant in association with local disability groups to improve computer access for people with disabilities across the whole of the People's Network	1, 2, 5
Review health information stock within libraries and plan for renewal and extension to meet Public Library Impact Measures when these become available	5
Evaluate the outcomes of the book prescribing scheme with local GP's	5
Review health information stock within libraries and renew and extend	5
Establish additional adult reading group	1,2

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

Working with other stakeholders and partners, identify groups within the community who are not using the library service and work with them to improve and plan appropriate services	1,2,3
<b>Actions Year Two</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Complete refurbishment of Walthamstow and Leytonstone libraries and continue to work to develop Lea Bridge, Leyton, Hale End and North Chingford Libraries and services, to provide attractive and inviting buildings with improved access to ICT	4
Deliver actions in neighbourhood delivery plans	2
Increase full internal and external disabled access from eight to all twelve libraries through libraries renewal programme	4,5
Using information from customer satisfaction surveys, develop programmes to address those areas which are shown to be not meeting customer requirements	2
Work with local community groups to establish extend of need for stock in languages other than English	2
Establish further teenage reading group, monitor and evaluate progress and plan for further groups	1,2,3
Work with other stakeholders and partners, identify groups within the community who are not using the library service and work with them to improve and plan appropriate services	1, 2, 3
<b>Actions Year Three</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Work with partners in Waltham Forest and neighbouring boroughs to ensure best use of resources to meet needs of numerically small groups within the community	1

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

Deliver actions in neighbourhood delivery plans	
<b>Outcome 3: Increase the number of people reading and learning in Waltham Forest</b>	
<b>Actions Year One</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Increase participation in the Summer Reading Challenge by 10% from 350 to 385 by increasing publicity to schools and within libraries	<b>1</b>
Establish one Homework Help Club and develop a monitoring and evaluation system for clubs	<b>1,3</b>
Agree plan for providing services from Children's Centres including reviewing the selection of books for children and young people to make sure that the stock is relevant and supports the National Curriculum	<b>1</b>
Work with WF volunteer Centre – develop first volunteers to enhance homework opportunities and reading class	<b>1, 2</b>
Take a full part in all the national and regional reading and book promotional opportunities that are available	<b>1,5</b>
<b>Actions Year Two</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Provide good quality homework and quiet study space at Walthamstow, Leytonstone, Lea Bridge and Hale End Libraries	<b>1,3,4</b>
Use the libraries renewal programme to provide fully accessible teaching spaces for joint use with ClaSS at four more libraries	<b>1</b>
Establish a minimum of two Homework Help Clubs around the libraries, ensuring that monitoring data is collected and used in planning further groups	<b>1</b>

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

Extend the Summer Reading Challenge to older groups in association with teenage reading groups and local secondary schools	1,3
Using the existing programme of events and extend these to include more book based activities especially for adults, involving the reading groups already established	1,2
Work with ClaSS on the national programmes for increasing Basic Skills provision within the borough and increase participation	1,3
<b>Actions Year Three</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Further develop work with secondary schools in the borough to serve their needs for library advice and support	1
Obtain sponsorship for increasing author visits to libraries and establish a literary festival either alone or in partnership with neighbouring boroughs	1,5
<b>Outcome 4: Residents benefiting from friendly and exciting libraries where they find services that encourage more people to come and spend time in attractive surroundings</b>	
<b>Actions Year One</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Ensure that mobility and accessibility standards are met in the design process for refurbished/altered buildings	4,5
Work closely with architects/contractors to ensure that the refurbishment of libraries provides the required environment to enthuse both staff and users	1, 2, 4
Replace public facing PC's with new equipment to high specifications	1

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

Train and develop staff for changed needs of the library service and customers	4, 5
<b>Actions Year Two</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Working closely with architects/contractors to ensure that the refurbishments of libraries provides the required environment to enthuse both staff and users	1,2,4
Deliver launch programmes and activities as appropriate with attendant publicity and marketing	2, 4
<b>Actions Year Three</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Continue to develop use of new technology to improve service delivery and responsiveness to library users	1, 2
Seek resources to continue the development and improvement of the physical environment and customer services in libraries across the borough	1, 4
<b>Outcome 5: Users and stakeholders are involved in determining the type and range of services and participate in shaping the development of the service</b>	
<b>Actions Year One</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Use the libraries improvement board to involve stakeholders and public in developing the service	2
Use nationally accepted and local surveys to assess customer satisfaction across whole age range and develop action plans to	2

*Libraries & Information Service Strategy 2006/12*

address areas of concern highlighted by surveys	
Use contacts established during the refurbishment consultation process to develop a programme of focus group meetings including those with disability groups.	2
Involve existing reading groups in stock selection exercises	2
Establish three user or friends groups with appropriate support and terms of reference	2

<b>Actions Year Two</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Use the outcomes of the stock selection exercise and identify resources for groups to purchase stock in the future	2
Establish an on-line magazine run by reading groups	2
Using the focus groups and other contacts to establish further three user or friends groups	2
<b>Actions Year Three</b>	<b>Community Strategy Priorities</b>
Establish friends groups for remaining libraries	2
Use the established groups to identify initiatives and improvements in the service and as a base for additional consultation	2