



CABINET

10 July 2013

Subject Heading:	A Literacy Strategy for Havering
Cabinet Member:	Cllrs Andrew Curtin
CMT Lead:	Cynthia Griffin
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Policy context:	Living Ambition Culture Strategy
Financial summary:	The Literacy Strategy will be implemented from within existing service budgets
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Is this a Strategic Decision?	Yes
When should this matter be reviewed?	December 2016
Reviewing OSC:	Towns and Communities

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	[x]
Championing education and learning for all	[x]
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	[x]
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	[x]
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[x]

SUMMARY

This report recommends the adoption of the Literacy Strategy, attached to this report as Appendix 1. The Strategy sets out how the Council and partners will improve Literacy levels in the borough and includes an Action Plan that identifies the priority actions for the next three years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To agree the Literacy Strategy attached as appendix 1 to this report.

REPORT DETAIL

1. The Literacy Strategy sets out a Vision for Literacy for the next three years: **‘For all in Havering to enjoy and feel confident in the English Language’**. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure better coordination of work to support literacy development in Havering.
2. The Strategy deliberately focuses on English because this is the language of the environment in which we all exist and relate to one another. Research has shown that English language proficiency is one of the key factors in supporting social integration and community cohesion, as well as being important in an economic context i.e. helping people to gain and progress in employment. This is particularly true of jobs where the ability to communicate in English is an essential pre requisite for being able to do the job effectively (e.g. for teachers, doctors, members of the police force etc). Being able to speak English is also very important in terms of learning and academic achievement, with a sound grasp of English being essential if students are to achieve academic qualifications in English and other subject areas, such as History and Geography.
3. Although the focus of this strategy is on English, it is important to recognise the need for communities to continue to celebrate their rich cultural traditions, including the continued use of their mother tongue, in addition to English. In fact there is evidence to show that young children benefit from speaking more than one language and this should be encouraged. There are plenty of opportunities for learning other languages in the borough, as part of primary and secondary education, and through adult provision provided by the Havering Adult College, Europa Centre and others.

4. It is important to stress that this strategy does not seek to undermine the cultural traditions of the different communities living in Havering; rather it seeks to ensure that all of the individuals from those communities can celebrate their culture, but also achieve their potential and become full members of society, which is reliant to a large degree on being able to speak English. Whilst positively welcoming the advantages of a diverse community, it is also important to ensure a shared environment where all members of the wider community can communicate with each other and have equal access and engagement within society, without barriers. This Strategy proposes that this can be best achieved by ensuring that all people in Havering are able to enjoy and feel confident in the English language.
5. Building a literate borough will take much more than just focusing on improving statutory provision; it will need to extend into the home environment by empowering and supporting parents to take a role in their children's literacy development, and it will require all organisations working with the public to increase their awareness – to be able to identify literacy needs and confidently signpost people to get support. The message is that 'literacy is everyone's responsibility' and everyone has a part to play. Working together is essential to extend the reach of literacy support within tightening resources, organisations need to pool resources and work more effectively together to access hard to reach groups.
6. By raising literacy levels in our community, through the actions in this Strategy and action plan, the Council and partners will be supporting the overarching objective of Living Ambition: "to deliver a better quality of life for residents in the Borough" and achieving several of the "Living Ambition" Goals, particularly the "Championing education and learning for all" Goal.
7. This Literacy Strategy and associated action plan focuses on the following groups:
 - Early Years (0-4 Years)
 - Children 5-11 Years
 - Young People 11-19 Years
 - Adults with Low Literacy
8. It is important to note that this document is a starting point. The ambition and eventual scope of the partners' work will be wider than the above target groups, so the strategy will, in due course, engage additional partners in order to address specific needs and future priorities.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

To establish a Vision, Strategy and Action Plan to help better co-ordinate and deliver Literacy work in Havering.

Other options considered:

The option of not developing a Literacy strategy was ruled out as the development of literacy skills is crucial to the development of individuals and communities in Havering.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The delivery of the objectives and outcomes included within the Literacy Strategy will be achieved from within existing Culture and Leisure Services budgets. The proposals do not create any budgetary pressure within the service. Clearly the strategy will need to remain flexible, in view of the Council's medium term financial position.

Legal implications and risks:

Subject to the equalities impact of the strategy which is addressed below, there should be no legal implications from the report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None applicable to this report. A previous restructure in the Library Service has created a new post that will be responsible for co-ordinating the work linked to the delivery of the Literacy Strategy.

Equalities implications and risks:

Research shows that poor literacy skills are part of a vicious cycle of factors that lead to disadvantage and poverty of opportunity, therefore the improvement in literacy provision and coordination will help promote equality within the borough.

Literacy is important for everyone's aspirations and the growth of the whole community within Havering, and we will continue to offer literacy support to all. However, there is a need for the purpose of this strategy and associated action plan to identify themed groups for action. This Literacy Strategy Action Plan looks at the following:

- Early Years (0-4 Years)
- Children 5-11 Years
- Young People 11-19 Years
- Adults with Low Literacy

However it is important to note that this strategy and action plan is only a starting point. The ambition and eventual scope of partners is far wider than the above key themes. The strategy will engage additional partners in order to take forward more specific themes in a future phase, for example establishing working groups to look in more detail at the additional specific needs of groups such as Looked After Children, Older People, Vulnerable Adults and others.

An Equality Analysis has been completed for this strategy and will be updated with the ongoing development of the Action Plan.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Library Strategy, 2013-15.