



CLive (Community Learning and Information Vehicle) Launched May 2004

**West Berkshire Council Library and Information Service
Position Statement 2004**



Introduction

West Berkshire Council is proud of its library service which is a much valued presence in every ward and parish in the council area. The council's vision for the service is for it to develop further towards the ideal library service outlined in Framework for the Future. The library service can make a huge contribution to the objectives of West Berkshire Council especially in offering learning opportunities, access to electronic services and in addressing social exclusion.

The council is looking for ways to develop and expand the service to offer greater access, more choice and more flexibility in the way services are delivered. We are dedicated to continuous improvement, to meeting the needs of our existing customers and of creating services to attract new users. The council welcomes the new emphasis on library services and the direction given by Framework for the Future, and we have been working on many aspects of the report for some time. Measuring the impact of the library service is an important consideration and we are aware of and involved in the national initiatives to develop impact measures which can demonstrate the value of library services within the community.

This position statement outlines the huge range of excellent work already being done within the service and the improvements which have been made over the last year. There is more to be done and, with a dedicated staff team, strong political commitment backed up by new resources and a will to develop, I am sure this is a service which will flourish.

I am happy to approve this statement and to submit it for assessment.

Councillor Mike Rodger
Portfolio holder Library and Information Service

1.1 Corporate Vision

Mission Statement- “West Berkshire Council’s Library Service aims to provide information, education, culture and recreation services in a variety of formats and technologies and to be responsive to the public library needs of the community. The service seeks to encourage independent learning and lifelong reading enjoyment.”

West Berkshire Council has a five year plan for the development and improvement of its services and has 10 corporate priorities and four development themes. The library service works towards a range of these priorities and has a key position in the delivery of the council’s vision, as will be demonstrated throughout this report.

The library service is also a key part of the delivery of the Community Strategy formulated by the Local Strategic Partnership, especially in the action groups working on rural issues and lifelong learning. Developing the library service will help the council and its partners to meet the shared vision of ensuring that the people of West Berkshire are “able to enjoy a high quality of life by having equal access to services...”

The council was given a fair score in the CPA in 2002 and is working to improve this in 2005. The council underwent an IDeA peer review in 2003, which showed considerable improvements since the CPA, and an improvement plan is in place. The development of the library service’s contribution to the corporate priorities is a key part of the council’s improvement programme.

The aim of the service is to ensure that libraries:

- are attractive and welcoming to all sections of the community.
- are open and accessible to as wide a range of people as possible with as few rules as possible.
- are aware of and responsive to the needs of the community.
- offer a wide range of books and other material to meet the expressed and known needs of the community and strives to reach non users and discover their needs.
- have friendly, helpful and knowledgeable staff available to help in whatever way is required.
- have free and accessible IT facilities.
- are available to people who cannot visit a static library, either through mobile services or a personal delivery service.
- are central to the community and seen as a vital part of community life and a key community service.

Achievements in 2003/4

During 2003/4 the library service was involved in a wide range of activities which helped to deliver both the council’s corporate plan and the Framework for the Future agenda, as detailed below. The success of many of these initiatives generated considerable publicity for the library service and the council as a whole. Many library activities contribute to a number of the priorities, but the key ones are outlined below. More details of some of these activities will be given later in this report.

Corporate Priority 1 Community Leadership

- CLIVE (Community Learning and Information Vehicle) managed by the library service in partnership with a range of other organisations. Funded as a demonstration project by the Countryside Agency.
- £10K of funding from local partners involved in CLIVE .

- CLIVE, mobile libraries and all branch libraries involved in distribution of travel tokens.
- Availability of planning applications in Pangbourne library to allow local people to see and comment on plans without travelling to Newbury. Plans also available in Newbury library on Saturdays when council offices are closed.
- Promotion of summer reading scheme throughout West Berkshire in partnership with local schools.

Corporate Priority 2 Tackling all forms of social exclusion.

- £35K investment to extend opening hours. The mobile library service now visits a major out of town shopping centre on a Saturday and visits four communities in the evening. Over 100 new library users have been registered as a result.
- Opening hours at five branch libraries were extended to cover lunchtimes and some evenings.
- Funding secured from the Countryside Agency for the new CLIVE .
- £0.5m investment in a new joint school and community library in Theale, the first of its kind in West Berkshire and we expect it to be a model which we can follow elsewhere.
- Family Learning Weekend event in Newbury library which attracted 1200 people and won a national prize for best event in a library.

Corporate Priority 3 Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities

- Visually impaired readers' group meeting at Newbury library. At least 12 people attend every meeting and the group was shortlisted for the Orange readers' Group prize.
- The library service operates a delivery service to housebound people using volunteers and the mobile libraries. We now also take internet enabled laptops to people's homes to give them access to the full range of electronic information and services.

Corporate priority 4. Better and fairer outcomes for children and young people

- A project in partnership with the council's children and young people service to support looked after children in developing their reading skills.
- A children's reading group which has active members from a wide social background
- Over 740 children visited the library on class visits including from schools in the deprived wards of the council area.
- 12000 Reading Maze packs sent out. 2600 children took part and over 600 children joined the library for the first time. Many also brought their families along to join the library.

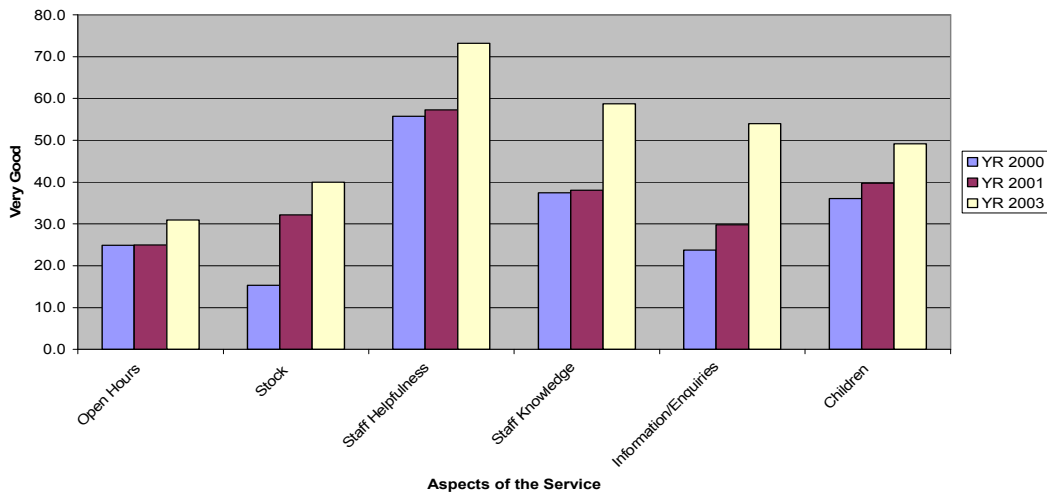
Development Theme 3 Customer Focus

- 10% increase in library visits in 2003/4.
- Library service involvement in council wide discussions about CRM and in giving contact centre staff access to the library system.
- Friends Group for Newbury Library which raises money for the library and encourages users to become involved with the library.
- Customer Comments books at all libraries with a guaranteed written response to all comments available for all users to refer to.
- Planned survey of public views on stock purchase to direct spending on specific areas.
- Plans to establish a children's forum to input to a redesign of the children's section at Newbury library.

The library service is important to everyone in West Berkshire, the community, elected Members and officers and it is acknowledged as contributing to corporate priorities in a range of areas.

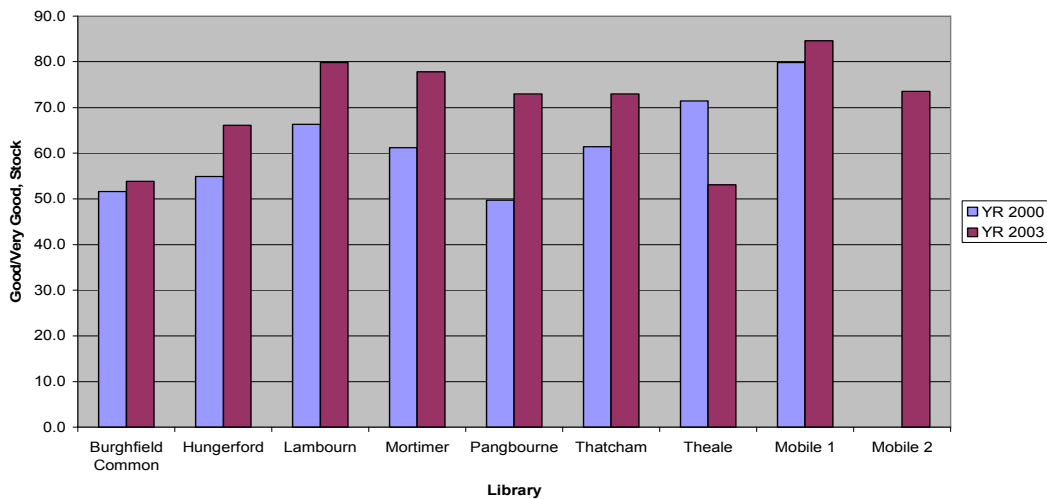
Recent surveys of public attitudes to the library service have been very positive with the PLUS survey recording a high level of satisfaction with the service (an average of 78% satisfaction with the quality of the service). There are significant improvements in almost all libraries compared with satisfaction levels in previous PLUS surveys. In Newbury library for example, all satisfaction levels have improved significantly.

Very Good Ratings : Newbury PLUS from 2000 to 2003



There is also increased satisfaction with the stock in almost all libraries:

Good/Very Good Ratings, Stock : Branches and Mobiles 2000 to 2003



NB- Theale library was in temporary accommodation during the survey period while the new building was being built. This has affected their score in a range of areas.

The council's general annual satisfaction survey for 2004 recorded a 65% satisfaction level with library services. The library service also gathers continuous feedback from customers who complete a Customer Satisfaction survey available in all libraries. This gives figures of 89% satisfaction with the service overall and 93% with the specific visit during which the form was completed.

A set of costed proposals for improving the service in line with the national standards and identified local need will be prepared for the budget cycle for 2005/6. Details of the options being considered are included throughout this report and in the section detailing our plans to improve against the National Standards

2 .Response to Framework for the Future

West Berkshire Library Service has been working for sometime towards achieving many of the recommendations for service development outlined in Framework for the Future and already had a highly developed programme of reader development activities in particular, before F4F. In order to respond better to the F4F recommendations the service is currently undergoing a restructure which will emphasise the F4F themes.

The new structure separates strategic development and operations into two distinct roles and then creates two professional teams, one for Lifelong Learning and one for Reader Development and Children's Services. Social inclusion, digital citizenship and the development of community based working are clearly stated in all the new job descriptions for the new structure and the team leaders have a specific responsibility for planning and monitoring services in these areas. The current service structure has the branch libraries and Newbury central library managed by different teams which has led to some inconsistencies of approach. The new structure will bring the entire service together in order to ensure a consistent approach to services in all local communities and to make more effective use of staff expertise and skills.

The new structure is intended to give the service an even greater focus on the needs of communities throughout West Berkshire and to enable the development of new services to engage with the community. The emphasis will be on involving customers, developing partnerships with other local groups and services and on offering new ways to engage with library services to encourage non users to discover the library service.

The new structure will be implemented during autumn 2004.

2.1 Books, Reading and Learning

Strengths

- A significant improvement in the level of new items purchased in 2003/4 due to better management of the stockfund. This improvement will be continued in 2004/5 through increased input to the stockfund.
- A range of partnership projects to deliver and improve the provision of Books, Reading and Learning. These include:
 - **The Gateway - Theale Library and Adult Learning Centre** opened in May 2004. The service is a joint school and public library, and adult and community learning centre. Extended opening hours in term time are a great benefit to public library users and access to a wider range of stock benefits both sets of library users. Success here will enable the

service to approach other schools with similar proposals to improve both school and public library provision.

- Partnership project with a range of organisations to operate **CLIVE**. A new CLIVE vehicle was launched in May 2004. It delivers information and learning opportunities to rural parts of West Berkshire and carries 5 internet enabled laptops. The driver has been shortlisted for a STAR award (sponsored by the DfES) for people working in lifelong learning.
- Enthusiastic and innovative participation in **national and regional reading development promotions**, such as “The Great Thames Read” (promoted by Penguin) and “The Big Read”.
- “**Reading is Fundamental**” a joint promotion with Starbucks, which is being targeted at children in West Berkshire’s most deprived ward and pupils at an under performing school. 80 children and their carers have been involved in two events so far and more are planned.
- Library staff work with the Council’s Children and Young People service to develop reading skills for **looked after children**.
- **Family Learning Weekend** event in Newbury library attracted 1200 people to a range of activities and won the award for best event in a library from The Campaign for Learning. Larger event planned for 2004.
- CLIVE visits travellers’ sites on a weekly basis in partnership with the local college and The Community Council for Berkshire. The sessions are aimed at improving basic skills for adults and children on the sites.
- **Readers’ groups** operating in 5 libraries and support being provided to 20+ private readers groups in the area.
- **Children’s Reading Group**, “BookChat”, running in Newbury library.
- Active participation in **Branching Out** project and a continued involvement with the scheme as it develops.
- Active involvement with “**Their Reading Futures**” programme which is being used to inform the development of children’s services.
- An assessment and action plan is being drawn up under the “**Fulfilling their Potential**” framework to improve services to young people and develop work with the council’s youth service.
- **Bookstart** scheme is well supported and the service has been actively involved since 1999.
- The service actively promotes the **Summer Reading Challenge** and it has had a significant impact on library use by children and families and considerable amounts of positive feedback.
- Staff knowledge and enthusiasm.

Constraints

- Limited and inflexible space in some library buildings for promotional event and displays.
- Limited stockfund.
- Staff skills, especially in developing learning services.

Challenges

- Improving the awareness of library services amongst non users.
- Improving the attractiveness of libraries to younger people.
- Engaging with the community and involving them in service development.
- An initial audit carried out under the “Inspiring Learning for All” is being used to guide developments in learning service provision.

Policies and Practices

- **Stock Management Policy** - published in 2002 to give library staff and users clear guidelines for the management of stock from purchase through to disposal. Includes guidelines for circulation of stock, for

the range of material users can expect to find in libraries of various sizes and for the level of specialist material we will provide.

- **Library Events Programme** - An annual programme of events and activities for all West Berkshire libraries. The programme aims to ensure every library has at least one significant event per year (space permitting) and that all are involved in service wide promotions such as the Reading Challenge. Publicity for events is targeted at socially excluded groups and feedback from all events is analysed to drive improvements in the programme.
- **Reader Development** - The library service manages a range of readers groups including a VIP group and also supports a large number of private groups. All staff are trained and supported to assist library users in developing their reading activities.
- **Literacy and Basic Skills** - All libraries carry a selection of material for basic skills and there are close links with the local college to refer enquiries. CLIVE delivers basic skills training to travellers sites in the area.
- **Children's Services** - a Children's Charter is in place which sets down clearly the level of service children and their parents can expect from the library. Active encouragement is given to schools to bring classes to the library, children can borrow as many items as adults and fines on children's stock are lower than on adult stock. Work with looked after children and with schools and children in deprived wards is delivering real improvements in the way children from these groups view the library and in their reading skills.
- **Education Development Plan** - The library service works closely with schools across West Berkshire to ensure pupils are aware of the services available to them from the public library. We believe it is important to encourage children to explore the library as a source of books and reading both for school purposes and for their own interests.

The service has also made useful links with the schools' IT and improvement officers, to develop a better awareness of the public library through the use of the schools' website and to investigate joint access to expensive online databases.

Specific actions linked with schools include:

- Regular programme of class visits, targeted where possible, at poorer performing schools and those in more deprived areas.
 - Summer Reading Challenge as outlined above.
 - Joint school and public library provision at Theale which brings together school and public stock and users to create a better service and wider choice for all.
- **Early Years provision**- West Berkshire Libraries have been actively involved with the Bookstart project since 1999. Links with the health visitors are excellent and feedback from them, and the parents whose children have received packs, demonstrates that the scheme is having a significant impact on the use of the library service by parents and young children. "Baby and Toddler" story sessions in a number of libraries are very well attended.

Developing and evaluating

- **Public feedback** - Survey results are analysed and improvements or service changes are implemented where possible.
- Feedback on improvements which require additional funding will be used to inform the options for improvement which will be put to members during the budget cycle.
- **Performance Management** - a new set of local performance indicators was introduced from April 2003 and these have now indicated areas needing work for example, the use of IT facilities in branch libraries could be improved and there is a need to ensure library users, and more significantly, non users, are aware of the availability of IT in all our libraries.

- **Equalities Impact Assessment** - The decision to drop request charges for items in ethnic languages was taken as a result of an equalities impact assessment. A proposal to delete the hire fee for spoken word material will be put to members in the budget process for 2005/6.
- The priority for team leaders in the new structure will be to set clear action plans and targets to address known areas of need identified from customer feedback and to investigate ways of reaching non users to increase library use especially amongst hard to reach groups.

Priorities

Priority	Timescale
Implement new team structure	Autumn 2004
Analyse areas for action from public response to surveys and implement changes.	Dec 2004
Complete "Inspiring Learning for All" and "Their Reading Futures" checklists	Dec 2004
Improve basic skills collections and investigate ways to develop use of the collections	March 2004
Devise and implement survey for children with a view to improving layout of Newbury children's library.(Their Reading Futures)	Dec 2004
Set up focus group for continuing and ongoing consultation with children (funding permitting)	March 2005
Work with West Berks museum to create local history resource for children using members of BookChat group	Dec 2004
Develop CLIVE project and increase availability and take up of learning opportunities on the vehicle	Ongoing
Organise event for Family Learning Week (Sunday Funday) and increase visitor numbers above 1200 achieved in 2003.	Oct 2004
Build on links with local college and organise joint promotions. Specifically Sunday Funday event for Family Learning Week and a readers group event for lecturers and students for World Book Day	Oct 2004 and March 2005

2.2 Digital Citizenship

Strengths

- Range of on-line services, available remotely as well as within libraries, including access to on-line databases.
- Qualified and enthusiastic staff, majority trained to level of New Opportunities Fund Expected Outcomes.
- CLIVE service re-launched with new vehicle and five internet enabled laptops with 3G connection.
- Free and open access to information and communication technology in all libraries (including mobiles).
- Laptops available to take to housebound customers to bring them access to the library catalogue and the internet.
- Member support for filtering on PCs used by children.

- Forefront of Council agenda for modernisation (e-govt) with almost all library services currently capable of being delivered electronically actually available.
- Web enabled system allowing access to the catalogue and allowing users to search the catalogue, reserve or renew items.
- On-line enquiry service (Ask a Librarian) available 24 hours a day with an answer guaranteed within 5 days.
- Broadband connections to all libraries (2Mb).
- Alternative access technology (including keyboards, mice, joysticks etc) available in all libraries.
- Video conference link between 4 libraries and the contact centre to facilitate communications between customers and officers.
- Dolphin software being rolled out to all libraries to enable visually impaired people to use PCs.
- Library service presence on the West Berkshire schools website is being developed. The website is the main port of call for all West Berkshire schools for information on a huge range of subjects. Having a high profile on the site will enable the public library to promote itself to teachers and students more effectively.
- Service involved in a joint project with neighbouring authorities to investigate a joint catalogue and shared library membership across boundaries. Currently carrying out a feasibility study largely funded by SEMLAC.

Constraints

- Levels of awareness of the potential of IT for developing services in a range of areas.
- Availability of time to develop IT facilities and staff skills.
- Technology and requirements of corporate networks prevent participation in some developments.
- Aging PC stock which is increasingly unable to handle new software developments
- Willingness of suppliers to cost databases realistically, and to make them available remotely.

Challenges

- Conflict between open access and security of network/privacy etc.
- User support.
- Developing new services, such as on-line learning.
- Developing new services on old PCs.
- Encouraging and supporting people with disabilities in the use of the library and the IT facilities.
- Content creation, identifying areas of stock suitable for putting into electronic format, obtaining funding and staff time/expertise to achieve it.

Services accessible electronically

	Libraries	Remotely
Internet	✓	✓
Word processing	✓	
Spreadsheets	✓	
Presentation software	✓	
Scanning	✓	
Databases:	✓	
EBSCO	✓	✓
Oxford reference on line	✓	✓

XRefer	✓	✓
Encyclopaedia Britannica	✓	✓
Catalogue	✓	✓
Reservations	✓	✓
Requests	✓	✓
Renewals	✓	✓
Free enquiry email service	✓	✓
PC booking facility	✓	
On-line membership application	✓	✓
Clubs & organisations and other community information databases	✓	✓
Publish local events on website	✓	✓
A-Z Council services	✓	✓
Comments/complaints	✓	✓
National reading initiatives	✓	✓
Video-conferencing	✓	
Alternative access hardware & software	✓	
Mobile library routes	✓	✓
Library opening hours	✓	✓
Access to government services	✓	✓
Access to West Berkshire Council services	✓	✓

The library service URL is

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/leisure.nsf/leadpages/Libraries?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=99&Expand=5>

We are also working on developing the library service presence on the West Berkshire schools website which is http://www.westberks.org/club_homepage.asp?unionid=4&clubid=2097

E-Government strategy

- The library service plays a key role in the e-govt strategy with almost all services which are capable of being electronically delivered already available electronically.
- The library management system is funded for replacement in 2006/7 and could be linked to a smart card project within West Berkshire to allow joint access to the library, leisure facilities and other council services.
- CLiVe is a key delivery vehicle for access to IT for rurally isolated communities and others unable to access services easily.
- Library buildings are the main point of access to e-government for the public.
- The development of a "One-Stop-Shop" as part of the redesign of Hungerford library will be a first for the council. The new facility will bring together the library, cash office and Council Information Centre under one roof and will have facilities for other services to be offered as well.
- Information and Communications is also the lead service in information management and in particular the authority's compliance with the Data Protection Act and the upcoming Freedom of Information Act. The service's responsibility for the council's website will also include electronic content management and link to requests for information under FOI.

Priorities

Priority	Timescale
Continue to develop staff IT skills to enable them to support public IT use	March 2005
Devise a strategy for developing IT support for library users and for training new IT users in liaison with local providers	March 2005
Web enable PC bookings	March 2005
Develop website content on both council and schools website	Dec 2004
Increase use of CLIVE to deliver IT services and training across the area	Ongoing
Investigate possibility of digitising a small local studies collection to test the practicalities of and demand for digitised content	March 2005
Develop One-Stop-Shop in Hungerford	Due to open June 2005
Continue to investigate possibilities of sharing electronic resources with schools to improve coverage and get better value for money	Ongoing
Develop a marketing strategy for improving the use of IT facilities in some branch libraries	March 2004

2.3 Community and Civic Values

Key strengths

- Well established Service to Housebound People delivered by volunteers.
- A network of branch and mobile libraries which covers every parish in the council area.
- CLIVE service.
- The Gateway, Theale Library and Adult Learning Centre opened May 2004.
- A new One-Stop-Shop project based on a new library in Hungerford which will incorporate other council services. Due to open June 2005
- Access improvements for libraries in progress with two libraries having major improvements in 2004/5.
- A new, more relaxed attitude towards the rules for joining the library.
- Meeting room available at Newbury Library for community groups.
- Branch and mobile libraries and CLIVE used for the distribution of travel tokens throughout West Berkshire.
- An Equalities Impact Assessment demonstrated that the service is accessible to a wide range of people and has positive policies for addressing the needs of people with disabilities in particular. Charging policies have been reviewed as a result and other changes requiring political approval will be proposed.
- Local groups/services meet at the library in Thatcham, Lambourn and Mortimer. Use of Theale library by community groups will increase as the new service develops.
- The new Hungerford library will have a meeting room which is accessible out of opening hours and will be made available for community groups at all times.

- Library staff attend Community Forums, parish planning meetings etc. and the service is also represented on the Children's Partnership.
- Active programme of events in libraries and participation in local arts festivals.
- Regular programme of class visits from schools across the Council area.
- Targeted promotion of events and activities to pupil referral units, special schools, groups representing disabled people etc.
- Friends of Newbury Library group which raises funds, organises events and encourages users to join to show their support for the service.
- The Community Plan for West Berkshire (produced by the Local Strategic Partnership) contains many areas of targeted work which are very relevant to the library service including action to ensure all rural communities have access to high quality and integrated services, engaging the community in lifelong learning, improving basic skills and improving access to IT facilities for those in rural areas.

Constraints

- Some building limitations eg space and location.
- Opening hours and difficulties of resourcing and identifying new opening times which would generate increased use.
- Mobile libraries unable to take on additional stops due to lack of available time.
- Staffing levels and workload.

Challenges

- Continuing to improve opening times and to match them to community needs.
- Reaching Non Users.
- Publicising the service to ethnic minority groups and responding to their needs.
- Proactivity in work with the community, and greater consultation with communities on their library services.
- Developing the use of volunteers in the library service as demonstrated by "Lending Time".

Policies and practices for adults and children

Headline policies and practice.

- We aim to provide consistent standard of services across West Berkshire, with access to services optimised for all communities.
- We regularly ask for feedback from customers about our services, to inform future development.
- We have recently relaxed the rules governing library membership which required proof of address to be able to borrow items to make it easier for people to become members.
- Library charges are set at a level which balances the need to generate income with the need to ensure users are not put off using services. The charge for hire of spoken word material will be proposed for deletion when the council reviews fees and charges in the coming months.

Actions encouraging citizenship and community identity

- Branch network and mobile service takes the Council out to every parish.
- Active participation in the national Bookstart Scheme (since 1999) to introduce babies and their parents to library membership.
- Work with pre-school groups and schools to introduce children to library membership.
- Active involvement in work experience programmes with the Education Business Partnership. Newbury library also has long term work placements of people with learning difficulties.

- Innovative project with looked after children to encourage them to discover the joys of reading with a supportive librarian.
- Participate in Community Forum meetings, dealing with specific groups such as the elderly and young people, in the East and West of West Berkshire.
- Library buildings are used by community groups, Parish Councils, information and advice providers and lifelong learning classes.
- Hold and promote books and other materials about the locality.
- Organise events focusing on local history.
- Provide travel tokens on behalf of West Berkshire.
- Service to Housebound people takes the library to key excluded groups.
- Readers' Groups are run in several libraries, including one for Visually Impaired People. Support given to private Readers' Groups.

Improving customer services

- Investigating ways in which the library service can be accessed through the council's contact centre.
- The service will be part of the CRM system which will improve customer services across all council services and will enable staff to signpost users to other council services.
- The ability to renew books and place requests for items through the contact centre will be explored in the coming months.

Areas to develop and methods of evaluation

- Reaching people from ethnic minority groups.
- Reaching non users.
- Finding opening hours patterns which will maximise use.
- Developing community use of libraries for other purposes and involving volunteers.
- Successful opening of new Hungerford "One-Stop-Shop" and building on the success of the project.
- Developing links with youth service to improve provision for young people.

Priorities

Priority	Timescale
Develop service delivery through contact centre. Ensuring staff are trained and able to respond to library enquiries efficiently	March 2005
Build on consultation activity carried out for equalities review to develop links with ethnic minority groups	March 2005
Open new Hungerford "One-stop-Shop"	June 2005
Use new service structure to develop and strengthen community links	Ongoing
Investigate ways to develop use of volunteers in the library service	March 2005
Monitor effects of new opening hours and seek views of users and non users on future developments	March 2005

2.4 Building capacity to deliver transformation

Strengths

- Commitment from members to develop and improve the library service and to link more closely with the community's needs
- Favourable public perception: strong public support and enthusiasm for new services
- Good IT provision in all libraries and well trained staff
- CLiVe which takes council and other partner organisation's services to communities across the area
- New libraries in Newbury (2000), Theale (2004) and planned for Hungerford (2005). All have the capacity for wider community use, Newbury already doing this and the others will develop this area of work.
- Feasibility studies underway to identify options for relocating Thatcham library.
- Extension of mobile library services from April 2003 to cover larger communities in the evenings and to be available on Saturday mornings
- Planned programme for limited redecoration and repair of other libraries and for replacing furniture and making other cosmetic improvements.
- Marketing: Strong creative visual image in line with corporate ID and guidelines for branding, together with a range of events to positively raise the profile of the service
- Visibility: Libraries represent a key presence for the Council in all West Berkshire communities
- Staff: enthusiastic, committed, innovative and involved in service development
- Promoting social inclusion: equality of access is a principle of the library service

Constraints.

- Limited space in some libraries makes developing community use difficult.

Challenges

- To continue to improve quality of service within funding constraints and work to improve the funding situation.
- To develop Libraries as an effective community resource.
- Reaching the working community who don't live in the area and are based on business parks often remote from static or mobile libraries
- The rural nature of much of the authority and ensuring services reach all parts at times when they will be used.
- Continuing to develop the library service links with the Local Strategic Partnership and the Children's Partnership.
- Extending services and promoting them to hard to reach groups.

Actions to improve leadership, staff capacity and skills

- Library service staff are part of the corporate approach to performance management and have appraisals and regular 1-1 sessions with their line managers.
- A training needs analysis together with the appraisals has led to the creation of a training plan covering a wide range for training needs for all library staff.
- Training is delivered through service specific courses (eg; use of the library IT system) through Corporate training programmes, through attendance at Cilip and other professional courses, and through membership of specific library interest groups.

- Library assistants are supported to attain the City and Guilds LIAC qualification
- Training has been delivered to staff on a wide range of topics, all have the ECDL and other areas include advanced IT modules, Data Protection and Freedom of Information, disability awareness, customer care, managing difficult people, health and safety, first aid and more, both library specific and beyond.
- Staff are encouraged to develop their own ideas for training topics and sessions have been delivered by individual staff to other staff and we have also organised sessions with external speakers and marketed places to other authorities.
- We continue to improve the monitoring and evaluation of training to ensure it is well targeted and the benefits are tangible.
- The new service structure will offer professional staff especially the opportunity to develop new skills and work in different ways to improve services. Opportunities for support staff to develop their enquiry service skills will also be increased.
- Staff are encouraged and supported in making links with other services across the council and in forming partnerships with others to develop new services such as the looked after children scheme and the use of the library for English classes for asylum seekers.

Activities to develop and evaluate practice

- As demonstrated above the service consistently achieves high satisfaction responses from public surveys but we are aware of the scope for significantly more work with local communities and for more involvement of local people in library service development and planning.
- The new service structure will create team leaders with specific responsibilities for developing this area of work. Action plans will include local consultation and strategies for developing community involvement
- The service works with the Community Council for Berkshire on the CLIVE project and is also represented at CCB events and parish planning activities.
- The housebound delivery service is provided through the extensive use of volunteers and there is scope for developing the role of volunteers to build community partnerships.
- The service has a range of local PIs to measure different aspects of the service and is now looking at ways of measuring the impact of services on the community or individuals. We are aware of and engaged with the national work being carried out in this area and look forward to being able to more easily demonstrate the impact of our services.

Partnerships

The Council and the library service have a number of key partners, including

- Amey plc :- strategic partner for HR, Finance, Property, business support and ICT
- Local Strategic partnership – with both private and voluntary sector
- Children’s Partnership
- Lifelong Learning Partnership
- Primary Care Trust (PCT) on health issues
- Local Area Forums
- Member of the Central Buying Consortium for stock purchase

In addition partnership working around specific projects is strong:

- CLIVE project which involves Community Council, Lifelong Learning Partnership, the local college, IAG, Early years and Childcare and may more. Majority of funding is from the Countryside Agency.
- The service works with the council's Children and Young People Dept. to provide a one to one service to Looked After Children in West Berkshire
- We are active members of Bookstart

- The service is involved in a partnership project funded by SEMLAC to investigate a joint catalogue and library membership across a number of neighbouring authorities.
- Friends of Newbury Library
- A number of managed and private reading groups
- VIP readers group which uses funding from the Friends group and support from the Berkshire Blind Society

Priorities

Priority	Timescale
Implement new structure and create action plans for staff development	Dec 2004
Increase library visits by 10% year on year	Ongoing
Reverse the decline in loan figures through better use of stockfund	March 2005
Meet all satisfaction standards as assessed by PLUS survey	End 2005
Staff training needs as identified through the appraisal system, are met as far as possible within budgets	Ongoing
Train staff in special skills eg; Theale library staff Behaviour Management Training for school students	Dec 2004

3.1 Public Library Standards

- The Options for Improvement proposals will be included in the budget planning cycle in Autumn 2004.

Standard description	National Standard	West Berks performance 2002/3	Comments	Option for Improvement
PLS 1(i) Proportion of households living within specified distance of static library	88% within 1 mile 100% within 2 miles	55% within 1 mile 75% within 2 miles	This is an unrealistic target for a rural authority and the council is satisfied that mobile library services are an appropriate alternative delivery mechanism, albeit that frequency of visits could be improved (NB- incorrect figure reported in 2003 in error)	
PLS1(ii) Proportion of households living within a specified	88% within 1 mile 100% within	55% within 1 mile 75% within 2	The extension of mobile library stops to evenings and Saturdays in April	Proposals will be put forward for extending opening hours to include

distance of a library open during convenient hours	2 miles	miles	2003 has improved service access but mobile libraries do not count in this measure. Generally libraries in the area are not busy after 5.30pm	later evenings at Newbury library, extending Saturday opening hours and Sunday opening.
PLS 3 (i) Aggregate opening hours per 1000 population.	128 hours	104	Additional opening hours funded in April 2003 have significantly improved performance against this standard. Achieving 128 would require an additional 66 hours per week across the whole service. The extended term time opening hours at Theale library will improve performance from 2004.	66 additional hours is a challenging target, but proposals to meet it will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An additional mobile library ➤ Sunday opening for Newbury library ➤ Evening opening to 8pm for Newbury ➤ Wednesday afternoon opening at Newbury library ➤ Additional opening hours for some of the branch libraries
PLS 3(ii)Proportion of aggregate opening hours that fall outside 9am to 5pm on weekdays	30%	24.4	The majority of the additional hours from April 2003 were at lunchtimes in small libraries so the % outside 9-5 has dropped slightly as a result	See above
PLS 11 Number of visits per 1000 population	6300	4200	A significant and sustained improvement against this target but the 6300 figure is still unrealistic for a rural authority. The increase is largely due to the people's network. A continued development of the library's events, promotions and activities programme and a greater community focus will improve this figure.	
PLS 12 (i) Percentage of adult	65%	52%	As demonstrated earlier, the general satisfaction	An improved stockfund in 2004/5 will enable us to

library users reporting success in finding a book			with stock has improved significantly so we are disappointed that the PLUS survey in 2003 did not improve our performance in this area.	build on the improvement management of the fund and improve the chances of users finding specific items.
PLS 17 Annual items added through purchase per 1000 population	216	130	<p>Significant improvement achieved against this standard in 2003/4 for 3 reasons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stock buying through the Central Buying Consortium which gives better discounts ➤ More paperbacks purchased ➤ Online databases funded from IT budget instead of stock fund (But this cannot be sustained indefinitely) 	We will continue to improve against this target in 2004/5 and hope to achieve 136 items per 1000 though continued close management of the fund and the input of additional resources.
PLS 18 Time taken to replenish the lending stock on open access or available for loan.	6.7 years	8 years	This is a significant improvement in performance which has been brought about not just by additional purchasing (a positive move) but also by a reduction in the amount of lending stock available through withdrawal of old stock.	Ditto above

3.2 Local targets

- A set of new local performance indicators was devised and collected from April 2003. Some of these proved difficult to collect or provided statistically unreliable returns so we have deleted them, but others have proved more useful.
- The statistics demonstrate that we have an ethnic minority membership which reflects almost exactly the council's population profile. Measuring satisfaction rates amongst ethnic groups however has proved difficult as returns from ethnic minority users have been too few to be statistically relevant.

- Measuring membership of people with disabilities is difficult because of limitations in the library management system
- The service has deleted the charge for requesting books in ethnic minority languages from outside West Berkshire as our inability to supply them free from our own stock meant this was discriminatory. Proposals to delete the charge for spoken word material will be put to members when fines and charges are discussed.
- Services to people with disabilities are available through all libraries with work being carried out on two branches this year to ensure they comply with the DDA.
- Feedback from a focus group of people with disabilities as part of the equalities assessment demonstrated a very high satisfaction rate with the library service.
- All libraries have assistive technology available for using IT.
- The mobile and housebound library service delivers a home service to nearly 300 people through the use of volunteers and the mobile libraries.
- The service manages a readers group for visually impaired people.
- Funding from the Community Education Fund has been used to involve VIPs and travellers in events connected to The Great Thames Read.
- CLIVE delivers information, learning opportunities and much more to all parts of the area in partnership with a range of other organisations. It is also used to deliver basic skills classes to traveller's sites.
- All publicity for events, activities and promotions carried out in libraries is circulated to a wide range to groups and organisations in order to target people from socially excluded groups.

4. Resources

Spaces

Strengths

- An excellent new Central Library in Newbury, opened in 2000
- The Gateway, Theale Library and Adult Learning Centre, opened in May 2004. The first joint school and public library in West Berkshire with an adult and community learning centre as part of the building
- Relatively new building stock, with the oldest library dating from the mid 60's
- Increasing numbers of shared spaces, currently Mortimer library has a Parish Council office attached and Burghfield Common and Mortimer host local enquiry points.
- Building work will start in December 2004 to replace the cramped library in Hungerford with a joint library/cash office/Council information point, thus creating a single point of contact for the community with the Council in this growing town and improving customer access to services, a major plank in the Council's customer contact strategy.
- Feasibility studies underway to assess possible new locations for Thatcham library which is too small for the population and poorly located. The possibility of relocating to the local secondary school and next to the leisure centre will be explored along with possible sites in the town centre.

Constraints

- Some branch libraries are too small for the size of the community served (e.g. Thatcham) while others are not geographically well sited within the communities served (e.g. Theale) .The new development at Theale should place the library at the heart of the community even if its geographical location is less ideal.

- Limited maintenance budgets to redevelop and modernise library buildings.
- The closure of one library due to a difficult budget situation for 2004/5. Wash Common library, in Newbury, closed in March 2004 and the area is now served by a mobile library.

Challenges

- Keeping buildings attractive and welcoming.
- Finding new ways to use library buildings to position them at the heart of their communities.
- Finding ways to involve library users in the design of buildings

Timescales

- There is no agreed timescale for the provision of new buildings. The capital programme within the Council runs on a 3 year cycle and bids for capital projects have to compete with other services

Stock

Strengths

- Around £300,000 was spent on improving the stock at the new Newbury Library during 1999 and 2000 in preparation for the opening of the new building.
- A robust process of stock control, and automated stock circulation is in place in the branch libraries, with the aim of meeting more closely the needs of the local community and working within the stock budget.
- Significant improvement in the number and range of stock acquired in 2003/4 due to better management of stock funds.

Constraints

- Stock fund was reduced from £300,000 per annum to £200,000 per annum in 2001 as part of an overall savings package across the council.
- The Council will look to achieve best value in purchasing new stock within the year on year fund of £200 000.

Challenges

- To continue to achieve and develop the best use of the available stock fund.
- To improve the stock in Newbury library which is ageing since the new library opened with significant amounts of new material which is wearing out and dating at the same time.
- An initial assessment of fiction using the Stock Health Check has highlighted a need to purchase some new titles which will be addressed as a priority.

Timescales

- Improvements in the stockfund will be made as budget pressures within the council allow. An increase in the stockfund in 2004/5 will enable us to improve our level of buying.

Staffing

Strengths

- Staff are enthusiastic about the service they are delivering, committed to improvement and innovative.
- They are well trained and ready to explore new areas of service.
- Low turnover of staff.
- We have a focused training plan in place.
- The new structure being implemented from autumn 2004 will enable staff to develop new service areas and give opportunities for personal development within the service.

Constraints

- Many of our staff are part time, which carries with it both advantages (flexibility) and disadvantages (communications, line management and training and the costs of employing larger numbers of people).
- We also have a limited local pool of library qualified staff, and some difficulty in recruiting to professional vacancies from outside of the area due to high local property prices.
- Staffing levels are adequate for current service delivery but expansion of new services and growth of library use could be difficult to maintain.

Challenges

- To maintain the high level of commitment from staff by making them feel valued.
- Recruitment of professional staff a potential problem, as reflected in national trends.
- Providing sufficient staff support to cope with increasing public use of IT
- Finding ways to use the community to develop services through volunteers without compromising staffing levels
- Implementing the new structure.

Timescales:

- Timescale on the implementation of the training plan is that all currently identified training needs for current staff will be completed within the next 18 months.
- New structure to be in place by autumn 2004.

ICT**Strengths**

- Inflation linked revenue budget
- Range of hardware and software in all libraries

Constraints

- Network/security requirements
- Availability of time from IT support to implement new services and repair and maintain the library service's large number of heavily used public PCs.
- Increasing demand for new IT services which cannot be provided on the current specification of PCs we have in our libraries.

Challenges

- Funding programme for replacement PCs
- Increasing costs of consumables

Adequacy

- The Council makes adequate provision for revenue costs of maintaining the infrastructure and recognises the role that Libraries can play in the wider corporate agenda.
- Currently, the revenue budget is adequate for existing needs.

Timescale

- As IT issues arise we work closely with the IT service to develop solutions which will ensure corporate security, yet at the same time allow us to be flexible in what we offer the public. There is no specific timetable for resolving network or security issues.

- Like all other Council services, the Library service has to make a bid to the Capital Programme for funding any upgrades. The Library service has funding in the Capital Programme for 2006/7 to replace the library management system, and to upgrade staff and public PCs. The possibility of this being linked with a smart card project for the whole council will position the library service at the centre of the council's agenda but will also mean considerably more money will need to be identified.

Conclusion

This position statement paints a picture of a positive, developing and forward looking library service which is constantly looking for ways to improve the service to the public of West Berkshire. A range of innovative programmes are in place and in development, and a new structure, designed to reflect Framework for the Future and to align the service even more closely to the Council's corporate agenda, will be implemented very soon.