Appendix 1

Oldham Library and Information Service: An Update on recent developments

1.1 All the key actions relating to the Strategic Review of the Library and Information Service as discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Meetings were incorporated into the annual Service Plan.

1.2 We have made good progress with actions in the Plan and are on target to meet a high percentage of objectives by the end of March 2012.

1.3 The Strategic Review identified the Core Purpose of the Library and Information Service as providing:
   - Access to Information
   - Support for Learning
   - Books and Reading
   - Space for communities.

1.4 The Service Plan identified key areas of activity under each of these headings. We are currently 6 months into the lifecycle of the plan and achievements to date under the headings include:

1.5 Access to Information:

1.5.1 The introduction of Customer Information Points in all libraries: Residents are now able to apply for benefits and report problems at the libraries, as well as being able to find information locally on a range of council services.

1.5.2 Library staff are also able to offer face to face support and signpost customers to specialist advice using the library computers to access the Oldham Council website or the freephone linking directly to council departments.

1.5.3 The introduction of CAB advice sessions into Lees, Chadderton, Crompton and Failsworth libraries.

1.5.4 Development of business, finance and employment programme: the aim of this programme is to work in partnership with business support organisations to promote the business resources and services of the Library Service, support local businesses and those wanting to set up their own business, provide high quality information for Job seekers, local employers and students and provide information to help people through the ‘credit crunch’ events in the programme have included a successful Business Breakfast on the theme of marketing, seminars on performance management and copywriting and advise sessions for the newly self employed with HMRC. September will also see the Library Service hosting an Employment and Skills fair, with an opportunity to meet employers and training organisations and attend workshops such as CV writing and interview techniques.

1.5.5 Health Information: the programme of events to promote the information role of the Library Service in terms of Health and Wellbeing has continued with sessions such as Nordic Walking, Love your Heart (a free health check event at Chadderton Library) and stress
management. Forthcoming events include a chair based exercise session, a seminar on banishing winter blues and a session entitled Don’t be a Cancer Chancer when a cancer champion from the NHS will be advising on how to spot cancer symptoms. In January, Oldham Library will be hosting a weekend Health programme where our guest speaker will be TV Dr Chris Steele

1.6 Support for Learning:

1.6.1 Silver Surfers Day: young volunteers were on hand in the library to help older customers with their mobile devices, texting and accessing the internet

1.6.2 Summer Reading Challenge 2011: our most successful year to date with over 2,200 children taking part in the challenge to read 6 books over the summer holidays

1.6.3 All About Dads: a programme of 6 Sunday sessions at Oldham Library and now taking place at Lees Library to provide an opportunity for fathers/male carers to spend quality time with their children in a safe and secure environment

1.6.4 Mad About Science: a series of workshops took place at for children and families at six Oldham libraries during Science and Engineering Week in March. Sonic sounds and slime were the main focus of the experiments carried out and children loved the hands on approach and experiments which included the magic voice changer, the ‘slinky’ and the inner workings of silly putty.

1.6.5 Development of English Conversation Club at Oldham Library: The aim of this programme which takes place every Thursday 10.00 -11.30am, is to provide a platform for language learners to use and develop their English in a casual setting, and support a diverse group to interact with each other and make new friends.

1.6.6 Lifting the lid on Learning: our first week long Informal Learning Festival planned in partnership with the Lifelong Learning Service, will take place in October, providing the opportunity for customers to explore and enjoy a range of free taster sessions on topics as diverse as food and make up demos to Zumba and woodcraft

1.7 Books and Reading:

1.7.1 Storytelling project at Lees Library Community Hub: this programme is a key legacy of the lottery funded Community Libraries project. The Storytelling Project was specifically set up to engage communities through a creative programme of storytelling. Recent visiting storytellers have included Jan Blake, an international storyteller who has been performing worldwide since 1986, specialising in stories from Africa, the Caribbean and Arabia. Other visiting tellers with international reputations have included Peter Chand, Patrick Ryan and Michael Harvey.

1.7.2 Oldham Literary Weekend: a festival featuring the best in fiction, non-fiction, verse and storytelling. The Festival was launched with an appearance by William Roache giving his unique perspective about the most famous street in Manchester. 140 guests attended this special event at the newly opened Failsworth library.
1.7.3 Reading places: a summertime reader development promotion – themed on travel, (fiction and non-fiction). The promotion included author talks, reader development pods and a toolkit.

1.7.4 Book Review Competition for Families: Oldham Libraries worked in partnership with Oldham Lifelong Learning Service to give families throughout Oldham the chance to enter a Family Learning Book Review Competition.

1.7.5 The Autumn winter programme also includes a murder mystery night and an appearance at Delph Library by Willy Russell, one of the most successful writers of our time.

1.8 Community Space:

1.8.1 The Big Lunch at Lees Library Community Hub: Around 200 people attended the Big Lunch at Lees Library. There was a great mix of people from all around the Lees area and the first Lees Library Big Lunch cake competition was hotly contested! Other activities included face painting, henna painting, a community tombola and lots of time together to chat over lunch. Leesfield ATC provided drumming displays and the driving simulator from Road Safety was available to test our reflexes.

1.8.2 Refugee Week: celebrated between 19 and 25 June with five events organised by Oldham Refugee Week Partnership, co-ordinated by Oldham Library Service. The programme kicked off with a 7-a-side football tournament in which 14 teams participated. An information stand, raising awareness about the plight of refugees and their contributions to the UK, was held at Oldham Library. Table Games of the World kept the enthusiasts busy discovering the history and origin of games and trying them out. Games included: Carom, Quarto and Chinese Checkers which originated in Germany! A Jewellery Making Demonstration and Workshop was held at Lees Library Community Hub, where participants created some very intricate designs with the help of an expert. The programme closed with the Let’s Celebrate event on 25th June and was an extravaganza music and songs, interjected with stories of refugees living in Oldham. We had nearly 400 participants during a week-long programme of activities where 96% rated the events as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.

1.8.3 Further events planned for the Celebrate! Programme include an afternoon of dance and quizzes to celebrate Diwali, a lunchtime talk on Chanukah and Christmas carols and mince pies.

1.8.4 Lees Library Community Hub Child Safety Week: a week of fun events and activities to raise awareness during child safety week

1.8.5 Sunday Funtime at Oldham Library: an open session every Sunday morning for families to spend some quality time together in a welcoming environment filled with books, softplay finger painting, Lego and Duplo activities

1.8.6 Rockabye Roadshow: a celebration of lullabies held at Oldham Library. Three musicians play soothing music and sing lullabies to babies in arms and their parents/carerers in 2 hour long sessions. Seating is provided on beanbags, cushions or fluffy rugs. Multi-sensory lights and aromas help the audience to be totally relaxed.
1.9  The Library Service Annual Plan also has a section entitled Quality Services which incorporates actions around the following:

1.9.1  Consultation with District Partnerships re the development of the Core Offer as defined in the Strategic Review of the Library Service: Meetings have taken place with District Partnership managers about the role of the library service in supporting local priorities.

1.9.2  Agreed actions include the development of a brochure of activities that Partnerships can use to identify relevant programmes of library activity. Work is currently underway to produce a first draft of the brochure. We will also be taking the learning from the Lees Library

1.9.3  Community Hub project and considering what would be appropriate activity for rolling out to other libraries (particularly the new Fitton Hill Neighbourhood Centre) to ensure that services are developed and delivered according to local need and in a way that supports the co-operative agenda. A key development in our joint working with the District Partnerships is the fact that a number of libraries have become the local hub / base and a number of District Managers and locality staff are now co-located with libraries.

1.9.4  Development of the ‘Library Family’ model: The concept of the Library Family identified in the Strategic Review is in recognition of the fact that to develop a comprehensive Library and Information service across the authority, Oldham Libraries needs to work in partnership with community partners, education partners and specialist partners. Although there has been some slippage with this piece of work, progress has been made in a number of areas and will be further developed over the course of the Autumn.

1.9.5  Work has progressed with Delph Volunteer Led Community Library and Oldham Library staff will start to co staff this facility to enable the full range of library services to be delivered (including the provision of information) from the middle of October.

1.9.6  A reading group for Oldham Council workers has been introduced.

1.9.7  A core offer of services has been developed for primary schools including the introduction of an innovative new programme Reception Reads designed to encourage parents of children about to start Reception class to share a selection of books with their child over the summer holidays. Work is also being undertaken to develop an Oldham Schools’ Book Award.

1.9.8  Meetings have taken place with the Extended Services Team to discuss the potential for joint projects. Links have been strengthened with the Health and Business sectors.

1.9.9  Embedding the new staffing structure: a new management staffing structure, aligned to the core purpose of the Service as outlined in the Strategic Review was introduced to ensure that activity was focused on developing programmes of activity aligned to each of the four aspects of the Core Purpose.

1.9.10 Following on from the management review, a review of frontline staffing was undertaken in response to a budget reduction but also to ensure a high quality customer focused service.
1.9.11 The front line staffing review has presented some challenges but we are confident that all issues will be resolved and that we can focus on delivering a lean, efficient but effective front of house service for all our customers.

1.9.12 Performance Action Plan: The Service has worked with the Performance Team to develop an Annual Performance Framework, profiling a range of activities to take place within each quarter. A key priority for Oldham libraries is to embed the practice of evaluating our programmes of activity in terms of outcomes.

1.9.13 As a Service, Oldham Libraries continues to perform well when benchmarked against comparator authorities. We have, for example, one of the highest figures for visitors numbers. Oldham Libraries is leading the Performance and Peer Review work-stream for the Greater Manchester Libraries Shared Services Project, which aims to identify best practice for all authorities to learn from.

1.9.14 New Capital programmes: the new Fitton Hill Library development is due to open in January 2011. Failsworth Library opened in the newly refurbished Failsworth Town Hall in March. The library boasts a high quality environment offering a modern, retail experience for customers. There has been a 55% increase in new members and 12% increase in issues.

1.9.15 Extending Volunteering Opportunities across the Service: An open day is planned for Saturday 24 September to recruit volunteers to the Service. We are particularly interested in extending the reach of the Home Library Service, which currently engages with only a small percentage of potential users due to capacity, through working with volunteers.