

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

Purpose of Report

1. This report enables Members to evaluate the performance of Cardiff in the 2015 Summer Reading Challenge and test plans for the Summer Reading Challenge in summer 2016.

Background

2. The Summer Reading Challenge is a reading promotion for children aged four to 11 that takes place across the UK. It is run annually by The Reading Agency (an independent charity, whose aim is to inspire more people to read more, encourage them to share their enjoyment of reading and celebrate the difference that reading makes to all our lives) through the public library network.
3. Children's reading can 'dip' during the long school summer holidays and the aim of the Summer Reading Challenge is to address this. The target is to get children to read six or more books from the library during the summer holidays. It is free to join and every child who completes the Challenge receives a certificate. Children can read whatever they like - fact books, joke books, picture books, audio books – the only requirement is that they are borrowed from the library.

Previous Summer Reading Challenge Results

4. The following results were achieved in Cardiff for the 2013 Summer Reading Challenge:
 - 4853 children started the Challenge

- 3207 completed – 66%
 - 49% aged 4 – 7
 - 49% aged 8 - 11
 - 3% aged 12 plus
- 600 new members of the Library Service
- 1,771 children attended events that ran over the Summer Holidays
- The 66.1% completion rate saw Cardiff ranked 3rd in Wales.

5. In preparing for the 2014 Summer Reading Challenge, the following targets were set:

- 10% increase in participation
- Increased profile
- Audience development
- Consistency of service compared to previous scatter gun approach
- Offer gateways to reading to Cardiff's children.

6. The following results were achieved in Cardiff for the 2014 Summer Reading Challenge:

- 5,924 children participated in the Summer Reading Challenge (an increase of 1,071 [18%])
- A 6% increase in completion rate
- 270 promotional events and activities delivered (an increase of 241%)
- 2932 children attended events (a 65% increase)
- 605 children joined the Library Service
- Visited 81 schools.

Summer Reading Challenge 2015

7. The theme of *Record Breakers* was set for the 2015 Summer Reading Challenge.

In scrutinising the 2014 results, Members were informed that the Council was looking to build upon the partnerships it had developed with organisations in Cardiff to further promote the 2015 Summer Reading Challenge, and that an improved completion rate of 70% was being targeted.

Previous Scrutiny

8. Following its consideration of the 2014 Summer Reading Challenge results in May 2015, the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-operatives & Social Enterprise to say:

We are aware that this initiative is one that Local Authorities must opt-in to, and are glad the Council is committed to supporting young people and addressing the literacy dip that can occur in the summer break.

9. The Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee has considered Library provision in Cardiff at a number of meetings in its 2014/15 work programme. During these meetings Members stressed:

- The closure of a local library would be more than just a loss of access to books. There will be an impact on the local economy, where shops and cafes benefit from the passing trade of those who are visiting the library. Similarly local schools, who direct their pupils to the library for access to the internet or printers, or schedule visits to the library to encourage young people to read, will no longer be able to do so, and could impact on young people reaching their full potential and literacy targets.
- Libraries are far more to local communities than a place to borrow books – they provide a social meeting point for communities, a place for young people to study, to access the internet.

Way Forward

Councillor Peter Bradbury (Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise) has been invited and may wish to give a statement. Sarah McGill (Director of Communities, Housing and Customer Services) and Isabelle Bignall (Assistant Director of Communities and Customer Service) will be in attendance and will provide an overview of the 2015 Summer Reading Challenge and targets for 2016.

Legal Implications

10. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

11. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/ Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

Recommendations

12. The Committee is recommended to give consideration to the information attached to this report and received at this meeting, and to submit any recommendations, observations or comments to the Cabinet.

Marie Rosenthal

Director of Governance and Legal Services

8 January 2016