

REPORT TO THE CHIEF OFFICER NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AUGUST 2014

INVEST TO SAVE PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT AN EMAIL MEASSAGING SERVICE FOR LIBRARY CUSTOMER NOTIFICATIONS

*Report written by: Sara Weare, Group Leader Business Transformation
Christine George., Libraries Manager*

Report submitted by: Cath Thomas, Head of Economy Environment & Enterprise

1 Area Affected

1.1 Neighbourhood Services , Libraries

2 Purpose of Report

2.1 To seek Chief Officer Approval for £2,500 funding, to implement an automated email messaging service for Library customer notifications.

3 Key Messages

3.1 Current manual administrative processes relating to the provision of library customer notifications is very costly and resource intensive and savings could be achieved by the implementation of an automated email messaging service for customer notifications.

3.2 It currently takes one member of staff approximately 7.5 hours per week to carry out the administrative processes relating to the provision of the manual customer notifications via the traditional letter, and on average the team sends out 1072 letters every month.

3.3 Based on administrative, postage and 'oncosts', the current cost of sending Libraries notifications via traditional manual letters is approximately £1000 per month

3.4 The cost of sending an automated email is nil, so by utilizing this module for as many notifications as possible, significant savings will be achieved.

3.5 By adopting the automated email messaging service, the Libraries Service will also be able to provide a more modern digital service, which will better suit the needs of customers (particularly our younger customers) - in effect, the proposal also offers potential to 'future-proof' the service.

4 Background

4.1 Torfaen Libraries aim to be seen by library users as being modern, forward-looking and responsive to customer demand. Offering customers who have expressed dissatisfaction with printed letters the option of receiving emails demonstrates our

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT UPON REQUEST

1

commitment to customer care, whilst embracing advancing digital technology.

4.2 Many situations arise daily, where an automated e-mail message could replace a letter or a phone call, for example :

- Reservations/'Overdues' letter
- Pre-dues (i.e. remind customers that items on loan are approaching their due date) and encourage them to use the online self-service to renew their loans and avoid accruing fines
- Messages to remind customers whose membership is close to its expiry date to re-register
- Personal Library 'My Account' access
- Library closures (e.g due to bad weather etc)
- Messages to advertise Library activities/events and to promote the service

5 Issues and Findings

5.1 A lot of work has been carried out within the Libraries Team over the past year or so to consider various automated service options, and one element that has been considered is the introduction of text messaging. Whilst it is thought that this may be a good option in the longer term, the current costs to introduce such a system far outweigh the benefit that might be achieved. As such, it has been decided that this is not appropriate at this point in time, however, the team may consider this option at a later date.

5.2 At present, over the course of a week, it takes one member of staff approximately 7.5 hours (1 day) per week to carry out the administrative function associated with current traditional letter communications to customers.

5.3 4286 letters have been produced and posted to customers over a 4 month sample period, and the cost that has been attached to this is £4000. This cost includes paper and printing costs, as well as the administrative costs. This sample 4 month period is fairly typical of normal postage, and averages out at approximately 1072 letters per month.

5.4 Adopting an automated email messaging service will provide a cost saving on current postage, it will release staff to undertake other duties, it will help to improve stock circulation ; and will help to improve the image of the 'digital' Library , (particularly with the younger generation). The provision of e-mails would represent a valuable and efficient service development for our customers.

5.5 The automated email messaging module already has the facility to harvest existing system data in order to generate new notifications, which means that there will be minimal staff resource required to prepare the system for use.

5.6 The existing Libraries Management system providers have advised that the automated email messaging facility can be configured for £2,500. This is a one off fee, and no further costs would be incurred. The quotation is attached at Appendix 2.

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT UPON REQUEST

- 5.7 It should be noted however, that customers who do not have access to email will still require communication via a traditional manual letter, so we will not be able to mitigate all of our traditional letter costs, however the Libraries Team will endeavor to utilise the automated module as much as possible in order to maximise savings.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The quotation to implement an automated Email messaging service is £2,500, which is a one off fee, with no further costs to follow.
- 6.2 Based on information provided by the Libraries Team, the Lead Finance Officer has calculated that the potential savings that this implementation will attract are £12,000 per year with payback of this initial investment in 2.5 months.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Libraries and Information Manager and the Lead Finance Officer have been consulted on and have fed into the content of this report.
- 6.2 Library customers have been consulted on potential changes to notifications and feedback has been positive. Many have been proactively requesting to be contacted by email

7. Policy Impact Assessment

- 7.1 See Appendix 1

8. Risks

- 8.1 If we do not receive approval to purchase the automated email messaging service, the proposed financial savings will not be achieved and the existing costs associated with the current process will still need to be included in the Neighbourhood Services budget.
- 8.2 Failure to offer a choice in how customers receive notifications could lead to a further increase in the considerable dissatisfaction currently expressed by customers who do not want to receive printed letters. Consequently, the reputation of the Library Service may decline and we could be perceived as missing an opportunity to save money and increase efficiency during this time of unprecedented financial austerity in public services.

9 Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Chief Officer approves the £2,500 funds to allow the automated email messaging service to be implemented.

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT UPON REQUEST

Appendices	Appendix 1 – Policy Impact Assessment Screening Matrix Appendix 2 - Quotation
-------------------	--

Background Papers	
--------------------------	--

For a copy of the background papers or for further information about this report, please telephone:

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT UPON REQUEST

Appendix 1 – Policy Impact Assessment Screening Matrix

Project/Activity	Automated email messaging service in Libraries		
Project Manager:	Sara Weare	Appraiser:	Sara Weare
		Date:	28 August 2014

Theme	Criteria	Type of impact	Significance of impact	Notes
		Positive + Negative – None NA	High H Low L	
Resource Implications	Legislation			Implementation represents cost savings, much improved communication channels between staff and customers. Also full implementation (including Prism Pro) will provide the opportunity to use staff time more appropriately front of house.
	Finance	+	H	
	Communication	+	H	
	Employees	+	H	
	Partnership/Collaboration			
Health	Physical Health			
	Mental Health			
	Healthy Lifestyles			
Education	Educational Attainment			
	Basic Skills			
	Continuous Learning			
Housing	Good Quality Housing			
	Homelessness			
	Affordable Housing			
Economy	Poverty			
	Employment			
	Business			
	Community Enterprise			
Equality	Age	+	H	Implementation will position the service to respond to digital natives in terms of communication method. Welsh speakers will be able to receive automated communication in Welsh.
	Disability			
	Gender			
	Marriage & Civil Partnership			
	Pregnancy & Maternity			
	Race			
	Religion & Belief			
	Sexual Orientation			
	Welsh Language	+	L	
	Group not achieving equality of service			
Human Rights				
Safer Communities	Crime			
	Anti Social Behaviour			
	Safety of area or people			
Transport	Public			

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT UPON REQUEST

	Private			
	Walking / Cycling			
Built Environment	Local Distinction & Heritage			Greener communication. Less paper waste to recycle
	Waste & Recycling	+		
	Energy / Water Efficiency			
Pollution	Air / Water / Ground			
Natural Environment	Climate Change	+		Greener communication. Less paper waste to recycle
	Animal / Plant Species			
	Habitat / Landscape			

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT UPON REQUEST