

Birthday Parties in Libraries

Forward Plan reference number: Not applicable

Report title: Birthday Parties in Libraries.	
Report to: Cllr Susan Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate	
Report author: Suzanna Shaw, Director Customer Services	
Date: 3 September 2019	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Russell Dolton, Customer Business Development Lead / 03330 130445 / russell.dolton@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To ask the Cabinet Member to agree to a new birthday party service to be run within Essex libraries.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree a new set of fees to be added to ECC's fees and charges schedule with immediate effect enabling the Library Service to charge for 'Birthday Parties Held in Libraries' as detailed in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2.2 Agree to trial birthday parties in the libraries listed in paragraph 3.7 and agree that the trial can be expanded to other libraries if the Director, Customer Services considers the trial is a success.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1. Essex Library Service has implemented many new activities to increase usage of ECC libraries and participation in events held in libraries.
- 3.2. The Library Service plans to offer a birthday party service within libraries to increase the use of libraries by the residents of Essex, offering residents an alternative birthday party option not currently available in Essex.
- 3.3. Officers held a test party for six children in January 2019 in one of ECC's libraries to gather intelligence from parents and participating children on the format that appeals most to them.
- 3.4. The following party formats, aimed at 0 – 7 year olds, were developed as a result of the feedback received from the test party:
 - (a) Rhyme party (target age 0-3);
 - (b) Interactive story party suitable for learning disabilities (target age 3-5); and
 - (c) Pirate and Enchanted forest party (target age 5-7).

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- 3.5. The feedback provided by participants and the delivery team was very encouraging and has been used to refine the programme and timing of birthday party activities to be trialled in the next phase.
- 3.6. The idea of hosting birthday parties in libraries is not new, but it is uncommon particularly in local authority libraries. Officers are not aware of any local authorities in England offering any of their libraries as a birthday party venue currently but is aware of one in Scotland and one in New Zealand.
- 3.7. The next phase of this project is to trial the concept on a larger scale in the following four libraries
 - (a) Basildon;
 - (b) Walton on the Naze;
 - (c) Great Parndon; and
 - (d) Witham.
- 3.8. When selecting the four libraries to trial the birthday party offer, officers considered the variation in demographic, social and environmental factors.
- 3.9. The trial will seek to develop the delivery format by gathering intelligence wider market intelligence. The results from this trial will help to shape future plans on how the programme is developed and extended to more libraries.
- 3.10. The delivery teams have been trained to deliver the party formats. The plan is to be able to start delivering parties in the Autumn 2019.
- 3.11. Officers will review the success of the trial which will last for 6 months within the four libraries detailed above, and seek to expand the offer to other libraries within Essex following review of the data collected during the next phase of the project.

4. Options

- 4.1. Recommended Option
 - Authorise the second stage of trialling birthday parties in libraries with the aim of making it one of the chargeable events offered by Essex Libraries if the trial is successful; and
 - Add the charges for each age group to ECC's fees and charges schedule as outlined below.

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Age Group	Group Size	Proposed Charge Per Child	Party Duration
Age 0 – 3 Rhyme Time Party	8 - 20	£6.50 (Party charge from £45.60)	1 hour session
Age 3 – 5 Interactive Story (suitable for children with learning disabilities)	8 - 20	£7.50 (Party charge from £54.75)	1 ¼ hour session
Age 5 – 7 Pirate Party	14 - 20	£12 (Party charge from £165)	2 hour session
Age 5 – 7 Enchanted Forest Party	14 - 20	£12 (Party charge from £165)	2 hour session

4.2. Not recommended – Not to proceed with trialling birthday parties' in libraries and include birthday parties as one of the chargeable events on offer in Essex Libraries as this goes against what good looks like (page 40) in the draft future libraries strategy.

5. Issues for consideration

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 The library Service is proposing to run a 6-month trial during which four libraries in locations across Essex are made available as venues for hire for children's birthday parties. This is to trial four party types with three age groups, 0-3, 3-5 and 5-7 year olds.

5.1.2 The table below summarises the birthday party offer proposed. It shows the three age groups, party types for each, minimum and maximum party / group size, minimum recommended party charge, proposed charge per child and duration. The charges proposed per child for each age group reflect the estimated cost of delivering the birthday party for that age group if the minimum party size for 0-3 year olds and 3-5 year olds is eight paid attendees and for 5-7 year olds fourteen attending.

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Age Group	Group Size	Proposed Charge Per Child	Party Duration
Age 0 – 3 Rhyme Time Party	8 - 20	£6.50 (Minimum party charge of £45.60)	1 hour session
Age 3 – 5 Interactive Story (suitable for children with learning disabilities)	8 - 20	£7.50 (Minimum party charge of £54.75)	1 ¼ hour session
Age 5 – 7 Pirate Party	14 - 20	£12 (Minimum party charge of £165)	2 hour session
Age 5 – 7 Enchanted Forest Party	14 - 20	£12 (Minimum party charge of £165)	2 hour session

5.1.3 The minimum party charge covers the costs of library staff, library room / space hire for the duration of each party, cleaning, administration and the cost of materials where applicable.

5.1.4 The party charges and cost to ECC for two party scenarios costed (including staffing and space hire cost) are summarised in the table below to demonstrate the breakeven point for numbers of attendees:

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One party for each age group at all four libraries, attended by seven 0-3 year olds, seven 3-5 year olds and thirteen 5-7 year olds during the 6 month trial period:

SCENARIO 1

Age Group	Price / Child	Party Size	Party Charge Rate	Cost to ECC to Deliver	Margin £ (to cover overheads)
0 - 3 year olds party	£6.50	7	£45.50	£45.59	(£0.09)
3 - 5 year olds party	£7.50	7	£52.50	£54.72	(£2.22)
5 - 7 year olds party	£12.00	13	£156.00	£160.95	(£4.95)
		27	£254.00	£261.26	(£7.26)
Total net cost to ECC for 3 parties per mth (one for each age group) at each of four libraries, for the 6 month trial period.					(£174.15)
3 parties a month at 20 libraries for 6 months					(£870.75)

One party for each age group at all four libraries, attended by eight 0-3 year olds, eight 3-5 year olds and fourteen 5-7 year olds during the 6 month trial period:

SCENARIO 2

Age Group	Price / Child	Party Size	Party Charge Rate	Cost to ECC to Deliver	Margin £ (to cover overheads)
0 - 3 year olds party	£6.50	8	£52.00	£45.59	£6.41
3 - 5 year olds party	£7.50	8	£60.00	£54.72	£5.28
5 - 7 year olds party	£12.00	14	£168.00	£164.71	£3.29
		30	£280.00	£265.02	£14.98
Total net income for 3 parties per mth (one for each age grp) at each of the 4 libraries, for the 6 mth trial period.					£359.61
3 parties a month at 20 libraries for 6 months					£1,798.05

5.1.6 The above highlights the minimum attendee numbers required to avoid parties being delivered at a net cost to the Council. These numbers have been used to arrive at the minimum party charge for each age group.

5.1.7 One of the aims of this trial phase is to ascertain the level of demand for this service across the county to inform further roll out of the programme. The charges proposed for this phase will be reviewed at the end of the trial and should a change be considered necessary this will be the subject of a further report.

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1 The Library Charges (England and Wales) Regulations 1991 permit these charges

6. Equality and Diversity implications

6.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

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- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

6.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

6.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

- a) The offer will have a positive impact to Age. The new event will create an opportunity to re engaging with younger users who might not use the service. The new offer allows us to re-engage, remind and promote the service.
- b) The offer will have a positive impact on Disability - learning disability. One of the party options includes the use of the Inclusive Communication Essex kits that participants with learning disabilities will enjoy and benefit.
- c) The offer will have a positive impact on Disability - sensory impairment. One of the party options includes the use of the Inclusive Communication Essex kits that participants with learning disabilities will enjoy and benefit.

7. List of appendices

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA1151199215)

Charging statement for Birthday parties

8. List of Background papers

Appendix 2 (Birthday Parties in library plan)

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Susan Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer and Corporate	30.09.19

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In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director for Finance and Technology (S151 Officer) Nicole Wood	17 September 2019
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer) Paul Turner	31 August 2019