



To Whom It May Concern:

The Merseyside Cultural Forum represents the six boroughs of Merseyside (Liverpool, Knowsley, St Helens, Halton, Sefton, Wirral) to promote culture and leisure across the region. Its membership consists of the senior portfolio holders (Elected Members) for each borough, along with the relevant Chief Officer. At its most recent meeting, the Forum considered the modernisation review of public libraries (Empower, Inform, Enrich).

The Forum did not wish to make a detailed response, because it felt that their views had been adequately represented elsewhere, and individual boroughs had been able to contribute through a range of opportunities. The Forum, however, did wish to place on record its overall response as set out below: -

- a) It fully endorses the views of the Society of Chief Librarians, those from the Network – tackling social inclusion, and those from CILIP.
- b) It was concerned that a lot of the initial work of the review process had been ignored and should be taken into account.
- c) The over-riding principle of a free service should be maintained.
- d) The lack of definition of what a ‘comprehensive’ service should be remains a serious weakness.
- e) There are so many example of what a modern, fit for purpose public library should look like that are seemingly ignored – why seek for the Holy Grail when you might already have it?
- f) The lack of investment in building fabric remains a concern. It is difficult to modernise further in premises that are becoming increasingly not fit for purpose.

The Forum would welcome the opportunity to further engage in the consultation process.

It's all happening IN HALTON

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