

Resolution of Council

2 July 2020

Item 16.2

Public Libraries Adapting to Covid-19

Moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Scully –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) due to the COVID19 pandemic, the City was forced to close its libraries and communities centres, however, the City has continued to offer some of our invaluable services online;
- (ii) ninety percent of the Libraries and Learning staff were working from home on innovative projects for the community;
- (iii) as part of the recovery and re-opening plans, new services are being investigated from a financial and operational sustainability perspective, whilst ensuring the health and safety of the team and library members remains central;
- (iv) the City is reopening its libraries and other library services in line with NSW Government restrictions being lifted;
- (v) the City has continued to provide key services such as the Home Library to our vulnerable community, however, due to safety reasons some library services were discontinued;
- (vi) online borrowing increased by 74 per cent compared to this time last year, across all resources, including movie streaming through Kanopy, initiatives in conjunction with the NSW State Library such as IndyReads, transferring rhyme time/storyline online and allowing for safe in-person book collection through 'Reserve & Collect';
- (vii) library staff answered thousands of emails responding to community members and assisting the elderly who have limited technological literacy;

- (viii) a range of Sydney councils have expanded their previous services, continuing to allow homeless people, who cannot afford their own device, access to a PC and an internet connection. This has been done during restricted hours, with frequent cleansing of used areas and enforcing social distancing between terminals;
- (ix) City of Sydney staff are developing recovery plans for reopening libraries that incorporates granting access to all of our communities;
- (x) the City of Sydney is a member of the Sydney Rough Sleeping Covid-19 Taskforce, and is assisting the NSW State Government to help rough sleepers into temporary hotel accommodation;
- (xi) some rough sleepers have had access to wifi and computers in hotels;
- (xii) some rough sleepers were given access to mobile phones;
- (xiii) councils supported their libraries to transfer writer, illustrator and other creatives talks or content online through workshops and/or webinars; and
- (xiv) libraries underwent 'weed and seed' initiatives, to collect the older titles from the shelves, and make room for new collections providing much needed revenue for authors and publishers. This task is easier to undertake and manage when libraries are closed and teams can comprehensively review their collection; and

(B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

- (i) where social distancing continues to apply, investigate the possibility of prioritising access to PCs, the internet and the library to vulnerable and homeless communities, and ensuring that this is the City's policy if any pandemic or similar circumstance was to happen again;
- (ii) investigate the City's capacity to help create increased online workshop/webinar content, and undertake a 'weed and seed' initiative to support authors and publishers;
- (iii) update the City of Sydney Library Services website and other channels to reflect any service changes; and
- (iv) update the City of Sydney Library Services website and other channels to reflect the policy change.

Carried unanimously.

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