

Minutes of a meeting of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 6 October 2015.

PRESENT

Mrs. R. Camamile CC (in the Chair)

Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC

Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC

Mr. S. J. Hampson CC

Mr. A. E. Pearson CC

Mr. D. Jennings CC

Mr. R. Sharp CC

Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC

Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC

In Attendance.

Mr. R. Blunt CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Heritage, Leisure and Arts (Minutes 36 and 37 refer).

29. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

30. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

31. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

32. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

33. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

34. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

35. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

36. Future Strategy for Delivery of Library Services.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities to be considered by the Cabinet concerning:-

- the progress made with communities who were assessed as meeting the County Council's conditions to enable them to manage their community library;
- an update on the second and final round of registration of interest (ROI) which was aimed at those communities where previously no ROI had been received or had been received and subsequently withdrawn;

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr R. Blunt, Cabinet Lead Member for Heritage, Leisure and Arts.

The Director and Cabinet Lead Member in their introduction to the report drew the Committee's attention to the following:-

- (i) Since the report had been written the community group linked with Barwell Library had withdrawn their proposed bid. As a result Barwell would be added to the list of libraries where a further three month consultation was proposed on possible closure and replacement with a mobile library service;
- (ii) While Braunstone Town and Mountsorrel had submitted Outline Business Plans, both assumed an on-going financial commitment from the Council which was not in line with the infrastructure support package offer;

Arising from the discussion the following points were made:-

- (i) There was a statutory requirement to undertake consultation where a closure of a library was proposed. However, members were assured that there would be an on-going dialogue with local community groups with a view to trying to find a way forward to keep a community library operating;
- (ii) There were some issues regarding the lease the County Council had with both Mountsorrel and Braunstone Town and further discussions would take place with both organisation regarding the lease. In undertaking these discussions officers would be mindful of the view previously expressed by the Committee that there should be a level playing field and no one community group should receive preferential treatment whilst at the same time seeking to find, if possible, a pragmatic way forward;
- (iii) Voluntary Action Leicester, who had considerable experience in building community capacity, were working closely with officers and would be able to support and advise communities who took on responsibilities for managing community libraries as they developed their plans to transfer;

- (iv) The Council would continue to provide on-going support and advice through the Relationship Manager during the transition phase to community management and through the Locality Support Officer once the group had taken over the library to try and ensure the long term sustainability of libraries that are transferred;
- (v) The County Council's expectation was that transferred community libraries would continue to be open for the same number of hours. However, it was recognised that local communities would want to shape the service to local needs and to that end it was recognised that the County Council would need to be flexible;
- (vi) The County Council was entering into agreements with local communities and as such could not be prescriptive about how the service was delivered or how success was measured. This latter issue would need to be revisited at a future point when the shape of the service within communities became clearer through engagement with the local groups;
- (vii) It was recognised that, whilst there were currently a number of outline business cases being processed there was a risk that one or more of these might not proceed to completion. Accordingly recommendation (g) in the Cabinet report sought delegation for the Director to commence consultation on possible closure of the library and replacement with a mobile service should this be necessary.

Members of the Committee commended officers on the work undertaken and paid credit to those community groups that had come forward to take over the running of their local libraries.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised of the comments of the Committee as now outlined.

37. Outcome of Consultation on Mobile Library Services.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities to be considered by the Cabinet concerning the outcome of consultation on proposals to re-schedule the mobile library service and propose a new model of service delivery.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr R. Blunt, Cabinet Lead Member for Heritage, Leisure and Arts.

Arising from the discussion the Committee was advised as follows:-

- (i) The majority of people responding to the consultation preferred a monthly cycle for the mobile library service with one of the primary reasons given being that it was easier to remember;
- (ii) A total of 39 additional stops had been added and the capacity remained within the mobile fleet to support areas where a community library had closed;
- (iii) The Service was confident that it could operate the routes with three vehicles. Vehicle breakdowns were a key risk in the delivery of mobile services. Provision had been made for the purchase of two new vehicles which would go some way to

minimising this risk. The mobile service had in place mechanisms to alert communities that the service would not be operating due to a breakdown or in the event of bad weather and these had worked well;

- (iv) There would be an increased limit on the number of books that could be borrowed and the loan period would be flexible. Where an individual was unable to get to the mobile library to renew their books there would be a facility to do this on-line or over the telephone.

Members of the Committee commended the way in which the consultation on the mobile library service had been undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised that the Committee notes the outcome of the consultation and supports the implementation of a monthly schedule of mobile library service visits.

38. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 3 November 2015 at 2.00pm at County Hall.

2.00 - 3.05 pm
06 October 2015

CHAIRMAN