

CABINET – 1 MARCH 2016

FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

PART A

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of the public consultation and subsequent engagement activity held in four communities (Barwell, Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough) regarding alternative library provision, and recommend a way forward for each community. The report also informs the Cabinet of progress made with regard to Kirby Muxloe library.

Recommendations

- 2 It is recommended that:
 - a) The outcome of the consultation and its findings be noted;
 - b) The comments of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
 - c) Noting, that no viable plans in line with the County Council's offer have been received:
 - (i) Barwell library be closed and replaced with a mobile library service at locations informed by the results of the consultation, and that officers seek the agreement of the George Ward Centre (GWC) in Barwell to support and manage the provision of community access to IT facilities from a suitable space within the GWC;
 - (ii) The new outline business case received for Braunstone Town library be fully assessed and recommendations be made to the Cabinet on 19 April 2016;
 - (iii) Further lease discussions be undertaken with the landlord of the Mountsorrel library premises and recommendations be made to the Cabinet on 19 April 2016;
 - (iv) A deadline of 31 March 2016 be set for the submission of an outline business plan from the local community group in Narborough and recommendations be made to the Cabinet on 19 April 2016;
 - d) That the Director of Adults and Communities in consultation with the County Solicitor be authorised to determine whether, and if so in what form, any further

consultation should take place in Kirby Muxloe following the receipt of further legal advice.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3 The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure provision of a comprehensive and efficient library service. It has sought to enable and facilitate the ongoing provision, wherever possible, of library services by closer working with communities and other providers, whilst at the same time sustaining the countywide infrastructure to enable it to meet both its statutory obligations and budget challenges.
- 4 In November 2014 the Cabinet agreed, inter alia, a delivery model for its library services and a support package for community libraries.
- 5 Barwell library is situated within the GWC, a community centre. The local group that previously submitted an outline business plan that was approved by the Council has withdrawn its plans as they feel unable to guarantee the library's long term future financial sustainability. Consequently there is no viable plan to progress community management of the library.
- 6 Since the closure of the consultation, a staff-based social enterprise has come forward with an outline proposal for the future operation of Braunstone Town library that appears to be compliant with the County Council's support package. It has not yet been possible to conclude the assessment of the viability of the proposal as further discussions with the employees of the social enterprise is required prior to a recommendation to accept or reject the outline business plan.
- 7 Constructive discussions with the landlord of the Mountsorrel library are currently ongoing which may present an opportunity for the Mountsorrel War Memorial Trust (MWMT), or a similar body, formed by the landlord to take over the running of the library in the spirit of the intention behind the County Council's support package. It is hoped that these discussions will be sufficiently advanced to enable a recommendation to the Cabinet at its meeting in April.
- 8 Significant local community activity in Narborough has resulted in a very positive response and a local group is forming with a view to manage the library based upon the County Council's support package. There is a high degree of confidence that this group will be able to put forward a viable plan to manage the library by the end of March 2016.
- 9 Kirby Muxloe Parish Council has formally withdrawn its plans to manage Kirby Muxloe library. There are a number of legal issues surrounding the lease that the County Council has for Kirby Muxloe library and further legal advice is being taken to resolve them.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

- 10 This report will be considered by the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 February 2016 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.
- 11 In order to meet Medium Term Financial Savings (MTFS) savings targets final recommendations with regard to the future of Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel, Kirby Muxloe and Narborough libraries need to be made by July 2016.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 12 In September 2014, following consultation, the Cabinet approved a remodelling of the library service based on the following elements:
 - 16 major market town and shopping centre libraries funded by the Council with a 20% reduction in opening hours;
 - A support service enabling local communities to run their local library;
 - An online library service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to those with access to the internet;
 - A mobile library service providing a regular library service to most villages without a static library.
- 13 In November 2014, the Cabinet agreed the infrastructure support package to be offered to local communities wishing to operate community managed libraries.
- 14 On 16 March 2015, the Cabinet authorised the Director of Adults and Communities to assess the outline business plans put forward by community groups that had registered an interest in running their community library, and the County Solicitor to prepare the necessary legal agreements where communities were deemed to have in place a satisfactory outline business plan which was compliant with the Council's requirements.
- 15 The Cabinet also agreed that a further round of engagement with community groups would take place where either no registration of interest (ROI) was received by the deadline date of 16 January 2015, or where the ROI had been subsequently withdrawn, or where the initial ROI submitted required further work to be compliant with the Council's requirements.
- 16 On 11 May 2015, the Cabinet noted the assessments of 27 submissions of outline business plans and authorised the Director of the Adults and Communities, following consultation with the County Solicitor, to enter into agreements for 19 community managed libraries to be run by community groups/organisations, subject to appropriate legal agreements in relation to lease and grant funding being in place.
- 17 On 16 June 2015, the Cabinet noted that a further five outline business plans met the Council's conditions and were capable of being progressed through formal agreements to enable those communities to manage their library. It also agreed further engagement work and a second and final period to invite ROIs and outline business plans for those communities where either no ROI had been received, or an ROI had been received and subsequently withdrawn, and also for Mountsorrel and Braunstone Town, as the outline business plans submitted by those communities were not considered acceptable.
- 18 The Cabinet also requested officers to develop proposals for alternative library service provision should no viable ROI or outline business case come forward.
- 19 On 7 October 2015 the Cabinet approved a three-month consultation exercise with regard to those libraries where a viable business plan had not been put forward.

Resources Implications

- 20 Since April 2014, the Communities and Wellbeing Service (part of the Adults and Communities Department) has implemented changes to deliver £1.0 million of savings from a mixture of efficiencies and service reductions.
- 21 Members will be aware of the worsening financial situation which is reflected in the 2016/17 MTFs approved by the County Council on 17 February 2016. A further £1.9m will need to be made by the Communities and Wellbeing Service by 2018/19.
- 22 The annual savings from the community libraries programme remain in line with the initial estimates. For the 32 libraries that are well positioned to become community managed libraries, annual savings are expected to be £0.4m from staff savings and £0.3m from running costs, (net of income) following the end of the seven-year tapering period when the groups assume full responsibility for the costs in question. This will also help to enable further savings from the departmental infrastructure that supports all libraries.
- 23 The County Council has set aside £0.4m to support community groups in the initial set up stage. These implementation costs will be met from earmarked transformation funds, as will redundancy and pension costs relating to the staff changes.
- 24 The Director of Corporate Resources and the County Solicitor have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

- 25 Mrs R. Camamile CC, Mrs J. Fox CC, Mr. P. C. Osborne CC, Mr. T. Richardson CC, Mr. R. Blunt CC.

Officers to Contact

Jon Wilson, Director of Adults and Communities
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 305 7454
Email: jon.wilson@leics.gov.uk

Nigel Thomas, Head of Service, Communities and Wellbeing
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 305 7379
Email: nigel.thomas@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

- 26 The previous decisions recently made by the Cabinet with regard to the Council's policy on the delivery of library services are detailed in paragraphs 12 to 19 above.
- 27 Since that time the Council has engaged with supporting 36 communities to undertake the management of their local library with a tapered support package over seven years. Of the 36, 32 are progressing to community management and 13 have transferred to local communities to date.
- 28 In October 2015, the Cabinet approved a three-month consultation exercise with regard to those libraries where a viable business plan had not been put forward. The aim of the consultation was to explore alternative library service provision based on the mobile library service for book lending, online library services and Council-funded libraries for all other services
- 29 At that time the communities affected were Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough. Barwell was added following the community group's decision to withdraw its outline business plan. Discussions remained open for the submission of any new or revised outline business plans with the communities involved.
- 30 At the end of this process four communities remain at a stage where either:
- An alternative plan to manage the library has been proposed that has not complied with the published offer of support (Braunstone Town and Mountsorrel);
 - There is no viable local plan to manage the library at the current time (Barwell and Narborough).

Consultation

- 31 The consultation took place from 19 October 2015 to 17 January 2016 and was undertaken in the four communities - Barwell, Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough. The consultation sought responses to proposals to provide six hours of mobile library services in each of the four communities across either a single session on a particular day of the week, or across two sessions on different days of the week. This would provide alternative library service provision should a decision be made to close the library in future.
- 32 The consultation comprised the following elements:
- a) A bespoke consultation document that outlined the background and proposals for the specific library available online and in hard copy;
 - b) A survey questionnaire available online and as hard copy integrated into the bespoke document noted above;
 - c) An information event at each library location aimed at informing residents about the proposals and enable them to make an informed response to the consultation (via the survey);

- d) Information displays at each library;
- e) A “future libraries” email address for people to direct comments and queries.

Analysis of outcomes

- 33 Reports of the detailed findings for each of the four communities are attached as Appendices A-D and notes from each of the public information events are attached as Appendix E.
- 34 Across the four communities the consultation engaged with:
 - 156 responses via the survey;
 - 126 people attending the public information events.
- 35 A number of emails were received through the “future libraries” email address from three of the four communities that were targeted for the consultation. These are attached to this report as (Appendix F). These submissions generally advocated the value that the local libraries had in their respective communities particularly for children and young people. Others objected to the proposed provision of a mobile library service as an alternative method of service delivery.
- 36 Any decision to close a library would, through its Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) framework seek to mitigate the impact of such a decision on protected groups such as young people and older people, by producing and reviewing an Equalities Improvement Plan.
- 37 The remainder of this report summarises for each community, the response to the consultation and the current status of each community with regard to existing outline business plans and ongoing engagement with local groups.

Barwell

- 38 18 people attended the public information event in Barwell on 7 December 2015 and there were 33 respondents to the consultation survey regarding alternative library provision. 78% either strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the Council’s proposals for mobile library service provision outlined in paragraph 31 above, which was either two half-days or one full day in one or multiple locations. The limited access to the mobile, together with no provision for IT, and reduced services to children and older people were some of the reasons cited as disagreement. The future expansion of the village was also a common theme.
- 39 There has been ongoing work with a local group to establish a solution for Barwell library. However, despite a number of plans being explored, the group feels that it cannot guarantee the long term financial sustainability of the library site and has subsequently confirmed withdrawal of its plans. Therefore there is no plan to manage the library.
- 40 Barwell library occupies space within the GWC and whilst closure of the library will end the associated rental income for the GWC, it may also present opportunities for increased income generation from the space currently occupied by the library.

- 41 It may be possible to mitigate the loss of IT facilities if the provision of a community IT facility within the GWC can be agreed with the GWC Management Committee.
- 42 It is therefore recommended that the library should close from 1 June 2016 and be replaced with a mobile service, and if possible, community IT access be facilitated by an agreement with the GWC Management Committee.

Braunstone Town

- 43 50 people attended the public information event in Braunstone Town on 1 December 2015 and there were 72 respondents to the consultation survey regarding alternative library provision. 96% either strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the Council's proposals for mobile library service provision as outlined in paragraph 31. General accessibility to the mobile, together with the large size of the community and its economic status were cited in addition to the issues summarised in paragraph 38 for Barwell. A "save our library" group has been established to campaign for the continuation of the service based on the proposals put forward by the Town Council. Officers participated in a well-attended public meeting organised by the group to outline the proposals and promote the consultation and listen to views.
- 44 Braunstone Town Council submitted an outline business plan to run the library either as part of a combined local authority service hub serving Braunstone Town Council, Blaby District Council and the County Council, or as a standalone library. The outline business plan is not compliant as it assumes continued County Council funding to cover the building running costs for a period in excess of the original offer.
- 45 Since the closure of the consultation, a staff-based social enterprise has come forward with an outline proposal for the future operation of the library, based upon the County Council's support package. This might see an alternative model of operation being possible that may, or may not, include the involvement of Braunstone Town Council.
- 46 Further investigation of the potential of this proposal and the timescales for implementation is currently underway and it is therefore recommended to defer a decision until the Cabinet meeting on 19 April to enable the new outline business case to be fully assessed.

Mountsorrel

- 47 56 people attended the public information event on 26 November 2015 and there were 38 respondents to the consultation survey regarding alternative library provision. 90% either strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the proposals around mobile library service provision which was outlined in paragraph 31. The view of respondents was that the area is perceived as an area of low educational attainment which would be compounded by restricted access to book lending facilities presented by a mobile library service, the lack of IT provision, the lack of access for children out of school hours and the wider value to the community that the library represented.
- 48 The Council also received various emails and letters with regard to Mountsorrel library expressing similar concerns and sentiments and 230 people signed an online petition to 'keep Mountsorrel library open'.

- 49 The MWMT had previously submitted an outline business plan to run the library. However, this is not compliant with the published offer of support from the County Council as it assumes continued Council funding to cover the building running costs.
- 50 Discussions are still in progress regarding the lease of the library with the landlord. The outcome of this discussion will inform any further discussions with the MWMT concerning the future operation of the library.
- 51 It is recommended that until discussions with the landlord are concluded in respect of the lease any decision be deferred and a further report be submitted to the Cabinet on 19 April 2016.

Narborough

- 52 Two people attended the public information event in 19 November 2015 and there were 13 respondents to the consultation regarding alternative library services. 54% either strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the proposals around mobile library service provision which was outlined in paragraph 31. Access to books and IT for young and old, local transport issues, and the limited service offered by the mobile service were cited as reasons for disagreement.
- 53 No group in Narborough submitted an outline business plan to run the library by the deadline of 4 September 2015. However, further community activity in the Narborough area following the public meeting in November 2015 has led to a group of local residents preparing an outline business case for consideration by the Council.
- 54 It is recommended that a deadline of 31 March 2016 be set for the submission of an outline business plan and that a report be submitted to the Cabinet on the outcome of the assessment of the plan with recommendations for further action on 19 April. These recommendations could be:
 - If an acceptable plan is received, progress toward transition to a community managed library with the published support package from the County Council;
 - If an acceptable plan is not received, close the library and implement a mobile library service.

Kirby Muxloe

- 55 Kirby Muxloe Parish Council had originally submitted an outline business case that proposed that it managed the library. Subsequently the Parish Council has advised the County Council that it is no longer in a position to progress its plan.
- 56 The outline business plan proposed that the Parish Council manage the library which would be staffed by volunteers. Unfortunately, the Parish Council elections in May 2015 did not give it sufficient elected members to be able to award itself the general power of competence and, despite repeated attempts to recruit by the Parish Council, there was a lack of public interest in volunteering. The Parish Council has reluctantly therefore had to withdraw its outline business plan.
- 57 A number of issues remain to be resolved around the leases granted to the County Council that require further attention before it can progress further with finding a solution.

58 Subject to the receipt of further legal advice in respect of the current lease for the library, a decision will have to be made as to whether further consultation within the Kirby Muxloe area and the basis on which this should happen. It is recommended therefore that, following receipt of further legal advice, authority be given to the Director of Adults and Communities to undertake such consultation as he considers necessary.

Conclusion

59 Following further consultation and engagement, there are positive signs that community managed solutions can be found for three of the remaining four libraries meaning that of the 36 local libraries across Leicestershire 34 can potentially be sustained through supporting local communities to manage local libraries.

Background Papers

Report of the Cabinet to the County Council meeting, 19 February 2014 - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2017/18

<http://ow.ly/JmQUZ>

Report to the Cabinet, 5 March 2014 - Consultation on Proposals for Changes in the Delivery of Community Library Services

<http://ow.ly/JmQOC>

Report to the Cabinet, 19 September 2014 - Outcome of Consultation on Proposals for Changes in the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/JmQGv>

Report to the Cabinet, 19 November 2014 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/JmQwT>

Report to the Cabinet, 16 March 2015 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/Ynxiu>

Report to the Cabinet, 11 May 2015 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/Ynxi5>

Report to the Cabinet, 16 June 2015 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/Ynxrw>

Report to the Cabinet, 7 October 2015 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/YnxuM>

Appendices

Appendix A - Alternative Library Services in Barwell – Consultation survey results

Appendix B - Alternative Library Services in Braunstone Town – Consultation survey results

Appendix C - Alternative Library Services in Mountsorrel – Consultation survey results

Appendix D - Alternative Library Services in Narborough – Consultation survey results

Appendix E - Notes of public meetings held in support of the consultation
Appendix F - Consultation comments
Appendix G - Barwell Library EHRIA
Appendix H - Barwell Library Profile

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality and Human Rights Implications

- 60 An EHRIA for each of the 36 community libraries was appended to the Cabinet report of 19 November 2014. These have been updated for Barwell and this is attached as Appendix G.
- 61 The EHRIA process is iterative in nature and Equality and Human Rights Improvement Plans, attached to the EHRIA, outlines mitigating actions to be monitored.
- 62 An online interactive community profile Barwell has been established which outlines key features associated with the community from a number of criteria. This can be viewed through the following link: <http://ow.ly/JmQgE>. This has been supplemented by additional profiling contained in Appendix H for Barwell.
- 63 It should be noted that although the majority of the information contained in the profiling work is not required in order to address the Authority's Public Sector Equalities Duty, it is regarded as good practice and a means of supporting informed decision making for targeting services in the event of Barwell library's closure.
- 64 Following this process the main mitigating actions for Barwell are to secure access to IT provision and some additional book provision for children and young people in the area, and to provide adult book lending via the mobile library service.