

Notes of public meetings held in support of the consultation

As part of the consultation on alternative library service provision, a public meeting was held in Barwell, Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough.

This report provides a summary overview of the key issues raised and discussed at these meetings as well as a record of the questions and comments put forward by delegates at these meetings.

BARWELL

Place of meeting and name of local library: Barwell Village Hall, High Street, Barwell, Leicestershire LE9 8DS

Date and time of meeting: 7th December 2015, 7-9 pm

Number of participants: 18

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION

Views expressed about proposal / situation in general General feelings of dismay about losing a valued service. Some feelings expressed that LCC should have recognised earlier that a community managed library was not going to be a feasible option in Barwell – due to issues with building and nature of local community.

Concerns expressed about future of George Ward Centre if library closes.

Views expressed on the adequateness of the proposed alternative provision. Service is not considered adequate, especially for school children and working age people. No proposed replacement of IT suite means job seekers and children would lose access to the internet.

Views expressed that charging mobile library users £1 per book for each online reservation would not be appropriate.

Views expressed on community managed library solution. General agreement that ‘Structural’ Issues related to the library venue and a lack of opportunities to generate ongoing revenue funding stand in the way of a sustainable long term solution for the library.

Active discussion about possible alternatives took place and people resolved to explore further a suggestion to develop a children’s library + IT suite.

Views expressed on the proposed stops in the local area and the frequency. 6 Hours was not considered sufficient time to serve local residents, especially school children in the village. It was suggested to increase the weekly hours from 6 to 9 hours.

The proposed stops would not be in the right place and appear to include a stop in Earl Shilton.

Accessibility of other / alternative services (online and other libraries)

Many children don't have home computers to access the internet. The cost to travel to other libraries is too much for local families to afford.

4. ANY OTHER POINTS TO NOTE

Representatives of the Barwell Library Group were present and contributed actively to debate and exploration of possible new community managed library solutions. It was agreed to follow-up with LCC a suggestion to develop a children's library + IT suite further. This would be complemented by a mobile library service catering for adults.

5. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS RAISED:

1. Belle Vue Road would not work for the residents of Barwell as it is in Earl Shilton
2. The library group won't be able to raise the £12,000 as time goes on
3. If the group were to set up a friends group to financially contribute how many would be needed?
4. Barwell residents don't have the income to support the library, especially long term
5. Can the county council find a way the group could make money?
6. The council should not be asking the residents of Barwell to find money to support the library
7. Cost to reserve a book when using mobile library is an insult to service users.
8. Does George Ward Centre (GWC) contribute towards the group costs?
9. An issue is that the library is 25% of the building and therefore gets 25% of all the on costs for running the building. The library would continue to be tied to existing contracts with GWC for the utilities, building maintenance, insurance etc without control over these. The group have got a committee, 5 here tonight, and volunteers to run the library. The group has done the forecast for the budget and cannot guarantee to meet future costs that are required.
10. Would the group have enough volunteers to run the library if the issue of financing was resolved? [more would be welcomed, including on management committee]
11. If the lease agreement comes up again what length would be suitable, 5 or 10 year?
12. I am a fundraiser for another group and to raise £10,000 to support the library just does not add up, might be able to raise £1,500 to £2,000 per year
13. The housing developments should be able to contribute via section 106?
14. Is the county council treating all the 36 community libraries the same?
15. Issues about the building and the rooms are under investigation, does the council have any idea what this could look like yet?
16. The future of GWC and the library currently are linked together by the building so a solution that suits all parties should be considered
17. Can the lease be retained until the money from the section 106 comes forward?
18. When will the housing developments be starting?
19. Can the computers go into the library from the IT suite?
20. The mobile service won't provide the computer for the children to do homework or for adults who are seeking employment, as requirement for those on benefit
21. The library service in Barwell is paid for through taxes and this is being taken away as are other services in this area
22. The library service is a statutory service for residents in Leicestershire
23. What will the cost be to deliver the proposed service to Barwell?
24. I would not use the mobile service and it's no good for children at school as visiting hours of the mobile are all during school hours.
25. Where would the mobile service stop?
26. For the less able are the mobile libraries accessible?

27. Is there any way we can retain the current service in Barwell?
28. Travelling to other local libraries would cost too much, a return on the local bus cost between £5 to £7
29. The current library assistants give a personal service and support to children and adults – they would be missed.
30. How much would it cost to retain the IT suite only?
31. GWC is a charity; would the library group become a charity?
32. Would the county council consider a smaller library for children including the IT suite?
33. There have been things on social media suggesting the library will close. The Hinckley times said that the group proposal was off the table.
34. Would the council consider having the library in a different location?
35. There are 12 computers currently [in the IT suite] but the library may only need 6, would it be possible to run the library from the IT suite?
36. The GWC centre might benefit from another room to hire and it would retain a smaller library in the centre
37. The group might consider increasing the library opening hours, in a smaller library, as it would be easier to staff?
38. We could aim to change the layout of the library and incorporate the IT suite and staff room into 1 room and giving up the remainder so that GW has additional space to let, this would reduce the on-costs for the library.
39. In 5 years the housing development should have started and so section 106 will become available

BRAUNSTONE TOWN

Place of meeting	Braunstone Civic Centre, 209 Kingsway, Braunstone Leicester LE3 2PP
Date and time of meeting:	1 st December 2015, 7-9pm
Number of participants:	Appr. 50

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION

Views expressed about proposal / situation in general	<p>Strong views expressed that closure is not acceptable and the County Council should accept the Town Council's proposal. General views that Braunstone needs a library building, rather than a mobile.</p> <p>Some views expressed that decision making to not include Braunstone Town as council funded library was flawed.</p>
Views expressed on the adequateness of the proposed alternative provision.	<p>A mobile service was not considered to be a suitable service for a town the size of Braunstone.</p> <p>Access for schoolchildren was highlighted as a particular issue.</p> <p>Lack of access to computers for unemployed people was also raised as an issue.</p> <p>Views expressed that charging mobile library users £1 per book for each online reservation would not be appropriate and act as a barrier to use the service.</p>
Views expressed on community managed library solution.	<p>Community management was considered appropriate and viable subject to LCC continuing to provide financial support towards the running costs in line with its lease commitments.</p> <p>The Town Council proposal was widely supported. There was no interest in forming an alternative community group to provide the service.</p>
Views expressed on the proposed stops in the local area and the frequency.	<p>The number of stops and amount of time allocated were not considered adequate. Access for schoolchildren was highlighted as a particular issue.</p>
Accessibility of other / alternative services (online and other libraries)	<p>Concern about the impact on people who don't have access to these services and travel inconvenience.</p>

4. ANY OTHER POINTS TO NOTE

The Town Council indicated it remains keen to continue discussions with LCC to find a mutually agreeable solution.

5. QUESTIONS & COMMENTS RAISED:

1. Statement by Chair of Save Our Library Action Group (SOLAG) – LCC has decided the library should be closed and the community has decided that it should be kept open. The Town Council is offering £30k pa of funding and this offer should be accepted by LCC in a time of austerity. If the decision to close the library has not yet been made who will

make that decision? There is a need to lobby LCC members. Members will follow officer recommendation.

2. There is a need to meet with politicians and particularly Mr Blunt.
3. Who is a member of the Cabinet?
4. As far as SOLAG is concerned there is a need to get Mr Blunt to attend a local meeting.
5. A mobile library is no substitute and LCC is legally bound to provide a suitable service. Town Council will save LCC £30k pa and provide an improved 5 day service.
6. What type of information will be reported to Cabinet? The footfall information previously used was not correct.
7. At the 2014 consultation meeting the public were not listened to.
8. Are members of the public allowed to attend Cabinet meetings?
9. When was the last Cabinet meeting to discuss the library?
10. NB (Town Council) – The consultation is a farce and the LCC lease is the obstacle to a solution for the library. If a group were to come forward to put forward a proposal meeting LCC criteria there will still be the issue of the lease between the Town Council (TC) and LCC. LCC has said that it is not willing to honour the lease. The basis of the consultation is flawed for Braunstone because proposals could not be developed to meet LCC criteria. Meetings have been held with Mr Blunt, Nigel Thomas and others and the onus is on LCC to develop a solution. The threat to the library is unfair on the local community and LCC should develop a viable offer for the community.
11. Braunstone has a population of 17/18k and a mobile service would be wholly inadequate and does not meet the standards of the 1964 Act. Braunstone has one of the largest populations in Leicestershire and deserves a fixed library. The TC wishes to support this and is prepared to commit resources to improve the service – the offer has been made to LCC which needs to resolve the issue asap.
12. Can we hear about some of the other ideas that have been developed – LCC suggestions for dealing with the lease issue and solutions to library provision?
13. LCC is disrespectful to the plan that has been put forward and the people behind it.
14. In Braunstone and Thorpe Astley Council Tax payers are contributing c£10m. Why should people pay tax when the only facilities in Braunstone are the library, park and Civic Centre. If the community pay £30kpa towards the library can't LCC pay £17k? Have schoolchildren been asked if they want a mobile library? Will the book-stock be returned to the community?
15. Braunstone should not be identified as one of the 36 community libraries – footfall is lower than it would otherwise be because of a small size, shorter opening times and fewer books than some other libraries. The previous library was a temporary building in school grounds and this had depressed footfall. The community deserves a library and it is a disgrace LCC is trying to close it. Why doesn't the proposed mobile service have a stop at the Civic Centre?
16. Would there be a charge for online reservations?
17. Q9 of the survey is weighted to discourage other options being put forward.
18. How will children get access to library books and PC use without having to be driven to other libraries?
19. If the reservation charge is waived and all residents reserve a book it would cost LCC £17k in lost revenue – can't this be used to fund the library?
20. LCC has a legal responsibility to honour the lease.
21. Is the only option for LCC in dealing with the lease to provide other services from the building?
22. NB – LCC has agreed a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent but LCC is responsible for service charges – business rates, gas, insurance etc. that currently amount to c£17k pa but this cost will increase over time with inflation. LCC has a long term future liability and needs to provide a good deal for the community. The building will also need repairs in

future and this needs to be covered in any deal with LCC. It is hoped that a solution can be reached.

23. Children will not be able to access a mobile service during school time, job seekers will not have access to PCs and mobiles do not have disabled access.
24. What is the annual cost of the mobile service?
25. Will the proposal reduce mobile services to villages?
26. What is the difference between the cost of mobile provision for Braunstone and the cost of a fixed library?
27. How many places do mobile libraries serve?
28. Will mobile libraries provide reserved books to collect? If children reserve 4 books each and all children reserve books how will the library transport the books?
29. How does the cost of books lent from the mobile service compare to those lent from fixed sites?
30. LCC is not being asked to fully fund the library – the issues of funding needs to be resolved.
31. According to LCC mobile libraries don't carry large print books and this is discriminatory.
32. If LCC sub-let the building it will renege on lease obligations.
33. Has the building been earmarked by LCC for other uses?
34. If a sub-tenant defaulted LCC would be legally liable.
35. Why should a community group pay lease costs?
36. How much is the consultation costing?
37. Does the 6 hours include time the mobile library moves between stops?
38. The mobile service costs £108 per user so for the 1480 Braunstone users the cost will be c£160k pa.
39. If LCC accepts the TC offer the mobile service could be reduced.
40. If the mobile library stops at a primary school and half of children wish to use it that would be 200 and only 8 can access the library at any one time so provision would not be practical.
41. Will people be able to view proposals put to Cabinet beforehand?
42. How will people be able to see reports if they don't have on-line access?
43. Can all local people attend the Cabinet meeting?
44. NB – By the time of the Cabinet report decisions will have been made – there is no point in lobbying on the day – this needs to be done beforehand.
45. If there is no additional cost for the mobile service where is the additional capacity coming from?
46. LCC is aiming to close the library.
47. Will LCC put time into resolving the lease issue?
48. There are 4 schools in Braunstone and how can the mobile service visit all three at 3.00pm?
49. Is footfall measured on books withdrawn or people visiting?
50. LCC has used statistics inappropriately – can LCC use statistics to support the Braunstone business case?
51. There will be 5 local schools from September 2016 and all set local history homework – there will be no local history books on the mobile so how will children do their work?
52. How will skills and work training be delivered if the library closes?
53. Is there a risk of the driver leaving with children on board?
54. The consultation is a waste of time and proposals are cultural vandalism – children do use the library and how will asylum seekers access learning? The library is an opportunity to socialise and the proposal to close the library and replace with a mobile is unacceptable.
55. If the smallest libraries were closed LCC could afford to keep the bigger ones open.
56. If a community group came forward and took up the LCC support package what would happen if lease payments could not be afforded in 7 years' time?

57. If a group is unable to pay costs after 7 years the community would be in the same position then as it is in now.
58. NB – after 7 years the lease costs would be higher (potentially c £25k) and that is a big ask for any community group.
59. Who staffs mobile libraries – are they qualified librarians?
60. If the library closes it will never open again so it needs to be kept open.
61. The LCC Cabinet members should be targeted for lobbying. LCC local member Jo Fox is already supportive of the community proposal.
62. If LCC is released from the lease would it alter its position?
63. The community is being penalised for LCC's error in signing a 99 year lease.
64. NB – The current situation could not have been foreseen in 2006 when the lease was signed and it was a good deal for residents at the time. The lease is now proving to be a difficulty but with goodwill issues can be overcome.
65. Could a compromise be reached between LCC and the TC?
66. NB - The TC is open to suggestions that need to be put forward by LCC.

Mountsorrel

Place of meeting

Mountsorrel Methodist Church Hall, Church Hill Rd, Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12

Date and time of meeting:

26th November 2015, 7-9 pm

Number of participants:

56

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION

Views expressed about proposal / situation in general

A community managed library should be pursued so the library can remain open and building can continue to be used.

Unhappy Mountsorrel is not considered for a fully funded LCC library and feelings that decision making around this had been flawed.

Views expressed on the adequateness of the proposed alternative provision.

Strong views expressed that proposed provision would not be adequate, in particular for children. A weekly 6 hours of mobile provision would not be a replacement for the existing library service.

Views expressed on community managed library solution.

There were queries and discussion about the content of the bid submitted by the War Memorial Trust/Parish Council and about the cost of running a Community Managed Library. People wanted to know who was doing what and if & how a new effort for managing the library could be pursued.

Views were expressed that the long term lease situation means LCC should accept that an ongoing contribution towards running costs is reasonable and that this would be cheaper than mothballing the building.

Views expressed on the proposed stops in the local area and the frequency.

The proposed stops would be unsuitable due to parked cars and traffic considerations.

The mobile service would take too long driving to these stops as the village is long.

Some stops were seen as far away from those who would want to use it

Accessibility of other / alternative services (online and other libraries)

View was expressed that not everyone has a computer to use the on-line service.

4. ANY OTHER POINTS TO NOTE

A letter from the PSFA Mountsorrel and a roll with 211 online petition comments was presented to Nigel Thomas.

LCC agreed to organise a follow-up meeting to bring together interested parties to explore a community managed library solution.

5. QUESTIONS & COMMENTS RAISED:

1. The current library has a long lease agreement term remaining, has this been considered?
2. The county council is not flexible enough to consider other models, like the one on the table?

3. The proposed stops are not viable and a mobile service would not be able to stop at these locations due to other issues like parking or near the school
4. How much funding is required to keep the library service open, what is the difference between the funding and running costs
5. What was the usage of the library in January 2015
6. What is the cost of the lease per year to keep the library open?
7. The parish has offered £15,000 to keep the staff at the library, doesn't this make it work?
8. Does the LCC funding end after the 7 years?
9. What is the yearly cost for the library?
10. If the library closes what happens to the classes and meeting room?
11. Surely we are paying to retain the 16 libraries around the county and losing ours?
12. The war memorial trust has submitted a plan, do they know what is happening and can they let us know?
13. A volunteer group does not have the experience of the current librarians. In order to put in a bid to run the library we need the facts and figures.
14. What other groups use the library building?
15. Funding is difficult now but this is predicted to change in the future, would LCC take the service back?
16. The group would be responsible for funding library costs but how would they do that?
17. What alternatives models have been considered for running a library?
18. For the rental / room use upstairs would the community managed library keep the income?
19. When would the library actually close?
20. Would a new library group run into the same issues with the lease as the current proposal?
21. Disappointed about the number of people here, lots of people thought this was about the mobile service.
22. Can we find out about the current proposal? Why was the proposal turned down last time?
23. Is all the library information available for the 36 community libraries?
24. Where LCC aware of the lease agreement at the original meeting in 2014?
25. Can we have the links to all the documents sent out?
26. What happen to staff if the library is run by volunteers?
27. Will the deadline for Registrations of Interest be extended to allow a ROI from a new group?
28. If the mobile library has 6 stops much of the 6 hours will be used by travel time and one of the stops is in Rothley.
29. Of the 36 libraries involved how many have a big meeting room and full disabled access? Rothley, Birstall and Quorn do not have a community room. The room is used a great deal and should be kept open.
30. How many libraries have a large community room like Mountsorrel?
31. Why wasn't Mounsorrel library retained as a LCC library – how were the 16 assessed – Mountsorrel should have been one of these.
32. Can Mountsorrel be retained by LCC and the community fund the cost?
33. The two options are raising the finance to fund staff or find an alternative community group to run the library with volunteers?
34. What is the cost of mothballing the library?
35. Has the CC looked at alternative uses for the building and do these need to be community uses?
36. Will new house building in the village increase rates income for the PC?
37. War Memorial Trust representative identified that there was a meeting proposed for next week to consider the library.

38. If the Memorial Trust will not progress proposals a separate bid should be put forward from the village. Does the Trust wish to retain staff? If this cannot be funded there is a need to engage volunteers and discuss this with the Trust.
39. A total of 211 emails have been sent to CC via a change.org petition to “save Mountsorrel Library”. Last year the village raised 1100 signatures to oppose CC proposals. I object to the detrimental impact on parents and children in the village. Reading is critical to children’s development. Computers assist with homework and the library is an indoor safe space. A mobile is no replacement. The library was one of the top 16 for under-18 readers/users.
40. The Prime Minister wrote to his County Council seemingly unaware of the impact of Government cuts on local councils – has enough been done to explain the impact of the cuts to Government and why does the PM seem to be unaware of the impact?
41. If the Memorial Trust and PC fund the library and staffing for 7 years and the country’s finances are in order by then, would the CC take back the library?
42. Is the CC washing its hands of the library service?
43. Will Mountsorrel residents get a rates rebate if there is no library service?
44. Why has Leicestershire been underpaid by Government all these years and the situation has still not been resolved?
45. Does the community want to keep the library? It looks as though it won’t be retained as things stand and the War Memorial Trust is not taking action. The village needs to work together and stop arguing as has happened at Rothley and Barrow and put forward a proposal as soon as possible.
46. There is a need to establish the costs and involve the PC and Memorial Trust.
47. There is no financial information in the information pack.
48. Before next meeting with the CC there is a need for a meeting in the village with the Memorial Trust and PC and as many people as possible who want to get involved. Will the PC look into doing this?
49. The community needs to know exactly what this proposal is and to develop an alternative proposal.
50. The library is open 20hrs per week – how many volunteers will be needed?
51. Will volunteers be trained?
52. Is there an option to have 1 paid member of staff with volunteers to support?
53. At the end of 7 years the group taking on the library will be responsible for all funding – where will the money come from?
54. How does what the Parish Council and War Memorial Trust are offering and the reduced rent that is being argued about compare to the amount of rent that the County Council is committed to paying until 2033?
55. What is the total cost of community libraries and Mountsorrel library?
56. Could S106 money be used to support the library? It is a vital resource for the community and closure would lead to low levels of literacy. Not everyone has access to books and there is no need to buy new books when they can be borrowed.
57. There is nowhere suitable to park a mobile library.
58. What is the income for the library and what does room rental contribute?
59. In 7 years’ time the community would need to contribute £0k pa to keep it open.
60. The Parish Council and Memorial Trust are behind the library but need to know how much money is required.
61. Does the CC have a contingency plan on how to use the building for the next 18 years if the library is closed?
62. Of the 32 libraries that propose to become community libraries how many are there where the CC is committed to a lease and the PC has committed to refurbishment of the library?

63. The LCC web site is difficult to access Cabinet papers etc. can the information be put together and made available in paper format in the library as well as on line to help people decide on how to form a community group?
64. Will a second bid need to be submitted well before March?
65. PC Chairman – there is a need to involve the landlord as I am not sure where negotiations have got to. The landlord has been the lead and we need to get his view clear.
66. Who organised this meeting? It was not well publicised and buried on the CC website which may be the reason this meeting is not better attended.
67. If volunteers are over 75 now by the time fundraising is required they will be 82+.
68. Can a representative from Rothley and Barrow be invited to the next meeting along with the landlord?
69. Will LCC negate the contract for the building whatever happens?
70. Could details of funding be included in the library information?
71. If a community group takes on the building will it keep room rental and is current rental information included in the financial details?
72. Does LCC have the consent of the landlord to sub-let the building and would the landlord accept the PC proposal?

NARBOROUGH

Place of meeting Narborough Parish Centre
Date and time of meeting: 19th November 2015, 7-9 pm
Number of participants: 2

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION

An informal discussion was held with the two participants in attendance, with both participants able to ask questions in relation to the proposals. Key points raised:

Disappointment about the turnout was expressed, with queries about how LCC had advertised the meeting.

It was queried if people would still be charged £1 to make a reservation?

The library provides an important place to find information about local services, leaflets etc. Mobile would not be able to provide that.

Part of the discussion focused on the scope for developing a community managed library in Narborough. There was concern there may not be enough volunteers available in Narborough and the small size of the library may be a factor limiting income raising opportunities. There were also questions with regards to the involvement of and efforts by the Parish Council in finding a community managed solution for Narborough library.