

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 APRIL 2016

FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on further engagement activity held in three communities (Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough) regarding proposals made by local groups to manage their local library. The report also updates members of progress made in relation to Kirby Muxloe and Quorn libraries.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 2 In September 2014, following consultation, the Cabinet approved a remodelling of the library service based on the following elements:-
 - (i). 16 major market town and shopping centre libraries funded by the Council with a 20% reduction in opening hours;
 - (ii). A support service enabling local communities to run their local library;
 - (iii). An online library service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to those with access to the internet;
 - (iv). A mobile library service providing a regular library service to most villages without a static library.
- 3 In November 2014, the Cabinet agreed the infrastructure support package to be offered to local communities wishing to operate community managed libraries. On 16 March 2015, the Cabinet authorised the Director of Adults and Communities to assess the outline business plans and with the County Solicitor prepare the necessary legal agreements where communities were deemed to have in place a satisfactory plan which was compliant with the Council's requirements.
- 4 On 16 June 2015, the Cabinet agreed further engagement work and a second and final period to invite Registration of Interests (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plans for those communities where either no ROI had been received, or an ROI had been received and subsequently withdrawn, and also for Mountsorrel and Braunstone Town, as the outline business plans submitted by those communities were not considered acceptable.

- 5 The Cabinet also requested officers to develop proposals for alternative library service provision should no viable ROI or outline business case come forward.
- 6 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.
- 7 On 1 March 2016, the Cabinet noted the outcome of the consultation and approved the closure of Barwell library, with the proviso that the County Council would consider any plans from a local group to provide a library in the village if one were to come forward within 12 months of closure.
- 8 It also deferred decisions on Braunstone Town and Mountsorrel libraries to allow revised and new outline business plans to be assessed and further discussions to take place with the landowner at Mountsorrel.
- 9 In addition, a deadline of 31 March 2016 was set for the submission of an outline business plan from the local community group in Narborough.
- 10 The Cabinet was also informed of the complexities over the leasing arrangements at Kirby Muxloe library, and of the Parish Council's reluctant decision to withdraw their proposal to manage the library. Authorisation was given to the Director of Adults and Communities, in consultation with the County Solicitor, to determine any appropriate form of consultation to be taken in Kirby Muxloe following legal advice.
- 11 At its last meeting on 26 February 2016, the Committee asked for an update on Quorn library and Kirby Muxloe library.

Background

- 12 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 2 to 10 above.
- 13 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. To date, 16 libraries have so far transferred to community management.
- 14 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.
- 15 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 and subsequently a decision to close the library and replace it with a mobile library service was taken by the Cabinet on 1 March 2016.
- 16 During the consultation period an alternative proposal to manage Braunstone Town library was submitted by a social enterprise, and ongoing discussions about the future of Mountsorrel library were still in progress with the landlord and the Mountsorrel War Memorial Trust (MWMT). A decision was taken to defer recommendations for these sites by the Cabinet on 1 March 2016.

- 17 In addition, during the consultation a local group in Narborough emerged who indicated their intention to submit an outline business plan. A deadline of 31 March 2016 for the plan was approved by the Cabinet on 1 March 2016.
- 18 Kirby Muxloe Parish Council, who had originally submitted an outline business plan to manage the library, reluctantly took a decision to withdraw its plan. This was because 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 required to undertake its original plans, and despite repeated attempts to recruit by the Parish Council, there was a lack of interest in volunteering.
- 19 A number of issues also remained to be resolved around the leases granted to the County Council at Kirby Muxloe that required further attention. A decision on further consultation and its form was a subject for further legal advice. Consequently a decision was made by the Cabinet on 1 March 2016 to delegate authority to the Director of Adults and Communities to undertake such consultation as he considered necessary.
- 20 The remainder of this report considers progress made to date with each of the sites and the additional information requested by the Committee.

Braunstone Town

- 21 Braunstone Town Council (BTC) submitted an outline business plan to run the library either as part of a joined local authority service hub serving BTC, Blaby District Council and the County Council, or as a standalone library. At the time of assessment neither plans were considered compliant with the County Council offer of support as they assumed ongoing funding to cover building costs for a period in excess of the original offer. However, engagement with BTC on this issue have been ongoing.
- 22 Since the closure of the consultation outlined in paragraph 14, a staff-based social enterprise came forward with an outline business plan to manage the library. Their plan outlined their intention to manage the library with a greater focus on vulnerable young people, particularly those in care, and to retain access for adults to a public library service.
- 23 Pending some additional information that has been requested of the group, and further discussions with BTC there is a high level of confidence that this plan will represent a way forward for sustaining the library.

Mountsorrel

- 24 The MWMT had previously submitted an outline business plan to run the library. At the time of assessment the plan was not considered compliant with the published offer of support from the County Council.
- 25 A revised outline plan has been received from MWMT and discussions are ongoing with the landlord regarding the options that have been submitted. There is a high level of confidence that one of the options outlined will represent a way forward for sustaining the library.

- 26 In making appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet about the way forward for both Braunstone Town and Mountsorrel libraries, officers will need to consider:-
- (i). If any viable plans in line with its offer were received following the ROI process and associated consultation on alternative provision;
 - (ii). If any alternative plans were received following the ROI process and associated consultation on alternative provision;
 - (iii). If there are satisfactory reasons why the body putting forward the alternative proposal is not able to deliver their proposals on the basis of the Council's support package;
 - (iv). Where the Council is not able to offer its support package to the body putting forward the alternative proposals, if it is feasible to make the adjustments required that would enable it to do so;
 - (v). What the impact of the alternative proposals would be on revenue savings for the Council.
- 27 The above factors will be taken into account when officers present their recommendations to the Cabinet on 19 April.

Narborough

- 28 The local community group at Narborough met the deadline of 31 March 2016 for submission of an outline business plan to manage the library.
- 29 This plan has been assessed by officers and it is intended to recommend to the Cabinet to progress the library for transfer to community management.

Quorn

- 30 At its meeting on 26 February 2016, the Committee was made aware of the concerns of Quorn Parish Council over the lease arrangement with Rawlins Academy. The Academy was concerned about a volunteer group managing the library on its site, and their intended proposal to withhold consent to a lease arrangement with the Parish Council due to the Academy stating the accommodation is needed for their own purposes.
- 32 Following advice from Counsel a letter has been written to the Academy seeking to reach a compromise which would enable a transfer of the library to community management run by the Parish Council and staffed by volunteers during 2016/17, with occupation guaranteed for a minimum period to be negotiated.
- 33 The Council will continue to keep an ongoing dialogue with Quorn Parish Council in order to support them in the progression of their plans.

Kirby Muxloe

- 34 The status of Kirby Muxloe library is noted in paragraphs 18-19 above.

- 35 Following legal advice, and consultation between the Director of Adults and Communities and the County Solicitor, a three month consultation period began on 21 March 2016. The consultation seeks local views on the alternative library provision through a mobile library service, and invites a second and final period of ROI from local groups to submit an outline business plan to manage the library.
- 36 The consultation on alternative library services commenced on 21 March 2016 and will close on 19 June 2016.
- 37 The consultation will comprise of:-
- (i). A bespoke consultation document that outlines the background and proposals for the specific library available online and in hard copy;
 - (ii). A survey questionnaire available online and as hard copy;
 - (iii). An information event at Kirby Muxloe aimed at informing residents about the ROI process and the consultation;
 - (iv). An information display at the library.
- 38 The launch of a final period of ROI from the community commenced on 21 March 2016 and will close on 22 May 2016. A deadline for the submission of outline business plans to manage the library is set for 29 July 2016.
- 39 It is proposed to report on this activity and recommend a way forward for Kirby Muxloe at the Cabinet meeting on 9 September 2016.

Leases

- 40 At its meeting of 26 February 2016, the Committee requested information regarding libraries that had lease arrangements. The following table details the type of leases, the term and the current position:-

Site	Lease type	Term Years	Position
Bottesford	Leased	20	Sub-lease agreed with Parish Council
Braunstone Town	Ground lease only	99	Potential transfer to Community group
Countesthorpe	Ground lease only	99	Lease surrendered
Enderby	Leased	15	Lease to be surrendered
Glenhills	Ground lease only	99	Lease surrendered
Kirby Muxloe	Ground lease only	99	On Parish Council managed land (ownership in trust). Consultation on alternative library provision from 21 March
Mountsorrel	Leased	120	Subject to negotiations with landlord

Quorn	Draft lease	25	Subject to negotiations with college
Rothley	Ground lease only	20	Sub-let to Community Group

- 41 It can be seen that long leases are held for both Braunstone Town and Mountsorrel libraries and consideration would need to be given as to whether the surrender of leases would represent best value for the Council in making recommendations to the Cabinet on 19 April 2016.

Resource Implications

- 42 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.
- 43 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.
- 44 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, 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.
- 45 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.
- 46 The Director of Corporate Resources and the County Solicitor have been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

- 47 Recommendations to the Cabinet on Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough will be made to the Cabinet on 19 April 2016.
- 48 Recommendations to the Cabinet on Kirby Muxloe will be made to the Cabinet on 9 September 2016.

Recommendations

- 49 The Committee is recommended to note the latest position with respect to Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough libraries, as well as the most recent update on the progress made with regard to Kirby Muxloe and Quorn libraries.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet, 16 June 2015 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services
<http://ow.ly/Ynrxw>

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

<http://ow.ly/YnxuM>

Report to the Cabinet, 1 March 2016 – Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

<http://ow.ly/ZqF9l>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

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Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality and Human Rights Implications

- 50 During the process, Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) were completed for each of the libraries referenced in this report. These are located at Appendix H in the Cabinet report dated 19 November 2014 <http://ow.ly/ZKewN>
- 51 Should a situation arise where a decision is taken to close any of the libraries, then the existing EHRIA s will be updated for the Cabinet report of 19 April 2016.