



ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 SEPTEMBER 2016

FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON KIRBY MUXLOE AND
UPDATE ON DESFORD LIBRARY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Committee on the outcome of the consultation with the Kirby Muxloe community regarding alternative library service provision, and to provide an update on developments with Desford Library.

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 aimed at meeting its statutory responsibilities:
 - (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 and on 16 March 2015 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.
- 4 On 1 March 2016, the Cabinet was advised that Kirby Muxloe Parish Council, which had originally submitted an outline business plan to manage the library, had reluctantly decided 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.

- 5 On 19 April 2016, the Cabinet was advised that following legal advice regarding issues raised concerning the lease of the library the Director of Adults and Communities and the County Solicitor, recommended a three-month consultation be undertaken to explore alternative library service provision at Kirby Muxloe with the local community.
- 6 Desford Library originally submitted a successful outline business plan that was approved for transition by the Cabinet on 11 May 2015. However, the County Council and the existing Desford Community Group have been unable to reconcile differences over the provision of leasing arrangements to enable them to progress with their original plans. Although these discussions are ongoing, it is proposed to undertake a period of further consultation on alternative library provision through the mobile library service to mitigate against a situation where the County Council and the Desford Community Group are not able to reconcile their differences.

Background

- 7 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.
- 8 The previous decisions made by the Cabinet with regard to the Council's policy on the delivery of library services are outlined in paragraphs 2 to 6 above.
- 9 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. So far 27 libraries have transferred to community management. One library has closed.

Kirby Muxloe consultation

- 10 A three-month consultation period began in Kirby Muxloe on 21 March 2016 and ended on the 19 June 2016. The consultation sought local views on alternative library provision through a mobile library service (six hours of mobile library services 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 provision should a decision be taken to close the library in the future.) and invited a second and final period of Registration of Interest (ROI) from local groups to submit an outline business plan to manage the library in line with the Council's package of support. Interested parties had until 22 May 2016 to submit an ROI. The deadline for subsequent outline business plans was set for 29 July 2016.
- 11 The consultation comprised of the following elements:
 - (i). A bespoke consultation document that outlined the background and proposals for the specific library available online and in hard copy;

- (ii). A survey questionnaire available online and as hard copy integrated into the bespoke document;
- (iii). A public meeting in Kirby Muxloe on 20 April 2016 aimed at informing residents about the ROI process and consultation proposals to enable them to make an informed response to the consultation (via the survey);
- (iv). Posters at local venues and information boards to promote the consultation and the public meeting;
- (v). An information display at the library;
- (vi). Social media messaging through Twitter and Facebook;
- (vii). A “future libraries” email address for people to direct comments and queries.

Analysis of Outcomes

- 12 A report of the detailed findings of the consultation is attached as Appendix A.
- 13 27 people responded to the consultation survey, 15 by completing the online survey, and 12 returning a paper response.
- 14 The public meeting held at Kirby Muxloe on 20 April 2016, was attended by 24 people and a note of this event is attached as Appendix B.
- 15 Key responses emerging from the consultation are as follows:
 - (i). Of the 27 respondents, 13 visited the library at least once a fortnight;
 - (ii). The most popular activity was borrowing a book, hiring a CD or DVD, followed by using the library to access face to face advice, attend events or access information;
 - (iii). Five respondents felt that the proposed mobile library would be a poor alternative to the current service, and five accepted that a reduced service was better than none;
 - (iv). If a mobile library were to be introduced, 16 respondents felt that this should consist of two half-day sessions on different days of the week in one location.
- 16 The public meeting held at Kirby Muxloe, attended by 24 people, resulted in a group of local residents submitting a ROI and subsequently an outline business plan to manage the library that met the deadline set of 29 July 2016. This plan has been assessed by officers and following minor amendments, agreed with the group, the outline business plan now meets the criteria in order for it to progress to transfer to community management.

Desford Library

- 17 Desford Library originally submitted a successful outline business plan that was approved for transfer by the Cabinet on 11 May 2015. Since then the local group have raised concerns over the condition of the building fabric which has prevented the progression of the transfer of the library.

- 18 The Desford Community Group has stated that it has received legal advice from their solicitor who has recommended that it does not sign the 10 year lease agreement based upon its assessment of the current state of repair of the building and for it to apply to the Council for, and receive a commitment of funding of circa £45,000 to undertake a variety of repair work including the roof, heating system and window replacement prior to signing the lease.
- 19 None of the items raised by the Desford Community Group have been judged in the past to be priorities for the limited resources of the Council's central maintenance fund, and are not items which would pose either a risk to health and safety of occupants, or result in legislative non-compliance. Throughout the process of establishing community managed libraries, the Council has communicated clearly to all community groups that the Council would not invest in non-essential maintenance prior to the transfer.
- 20 Officers have reminded the Group that the Council has allocated a £150,000 contingency fund to which they can apply (once they have signed their lease) for non-routine repairs, such as when building or mechanical items are beyond economic repair and require replacement.
- 21 Funding any of these requested non-essential works prior to the lease agreement being completed would result in Desford Library being treated in a preferential way to other libraries that have already transferred or are due to transfer and where requests for non-essential works prior to transfer have also consistently been turned down.
- 22 Despite a number of meetings on this issue, the County Council and the Desford Community Group have been unable to find a solution to the position.
- 23 Whilst discussions remain ongoing with the Desford Community Group, it is recommended that should an agreed way forward not be achieved by the end of September, a three-month public consultation is undertaken in the community served by Desford Library to explore alternative library provision through a mobile library service.
- 24 The aim of the public consultation will be to receive feedback on proposed replacement services via a mobile library service and to assess impact on users and inform any mitigating measures to be taken. Alongside the consultation, there would also be a second and final opportunity for any other group who may wish to submit a ROI and a subsequent outline business plan to manage the library with the support package offered by the County Council.
- 25 It is proposed that the consultation will comprise of the following elements:
 - (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 integrated into the bespoke document described above;

- (iii). An information event at each library location aimed at informing residents about the ROI process and consultation proposals and enable them to make an informed response to the consultation (via the survey);
- (iv). Information displays at Desford Library.

26 It is proposed to submit a further report to the Cabinet recommending a way forward for Desford Library in the new year.

Resources Implications

- 27 Since April 2014, the Communities and Wellbeing Service (part of the Adults and Communities Department) has implemented changes to deliver £1.5 million of savings from a mixture of efficiencies and service reductions.
- 28 Members will be aware of the worsening financial situation which is reflected in the 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by the County Council on 17 February 2016. At the time of writing this report, a further £1.9 million saving will need to be made by the Communities and Wellbeing Service by 2018/19. However, the outlook for public finances remains bleak and there is a likelihood that this savings requirement will increase significantly.
- 29 The annual savings from the community libraries programme remain in line with the initial estimates. For the libraries that have either transferred, or are scheduled to transfer, to become community managed, annual savings are expected to be £0.4 million from staff savings and £0.3 million 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.
- 30 The County Council has set aside £0.4 million 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.
- 31 The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

- 32 The outcome of the consultation to explore alternative library provision in the Kirby Muxloe area and recommendations regarding Kirby Muxloe Library will be reported to the Cabinet on the 16 September 2016. Alongside this, the Cabinet will be asked to note the current position regarding Desford Library and agree to a three-month consultation exercise with Desford to explore alternative library provision in the area, if an agreed position cannot be reached by the end of September.

Recommendation

- 33 It is recommended that:
- a) The report on the consultation on alternative library provision for Kirby Muxloe be noted;

- b) The submission of an outline business plan proposed by the Kirby Muxloe group, which meets the requirements of the County Council be noted and arrangements be made to progress to formal agreements to enable it to manage the library;
- c) The position now outlined in respect of Desford Library be noted and that if an agreed position cannot be reached by the end of September further consultation be undertaken in the area on the basis set out in paragraphs 24 and 25 of the report;
- d) It be noted that a progress report in respect of Desford Library will be submitted to the Cabinet in the new year reporting the outcome of the consultation and recommending a way forward.

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>
- Reports to the Cabinet - Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services:
 - 19 November 2014 – <http://ow.ly/JmQwT>
 - 16 March 2015 – <http://ow.ly/Ynxiu>
 - 11 May 2015 – <http://ow.ly/Ynxd5>
 - 16 June 2015 – <http://ow.ly/Ynxdw>
 - 7 October 2015 – <http://ow.ly/YnxdM>
 - 1 March 2016 – <http://ow.ly/ka14303IFb3>
 - 19 April 2016 - <http://ow.ly/YR6F303IFeo>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

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Appendices

- Appendix A – Alternative Library Services in Kirby Muxloe – Consultation Survey Results;
- Appendix B – LCC Library Events: Recorded Notes of Meeting held on 20 April 2016.

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality and Human Rights Implications

- 34 An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) for each of the 36 community libraries was appended to the Cabinet report dated 19 November 2014 and can be accessed via the following link - <http://ow.ly/105GkG>
- 35 The EHRIA process is iterative in nature and Equality and Human Rights Improvement Plans, attached to the EHRIA, outlines mitigating actions to be monitored should there be any decision to close libraries in these areas.
- 36 An online interactive community profile for the libraries 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>
- 37 It should be noted that although the majority of the information contained in the profiling work is not required in order to address the Council's Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED), it is regarded as good practice and a means of supporting informed decision making. However, any further reports to the Cabinet will include appropriate assessments with regard to the PSED.
- 38 Any decision to close the library would, through its EHRIA framework seek to mitigate the impact of such a decision on protected groups such as children and older people by producing and reviewing and equalities improvement plan.
- 39 Further work on Desford Library will be undertaken and reported to Cabinet in the new year should a decision need to be made to close the library and provide mitigating actions and alternative service provision in the area.

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