

**CABINET – 9 MARCH 2018****FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES**
BRAUNSTONE TOWN LIBRARY**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 further engagement activity held in relation to Braunstone Town Library regarding proposals for its transfer to community management.
- 2 The Cabinet has previously approved the transfer of the Library to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) established by a staff-based Social Enterprise group, Fabula (Braunstone Town Community Library Group), but the group has reluctantly decided to withdraw from the arrangements. It is now proposed to transfer the Library to Braunstone Town Council.

Recommendations

- 3 It is recommended that:
 - a) The outcome of the further engagement activity and the comments of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
 - b) The proposal from Braunstone Town Council to manage Braunstone Town Library be accepted and that the Option 2 proposal outlined in paragraph 30 be adopted, whereby the Town Council will manage the Library using existing resources;
 - c) The Director of Adults and Communities in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Resources, be authorised to progress to formal agreements to enable the Braunstone Town Council to manage the Library.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 4 The Braunstone Town Community Library group has reluctantly decided not to proceed with the transfer of the Library, given the timescale and difficulties experienced in recruiting volunteers.
- 5 The plan previously submitted by Braunstone Town Council presents the most cost-effective way forward given the obligations of the long-term lease arrangement for the site from which the Library operates, and recent engagement activity with the Town Council supports this. It will enable the public library service in Braunstone Town to continue.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

- 6 The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this report on the 6 March 2018 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.
- 7 It is intended that the transfer of the Library would take place by July 2018.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 8 In September 2014, the Cabinet approved a remodelling of the library service based on the following elements as being compliant with the Council's statutory obligation under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service:
 - 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.
- 9 In November 2014, the Cabinet agreed the infrastructure support package to be offered to local communities wishing to operate community managed libraries and in March 2015 authorised the Director of Adults and Communities to assess the outline business plans put forward by community groups, and the County Solicitor to prepare the necessary legal agreements where those outline business plans were satisfactory.
- 10 In October 2015, the Cabinet approved a three-month consultation exercise at libraries where the outline business plans which had been submitted were not compliant with the Council's requirements, including Braunstone Town.
- 11 In April 2016, the Cabinet accepted the proposal from Fabula Social Enterprise to manage Braunstone Town Library, and agreed that the transfer should be progressed.
- 12 In June 2017, the Cabinet agreed a minor amendment to allow the transfer to be made to Braunstone Town Community Library (BTCL) a CIO established by Fabula as part of its local plan.

Resources Implications

- 13 The Council would continue to honour its obligation to cover the running costs associated with the long-term lease for the Library which are estimated at around £17,000 per annum and will make an estimated saving of approximately £20,000 from staffing resources.
- 14 The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

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PART B**Background****Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services**

- 15 Since April 2014, the Communities and Wellbeing Service, part of the Adults and Communities Department, has made a number of changes to deliver £1m savings; through a mixture of efficiencies and service reductions. The programme to transfer libraries to community groups is part of this.
- 16 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and has sought to continue to do this by working closely with communities and other providers and sustain the existing countywide infrastructure.
- 17 A total of 31 libraries have now transferred to community management and the annual savings from this remain in line with the initial estimates of £0.4m from staff savings and £0.4m from running costs (net of income).

Braunstone Library

- 18 Braunstone Town Library is built on land owned by the Town Council for which the County Council has a lease for 99 years from 30 July 2007. There is no lease break clause but the lease does allow for other alternative local authority uses in the event the library closes, subject to the Town Council's agreement. There is an obligation on the County Council to pay the building running costs as defined within the ground lease, currently circa £17,000 per annum.
- 19 In response to the County Council's call for Registration of Interests (ROIs) to deliver a community managed library service with a funding package from the Council, the Town Council submitted an option in 2015 to deliver the library service. This involved the County Council joining with the Town Council and Blaby District Council to form a hub offering a range of council services including the library at the current library location (Option 1 in the table below).
- 20 However, the outline business plan from the Town Council was judged not to be compliant with the County Council's funding package. Its proposal assumed continued County Council funding for building running costs for a period in excess of its offer and an additional contribution to funding to extend services at the venue.
- 21 In October 2015, the Cabinet approved a further three-month consultation exercise with regard to libraries where a compliant business plan had not been put forward - Braunstone Town, Mountsorrel and Narborough. This aimed 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.
- 22 During this period, the Town Council submitted an additional proposal to manage the library service, assuming the ongoing payment of the lease obligations/running costs only by the County Council (Option 2). Both the Town Council's proposals were put forward.
- 23 Fabula also submitted a proposal to manage the Library, which would enable the Council to sub-let the running costs of the lease to Fabula, thereby making a saving.

- 24 In April 2016, the Cabinet approved the transfer of the Library to Fabula and in June the following year agreed a minor amendment to allow the transfer to be made to BTCL a CIO established by Fabula to manage the library.
- 25 Since that time, considerable work has taken place to facilitate the transfer of the library to BTCL. However BTCL has concluded, with regret, that its plans have become unsustainable due to time pressures and lack of staff capacity. This is by no means a reflection on the efforts made by everyone involved.
- 26 The Town Council has confirmed that its offer to manage the Library is still open and that it is willing to pursue a transfer on the basis that it would provide and manage the library service using its existing corporate governance and management structures, policies and procedures and staff resource. The County Council would continue to honour its obligation to provide the running costs associated with the long-term lease arrangements.

Proposed Way Forward

- 27 Braunstone Town Library remains one of the busiest of the libraries in the community management transfer programme, and there is strong support for it to continue in its present location from both local residents and the Town Council. The community group "Save Our Library Action Group" (SOLAG) was established in 2014 and broadly supported the Town Council's proposals. The Town Council is keen for the library to remain at its existing site.
- 28 Whilst the County Council could explore alternative local authority use for the building, there are no immediate requirements at present and any changes would require the Town Council's agreement.
- 29 The following issues have been considered:
- If any viable plans in line with the County Council's offer were received following the ROI process and associated consultation on alternative provision;
 - If any alternative plans were received following the ROI process and associated consultation on alternative provision;
 - 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;
 - 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;
 - The impact of alternative proposals on revenue savings for the Council.
- 30 An options analysis has been completed regarding the current position with Braunstone Town Library and is summarised in the table below:

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Financial Implications
<p>Option 1 - Braunstone Town Council</p> <p>Manage library in Partnership with County Council/ Blaby District Council offering enhanced services from Civic Centre Venue.</p>	<p>Wider range of services.</p> <p>Library maintained.</p> <p>Community and Town Council Support.</p>	<p>Assumes ongoing revenue contribution of c. £20,000 per year including lease obligations.</p>	<p>Staff revenue savings of £20,000 following transfer.</p> <p>Ongoing Revenue contribution revenue of c. £20,000 per year.</p>
<p>Option 2 - Braunstone Town Council</p> <p>Town Council to manage the library using existing resources.</p>	<p>Library maintained.</p> <p>Community and Town Council Support.</p>	<p>County Council unable to sub-lease its running cost obligation.</p>	<p>Staff revenue savings of £20,000 per year following transfer.</p>
<p>Option 3 - Alternative local authority provision from venue</p>	<p>Non-library services offered from venue.</p> <p>Potential to deliver saving on running costs.</p> <p>Library service continues through mobile library service.</p>	<p>Community and Town Council support for library solution.</p> <p>Requires the Town Council's agreement.</p> <p>County Council may still be liable for running costs.</p> <p>Reduced library service /access.</p>	<p>Staff revenue savings of £20,000 following decommissioning of the library.</p>
<p>Option 4 - Library closure and replacement with mobile library service</p>	<p>Library service continues through mobile library service.</p>	<p>Reduced library service/access.</p> <p>Community and Town Council support the Town Council's proposals.</p> <p>County Council may still be liable for running costs.</p>	<p>Staff revenue savings of £20,000 following decommissioning of library.</p>

31 It is considered that Option 2, the Town Council's proposal to manage the library through existing resources, represents the best way forward, as:

- It is the most pragmatic way forward to sustain the library service in the area;
- It has strong Town Council and local community support;
- The County Council is obligated to honour the terms of the lease agreement;
- It would enable the Library to continue to operate from its current site.

32 On 22 February Braunstone Town Council's Policy and Resources Committee agreed in principle to accept the County's offer to manage and operate the Braunstone Town Library service and that the Executive Officer and Town Clerk

could negotiate the detailed legal, financial, governance and management arrangements in order to progress the transfer.

- 33 The Committee noted that the Town Council's proposals were viable, fully costed, and supported by the local community. Recognising that the County Council was the commissioning and responsible authority for Library Services, the Town Council would work with public bodies, service providers and the community to protect and enhance the service.

Background Papers

Minutes (draft) of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, Braunstone Town Council, 22 February 2018

<http://bit.ly/2owf1Mg>

Report to the Cabinet, 23 June 2017 - Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services - Transfer of Braunstone Town Library to Community Management

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5120&Ver=4>

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

<http://ow.ly/YnxuM>

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

<http://ow.ly/JmQwT>

Equality and Human Rights Implications

- 34 The recommendations in this report would ensure that the Library services continue to be provided and there would only be minimal impact on protected groups with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It has not been necessary therefore to revise the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) that was produced in November 2013.
- 35 An 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>
- 36 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 have been any decision to close libraries in these areas.
- 37 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/JmQqE>
- 38 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 PSED, it is regarded as good practice and a means of supporting informed decision making.

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