



## **CABINET – 6 JULY 2018**

### **COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

##### **PART A**

##### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet on progress made with the implementation of Community Managed Libraries and the arrangements in place to support their sustainable operation. The report also seeks approval of a process by which the Council will follow should a Community Managed Library group no longer be able to run a library.

##### **Recommendations**

- 2 It is recommended that:
  - a) Community Managed Library groups throughout Leicestershire be congratulated on their achievements in having developed their local libraries into thriving community hubs;
  - b) The continued support in place to help Community Managed Library groups to run their libraries, including the availability of temporary support funds be noted.
  - c) The process to be followed should any Community Managed Library group be unable to continue to provide a library service as set out in paragraphs 28–30 i) of this report be approved, noting in particular that this includes:
    - i) Delegation to the Director of Adults and Communities, following consultation with Local Member(s) and Cabinet Lead Member, to agree alternative arrangements if this will result in no significant effect in the level of library provision;
    - ii) A report to the Cabinet in the event that significant changes to library provision might result.

##### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3 Community Managed Libraries (CMLs) have been working well and there are CMLs across large parts of the County. The individual CML groups are responsible for ensuring they are sustainable and well managed and the Council continues to provide support where required. The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure provision of a “comprehensive and efficient” library service as detailed in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

- 4 The Council has ensured support is in place to help CML groups to pro-actively manage their sustainability and to advise and support them to deal effectively with emerging issues that may pose a potential risk to the future operation of the service as they arise. Most of the financial support will end in 2021/22.
- 5 In situations where a CML ceases operation, the Council will need to be able to act swiftly to consider alternative provision.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

- 6 Subject to approval, the process by which the Council will follow should a CML group give notice that it is ending its library service will be implemented going forward.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

- 7 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;
  - 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.
- 8 In November 2014, the Cabinet agreed the infrastructure support package to be offered to local communities wishing to operate CMLs 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.
- 9 Between January 2015 and March 2018, the Cabinet considered several reports regarding the transfer of community libraries across the County. To date, 31 libraries have transferred to community management, with a further four in the process of transferring.

### **Resources Implications**

- 10 The Communities and Wellbeing Service's net budget for 2018/19 is £5.3m. In line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) this will reduce to approximately £4.3m per annum from 2020/21. It is recognised that given the scale of these reductions, service delivery will change significantly. The CML programme has been an element of this change.
- 11 As part of the support package for CMLs agreed in November 2014, a contingency fund of £150,000 was established. This was put in place to assist any community group in the event of an emergency such as roof or boiler failure. To date £43,182 of this fund has been drawn down by communities.

- 12 In January 2018, £100,000 was allocated for one year as growth within the MTFS 2018-22 to assist any CMLs that may struggle financially as a direct consequence of other council decisions.
- 13 The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

- 14 This report is being circulated to all Members of the Council via the Members' News in Brief Service.

### **Officer to Contact**

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**PART B****Background**

- 15 The model for the delivery of library services in Leicestershire was agreed following extensive consultation in 2014 as follows:
- 16 libraries managed by Leicestershire County Council;
  - A support package to enable communities to manage and run their community library;
  - An alternative mobile library service if a community library closed;
  - An online library service.
- 16 To date 31 community libraries have successfully transferred to become CMLs which aim to provide a community hub which meets the needs of their local communities, with some choosing to increase opening hours, serve coffee and cake and establishing a solid programme of activities and events.
- 17 Each CML has a different offer depending upon need. For example, Measham Library by working in close partnership with Measham Health Centre has arranged for the stroke and disability group to meet regularly, a walking group to meet weekly starting at the library and returning for refreshments, Tai Chi and Yoga groups running in the library during the evenings, a weekly knit and stitch group, monthly book group and weekly pre-school story time. Activities such as these have been replicated in many of the libraries being managed by their communities.
- 18 Many CMLs also hold regular cluster meetings sharing ideas and best practice whilst working together to support each other through potential challenges they may face.
- 19 Annual review meetings are held between those running each CML and County Council officers in order to review progress made and address any emerging concerns and issues.

**County Council Support for Community Managed Libraries**

- 20 CMLs receive financial support from the Council in the form of a tapered financial package. This has consisted of transitional funding, grant funding and access to a contingency fund to help assist in the event of significant repairs. The tapered financial support offer for most libraries ends in 2021/22.
- 21 In addition, ongoing in-kind support is provided through the maintenance of the Library Management System, the free loan of County Council owned books and other materials, including periodic stock exchanges and supplies of new stock. Library staff offer peripatetic professional support, through two community support officers and day to day operational support through a telephone help line. Management support is given in facilitating access to potential Section 106 (developer contribution) funding.
- 22 In line with the agreed model for library services in Leicestershire, the Council would need to consider bringing in mobile library service provision in villages where a community library ceases operation and an alternative community run option could not be found.

- 23 The continued success of CMLs depends on groups ability to proactively manage their future sustainability including by:
- Ensuring the Management Committee has a broad range of skills, including succession planning;
  - Looking at new ways to generate income and/or reduce costs in the long-term;
  - Effective volunteer management and recruitment.
- 24 The Council supports groups to do this by:
- a) Providing access to a range of County Council commissioned support services for voluntary and community sector groups, for example Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL) for governance, volunteer management, funding advice; the Co-operative and Social Enterprise Development Agency (CASE) for financial sustainability, trading opportunities; and the Rural Community Council (RCC) building management advice.
  - b) Providing practical support and advice from the community support officer regarding governance and sustainability through regular visits, attendance at community managed library cluster meetings and annual reviews.
  - c) Providing training and support to volunteers annually ensuring that they are confident and up to date with all elements of library work including the Library Management System.
  - d) Working closely with the Communities Team (Chief Executive's Department) to review ongoing support, including learning and development opportunities, networking events, funding opportunities, peer support and strategic advice.
  - e) Working with internal partners to review the 10-year support package to be able to provide certainty and clarity for CML groups moving forward.

### **Risks to Community Managed Libraries' Viability**

- 25 Occasionally, CML groups will have to deal with situations or issues that, if left unaddressed could affect the future sustainability of the library or put the short to medium term viability of the library service at risk, for example an acute shortage of volunteers, financial or building issues.
- 26 In such circumstances, the Council would offer additional support, by:
- Increased liaison and practical support, advice and brokerage by the community support officer and training officer to enable steps to be put in place to address and resolve governance, volunteer management or financial sustainability issues.
  - Deploying targeted support from VAL, CASE and RCC as required.
- 27 As part of the original support package for CMLs in 2014, a contingency fund of £150,000 was established, to which groups could apply for help in the case of significant building maintenance issues. To date £43,182 has been awarded. In the latest MTFS (2018/19–2021/22) the Council made a further £100,000 available for one year to CMLs to aid long-term sustainability, to be used for example, where the

Council withdraws from occupancy agreements where groups benefitted from additional rental income from the Council.

### **Proposed procedure in the Event of Possible Closure**

- 28 Notwithstanding the above support it is acknowledged that there may be situations in the future when a CML group decides that it is no longer able to continue the operation of the library. Should this arise it is proposed that the process outlined below would be followed.
- 29 The group in question would be obliged to give formal notice to the Council that it could no longer provide library services. The agreements with the CML groups require that six months' notice is given, but realistically it may not be possible for a service to continue to be provided during this notice period.
- 30 It is therefore proposed that in the case of notice being given:
- a) The Local Member and Cabinet Member would be notified by the Director.
  - b) Arrangements for interim library service provision would be put in place until a permanent solution had been agreed. The Director may appoint a group or organisation to act as a 'caretaker' on a time-limited basis, or may agree a replacement mobile library service as a temporary measure.
  - c) The public would be advised and any group(s) willing to take over the management of the library would be invited to make submissions to the Council. Where appropriate the Council would assist the formation of a new group, or support the transfer of responsibility from the existing charity/group to the new group. (Depending upon the situation a formal registration of interest or other process may be required to ensure fairness and transparency; this would be a matter for the Director of Adults and Communities to decide).
  - d) In the event of a CML group being identified and there being no significant reduction in the services provided, following consultation with the Local Member(s) and Cabinet Lead Member, the Director of Adults and Communities would agree the new arrangements.
  - e) Should no community managed solution be found, the Director of Adults and Communities and the Assistant Chief Executive would make the necessary arrangements in order to initiate a public consultation on alternative library provision (eg mobile library services).
  - f) All proposals received under c) and e) above would be assessed against a 'value for money' framework, which would include an evaluation of the quality of service and community cohesions/resilience factors, and equality and human rights issues, as well as purely financial considerations.
  - g) Reference would also be made to the provisions of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, including whether it remained appropriate to continue to offer a library service at the location in question.

- h) The outcome of the public consultation, along with proposals for any alternative community managed solutions or service provision would be reported to the Cabinet, including a full Equality Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) being undertaken to inform decision making. The Cabinet would make the decision on the future of the service.
- i) Should it be decided to close a library the future of the building or site will be reviewed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan.

### **Conclusion**

- 31. Leicestershire's communities have been exemplar in their approach in sustaining a valued network of local libraries and the CMLs show every sign of continuing to be successful. However, it is considered prudent to have an agreed robust and transparent process in place in the event of future difficulties.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

- 32. There are no equality and human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report. In the event of needing to consider alternative library provision, such implications would form part of the proposed process as detailed above. The approval of a process for intervention should a CML group give notice to the Council that it is ending its library service 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 EHRIA that was produced in November 2013.
- 33. An EHRIA for each of the 36 community libraries was appended to the Cabinet report dated 19 November 2014.
- 34. 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.
- 35. 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>

### **Partnership Working and Associated Issues**

- 36. Continued partnership working with the organisations will remain important in order to provide a supportive environment in which community groups managing their libraries have opportunities to share best practice and develop skills associated with sustaining their library.

### **Background Papers**

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

<http://ow.ly/JmQwT>

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