



ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
10 JUNE 2014

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES IN THE
DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY LIBRARY SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to invite members of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment, as part of a consultation exercise, on changes to the way community library services are to be delivered by the County Council in order to make the required savings in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 2 National legislation regarding Libraries is outlined in the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act.
- 3 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, public library services are a statutory duty for local authorities who are required to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service. To comply with the act local authorities must:
 - Promote a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons in the area that want to make use of it (Section 7);
 - Promote the service (Section 7(2)(b));
 - Lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (section 8(3)(b)).
- 4 The Government superintends how councils undertake this role and has a duty to:
 - Oversee and promote the public library service (Section 1(1));
 - Take action where a local authority fails to perform its duties (Section 10).
- 5 In September 2013, the County Council consulted on its budgetary priorities in relation to the MTFS. The outcome of this consultation ranked libraries as overall 12th as a service where those who responded to the consultation felt that less money could be spent.

- 6 On the 5 March 2014, the Cabinet approved a consultation exercise regarding the future of community library services on the basis set out in this report, with a view to a report detailing the outcome of the consultation exercise being submitted to the Cabinet in September 2014.

Background

- 7 The County Council has a statutory obligation to ensure the provision of a comprehensive and efficient library service. An analysis of the current library service indicates that whilst it is comprehensive, there are a large number of service points, potentially leading to inefficient use of resources. A re-provision of the service would continue to meet the statutory obligations of the Council contributing £0.8m towards MTFS savings.
- 8 The rationale of the proposals is for the Council to enable and facilitate the on-going provision, wherever possible, of these services, by closer partnership with communities and other providers, whilst at the same time sustaining the countywide infrastructure to enable the obligations on the Council to be sustained, and meeting budget challenges.
- 9 The vision for the Communities and Wellbeing Service within the Adults and Communities Department is to:
- “Support communities by preparing people for the future through learning and skills, connecting the vulnerable to the wider society, preserving the best of the past, and encouraging a sense of health and wellbeing among all residents. These ambitions are being delivered by changing the service – by making it more integrated, more digital and peripatetic, more enabling and more entrepreneurial and through these changes making it leaner”.
- 10 The wider transformative change in how services are to be delivered in the future will involve a significant remodelling of service delivery shifting away from traditionally recognised models. In the case of libraries, the focus on working with communities to reduce demand for services, and supporting communities to deliver services, is an approach which is already generating interest in the County.
- 11 The MTFS targets approved by the County Council on 19 February 2014 relating to the reduction in funding for community libraries and the review of other library services (with a reduction in associated infrastructure costs) provides the opportunity to develop community partnerships for up to 36 community libraries depending on public appetite and viability, plus a reduction in opening hours of major and shopping centre libraries by 20%.

Strategic approach to meet MTFS targets

- 12 The main objectives are to:
- Encourage digital and online access;

- Encourage certain libraries to devolve to partnership delivery with communities;
- Reduce opening hours for libraries where appropriate;
- Share services within the region;
- Reduce infrastructure and staffing in line with the savings and realignment indicated above;
- Continue to support income and commercial growth.

13 Recognising the role of each library in its community, the strategic approach will be based on:

- a) A core offer that is online and virtual providing e-books, transactions and engagement, images of heritage collections and works of art, centred on its Library Management System and Image Leicestershire.
- b) A core offer in libraries that is physical and based around the 16 Market Town and Shopping Centre locations listed in Appendix A with reduced opening hours;
- c) A discretionary physical offer in community managed libraries (the remaining libraries listed in Appendix A), with support from the Council for their initial establishment, ICT, book stock and other services and based on an agreement clarifying responsibilities of the Council (reasonable property and related costs and services) and the community group which would be expected to provide staffing, access, advice, activities and events.
- d) A subsequent review of service infrastructure to accommodate the changes brought about by implementation of the above.

The proposed Community Partnership Model

14 The Council recognises the importance of providing enough support to enable community partnerships to be viable and sustainable into the future. Details of the proposed community partnership model are set out in Appendix B. This will be included in the proposed consultation. It will also be important to ensure that transitional support is available to assist community partnerships to take up this challenge and become fit for purpose going forward.

Options for devolved delivery

15 The service has been researching and keeping in close touch with organisations which have devolved their delivery in different ways. The options for this will be developed through the consultation process and invitations for bids to take over the management of libraries will be sought between September 2014 and January 2015, subject to the outcome of the consultations.

Status Quo

- 16 This is not a viable option. The savings cannot be made if the status quo is maintained.

Devolved Governance

- 17 Options such as community interest companies and partnerships with Parish and Town Councils are the possibilities for devolved governance. These will be explored in terms of sustainability depending on what levels of interest are expressed during the consultation period. Indications of interest thus far are encouraging.

Outsourcing to the private sector

- 18 There are a small number of private companies that may offer to manage libraries on behalf of the Council. Consultation on the MTFS indicated a lack of public appetite in Leicestershire for privatisation. However, there is scope to explore this option further should organisations express an interest in a discussion with the Council.

Consultations

- 19 In September 2013, the County Council consulted on its budgetary priorities in relation to the MTFS. Focus group work indicated that library services were service areas where less money could be spent through an exploration of alternative delivery models.
- 20 A range of related informal engagement activity on aspects of the proposals was undertaken in the autumn of 2012. A summary of the outcomes of this is as follows:
- Overall recognition and understanding of the need to make savings;
 - Libraries recognised for the professional service they provide and seen as being core to communities;
 - Support for the concept of using volunteers to help run small rural libraries, but not without the support of professionally qualified staff;
 - Certain activities could be conducted by non-library employees such as reading groups;
 - The mobile library service was felt to be essential for certain communities;
 - It was felt that mobile services could become less frequent if book allowances/borrowing times increased;
 - The concept of using technology (ie e-books) was not universally liked;
 - Libraries sharing buildings with other organisations – this option received strong support. Although the practicalities of achieving this were noted, it was recognised that long term benefits could be achieved.
- 21 In order to progress further, it was recommended that a formal consultation exercise be undertaken to gather insight around the proposals and to refine

them in order for a full recommendation for implementation to be presented to the Cabinet in September 2014.

- 22 Formal consultation will give an opportunity to provide detailed information around the proposals, give an opportunity to explore any other suggested alternatives than the ones detailed in this report and to ascertain how the citizens of Leicestershire would prioritise future options.

Public

- 23 A public consultation exercise commenced on the 7 April 2014 and will run to the 7 July 2014. The consultation is constructed principally around:
- The proposed new model of library service provision for Leicestershire;
 - A reduction in opening hours at all major libraries.
- 24 Informal meetings are being held with interested local Parish Councils in order to explore their role in supporting community partnerships. Parish Councils can support local communities in a variety of ways. These are summarised in a briefing note attached to this report as Appendix C. It has been recommended that legal advice be sought by any Parish Council planning a pro-active role in any future proposals post September 2014.
- 25 In addition, a full Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) will be undertaken to understand the mitigation required for people with a protected characteristic; this EHRIA work may reflect the need to consider changes in the provision of the mobile library service in order to support communities who may no longer have direct access to a community library service. The questionnaire for Barwell library is attached to this report as an example of how this may be taken forward (Appendix D).
- 26 The consultations involve the following components:
- Information and bespoke documents outlining the details of the proposals available on-line, as paper copy and in easy read format.
 - Data sheets with information and proposals for each library available electronically and in hard copy.
 - Survey form accessible through the County Council's website.
 - Hard copy freepost survey form available in all library service points and on request via dedicated telephone number.
 - 36 facilitated public consultation meetings at or near each of the community libraries.
 - 32 "speak to a manager" drop-in sessions – two at each of the 16 libraries for which changes in opening hours are proposed.
 - Four Community Partnership Library workshops to enable interested people and groups to further explore the detailed proposals with regards to partnership libraries.
 - A variety of venues and times to facilitate access by a wide cross section of the public.

- Four focus group workshops with library users - two with younger people and two with older people.
- Dedicated e-mail account and telephone number for the consultation.

27 The consultations have been highlighted to:

- The general public;
- Library users;
- Organisations with an interest in the delivery of library services.
- All Leicestershire District and Borough Councils;
- All Leicestershire Parish Councils;
- Arts Council England;
- The Big Lottery.

Staff

28 Staff have been consulted on the proposals by:

- Providing access to the on-line information and on-line survey form (hard copy survey form where appropriate);
- Staff meetings across the county;
- Regular engagement with staff representatives notably UNISON;
- Staff will have the opportunity to comment on the service proposals as they develop, before final decisions are made.

29 Should some, or all of the proposals be agreed by Cabinet following its consideration of the consultation feedback, then a further 30 or 45 day (as appropriate) consultation will be undertaken with affected staff.

Timetable

30 In order to achieve the savings within the budget set for 2014/15 it will be necessary to adopt the following decision making timetable.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Date</u>
• Cabinet – authorisation of staff and public consultation on the proposals	5 March 2014
• Start of 90 day staff and public consultation. Consultation events to be held during this period	7 April 2014
• Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of the proposals	10 June 2014
• Analysis of Feedback starts	7 July 2014
• Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider emerging proposals	2 September 2014
• Cabinet – Final decision on the future of community library services	12 September 2014
• Start of implementation process	September 2014

- Invitations for Community Library expressions of interest issued September 2014
- Final deadline for receipt of business cases for Community Managed Libraries 3 January 2015
- Implementation of Community Managed Libraries or alternative arrangements for service delivery. The timeline will be flexible to allow for early implementation of individual community partnerships as appropriate. April-June 2015

Resource Implications

- 31 The savings requirement for libraries approved by the County Council on the 19 February 2014 is as follows:

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
	£000	£000	£000	£000
"S.37 Reduction in Funding for Community Libraries and review of other library services	170	640	800	800

- 32 This is part of an overall savings reduction amount to £1.91m in total by 2016/17 in the Communities and Wellbeing service area.
- 33 Due to timescales associated with both the public consultation and partnership negotiations the majority of the 2014/15 savings for libraries are expected to slip into 2015/16. The balance of the 2014/15 savings target will be met by an earlier than anticipated implementation of changes to the Communities and Wellbeing infrastructure.
- 34 The scale of future library savings achieved will be dependent upon the interest and speed of any community partnerships that come forward as a result of the consultation and a mandate given to progress with the proposals.
- 35 Data and usage information for libraries has been provided as part of the public consultation. These can be found via the following links:
- http://www.leics.gov.uk/16_libraries.pdf
- http://www.leics.gov.uk/36_community_libraries.pdf
- 36 The Director of Corporate Resources and the County Solicitor have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

- 37 The MTFs was approved by the County Council at its meeting on the 19 February 2014. It identifies the reduction in the library budget that needs to be made during the period 2014-18. In order to achieve the reductions identified, it will be necessary to implement the necessary changes from Spring 2015.

- 38 A report detailing the outcome of the consultation exercise will be submitted to the Cabinet in September 2014.

Conclusion

- 39 The proposed redesign of library service provision creates an opportunity to realign these services within the resources available beyond 2016, whilst not compromising the Council's statutory library obligations.
- 40 It will give the opportunity for communities and other organisations to work together to decide what services they need for the future in their local area.

Background Papers

- Report to Cabinet: 5 March 2014 – Consultation on proposals for changes in the delivery of Community Library Services
[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00003988/AI00037201/\\$4communitylibraryservices.docA.ps.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00003988/AI00037201/$4communitylibraryservices.docA.ps.pdf)
- Report of the Cabinet to the meeting of the County Council on 19 February on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2017/18.
[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000134/M00003961/AI00037151/\\$5aBudgetReportoftheCabinet.docx.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000134/M00003961/AI00037151/$5aBudgetReportoftheCabinet.docx.pdf)
- Arts Council England: Envisioning the Library of the future
<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/google-search/?q=envisioning+libraries+of+the+future>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

- 41 The Cabinet reported dated the 5 March 2014 was circulated to all members of the Council via the Members' News in Brief.

Officers to Contact

Mick Connell, Director of Adults and Communities
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 305 7454
Email: mick.connell@leics.gov.uk

Nigel Thomas, Head of Service (Communities and Wellbeing)
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 305 7379
Email nigel.thomas@leics.gov.uk

List of Appendices

- Appendix A Libraries affected
- Appendix B Proposed Community Partnership Model for Leicestershire Community Library Services
- Appendix C Briefing Note on Parish Council Role
- Appendix D Barwell Library Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment questionnaire

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equal Opportunities Implications

- 42 The Council's duty under the Human Rights and Equality Act needs to be taken into account when coming to any decision. An initial EHRIA questionnaire has been undertaken using Barwell Library as an example and is attached at Appendix D. The approach that we have adopted is to assess Equality and Human Rights implications using data covering the services, resources, users and attendees at events offered at Barwell Library during 2012/13. The intention is to highlight the potential impacts that would need to be addressed by mitigation should Barwell Library be faced with closure (but in no way pre-empts such an outcome).
- 43 Research data included as appendices provides an idea of how library provision could be optimised across the County by a number of priorities which include the Equality protected groups of Age (older), Age (younger), Health, Gender and Ethnicity. It is clear from the questionnaire that full EHRIAs will have to be undertaken, where any library cannot be satisfactorily run by alternative means, eg community managed. This will evolve over the course of the consultation period.
- 44 In addition, a community analysis will be produced and submitted to the Cabinet prior to any final decisions about the service being taken.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

- 45 The consultation on the recommended strategy is anticipated to be sensitive and will require extensive discussion with a range of national and local stakeholders.

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