

Appendix C

Summary of the Library Services Review

Background

1. The aims of the service wide review which commenced in Summer 2011 were to ensure:
 - (a) delivery of our statutory duties whilst providing a high quality service in the most effective manner, in order to meet local needs
 - (b) making the best use of assets and increasing their impact for the benefit of all
 - (c) the service is flexible, adaptable and fit for the future
 - (d) the service is accessible to all, supports the most vulnerable and individuals as required throughout their lives
2. The review was taken forward through five key work streams which are summarised below. Further information is available on each element online at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/default.aspx>

Market Research – ‘The Big Library Debate’

3. The Big Library Debate (BLD) conducted in summer 2011 enabled the Council to undertake comprehensive market research with residents and stakeholders through workshops, focus groups, town centre events and questionnaires in order to gain a better understanding of what people valued, what they thought the service could do better and what we ought to start doing. 11% of respondents were from non service users. In order to ensure the views of non service users were represented The Research Unit (TRU) were employed to facilitate focus groups of service users and non users in order to gain a greater understanding of why people don't use libraries and what we need to do to engage with them.
4. In total over 2,000 people participated in the BLD, with the key findings being:
 - (a) it is clear that libraries are valued by both regular users and non-users but there has been a strong fear of closure
 - (b) what is most important is the lending of books, CDs, DVDs and spoken word material and friendly, helpful and informative staff
 - (c) recognition of challenges around opening hours, fines, range of stock/choice, uncomfortable study spaces, dated buildings and slow IT
 - (d) the service must promote and market itself better

- (e) recognition that there is real opportunity for libraries to become community hubs and maximise the use of space in libraries
- (f) positive views on libraries working with partners and integrating services such as council services and employment and careers advice
- (g) differing age groups tend to place a different emphasis on which services are most important
- (h) some conflict between those who don't want the service to change and those who believe it has to
- (i) residents tend to favour Council stewardship of libraries, but are not averse to greater private or voluntary and community sector involvement, including a greater use of volunteers
- (j) concern about the loss of the mobile library service and what opportunities there may be for greater outreach work in rural areas

Information Gathering and Needs Analysis – Understanding our Existing and Future Customers

5. In order to underpin the market research a comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken in order to understand which residents are and aren't using the service, levels of satisfaction and how the service compares to other library authorities in areas such as usage and value for money. From this it is clear that:
- (a) Issues and footfall has increased by (14% and 13% respectively between 2009/10 and 2010/11) and over the same period there has been increases in item requests, enquiries, use of PCs and children engaged in the summer reading challenge (over 5,900 young people). There has been a 133% increase in housebound users and we expect this figure to have increased again in 2011/12 with the withdrawal of the mobile library service. Number of registered users has declined by 1% between 2009/10 and 2010/11
 - (b) 93% of adults and 90% of children are satisfied with the service they receive, this compares very well with other Library Services with Bedford Borough at 88.6%, Luton 85% and Milton Keynes 91.2% for adults¹. Maintaining this level of satisfaction is a MTP measure. Achieving this during a period of modernisation will be a challenge
 - (c) Children aged 0-14yrs are much more likely to be users than average, along with Mosaic groups of industrial workers, higher income families concerned with education and careers and early and middle aged parents likely to be involved in their children's education

¹ Source: CIPFA 2010-11 Public Library Statistics Actuals.

- (d) Those groups less likely to be engaging with library services are people living in social accommodation designed for older people, less mobile people, people living in brand new residential developments and mixed communities with a large number of single people in the centre of small towns. Males aged 15-59 yrs are less likely to be users than average and 65% of library users are female
- (e) The service needs to take into account to a greater extent geographical areas of deprivation and pockets of unemployment as the service is not as successful in engaging these groups in certain localities such as Biggleswade and Flitwick
- (f) The rural nature of the population, particularly in respect of the cessation of the mobile library service means that there are a number of specific areas of low library usage namely Cranfield, Marston Moretaine, Lidlington, Aspley Guise and Woburn
- (g) Central Bedfordshire libraries issue 5,914 items per 1,000 population. This compares with issues per 1,000 population for English library services as a whole (4,885), English Unitary Authorities (5,084) and English Counties (5,296)²

Reviewing Best Practice and Options for Future Service Delivery

6. In 2010 the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals published guidance for local councils which said that a good public library service would deliver against key policy objectives and provide:
- “a positive future for children and young people
 - a fulfilling life for older people
 - strong, safe and sustainable communities
 - promotion of local identity and community pride
 - learning, skills and workforce development
 - health improvements and well-being
 - equality, community cohesion and social justice
 - economic regeneration”

² Source: CIPFA 2010-11 Public Library Statistics Actuals

7. A Further report “Sharper Investment for Changing Times” by the then Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) published in 2010 made a number of recommendations:
- review services against community need
 - look at ways of co-locating and integrating services
 - look at new approaches to technology to free staff from routine tasks
 - use volunteers to supplement core services
 - work more effectively and efficiently to respond to local needs across local authority boundaries
 - look at new ways of developing and delivering services
 - set up structures to allow people to become more involved in the planning and delivery services and engage more effectively with communities
 - reach out to new audiences and non users by targeted marketing, strong community outreach, working in partnership
 - develop a workforce that can deliver change
8. Red Quadrant were employed to support the review of best practice, delivery models and potential governance arrangements to work with the Council. Work was undertaken to look at a range of delivery models as briefly summarised below :
9. (a) Commercial Provider: Outsourcing library service provision to a private company, through open procurement. Could involve transferring staff, buildings, stock and IT equipment. Decisions would be required around who owns buildings, who owns stock, what would be the impact on the shared hub arrangements. There are only a small number of commercial providers delivering library services and as such they are largely untested and the successes unknown at the current time
- (b) Trust Model: Could involve establishing a new trust, buying into an existing trust across geographical boundaries or bundling with other Council services in forming a new trust. The library service on its own is considered too small to form a trust but the service could continue to look at alternative delivery models with other Council services as opportunities arise in the future
- (c) Devolution of Service: Devolve the running of the smaller libraries to town and parish councils. Could involve transferring staff and buildings to town and parish councils. Stock, ICT and infrastructure would remain the responsibility of the Council in order to move the stock round Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Luton as shared resources. Libraries are also part of a national network with material being able to be lent anywhere in the UK

- (d) Libraries delivered by other organisations: For example Further Education or Higher Education providers delivering services to students and the general public
 - (e) Libraries as a hub for Council Services: Could involve the co-location of Council services, with staff delivering from library premises e.g. as customer service points
 - (f) Virtualisation of Libraries: Over time look to close existing libraries, significantly enhance offer online virtual library offer and any physical services delivered through community based settings in shared spaces, developing a real community network
10. The conclusion from the analysis of options is that the Council should continue to run the library service but seek to deliver maximum efficiency savings through investing in technology, reviewing staffing structures and backroom processes to enable a greater focus on front line activities. The service should actively look at opportunities for more collaborative working and as other Council services look at delivery options the library service should position itself to be considered as part of a delivery model for a host of services.

Public Consultation – ‘Libraries for the Future’

11. Public consultation commenced in October 2011 and ran for 12 weeks through to January 2012. The consultation document explicitly stated that the Council was not looking to close libraries but recognised that in the future not all libraries would be the same. It also provided the opportunity for residents, partners and stakeholders to comment on the emerging service wide ambitions

The ambitions being tested were around:

- Involving local people in making decisions about their library
 - Being accessible when, where, and how people want
 - Helping children, young people, and adults to improve skills and learn
 - Recognising that to do this we will need to modernise our service, find new ways to provide better services and save money
12. Six models of future libraries were proposed to enable people to visualise what their local library could look like in the future, these were around:
- A community space
 - Computers and technology learning
 - Information and learning
 - Family library
 - Advice and access to other services
 - A place to read and relax

13. 2,200 people responded via completed questionnaires and 50 people took part in more detailed focus group discussions and a stakeholder workshop with the key findings being:
- (a) Clear endorsement of the service wide direction of travel contained within the ambition statements, but there remains a fear of library closures
 - (b) Concerns that saving money will compromise the library service and that the service cannot be run by volunteers
 - (c) Tensions remain between those who believe the service must change and those who want to keep it as it is
 - (d) Challenges around opening hours, choice of stock, uncomfortable study spaces, dated buildings and need to zone spaces were re-iterated. Along with support for refreshment facilities
 - (e) The “Family” type of library was the preferred model for every library, but by varying degrees. It was a particular focus for smaller libraries, with larger libraries also emphasising the importance of the “Read and Relax” library and “Information and Learning” library
 - (f) There are real differences by age with those over 30yrs favouring the “Family” library and those under 30 yrs favouring the “Read and Relax, Information and Learning and Technology” library types. Differences also exist by economic activity type and emphasise the importance of local libraries targeting local need
 - (g) 84% respondents said they would support Library Access Points in communities not currently served by libraries

Review of Systems, Staffing, Processes and Modernisation programme

14. An external review of the shared hub service funded by the MLA Council identified that whilst continuing the shared service arrangements with Bedford Borough Council and Luton Cultural Trust provides a cost effective solution for Central Bedfordshire Council there are a number of areas where significant efficiencies can be made. Efficiency savings will be driven through changes to processes, operating practices, reduction in hub staffing, introduce self service RFID technology, consider supplier stock selection and direct stock delivery to libraries and migrating the existing libraries network infrastructure for Central Bedfordshire libraries from Bedford Borough to Central Bedfordshire Council
15. A review of the existing staffing structure has concluded that in order to deliver the new Library Service Strategy and required efficiency savings it is necessary to reconfigure library staffing. Whilst the commitment remains to have a service delivered by paid staff running the core service the introduction of new technology will lead to a reduction in overall post numbers. In order to mitigate this for the last 9 months the service has been carrying vacancies in order to minimise the impact on staff

16. A review of the Library Link Service to housebound users has identified that whilst the service is hugely valued by customers with the demand for services already increasing and with the increasing ageing population, it is necessary to find less costly ways of delivering the service. A further detailed review of this service area will be undertaken in 2013. Any changes must result in their being little or no impact on customers
17. The Library Service must continue to review all business processes and procedures in order to deliver efficiency savings. Staff will be empowered and supported via ongoing training and development as part of our commitment to continuous improvement to identify areas of waste along with potential solutions