

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	11th April 2012	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2380
TITLE:	Libraries and Local Communities: Library Plan 2012-15	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: The Public Library Plan 2012-15,		

1 THE ISSUE

The plan sets out the 2012-15 strategic priorities for Bath and North East Somerset Council's Library Service describing the 5 key principles which will inform the allocation of resources and the direction to embed the service within local communities over the next 3 years.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 The plan is approved including the funding options included in 3.4

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The current economic climate is putting a pressure on library services to define their role more clearly, use resources efficiently and effectively and look to communities and partnerships for support and involvement.

3.2 There are currently many financial challenges facing the public sector and the Council, which may include implications for future service provision. This will need to be considered as part of the Council's financial planning process.

Revenue

3.3 The Library Service has delivered actions that have already generated £59K of revenue savings in the year 2012-13 as set out in the Medium Term Service and Resource Plan for 2012/2013

3.4 The estimated set up costs in 2012-13 for three pilot community library points total £77K, consisting of a salary for 1 temp. full time project officer at £22K and set up costs of £55K

Options for savings to meet these costs:

- £50K set aside to fund debt finance charges for mobile libraries in 2012/13 which will not now take place
- A potential reduction in the annual service charge included in the operating budget for Bath Central Library of up to £90K in a full year. If, following discussions with Property Services, this saving does not materialise, then the remaining £27K to fund the set-up of the community libraries, will be made from the Library Materials Fund

The on-going cost of each new community libraries project will be in the region of £6K p.a. which the service will identify savings for once the new community libraries are in operation. These costs will be reflected in future Medium Term Service and Resource Plans

Capital

3.5 The Service has the following item of capital expenditure for the year:

- Paulton Library relocation costs: The Council's Capital Programme has provided an expenditure of £172K for this project.

4 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- *Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone*
Libraries are open to all and provide free, safe places within communities to support learning and leisure. The distribution of local libraries across the area, especially mobile libraries, means that people are able to visit without reliance on public transport or use of a car. This feature, which supports independence, is particularly valued by older people and families with young children.
- *Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live*

Libraries provide a focal point for community activity. In addition to providing a space for informal social interaction the library service provides structured activities including children's story times, activities for teenagers and young people such as reading groups etc. writing workshops and computer courses for older learners,

- *Building a stronger economy*

The library is positioned at the heart of the community providing a gateway into all Council Services and a place where people can access affordable and relevant resources for learning, reading and enjoyment. The library is much more than simply a place to borrow books.

5 THE REPORT

The responses from the consultation exercises have played a large part in the development of the Library Plan and have influenced the change in direction for the future of the mobile library service. People's views have been listened to and their recommendations embedded in this plan. The key requests/comments were around:

- Better range of books and other items
- Better opening hours at static libraries
- Improved customer care and availability of staff
- Retaining a mobile library service with at least one vehicle

These, together with the desire to achieve excellent services within very tight financial constraints has led us towards new ways of achieving our ambitions. We will move towards a core professional service that is supported by a greater number of volunteers that have distinct roles in extending the accessibility of libraries services and embedding libraries more deeply within the communities they serve.

The process of moving towards this vision will be assisted by:

- emerging technologies,
- new approaches to 'partnership working' with local communities, *of which a few have expressed a strong desire to work with the library service to introduce local library collections,*
- understanding of the direction of travel of other library services across the country.
- regular sampling of our customers needs.

These issues have directed the content of the plan.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed. We have identified some potential impacts, all of these have been mitigated by the following actions:

7.1 Additional volunteers to be recruited and trained to enable the development of Home Library Service.

- 7.2 To enable people to be confident about visiting a static library and finding it open, the library service will work with communities and volunteers to extend static library opening hours in 2012.
- 7.3 Reduction of mobile library visits from every two weeks to once a month after mitigations have been introduced. March 2013.
- 7.4 Following consultation there are already some communities who are interested in hosting local collections. 3 communities will be selected as pilot projects in year one.

8 RATIONALE

- 8.1 In order to achieve 'value for money' services in a period of budgetary constraint we require that the Library Plan is robust, comprehensive, deliverable and yet responds to customer requirements.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Maintaining the mobile library service as current into 2013/14 and beyond. This option is rejected because an integral part of the plan is a target to have at least three new community based libraries in place by March 2013. With these in place, the mobile library routes will be revisited and reworked to ensure that communities who need a mobile library can continue to receive a service via one vehicle instead of two. During the consultation, a number of people supported this idea. The older vehicle to be removed from service in March 2013
- 9.2 Withdrawing both mobiles. This option is rejected at present as it is difficult to ensure that service delivery will not be lessened to disadvantaged residents even with the mitigations of 'new community libraries, improved opening hours in static libraries, and extended home library service. Work will continue to improve services to residents, particularly the elderly and the disadvantaged, during 2012/2016 and this option can be re-considered by 2018 when the newer mobile will need to be replaced or withdrawn.

9.3 CONSULTATION

- 9.4 *Cabinet members; Parish Council; Town Council; Trades Unions; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Strategic Director's Group; Monitoring Officer*
- 9.5 Consultation has been carried out with Library users, non-users, staff, Councillors, Parish Councils, Community Interest Groups via online and paper questionnaires, focus groups and public meetings during September and October 2011 and December to February 2012. A petition of 800 signatures has also been received.

10 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

- 10.1 *Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Human Rights; Corporate; Health & Safety; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations*

11 ADVICE SOUGHT

11.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	<i>June Brassington, Library Services Manager. Tel 01225 396424</i>
Sponsoring Cabinet Member	<i>Councillor David Dixon, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods</i>
Background papers	<p>Result of consultation held between September and October 2011, b) Result of consultation December 2011 to February 2012, c) Summary of questions and responses from the four public meetings. d) Voicebox 16 2009 : Library Service Engagement and Frequency of Service For Branch, Mobile & Internet Based Library Services. These can all be seen on the libraries website http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/leisureandculture/Libraries/information/Pages/Consultations.aspx</p> <p>What do the public want from Libraries? MLA, London 2010 The Modernisation of Public Libraries: A Policy Statement, DCMS, HMSO. 2010</p>
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