

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	11 October 2017	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E3000
TITLE:	Modern Libraries Programme - Community Library approach	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
APPENDIX A – Current library provision and use		
APPENDIX B – New Delivery model and support framework		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Modern Libraries Programme is seeking to deliver improved services across Bath and North East Somerset at the same time as contributing to the Council's unprecedented financial challenges. The Council is committed to an annual efficiency saving of £800,000 by 2020 to be realised through the whole programme.
- 1.2 Whilst there is a financial pressure, the Modern Libraries Programme seeks to develop an exciting community approach. Building on work so far, this will provide opportunities and increased investment for locally-based sustainable services across our areas tailored to local needs.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1 Adopt the new approach to delivering Community Run Library services in Bath and North East Somerset as set out in Appendix B as part of the overall Modern Libraries programme.
- 2.2 Approve the release of Capital in the sum of £275,000 to invest in and support our new approach to Community Run Libraries.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The Council has made provision for a capital budget of £5.953m plus £0.971m identified balances (a total of £6.924m overall) in order to deliver the modern libraries programme, this report focuses on the investment in and delivery of the Community Library Programme to be funded by £275,000 capital which will include a grant fund for the community and other supporting resources.
- 3.2 As part of the overall Modern Libraries Programme staffing levels will be reduced through staff turnover. Further development of the Community Run Libraries approach is key to enabling this and the corresponding investment in the programme is intended to mitigate any adverse effects of the reduction. There are no plans to make any redundancies and overall the transformation of the whole service, including the expansion of Community Run Libraries, will contribute to the overall programme savings target of £800k by 2020.
- 3.3 A total of £87,000 is currently spent on the rent, rates and utility bills each year for the Council managed branch libraries as well as the running costs of the mobile vehicle. The balance of the savings identified for the programme will be met through releasing the majority of these expenditures plus a proportion of savings in management and staffing costs across the whole service area.
- 3.4 Leases and tenancy agreements relating to the buildings may need to be reassigned, sub-let or existing agreements surrendered depending on break clauses. Consideration will also be given to potential Community Asset Transfer of existing branch provision facilities, depending on local circumstances.
- 3.5 Professional and other council support that is available for Community Run Libraries is set out in Appendix B

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local councils in England have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it.
- 4.2 We are not planning on reducing the Library service available but rather we will ensure that residents and library users will continue to receive the comprehensive and efficient library service they already enjoy. The Council, however, needs to take a strategic, long-term approach to transforming the library service and by adopting this new community approach, we will also strengthen the resilience of our communities as well as ensuring efficiencies. Any decisions taken will be based on an assessment of need, and future

library provision will be actively managed with the community and library professionals.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council currently manages 3 “core” libraries - in Midsomer Norton, Keynsham and Bath. These are planned to be integrated with One Stop Shop services and a report on the Bath core library and One Stop Shop is contained elsewhere on this agenda. The Council’s core library staff resources are also supporting its 5 ‘branch’ libraries with varying opening hours, at Paulton, Weston, Saltford, Moorland Rd and Radstock. These core and branch libraries are complemented by a single mobile vehicle and additional home and community-based options (<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/access-all>).
- 5.2 Library usage is declining, especially within areas with a greater density of low income households where we would wish to see an increase. Rural areas have a lower proportion of registered users and no area has greater than 16% of the population using a library.
- 5.3 Visitor numbers are in single figures at the majority of mobile library stops, so this makes this a particularly costly service per capita. In addition, the short stopping times and infrequent visits from the mobile vehicle are not conducive to support local activities and engagement.
- 5.4 Given these challenges, a new approach is required that is better tailored to local needs, makes best use of our local assets and encourages greater local ownership and therefore potentially more use from the community. The aim of this approach is that by 2020 library provision in the community with the exception of the core Library One Stop Shops in Bath, Midsomer Norton and Keynsham will be provided through Community Run Libraries and strengthened home and community-based options including the [Home Library Service](#) (link from Bath NES website address at para. 5.1). We will build on our relationships with residential homes, voluntary groups such as village agents and Age UK, as well as working with Virgin Care on new models of delivery including social prescribing.
- 5.5 This approach will see significant investment to enable local community groups (to include town and parish councils as well as voluntary organisations) to deliver local library services tailored to their community needs. Groups would become responsible for running costs, staff or volunteer management and appropriate IT. However, they would be offered a package of professional support from the Council including stock, volunteer training and networking.
- 5.6 There will also be access to a start-up fund (The Community Library Fund) of up to £5000 per scheme, further details of which will be widely publicised. In order to add to this fund and promote sustainability, local groups aiming to

run Community Libraries will be provided with additional help including support to access to alternative funding sources such as Crowdfunding.

- 5.7 The Community Run Libraries approach in each locality will be the subject of further discussions with the Area Forums, building on the progress so far that has seen significant interest in some communities wanting a more tailored library provision locally. For example work with parishes and communities from the Chew Valley, Timsbury, Stowey Sutton, Farmborough, Mulberry Park, Radstock and Paulton is already developing ideas for various Community Run provisions that will encourage and extend the use of libraries across the area. These range from utilising existing local community spaces, a school library or transferring the management of a branch library to a 'click and collect' facility in a village shop.
- 5.8 The Council will work with the Area Forums and their wide range of partners to support and champion local Community Library provision and be open to a range of opportunities. For example we would envisage local groups receiving support to ease the transition from current branch libraries to Community Run Libraries as this takes time. This is set out in more detail in Appendix B.
- 5.9 This overall approach will help deliver the following community benefits as supporting our outcomes identified in our Strategic Framework:
- Creating stronger more resilient communities by taking ownership of providing a library provision more tailored to local needs to encourage and extend their community's access to books and literature or online resources, improving literacy and digital skills.
 - Potentially creating a new space or invigorating an existing space, to bring people together for a wider breadth of services and local fun, educational, social community events and activities which can build community cohesion as well as giving people the opportunity to enjoy themselves.
 - Providing a local safe place to go to meet others, study or a gateway for physical and digital health information or support as a non-clinical space where health and wellbeing groups could work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue. Supporting people in self-care and in the self-management of long-term conditions and reduce social isolation.
 - Supporting local economic growth and prosperity by providing the resources and support to encourage people back to work and business start-up.
- 5.10 In recent years, the Council has tested this approach in local communities by developing a number of 'Community Run Libraries'. These libraries are independently run by local community groups and have proved popular locally. There are currently 4 of these 'Community Run Libraries', all different but tailored to their locality, at the "Hub in the Pub" at Chew Stoke, the New Oriel Hall in Larkhall, Combe Hay and at Southside Youth Hub.

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 As described in the July Modern Libraries report, integrating the core libraries and considering a new approach to delivery for our communities, allows us to deliver our strategic objectives, continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service whilst at the same time meeting the financial challenges we face.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Nationally, local authorities are considering a wide range of options for delivering community library services. The Council does not want to close libraries or reduce services, so considered all of the models as part of a desktop review, to assess both their suitability and potential to deliver the service in line with available resources:
- Local authority-run – library services maintained and either unstaffed i.e. self-serve only (OpenPlus) or staffed by council personnel.
 - Commissioned – library services outsourced or contracted to a third-party organisation.
 - Outsourced – library service outsourced to another local authority. These are known as ‘shared services’ and involve outsourcing the whole library service or specific functions.
 - Community run with local authority support – this includes models where the council transfers either the management of both the library asset (building and infrastructure) and the management or just the management of a library to an existing or new community organisation.
- 7.2 Each model has its pros and cons but moving to a blended approach of local authority-run and a new Community Run delivery provision with local authority support would enable the efficiencies to be made and deliver a better solution for the communities in many instances.
- 7.3 National best practice demonstrates that by working with community groups themselves to develop an appropriate delivery offer for their community and offering the right package of support ensures longer term sustainability and a more tailored service for the community. Transitioning to this approach will take time and support and relies on community commitment and often an increased use of volunteers.
- 7.4 This approach combined with existing benefits of joint procurement from working collaboratively with other authorities as part of the LibrariesWest consortium for book stock and the library management systems and co-

location with our One Stop Shops provides opportunities for increased access to services and overall reduced costs.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Public meetings have been held in the localities setting out the strategic aims through the Area Forums and further meetings are planned for the autumn cycle.
- 8.2 Following the Area Forums a series of informal engagement meetings have been held with various community groups including local parish, community and local interest groups supported by the Council's Community Engagement Team.
- 8.3 Councils are encouraged to provide Department for Culture Media and Sport with advance notice of proposals to change library service provision to assist the Libraries Minister in carrying out their statutory superintendence role - ensuring that councils are fulfilling their legal duties. In this case the Council has been in communication with the Department about its overall strategy which aligns in many ways with the "Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021" paper, we have also sent details of these proposals to the Department and will continue to be in communication with the Department with further developments.
- 8.4 The s151 and monitoring officer have had opportunity to review and input into this report.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	Equalities Impact Assessment (will be published on the Bath NES website)
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	