

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Education, Culture and Sport |
| DATE | 15th September 2011 |
| DIRECTOR | Annette Bruton |
| TITLE OF REPORT | Library & Information Service: New ways of working |
| REPORT NUMBER: | ECS/11/055 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At the Council meeting on 10th February, within the consideration of the Administration's proposals for the General Fund 2011/12, Council instructed the Director of Education, Culture and Sport to report to the relevant committee on new ways of working for the provision of library services within in the city. The original proposal involved the closure of up to 8 community libraries, leaving 8 libraries plus the Central library and had a potential saving of £452,000 over 5 years. This report considers changes to ways of delivering library and information services in the context of the context of delivering efficiencies and budget savings using technology and increasing 24/7 online services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee:

- 2.1 Note and endorse the contents of the report
- 2.2 Agree and endorse the proposed vision for the Library and Information Service and its service delivery for 2011-2016, within the wider context of the Service Plan for Education, Culture and Sport.
- 2.3 Instruct officers to report back to this committee Items which relate to or impact upon provisions of public service e.g. opening hours and service levels at community libraries, within the timelines proposed for each item. Items relevant to internal operations would be in the form of regular progress reports in the Committee Bulletin.
- 2.4 Approve the revised Home Service incorporating all eligible residents of sheltered housing currently served by the Mobile Library.

- 2.5 Approve that the Mobile Library service currently operating to Kingswells be replaced by a library drop in session at Kingswells Community Centre and the subsequent disposal of the vehicle.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The original proposal involved the closure of up to 8 community libraries, leaving 8 libraries plus the Central library and had a potential saving of £452,000 over 5 years. The Budget decision was not to progress the proposal, however to consider other ways to deliver services, to reflect online access and also wider use of technology, while also achieving efficiencies and savings. Due to the complexity of the many potential options to be explored for alternative delivery of library services as outlined in the report it is not possible at this time to estimate overall potential savings.

There will be savings of an estimated £13,000 per annum with the withdrawal of the mobile library and its subsequent disposal.

It is anticipated that there will be additional savings and this will become clearer as work on each option is undertaken.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal and policy context:

Local Authorities have a wide-ranging statutory role to ensure library provision.

The specific legislation includes:

- The Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887, defined “a library authority” (Section 2), and gave it powers to acquire and maintain land, buildings, and furniture and fittings for public libraries (section 10). It gave powers to manage, regulate and control libraries, including acquiring and disposing of books and other materials, to lend books, to provide reading rooms and to prepare and sell catalogues of the collection (Section 21). Authorities may make byelaws to regulate business and impose penalties for breaches (Section 22). New libraries can be established (Section 31) and it is stipulated that all public libraries are to be open to the public free of charge, and that no charges be made for the use of books or magazines issued for home reading (Section 32).
- The Public Libraries (Scotland) Act 1955 makes provision for library authorities’ co-operation in delivering services (Section 2) and extended the powers in Section 21 of the 1887 Act to any other library material which library managers think appropriate.
- The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 which states that local authorities had a duty imposed to secure the provision of adequate library facilities for all persons resident in their areas (Section 163, sub-section (2)).
- The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 incorporates the existing legislation relating to public libraries. It sets out the powers of the new authorities as having all the powers of the Council(s) operating in the area

of the new Council before 1 April 1996. In Section 53, it requires local authorities to make "*proper arrangements*" for the preservation and management of their records, in consultation with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland. Section 54 addresses the use, acquisition and disposal of records (which will include culturally significant archives). Section 54(1)(d) in particular gives authorities power to hold exhibitions of records and conduct lectures about them.

In addition, the Scottish Government has introduced a quality improvement framework, PLQIM (Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix) which sets out the underpinning principles for public library services and which assist in defining what an appropriate service is locally:-

- Provide universal access to resources, which is free, consistent and customer focussed
- Enable access to resources for reading, information and learning
- Help to build vibrant communities by encouraging community involvement and community-based activity and assisting in the creation of social capital
- Promote social justice, civic engagement and democracy
- Help minimise exclusion, be it social or digital
- Support learning in the Information Society
- Support the information needs for the knowledge economy
- Promote access to Scotland's cultural heritage
- Support and promote cultural/creative activities through the provision of information and venues.
- Encourage the public to pursue individual interests
- Work in partnership with others to offer value added services

Personnel implications

The review of the staffing structure and re-design to incorporate new ways of working will require the development of new posts and job descriptions which will require to be evaluated. There will also be an element of support required from colleagues in Human Resources throughout the implementation of a new structure, including the matching process.

Communications

Conducting surveys and consultations will require capacity from the Policy and Performance Team in Education, Culture and Sport and the Corporate Communications and Marketing Teams.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Officers have reviewed current service provision and have been investigating new ways of providing/delivering library and information services, working within the context of utilising available technology and best value and the realisation of budget savings. Officers have received support from the Scottish Library & Information Council and the Heads of Public Libraries in Scotland who have suggested a variety of models to be explored including joint community school

facilities at Loch Leven campus in Kinross similar to Bucksburn Community Library, Inverkeithing in Fife for shared services, and the Bridge at Easterhouse in Glasgow.

The following issues have been grouped into two sections, the first covering service provision options to be reviewed and reported back to committee as detailed and the second which deals with internal operational issues.

5.1 Provision of Library & Information Services

A vision for the service:

A valued, high quality library and information service that is relevant and accessible to all

Specifically it will provide access to and support in the use of:

- Information sources, both hard copy and online
- Literature, music and art for education, information or enjoyment
- Local historic collections
- Lifelong learning opportunities
- Literacy and creative writing opportunities
- Neutral welcoming community space

5.1.1 Survey and Research

The Library and Information Service has conducted surveys and customer research as part of specific proposals and developments. It is proposed to undertake further identified research, needed to determine what people expect from a library, what facilities and resources they need, why they use it. This would include current and potential users and be analysed alongside results obtained from previous surveys, and consultations, and compared /benchmarked against national data. It would also be used to test the vision and shape the future development for the service.

The Library and Information Service will review and update the in-depth profiles which exist for each community library and the Central Library, to re-assess current provision within neighbourhoods across the city, with particular consideration of provision in areas in the Scottish Multiple Index of Deprivation, or at risk.

The timescale for this work would be 12 months and results will be incorporated in a report to committee on options to be considered for levels of service provision and opening hours by the end of 2012.

5.1.2 Service provision levels

The Service has reviewed the recommendations of the Service Review conducted in 2001 to establish the Central Library as a "Centre of Excellence. The Central Library remains the flagship building for the Library Service providing a range of specialist services and is home to significant collections of local historic interest. The phased refurbishment of the 1892 building which began in

the early 2000s was halted in 2006 due to funding limits. As the final phases included the replacement of aging electrical and mechanical systems future consideration will need to be given to preventative expenditure, rather than reacting to building issues as they arise.

The Library and Information Service has developed a template for a community library, using the new Bucksburn and Kaimhill community libraries as benchmark models. Officers suggest that the Service Review proposal, to introduce different tiers of service for the community libraries depending on the capacity and suitability of each of the current community libraries be revisited. While this was not agreed at the time, it still has merit and it is proposed to develop a formula for each tier to give users clear information as to what they can expect. Those libraries identified with the capability and in an easily accessible location will be prioritised to provide a full range of services.

This work will be undertaken in conjunction with work led by the E,C & S Asset Management Plan on the assessment of the suitability and capacity of library buildings. Officers will report back at the end of this review in Autumn 2012.

5.1.3 Opening hours

Opening hours are continually reviewed and have both been increased and reduced over the last three years. The increase was on a cost neutral basis in 2007 in response to community needs identified from a survey and research conducted. They were again reviewed in 2009 to achieve budget savings and in response to the decline in visitors in evenings at community libraries. Evening opening at the Central Library was reduced from four to two days per week although this was offset by closing at 8pm instead of 7pm on those evenings.

Options to reduce library-opening hours across the service will be reviewed, including possible re-introduction of a one day a week closing, and annualised hours i.e. reduce hours during seasonal months in accordance with needs and demand. The outcomes of this review will be reported to Committee as part of the review of service provision levels.

5.1.4 Staffing

The full time equivalent staff complement has been reduced over the last 3 years by 14.91 fte (20 posts), which equates to a 12.54% decrease. Since 2009 the service recruits to vacancies on a fixed term 51 week basis and currently 26 posts (22 %) are filled in this way. It should be noted that this has the following results in terms of time to recruit, train and manage these posts:

- Up to 25% of frontline managers time is now taken up with the process
- Posts are vacant for up to 6 months while recruitment is undertaken
- Specialist staff and managers have increasingly had to be directed from other work to cover frontline which has seen an impact on overall service development
- Lack of applicants for professional posts particularly those for senior positions
- Over reliance on a small number of casual staff employed on a zero hours basis who should only be used when there is no other option.

- In addition, quality of service has been affected detrimentally as the Service is unable to build and maintain a level of local knowledge and expertise at some community libraries, and unable to deliver some core services on a regular basis such as storytimes, book groups and school visits due to lack of capacity and capability.

Comments received during the consultation focused largely on effects of temporary contracts and in the use of casual staff. The service is currently working with their HR Business partner to explore ways to resolve some of the issues involving recruitment on this basis. However it is clear that we cannot maintain recruitment on a fixed term basis for very much longer as the risk of failure of service increases and more posts fall vacant.

5.1.5 Redesign

The current staff structure will be reviewed and it is proposed to develop a new structure which will reflect the operational and development functions of the service. This will be completed internally by January 2012. Posts and job descriptions will require to be evaluated with a notional implementation by August of 2012.

5.1.6 Efficiencies in staff deployment

Officers will review the current use of the casual pool of relief staff who have worked with us either on a permanent or on a fixed term basis previously and who have the required experience and skills. A casual pool is used in a variety of library authorities, particularly those covering rural areas where casual workers are employed under different contractual arrangements to be used as and when required with no guaranteed hours. Options to increase the numbers would require effective arrangements to be in place to ensure ongoing training and monitoring of staff to ensure quality of service was maintained. This work will be incorporated into the overall service redesign proposals.

5.1.7 Volunteering

Various Council services and other library authorities currently use volunteers in a number of ways to enhance or complement services they deliver. The Service has developed a draft volunteer policy and a volunteer handbook for consultation. The implementation of the policy and timeframe for deploying volunteers will be guided by the Aberdeen City Council Volunteer Strategy framework currently under development.

The policy states:

Aberdeen City Libraries intend to encourage, develop and support volunteers working alongside our staff in identified and define areas within the library environment. Volunteers will not be used as a replacement or substitute for paid members of staff.

Volunteers will help us:

- *Enhance and expand our existing services and resources*
- *Extend and strengthen our community involvement*
- *Contribute additional knowledge, expertise or experience to our service*
- *Bring a new perspective and a service user's view to what we do*

- *Transfer skills between different age groups and sectors of the community*

Options currently being explored include the use of volunteers to assist in the indexing of photographs and other items within Local Studies collections, to support running of community book groups and to assist employed staff in the delivery of ICT sessions acting as It Buddies.

There will be a requirement for the role of a volunteer coordinator to be incorporated into a post within the new staff structure to train, support, and supervise volunteers. Depending on how volunteers are used there may be additional financial implications e.g. in payment of expenses for travel.

5.1.8 Other staffing efficiencies

Officers will investigate any other means of achieving staff efficiencies including annualised contracts, internships, and shared service opportunities with other local authorities. They will also review the capacity of the School Library Resource Coordinators in secondary schools out with school operating hours and terms with a view to how they might support work in the wider learning community in line with the HMIE inspections and to develop their role in supporting Learning partnerships across the city. There are various models within local authorities across Scotland including Aberdeenshire and Highland which officers will investigate.

Comments received during the consultation were mainly concerned about proposals around staffing with it obvious that staff are very concerned about how many temporary staff are employed within the service and in the current use of casual staff. Moral is very low due to the uncertainty of what the future will hold for libraries in respect of the requirement for budget savings.

5.2 Internal Operations

5.2.1 Online Services

The Library and Information Service will continue to invest in its portfolio of online services both accessible within libraries and via the library webpages; these include remotely-accessed databases, online enquiry services such as Ask Scotland and Enquire and on-line community information. It is planned to upgrade the Community Contacts database of clubs/societies/organisations to enable communities to manage their own information. Online access to the library catalogue and collections is already in place, including the facility to join the service, renew items on loan and place requests. There is a work plan in place to upgrade these services to enable greater functionality for users over the next 3 years. Progress will be reported to committee each cycle via the Committee Bulletin.

5.2.2 E-Book lending and downloadable audio books

The Service, in partnership with Aberdeenshire Libraries, will be introducing a downloadable e-book and audiobook service in the early autumn 2011. It is proposed to continue to improve the offer of online loans by adding language courses and music to this digital library.

5.2.3 Digital content

The Library and Information Service was able to access Scottish Government improvement funding last year, following its successful Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix evaluation, to develop an online database of images and indexes to its Local History collections and archives. This will be launched on Doors Open Day on the 10th September 2011.

Officers will continue to explore funding and partnerships to increase the accessibility to our collections such as the joint project with the National Library of Scotland to digitise the street directories held by themselves and by local authorities.

5.2.4 Review of support operations

The Library & Information Service have few staff who do not fill a frontline function at least part of the week. Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants based within the Library support service are all required to assist at the main service points including the Adult and Children's libraries. A small team of Support Assistants undertake the admin and clerical support including managing the Central Library switchboard. This team has seen a reduction of 1.5 fte, which equates to 29 % since 2008. There is also a team of Library Driver/Attendants who undertake a mixture of front of house and support duties and a Multimedia Technician who supports ICT and Multi Media services. Officers will continue to review the backroom support elements of the Service.

5.2.5 Shared Services

Officers will continue to explore the potential of joint procurement, consortium and shared service opportunities such as:

- The Potential to deliver other council services from community libraries— such as those delivered by Kincorth Library Customer Access Point.
- Library Management System (LMS) – shared costs with other authorities, including possible co-hosting of system centres.
- Open Source Library Management Systems – explore the opportunity to join the Stirling/East Dunbartonshire pilot launching in December 2011.
- Sharing of unique professional expertise and posts.

5.2.6 Business Improvement

Officers will continue to explore opportunities for the adoption of new technology and systems to increase capacity. For example:

Installation of Self issue machines in areas able to support usage; there are two currently purchased for the Central Library with payment collection capacity and two for community libraries. These will be installed over the coming 6 months as a pilot with a view to purchasing more. There is an ongoing annual cost of between £780 and £2300 per machine depending on what additional functions incorporated e.g. taking payments via cash or Accord Card, which would have to be factored into future budgets.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) is the exchange of electronic messages such as orders and invoices between libraries and stock suppliers. The Library & Information Service began work to fully transfer all purchasing operations over to EDI in 2008. The project cost of £50,000 is paid across 5 years as each part of the process becomes active and was met from current library budgets. The project to date has realised annual savings in excess of £38,000 through reduction in posts and changes to working practices. The project is due for completion in 2012.

A project to move to using electronic alert services such as SMS text and email as an alternative to posting letters alerting users to overdue items or reservations awaiting collection is underway with annual savings of up to £6,000 expected.

5.2.7 Stock acquisition management

The Service will continue to explore opportunities for the joint procurement of stock to increase the savings realised in 2010, which saw £20,000 taken as a corporate saving, from annual book fund budgets. For example:

- Procurement – explore further efficiencies within schools
- Supplier selection – whereby a large percentage of new stock is pre-selected by library suppliers based on profiles/guideline as set out by the library service
- Intelligence-led stock management – working on the Library Management System, delivering reports to inform the development of a stock rotation and exchange strategy. To be fully implemented by December 2012
- Consortium based procurement of online subscription services

5.2.8 Alternative delivery

Officers will explore alternative delivery to users including book drops at community locations, book dispensing machines, subscription services, home delivery etc. There is a current pilot ongoing at Seaton Community School, which will be reviewed and evaluated after six months and reported back to committee via the Committee Bulletin by December 2012.

5.2.9 Learning and staff development

Officers will explore potential for libraries to increase their delivery of learning courses in partnership with Aberdeen College and the city's two universities. This will include investigating the possibility of establishing the Central Library as an SQA centre to deliver library and information vocational modules.

The service has already close links with Community Learning and Development as partners in the delivery of community learning projects and activities. Budget led changes to the Communities team will impact on libraries in a number of ways including whether there is capacity to continue established partnership projects and also on the increased demand for libraries as venues to undertake learning activities as they no longer manage buildings. We are also already experiencing an increase in demand for support in completing CVs and in accessing online job databases. Officers will work with Community Learning and

Development colleagues to develop pathways for adult learning and youth development activities.

It is recognised that an important part of the service is the staff and the library service is committed to their continued learning and development, as well as planning for future needs of the workforce. It is also understood that Officers will work with colleagues within the Council and wider profession to ensure opportunities for CPD. Officers will also explore:

- Internships
- Placements/secondments both internal and external
- Shared training with other local authority library services
- Developing and delivering professional training opportunities with local partners such as Grampian Information, RGU, Aberdeenshire Libraries

5.2.10 Income generation

Officers will explore various options including:

- Sell/rent space within libraries
- Advertising on books, leafleting
- Website links
- Amazon online
- Resale of surplus stock
- Charges for enquiries/research undertaken
- Photographic collections
- Sell Aberdeen/local themed goods and books
- Retail corners e.g. reading diaries, book themed gifts
- Café areas
- Gallery space for art exhibitions

Officers will also review current charges for services, including online reservation charges and Audio visual charges which are generally perceived by customers as high and this has led to a resulting marked decline in issues. Adult audio-visual issue figures, which were previously in the top quartile of all Scottish authorities, have decreased by 43% since the introduction of increased charges in April 2010 when officers were instructed to increase charges to align with those in Aberdeenshire. This has also resulted in a drop in income by almost 25% from audio-visual services.

5.2.11 Sponsorship

The Library service will continue to investigate suitable opportunities for sponsorship including corporate and media sponsorship, events and service sponsorship. They will also continue to bid for funding to deliver additional services such as the Europe Direct Service and the Scottish Government PLQIM funding.

5.2.12 Performance

The Service uses the PLQIM (Public Library Quality Matrix) to evaluate and benchmark its services. In early 2010 it evaluated Quality Indicator 1: Access to Information and external verification placed this as “Good”, a follow-up self

evaluation and verification agreed that the Service had implemented the areas for improvement so successfully that it moved to “very good”. Library officers are currently working through Quality Indicator 2 – Personal and Community participation and this will be assessed by Scottish Library & Information Council on 24 November 2011.

- Measurement of use - ongoing KPIs
- Evaluation of services – using PLQIM and How Good is our Culture and Sport
- Evaluate social capital- Aberdeen city is one of the chosen authorities to pilot a ROI (Return on Investment) toolkit under development by SLIC and its Welsh equivalent and now recently joined by Northern Ireland It is expected that the toolkit will be piloted by end of September and ready to be launched by end of March 2012
- Contribution to education, health & wellbeing, economic and cultural agendas.

5.3 Cultural Trust

It is recognised that the Budget-led requirement for an options appraisal of the Museums and Galleries Service and other cultural teams to move to an arms length organisation also includes the Library & Information Service and this may influence how a number of the above are delivered.

5.4 Mobile Library Service to Kingswells

As agreed by Committee in 2009, the Mobile Library service which primarily visits sheltered housing will be withdrawn by the end of 2011, with the delivery transferred to the Home Service. The latter already delivers locally to housebound users, and sheltered housing residents will have the option to have books selected and delivered or to self-select at a local library and have them delivered at no charge.

The Mobile Library has only one remaining street stop, at Kingswells on alternate Friday afternoons, serving 69 out of a total of 731 registered library members, many of whom also use libraries at Airyhall, Bucksburn or the Central Library. It is proposed to operate a book drop-in session in Kingswells Community Centre on the existing fortnightly timetable to accommodate these users and the Library Service has had very positive discussions with the Community Centre which is supportive of continuing to provide a library service within Kingswells. This will involve a member of library staff visiting to deliver requested items and to issue items from a core collection which will be stored within the community centre. It is also proposed to introduce a free online reservation service for items to be delivered to the centre for Kingswells residents. There will be continued consultation with both library users and the community centre and this proposed arrangement will be reviewed after six months.

6. IMPACT

The report relates to the cultural objectives set out in ‘Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking’:

- Recognise the contribution of sport, culture and the arts to promoting the area as a tourist destination
- Modernise service delivery and ensure there is appropriate investment in staff training, equipment and accommodation to deliver this

The report also relates to the key aims set out in the Community Plan, in particular:

- To make improvements to pupil attainment and adult literacy and numeracy through family learning and promoting lifelong learning
- To encourage access to and participation in the City's cultural life
- To support cultural activities which have a positive impact on the social, economic and cultural development of the City

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Revenue Budget: Report to Council, 10th February 2011

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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