

Wards Affected:

All Wards

ITEM **11**

CABINET

11 JANUARY 2016

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIBRARIES 'MK' – MORE THAN A LIBRARY REVIEW AND DELIVERY PLAN

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor E Gifford - Cabinet Member for Community Services

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Executive Summary:

Between the months of June to September 2015 engagement with citizens and stakeholders took place in order to seek comments and views that would then shape the final report – Sharing Responsibility for Libraries 'MK' – More than a Library Review and Delivery Plan'.

The review outlines the key objectives and highlights the key messages from the engagement that provides some principles to guide the future of the Library service. This also includes a clear vision and a series of action plans working with communities and organisations for each library going forwards in order to deliver the savings target over the next three years. This paper therefore proposes that the final 'Sharing Responsibility for Libraries 'MK' – more than a Library Review and Delivery Plan be adopted.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Sharing Responsibility for Libraries 'MK' – More than a Library Review and Delivery Plan be adopted.

2. Issues

2.1 Background

2.2 'Sharing Responsibility for Libraries MK – More than a Library Review and Delivery Plan' sets out the proposals for Milton Keynes Libraries in the context of the Council's budget proposals for 2015/16 to 2017/18. This includes the outcomes from an extensive three month engagement programme on the future of Libraries and sets out a proposed way forward for each of the Council's libraries into the future.

2.3 Vision for the future of MK Libraries

MK Libraries want to provide a good service but this has to be set in the context of continuing requirement to make savings set against a strong community value being placed on their services. Libraries need to become hubs of community activity and not just about library service. Communities have engaged in the review and this has to be continued in the future developing successful and enterprising uses for the spaces both within

libraries opening hours and beyond. This can only be done by working with communities and organisations such as Town and Parish Councils, utilizing a partnership approach that will allow libraries to be at the heart of communities offering space and support where possible. Looking to the future an action plan has been developed for each library as well as overall and is highlighted at the **Annex**.

2.4 The key objectives addressed in the review are:

- Retaining all library outlets through sharing responsibility with communities and other agencies and utilising labour saving technology
- Minimising the impact on communities particularly older and young people
- Achieving a sustainable operating model for the libraries into the future within a defined minimal level of Council funding whilst meeting statutory responsibilities
- Achieve a budget efficiency target of £500k+ through a reconfiguration of the libraries.

2.5 There were two parts to the community engagement process which was undertaken in order to gather ideas, contributions and views from residents, users, parish/town councils, ward members and other stakeholders which consisted of:

- (a) A series of face to face engagement sessions at each library which comprised of a presentation followed by an opportunity for attendees to offer their thoughts through small group work led by a member of the Sharing Libraries Team
- (b) An online survey which ran from 19th June to 22nd September 2015. This survey was actively promoted to users at the library and through the Council's website.

In total 248 people attended one of the 9 meetings which started on 23rd June and ran through to the 14th July. There were over 200 responses to the on line questionnaire. A number of other meetings were also held with Parish and Town councils and voluntary and community sector stakeholders along with a number follow up meetings with organisational contacts provided at the engagement meetings

2.6 The key headlines and themes from this exercise were as follows:

- The public place a high value on their local library
- A desire for co-located services and alternative ways of working
- A wish to retain all nine library outlets and the mobile library
- Retention and extension of current opening hours to facilitate greater access and community use for a variety of activities and programmes.
- Strong support for the increased involvement of volunteers in libraries and the creation of "Friends" groups to support the libraries

- A need to maximize the use of the library buildings for a range of community activities both within and outside published opening hours
- Parish and Town councils were seen as logical partners to work with in future provision
- Information technology and retaining high standards was seen as important
- A need for more publicity and promotion
- The importance of sponsorship, donations and increasing income
- Coffee shops in libraries
- Reticence to the introduction of fully automated libraries.

2.7 The outcomes from the public engagement have helped to ascertain what residents need and would like from our network of library assets and services. It has identified a set of key principles to drive the future of Milton Keynes Libraries to deliver cost savings or increased income. The review at the **Annex** summaries the proposed direction and these are highlighted below.

2.8 Use of Buildings

Maximise the Community use of Buildings

The engagement exercise reinforced the value the public placed on an accessible network of libraries across the borough. The introduction of technology and community involvement can protect library hours and will allow for them to be extended.

Partnership Working with Charitable Organisations

Throughout the engagement process, charitable and voluntary sector organisations were invited to come with ideas on how libraries could be shared, and to explore the potential for stakeholders to operate within the physical buildings. There are a number of potential leads for the letting of space or co-location of services in the libraries.

Parish and Town Council Partnerships

The development of partnerships with Town and Parish Councils is an important part of the delivery of the library services. Meetings to discuss the development of initiatives to support library activities continue to develop and strengthen.

Co-located services

As part of the Community and Cultural Services Review (CCSR) options explored the potential to work more closely with Children's Centers and Youth Services. Some activity in terms of outreach children's work has been established at Bletchley and Kingston Libraries. The proposed development of a new library building at Westcroft will bring not only an improved service, but cost savings to the Council in the long term.

Reduction in library size and rental of released space

Along with staffing, the operation of the library buildings themselves represents one of the larger costs. The engagement process looked to generate ideas as to how these costs could be reduced or shared. The potential for income generation at CMK and Bletchley Libraries needs to be realised through the letting of space as a result of releasing space.

2.9 Financial Issues

Income Generation

This has always been a key challenge from the libraries and was a key focus during the engagement. There is a declining market for the loan of CD and DVD's and legally the Council cannot charge for the loan of books. There is the potential to free up space in libraries which can be used creatively to generate income.

Sponsorship and Donations

Experience has shown that this can be very challenging, time consuming exercise with little or no reward. However libraries will continue to be responsive to offers of help and donations where they meet the needs of the libraries.

Making the Library Buildings More Energy Efficient

Continued investment in developing energy efficient libraries needs to be maintained, both for existing and new buildings.

2.10 Management and Operation of Libraries

Core offer and central support

MK Libraries have a number of core costs that are attributed to Central Library (CMK) in its function as the headquarters for managing libraries. These central costs support the network of nine front line library buildings, its front line staff who provide daily staffing during library opening hours, schools library service and the mobile as well as the wider community as detailed in the **Annex**. A review has resulted in further efficiencies and savings across central costs of 35% (staff reduction from 20.83FTE to 12.5FTE).

Stock

The stock in libraries is the 'lifblood' of any library provision. It has been shown that some stock on shelves in libraries can be reduced due to the order and delivery services that are in place (i.e. on line services). Space created will be used to allow further community activities to take place and to create an environment which is more flexible and responsive to community demand. Continuing investment in the purchase of new stock and the distribution of that stock needs to be maintained.

Open Libraries

The introduction of new technology, known as "open libraries", could allow a library to operate longer opening hours while reducing costs. The "open libraries" concept is due to be installed at Kingston Library and be operational by Spring 2016. This should provide some valuable feedback before rolling the service out across all libraries later in the year. Communities will have a

choice to use the libraries either at unstaffed hours when they can self-serve and self-access, or at times when they are staffed if they need support or guidance from staff. The alternative is for additional hours to be provided either through funding from partners or through the community becoming more involved through volunteering.

2.11 Information Technology

The provision of IT services is a key success factor for libraries and investment in this area is critical to success.

2.12 Publicity and Promotions

This needs to be undertaken in a number of different ways in order to ensure that the messages are getting out to a wide sector of the community as possible. This should be using both traditional methods as well as new technology.

2.13 Staffing and Volunteers

Staffing

A number of reductions in staff numbers have been made since 2012. There are a further set of savings in 2015/16 which will be found from a reduction in senior staff and frontline staff costs (i.e. those who provide staffing during library opening hours) as highlighted in the **Annex**. Reductions in staffing need to be achieved by 1 April 2016 in order to reach a level of sustainability within the council's financial restrictions.

Volunteers and Friends Groups

This has been a key theme dating back to the previous Future Libraries Review in 2012 and reinforced through the recent public engagement. The work to establish "Friends" groups in all libraries needs to be continued as their input is extremely valuable to the function of the libraries.

The role of volunteers in libraries is very much valued. They also provide valuable support to library staff, this relationship helps to sustain volunteer development. Therefore investment in their recruitment and deployment needs to be maintained.

3. **Options**

- 3.1 The 'Do nothing' option would mean that the library services would not develop, change and flourish and would ultimately decline in effectiveness, efficiency and relevance. MK Council would be at risk of not meeting its statutory duties as outlined in the Public Libraries Act, 1964 and Corporate Plan priorities.

4. **Implications**

4.1 Policy

Resources and Risk

A total of £848k savings to the Libraries' revenue budget will have been achieved over the four year MTFP period from 2014/15. This includes £348k

in addition to the £500k from the CCSR, achieved through a combination of operational and staff savings. New income initiatives are expected to contribute an additional £68k to the revenue budget.

Y	Capital	Y	Revenue	Y	Accommodation
Y	IT	Y	Medium Term Plan	Y	Asset Management

4.2 Carbon and Energy Management

Individual business cases as part of the delivery plan will embrace the need to minimise emissions.

4.3 Legal

The Public Libraries Act, 1964 makes it the statutory duty of the Local Authority to provide library services for those who live, work or study in its area. DCMS has established a sub-group to review the Public Libraries Act, 1964 in light of recent judicial reviews made by pressure groups as a result of Local Authority library closure programmes.

4.4 Other Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. (Available on request)

Y	Equalities/Diversity	Y	Sustainability	Y	Human Rights
Y	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers: None

Annex – Sharing Responsibility for Libraries ‘MK’ - More than a Library Review and Delivery Plan

Link to the individual Library reviews: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sharinglibraries>