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**To: The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Subject: Library Service and Connecting Communities**

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**1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Board on recent changes to Library Services in the City being introduced as part of the Connecting Communities programme.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Members consider the report and receive a presentation by officers regarding the latest position on implementation of these changes.
- 2.2 Members identify any recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

**3 Information and Background**

- 3.1 On 23 February 2016 Cabinet agreed to implement a series of proposals of which the following changes to Library Services in the City were included:
- a. To end delivery of library services from the Arena Park Library facility by not renewing the lease and to continue engagement with Holbrooks Community Care Association (HCCA) about the potential delivery of a reduced library service to be provided in the HCCA building by September 2016.
  - b. To end delivery of library services by not renewing the lease from the current Willenhall Library facility and to continue engagement about the potential delivery of a reduced library service to be provided in the Hagard Centre building by September 2016.
  - c. To end the mobile library service by 1 June 2016.
  - d. To cut the library media fund of £658,000 to £558,000 with effect from 1 April 2016.
  - e. For Central Library to continue to open seven days per week, but to close one hour earlier on weekdays – closing at 7pm instead of 8pm by September 2016.
  - f. To close Caludon Castle, Earlsdon and Foleshill libraries on Wednesdays and close Stoke and Tile Hill on Sundays by September 2016. To agree in principle that Bell Green, Earlsdon and Foleshill libraries remain open on Sundays provided that officers are satisfied as to the viability of a mix of paid staff and volunteers operating the libraries on these days. In the event officers are not satisfied the question of whether the libraries should remain open on Sundays be referred back to the Cabinet Member for Education.
- 3.2 These changes are part of Connecting Communities, an ambitious and wide reaching approach to radically redesign services through co-production and collaboration with local communities. The approach focuses on how services might be delivered differently in the future in the communities and neighbourhoods where there is most need, and within the resources available. This might include joining services together to reduce the number of buildings and staff that the Council and other statutory organisations require to deliver services.
- 3.3 Connecting Communities, to reflect the importance of delivering support effectively in neighbourhoods, aims to:

- Transform the provision of public services by identifying existing community strengths, resources and aspirations in communities
  - Work with and support communities and organisations who want to develop and deliver alternative support and services in their communities
  - Invest in ways of delivering high quality services
  - Focus key services in areas of highest need
  - Deliver better services at lower cost – developing high quality services in fewer high quality buildings.
- 3.4 The proposals focused on ways, in light of reducing resources, the Council needed to protect the city’s most vulnerable residents while supporting economic regeneration, investment, growth and job creation in the city. Connecting Communities is a transformational approach that will enable services to be developed in areas where there is most need, focusing on making the best use of resources across sectors, organisations and groups and local communities.
- 3.5 In total ten specific proposals were made for the delivery of a £1.2 million saving. The target for 2016/17, set through the original City Centre First programme for 2016/17 was £1 million but proposals made to Cabinet in November 2015, exceeded this by £0.2 million.
- 3.6 A public consultation process on the ten proposals took place between 7 December 2015 and 1 February 2016. Cabinet also agreed for officers to begin to progress a wide scale engagement programme, using innovative engagement methods, with residents, community groups and partner organisations.
- 3.7 A number of Council services are included within the scope of Connecting Communities i.e. libraries, youth centres and services, children’s centres, play centres, community centres, public conveniences and adult education. This list is by no means exhaustive and is expected to eventually comprise all elements of People Directorate, and possibly wider service transformation to deliver broader savings targets.
- 3.8 During the consultation it was made clear that Coventry’s residents value the library service and staff and consider that libraries are vital for accessing computers and the internet, for others it is somewhere to go and meet others and reduce social isolation. Parents and children value the opportunity to attend activities and interact with others, sometimes from different backgrounds. Also there was recognition that the proposals could have been more severe but concern about future service reductions. It was made clear during the consultation that there will be a need for further changes to Council services due to budget reductions but there are also opportunities to deliver services differently and more effectively.
- 3.9 Consideration was given to consultation feedback and equality analysis to inform a view on whether the proposals should proceed as described, be varied in light of consultation feedback and impacts or withdrawn. The reports referred to in background papers include detailed proposal documents and analysis of the impact on equalities.

#### **4 Connecting Communities in the Future**

- 4.1 Opportunities for change will be identified through the Transition fund process. Where groups have expressed an interest in a particular area of service delivery, they will be directly involved in a process of targeted engagement to inform the delivery of future phases of Connecting Communities.
- 4.2 The innovative use of technology will play an important part in delivering the Connecting Communities programme. This could include technology that enables increased levels of self-serve and digital literacy, up to date public access equipment, loaning resources in different locations or through digital methods, and mobile working for staff that further

reduces reliance on buildings as fixed service delivery or staff bases, enabling staff to spend more time with customers. The opportunities to develop the use of technology in Council services will be considered during the engagement programme with opportunities being taken as they arise based on affordability, the Council's ICT strategy and service objectives. By mid-March 2016 all Coventry libraries, including those delivered in partnership, will have free high speed public wi-fi as standard following a successful grant award from the Arts Council.

- 4.3 Officers from the Library Service will attend the meeting and give the Scrutiny Board the latest position regarding implementation of the phase one proposals as well as an update on expressions of interest in the Transition fund.

#### List of background papers

Connecting Communities – Cabinet - 26 November 2015

<http://moderngov.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=124&MId=10764&Ver=4>

Connecting Communities (outcome of consultation) – Cabinet – 23 February 2016

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s27675/Connecting%20Communities%20Phase%201%20Outcome%20of%20Consultation.pdf>

Empowered Citizens: Networked Communities

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s27373/Empowered%20Citizens%20Networked%20Communities.pdf>

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