
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

17 January 2019

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet member for Education and Skills – Councillor K Maton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Library Service Budget Reductions

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report seeks the Cabinet Member's confirmation for a series of Library Service budget changes which are required to ensure compliance with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The changes focus on reductions in the staffing of a number of libraries, the adoption of new ways of working and a reduction in resources purchased by the Library Service. The proposals do not include any changes to the number of libraries or their opening hours.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member is recommended to agree to the proposals contained in this report.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A – Single Staffed Libraries

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

At their meeting on 29th November 2018 the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) considered a Briefing Note regarding current Library Service issues which contained reference to the proposals contained in this report.

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No (please see above)

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Library Service Budget Reductions

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Council introduced the Connecting Communities programme in 2015/2016. The programme proceeded in two phases with changes to Library Services introduced alongside changes to a number of other Council services. The main Library Services changes included greater participation by the community in the delivery of library services along with reductions in opening hours, reductions in the amount of money spent on library stock, a move to three library types (core, partnership and community-led) and the de-commissioning of the former mobile library.
- 1.2 Phase one of the changes resulted in budget reductions including property savings of £802k and phase two of the changes enabled a further reduction of £653k, totalling £1,455k. In line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy a third set of proposals is required to achieve the savings target and has recently been consulted on with staff and service users. These proposals will reduce budgets by a further £319k per year.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Proposals to reduce expenditure include the following:
- Reduce staffing in Aldermoor, Caludon, Canley and Coundon libraries to single staffing. Staff will be supplemented by a small peripatetic team who will support the delivery of library activities and provide some support to staff and volunteers in these libraries.
 - Reduce staffing in Central Library by introducing a 'Library Express' model which will rely on self-service and limited staff supervision of the library from 9-11am Monday to Friday and on Sundays.
 - End the provision of most hard copy newspapers and all hard copy magazines and support users to move to digital access either in the library or at home.
 - Generate additional income from the introduction of a privately run café within Central Library and an externally funded Visa scheme.
 - Reductions in other fixed budgets and a review of management and non-front line posts.
 - A change to library fines to move the age at which users are expected to pay from aged 8 years to 16 years.
- 2.2 The Council has already made some progress in the recruitment of volunteers to support service delivery. In addition plans are being developed to establish "Friends of..." Groups for libraries, focusing on Aldermoor, Caludon, Canley and Coundon libraries initially in order to stimulate volunteering and explore the potential for greater community involvement in the running of community libraries.
- 2.3 The proposal to remove fines for those under 16 years reflects the Service's view that particularly for families with limited incomes library fines are a disincentive for children to continue library use after fines are introduced at age 8.
- 2.4 Alternatives to the proposals in this report include the closure of a number of libraries, reductions in the opening hours of some or all libraries and further reductions in the books and other resources purchased by the Service for the use of borrowers.
- 2.5 The Council's emphasis has been on maintaining library access and the Service has taken the view that further reductions in opening hours (following changes introduced in 2017) or closing libraries will produce a negative impact in a number of vulnerable communities across the City.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 From 19th November to 23rd December service users were consulted on the main proposals which impact on access to Library Services. A total of 444 responses were received as well as responses from Unison and Unite. The consultation was promoted through local libraries as well as digitally via social media and the Council website. Responses were made both via hard copies and online.
- 3.1.1 76% of those responding to the consultation identified themselves as members of the library. 51% respondents said they do not currently use newspapers/magazines in the library. 67% of respondents said they currently use Central Library. 66% of respondents said that they are able to use self-service options. 55% of respondents said that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the proposal to remove overdue charges for 8-16 year olds.
- 3.1.2 The consultation produced many suggestions and observations on the proposals and on current library service delivery. Concerns centred on the following areas:
- Many respondents referred to the impact of the proposals being limited and being preferable to other alternatives (such as closing libraries).
 - The importance of staff being retained in libraries to assist users along with combating social isolation.
 - Many users were concerned about ceasing the provision of hard copy newspapers (less so regarding magazines). In response to this level of feedback the service has modified this proposal and is proposing to retain provision of the Coventry Telegraph in all libraries. Opportunities will be explored for sponsorship or donations to support further provision.
 - Support for ending charges for children was widespread however many users also questioned the impact of the lost income or suggested alternative groups (eg. older people) not having to pay fines.
 - A number of other suggestions were made including ending or altering the provision of DVDs, reducing book purchase, or increasing income generation through wider commercialisation.
- 3.2 In November 2018 officers met with the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) and amongst other library updates discussed the proposals contained in this report. In discussion Members expressed concern regarding the proposals to introduce single staffing in some libraries. Officers have considered Members concerns carefully and whilst more work is planned on developing new ways of working a short summary of the approach proposed is included as Appendix A to the report.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Implementation of the budget changes and associated new working practices will be from April 2019.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services

5.1 Financial implications

The recommendations in this report will enable full year achievement of the remaining £319k Connecting Communities savings target within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. These cost reductions will take effect from April 2019.

Table 1: Breakdown of £319k saving

	Cost Reduction (or additional cost where applicable)	Notes
Property savings	£ 6,000.	Community libraries
Net Staffing Reductions	£ 105,000.	Single Staffing and Library Express model at Central
Reduced purchase of library resources	£ 50,000.	Newspapers and magazines
Other budget reductions	£48,500.	Health Development, training, equipment and voluntary associations
Additional income generation	£ 35,000.	Library Café (Central Library), Visa Project
Abolish fines for under 16	-£4,000.	
Resource switch with grant funding	£ 78,500.	This will be reviewed after 2 years and any funding implications will be considered at that time.
	£ 319,000.	

The proposals concerning additional income generation will be closely monitored to ensure that they are delivering the anticipated financial benefits.

5.2 Legal implications

In respect of proposals around library provision S.7 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 creates a duty upon local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons. In fulfilling its duty local authorities should have consideration to the desirability of securing adequate stock and encourage people to make full use of the service.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

Coventry libraries make a positive contribution to the council's priorities, particularly in relation to: a prosperous Coventry; citizens living longer, healthier, independent lives; making Coventry an attractive and enjoyable place to be; ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution; encouraging a creative, active and vibrant city; developing a more equal city with cohesive communities and neighbourhoods.

6.1.2 Following the implementation of the proposals outlined within this report, the City Council has considered the City's needs in terms of its responsibility to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service (as defined by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964) and has concluded that the service as amended will comply with statutory requirements.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The proposals contained in this report relate to budget reductions. Risks associated with the delivery of library services will continue to be managed in accordance with corporate health and safety guidelines within which the service will be fully compliant.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The principle impact on the organisation from the proposed budget reduction will be the employment of fewer staff. It is estimated that these changes will result in 4.25 FTE fewer staff following the re-organisation of library staffing.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An analysis of the equality impacts of these proposals for Library Service budget reductions have been considered with an Initial Equality Consultation Analysis being prepared in advance of the consultation. This has now been updated following the completion of the consultation to take into account any relevant consultation feedback.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Gail Quinton	Deputy Chief Executive (People)	People	8 Jan 2019	9 Jan 2019

This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix A

Single Staffed Libraries

General Principles

The proposal is to reduce staffing at four libraries to single staffing. These staff would be at Grade 3 Supervisory Level.

Libraries proposed for single staffing are Aldermoor, Caludon Castle, Canley and Coundon Libraries.

The proposed libraries will therefore have staff who are lone working.

To mitigate against Health and Safety Concerns regarding Lone Working a number of measures will be introduced. These include practical provision of equipment, changes to procedures and practises, targeted support from other members of library staff.

Procedures and Practices

- Risk Assessments
- Lone worker training will be undertaken
- Safe systems of work
- Procedures and services will be simplified.
- A secure place of safety with access to a telephone is present in each library
- Telephones and mobiles will be programmed with relevant emergency and contact numbers

Staff will be trained and supported to make dynamic decisions as to their own safety and welfare.

Equipment

- Portable personal communication devices (enabled to remote 'on call' location, detect non-motion),
- Personal alarms,
- Work mobile phones
- Panic buttons.

Targeted Support

To support the staff and services in the four single staffed libraries, we will be providing targeted support for events and activities through a peripatetic outreach team, the development of "Friends of..." libraries groups, further expansion of the library volunteer network and continued exploration of partnership opportunities. There will be continued face to face support from Library Managers and Library Services Assistants teams. There is also management support available from their own Manager and in addition, during all opening hours via a Duty Manager system. Each single staffed library will be allocated a Buddy Library to provide day to day telephone support and guidance.

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