

Cabinet

Meeting to be held on 4 February 2016

Report of the Head of Business Intelligence

Electoral Division affected: All

Lancashire County Library Service consultation – stage one

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the responses received following the first stage of the consultation on libraries. The consultation was on the service's design, need and use, and was available to complete between 4 January and 31 January 2016.

The majority (95%) of respondents were current library members and therefore the consultation findings predominantly represents the views of this group. 92% of respondents use the library at least once a month and 97% are very or fairly satisfied with the service.

Those responding agreed the service should provide helpful and knowledgeable staff, encourage people to enjoy reading, have space to enjoy culture and learning, have easy to use online services and help people to reach their potential.

Respondents commented that they wanted their library to remain open, they valued borrowing books and improving literacy and there were positive comments about staff. Libraries were seen as community hubs, improving wellbeing and cohesion, and groups and events were valued.

The report represents the responses and feedback that have been processed up until 1 February. Given the level of response, there are some responses that are still awaiting processing. There will be a further management report on this consultation, which will be published on the Have Your Say website once it has been compiled. It will incorporate all consultation responses and provide more detailed demographic analysis, with the findings from the report feeding into the service design.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to note the report.

Background and Advice

At its meeting on 21 January Cabinet received a report summarising the views of respondents to the consultation on the budget proposals. The report set out that it was the first of a series of consultations on the budget proposals, with the remainder focusing on specific service areas. This report summarises the responses to the Lancashire County Library Service consultation on service design, need and use.

The consultation used a questionnaire that was available in the county's 74 libraries and published on the county council's Have Your Say webpage, where it was available for anyone to complete. The fieldwork ran from 4 January until 31 January 2016 in which time 6,932 questionnaires were completed and processed, comprising 973 paper-based and 5,959 online. The data are unweighted.

The questionnaire asked respondents library usage and frequency, reasons for visiting and not visiting, which libraries they used, what they did on their last visit, use of online library services, the importance of specific library service, future library service provision and usage times and any suggestions or comments about the service.

Additionally, there have been a number of ePetitions registered on the county council's website along with petitions and letters received. The ePetitions on the council's website for libraries are shown in the table.

ePetition	Respondents	Closing date
Don't Close Heysham Library	188	31 January 2016
Save Ingol Library	33	9 February 2016
Save Longridge Library	257	16 February 2016
Save Garstang Library	324	16 February 2016
Don't close 40 out of 74 Libraries	114	23 February 2016
Save Kingsfold Library	19	24 February 2016
Save Coppull Library	186	24 February 2016
Saving the Knott-End-On-Sea Library	5	25 February 2016
Save Longton Library	37	3 March 2016
Save Savick Library	4	7 March 2016
Tarleton Library	22	7 March 2016
Keep Carnforth Library	32	13 March 2016
Save Fleetwood Library	9	31 March 2016

As at 1 February 2016

Also, a number of hardcopy signed petitions have been received. There were approximately 650 signatures for Kingsfold Library, 65 signatures for save libraries in Hyndburn and Rossendale and 3,265 signatures as part of wider petition for saving the ferry, buses, library and youth service in Knott End.

To date there have been 249 responses logged on the council's VIP communication system about libraries. The service has received 14 enquiries from councillors linked

to the consultation. 103 emails have been received to the Have Your Say address. Social media has been used along with other online petition websites. The invitation for expressions of interest on community assets and community service continues.

Summary of responses to the consultation

This report sets out the responses to the first phase of the consultation on libraries.

Almost all (95%) of respondents are current library members, with a further 3% saying they used to be a library member, but are not anymore. A quarter (27%) use a library more than once a week, and overall 92% of respondents use the library at least once a month. In the last year, 5% had used the mobile library service, 6% had used the Home Library Service and 21% had used a library not provided by the Lancashire County Council.

Two-thirds (68%) of respondents were female, over half (54%) were aged 35-64, with a further 33% aged 65+, one in nine (11%) was is deaf or has a disability, and 62% have no children aged under 20. 96% were white British, 69% Christian and 63% married. 98% were Lancashire residents, 18% were members of a voluntary or community organisation and 8% were employees of Lancashire County Council.

Overall, 85% of respondents were very satisfied with the library service in Lancashire with a further 12% fairly satisfied.

Respondents were asked about their most recent visit. Almost half (49%) visited alone, a third (33%) visited with children or young people and a quarter (23%) visited with other adults.

The small number of respondents who hadn't visited a library in the last 12 months were asked why this was. Three-in-five (38%) said they had the internet at home, a third (33%) preferred to buy books or ebooks and a quarter (27%) said they had no time or were too busy. They were also asked what would encourage them to use the libraries more. Over a quarter (28%) said nothing, two-in five (23%) said a wider range of books and other loan material, two-in-five (19%) said a wider range and frequency of activities and event, and 16% said opened when they needed it.

Over half (56%) of respondents had borrowed a book in the last week, and a further quarter (28%) in the last month. In the last week a third (34%) picked up non-library information, a third (31%) had used an online library service, a quarter (30%) read a newspaper, a quarter (25%) used a computer, a quarter (24%) undertook reference or research, one fifth (23%) used free wifi, one fifth (20%) had reserved a book online, one in six (17%) attended a social or group activity, one in seven (15%) attended a children's event.

The library services that were most important to respondents are borrowing a book (95%), the use for reference or research (53%), using a computer (50%), attending a children's event or activity (37%), picking up other information (37%), borrowing a CD,

DVD or talking book (36%), attending a social or group activity (35%), reading a newspaper or magazine (27%), using the online library service (22%), reserving a book online (21%) and using the free wifi (20%).

The questionnaire asked respondents what they thought the Lancashire County Library Service should provide, in line with the service's strategic objectives. 92% strongly agreed it should provide helpful and knowledgeable staff, 92% said encourage people to enjoy reading, 71% strong agreed it should provide spaces to enjoy culture and learning, 65% easy to use online services, 63% help people reach their potential and live independent lives, 58% support for communities to stay healthy and 47% strongly agreed that there should be opportunities for volunteers to help in libraries.

Those responding were asked when they would be most likely to visit the library if the opening times were available. During weekdays, 10am-11:59am (56%) and 2pm-3:59pm (49%) were the most cited times. For Saturdays respondents were most likely to indicate 10am-11:59am (57%) and 12-13:59pm (34%), and on Sundays it was 10am-11:59am (23%) and 2pm-3:59pm (20%).

Respondents were asked to provide any suggestions or other comments about the Lancashire County Library Service. Of those completing the question, two fifths (39%) stated their library should remain open, a quarter (27%) were positive about the staff, a quarter (26%) said libraries were vital for individual wellbeing and community cohesion, a quarter (24%) made positive comments about being able to borrow books and improving literacy generally, a fifth (22%) saw libraries as vital or important, and a fifth (26%) commented on the libraries as community hubs and meeting places.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The county council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge. The Medium Term Financial Strategy reported in November forecast that the council will have a financial shortfall of £262m in 2020/21. This is a combination of reducing resources as a result of the government's extended programme of austerity at the same time as the council is facing significant increases in both the cost (for example, as a result of inflation and national living wage) and the level of demand for its services. The revised position following the financial settlement for 2016/17 is now for a financial shortfall of £200.5m in 2020/21. This revised gap is after the impact of the settlement, new financial pressures and the £64.8m of savings proposals agreed at Cabinet in November.

Any savings that are not taken and implemented will require financing from reserves.

Equality Act 2010

The responses to the library consultation identified a number of general concerns and issues which should be considered in terms of designing a future library service, some of which are of particular significance to vulnerable groups and people with protected characteristics.

The accompanying updated Equality Analysis for this budget option identifies some areas of possible concern or consideration raised during the initial consultation stages in relation to protected characteristics groups which should be considered in designing the future library service. This Equality Analysis will be further updated to reflect the next stages of this consultation process in due course.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
The County Council's budget position	26/11/2015	http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?Ild=44566&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A135594 Neil Kissock, Acting Director of Financial Resources, 01772 534715

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A