

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday, 16 March 2018

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Progress Report on the Reopened Libraries

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report provides information and progress on the reopening of libraries across Lancashire.

Recommendation

The Internal Scrutiny Committee is recommended to review and note the progress on the reopening of libraries programme.

Background and Advice

On 30 September 2016, twenty six libraries were closed as part of a budget saving strategy. In May 2017 the County Council's administration gave a commitment to reopen libraries across the county and a report was considered by Cabinet in July 2017 setting out initial proposals to enable this. Where individual premises were closed, communities had been given the opportunity to take responsibility for their operation through community asset transfer and to establish an Independent Community Library. The Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services held local discussions with community groups to determine whether they still wished to progress asset transfer, subject to the inclusion of an independent community library offer, or whether their preference was for a County Council run library service to be re-instated. A programme for re-instating libraries is being implemented with Silverdale Library the first to be reopened on 1 November 2017.

In total eleven libraries have reopened to date, the most recent being Thornton Library which was reopened on 26 February 2018. There has been a positive public reception at all of the library reopening events.

Appendix 'A' contains information relating to the twenty six libraries that were closed. As well as the eleven libraries that have reopened, eight libraries have become or

are in the process of becoming community asset transfers which will all include an independent community library offer. In relation to the other closed libraries:

- A report has been presented to Cabinet on 8 March requesting approval to relocate the Earby Library service to Earby New Road Community Centre.
- Lytham and Briercliffe Libraries are subject to ongoing feasibility studies to identify an appropriate location for re-instatement of the service.
- Rosegrove, Chatburn, Read and Northfleet are subject to further consideration with regard to providing either a static library offer or an offer through our mobile library service.

Alongside the reopening programme the library service has conducted an eight week consultation with the public in relation to library opening hours. The consultation focused on reshaping opening hours for the 47 libraries unaffected by the previous closure programme, proposing an operating model with a range of opening hours across four bands aimed at providing a more consistent and equitable service across the county. The consultation set out recommended opening patterns for each library and over 2,300 responses were received. The responses have been analysed and comments on the recommended opening patterns considered. Final proposals following the consultation were reported to Cabinet on 8 March and the papers relating to the consultation, final proposals and Cabinet report are available as background papers to this report.

Following legal advice it was determined that for libraries that had closed and were now being reopened, the County Council was not required to consult on re-opening hours. The operating model has therefore already been implemented for reopened libraries with each library being allocated to an appropriate band and pattern of opening hours.

Further developments

A revised library strategy was approved in September 2017. One of the strands referred to in the strategy focuses on reading. The library service began a campaign in 2017 to encourage more people across Lancashire to read. This was marketed as the 'Lancs50Book challenge' and proved to be very successful in gaining support from readers throughout the county. This has been demonstrated by the number of reviews and lists being created on the library catalogue by readers and through the number of interactions on social media. The service is continuing to develop the campaign this year and is already witnessing a very positive reception from across the county.

The service is collaborating with the Schools Improvement Team to improve literacy levels for 4 – 18 year olds across the county. A new campaign will be launched on 12 March which is called "We are reading ". It is the intention of the service to support this campaign and that will begin with a launch event on 12 March and support will continue throughout the coming year. Staff from the Schools Library Service, the Heritage Learning Team and the Cultural Development team will be contributing.

These campaigns support the library strategy and its aim to increase the use of the libraries and develop future and existing readers.

A further element of the library strategy is to revise the Friends of Libraries constitution. A Constitution was agreed by Cabinet on [18 January 2018](#).

A proposed premises use policy, setting out how community use and specifically Friends of Library groups will be able to utilise library premises was reported to Cabinet on [8 March 2018](#).

The performance of all libraries is being monitored so that an holistic view of the worth of our libraries can be taken which is congruent with the recent statement by the libraries minister that library services provide more 'than just books', something that the library strategy already reflects.

Over 48,000 items of stock have been distributed across the 11 libraries that have reopened which includes 35,000 items that had been held in store. Stock levels relate to bands and are consistent across all libraries. All libraries are included in delivery schedules for new items of stock which are provided from the supplier on a weekly basis.

Each of the 11 reopened libraries has been equipped with upgraded public computers, Wi-Fi access and Wi-Fi printers. Each library was assessed for the appropriate number of computers based on an estimate of use. This approach will be used for upgrades of such information systems throughout the library service as they become necessary.

Financial

The budget amendment agreed by Cabinet on 13 July 2017 removed proposed cuts to the Library Service, reinstated revenue budget for a number of libraries (including 9 of the libraries which have reopened to date) and replaced funding for the County Book Fund (£1.654m in 2017/18 and £1.770m in 2018/19 recurrently). A further report was approved by Cabinet on 10 August 2017 which agreed to fund the reopening of Parbold and Thornton libraries costing £0.157m in 2017/18 and £0.166m in 2018/19 recurrently.

The budget amendment also agreed one-off capital investment of £1.571m in buildings to be reopened to ensure they are maintained to acceptable standards.

To date 11 libraries have reopened between November and February. The revenue costs of these libraries during this period is circa £200,000 for staff and running costs and circa £200,000 for new items of stock, and the capital costs are summarised below.

The funding approval of £1.571m was agreed to fund libraries reinstatement programme, of this £0.849m was allocated to a named 11 libraries based on estimates of spend. The finished costs for these libraries including additional work identified is now forecast to be £0.957m meaning there is a shortfall to be funded

from the remainder of the £1.571 that was unallocated (£0.722m) . This will then leave £ 0.614m for the remainder of the programme.

Summary:

Funding approved (Full Council July 2017)	£1.571m
Estimate for 11 libraries (Cabinet September 2017)	£0.849m
Finalised costs for 11 libraries	<u>£0.957m</u>
Shortfall	-£0.108m

These costs do not include premises costs incurred prior to the reopening of libraries, which the County Council was liable for whilst decisions were pending on the future of buildings.

A positive contribution to ensuring the costs have remained on target has been the introduction of the library bands. The banding provides a transparent, equitable and more manageable way of resourcing provision.

Proposals and cost estimates relating to provision of the library service in the remaining locations will form the subject of further reports to Cabinet in due course.

Legal

As a result of the reopening of the libraries as set out in this report there has been no further correspondence from the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in relation to the statutory delivery of the library service in Lancashire.

Personnel

Arrangements for recruiting to the vacancies associated with the re-opened libraries, have been approved and are being pursued line with County Council policy.

Risk management

In order to ensure the delivery of the libraries re-instatement programme a project group was established which met on a weekly basis for the initial planning period and continued to meet as required until the beginning of 2018. As a result of the risk assessment and overarching plan all of the currently reopened libraries have opened according to plan.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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NA

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A