

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 6 February 2020

Report of the Head of Service - Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
(All Divisions);

Mobile Library Review - Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report concludes the review of the future of the mobile library service.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve the introduction of the revised mobile library routes from 1 June 2020.
- (ii) Approve the use of the trial days to offer mobile library stops to communities without a static library and no existing mobile library stop.
- (iii) Authorise the Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services and the Head of Service - Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars to make the final decision(s) regarding the trial routes.

Background and Advice

Cabinet approved proposals in a report, on 17 January 2019, on the need to review the future of the mobile library service and the home library service. One of the three recommendations that was accepted was "Cabinet endorses the public consultation process for the future of the Mobile Library Service and requires a further report in mid-2019". The results of this consultation would then inform the proposals that Cabinet would be asked to approve when planning the future of the mobile library service.

The fieldwork ran for eight weeks between 4 March 2019 and 28 April 2019. In total, 564 completed questionnaires were returned (441 paper questionnaire responses and 123 online questionnaire responses).

The analysis of the completed questionnaires was produced in June 2019 and reported to Cabinet when it met on 5 September 2019.

At that meeting, Cabinet agreed that the following criteria should be applied to the revision of the routes followed by mobile libraries:

1. All mobile library stops would move to a three weekly frequency.
2. No mobile library routes would be scheduled over the Christmas and New Year fortnight.
3. Mobile library routes would be maintained throughout the rest of each year whenever possible.
4. A mobile library vehicle would be held in reserve.
5. The minimum stop time would be 15 minutes wherever possible and would be incorporated into the re-organisation of the mobile library routes.
6. All existing mobile stops would continue to be visited and would be incorporated into the re-organisation of the mobile library routes.
7. Requests for new stops within 0.75 miles (approximately a 15 minute walking distance at an average walking speed) of a static library would not be accepted. Any members of the public requesting a stop within this radius will be contacted to see if they were eligible for the home library service.
8. Any stop that was not used within six continuous months (approximately eight visits) would be discontinued.

These criteria have been applied to the existing 784 stops provided by the existing fleet of six mobile libraries (with a seventh vehicle available as a reserve).

By moving all routes to a three weekly frequency, all existing stops can be visited by using five mobile libraries (with a sixth vehicle available as a reserve) providing 70 daily routes within a three week rota (allowing for one maintenance day per vehicle per rota).

The revised routes will keep the majority of existing stops on the same day of the week and approximately the same time of day (within 30 minutes of the current stopping time). However the frequency of visits will change from fortnightly to three weekly for some customers.

There are a limited number of 44 stops (8% of all stops) serving 117 customers that will either need to change the day of the week on which they are visited or will keep the current day of the week, but will require a significant change to the time of day (from morning stop time to an afternoon or vice versa).

The revision of the mobile library routes has been able to free up 4 of the 70 routes and two half-days to become "trial days". There are 49 parish council areas without a static library and which get no mobile library visits. In addition, there are areas of the county that are not parished and have neither a static library nor mobile library visits. It is proposed that the council's Champion for Parishes (with support from the Libraries Service) makes contact with those parish councils and representatives of

those areas not parished to identify those communities that want to benefit from a mobile library visit. The "trial days" will enable those new stops to be piloted and reviewed after six months to see if there is enough customer demand to add those pilot stops to the main routes followed by mobile libraries. Given that there are only 5 trial days in total, it might result in a waiting list of communities to be piloted but these can be worked through over a number of six-monthly periods.

It is proposed that the new mobile routes will commence from Monday 1 June 2020 as this gives adequate time to notify all customers of any changes to existing days or times for people to have time to make any adjustments that they may need to make.

Alongside the review of the mobile library routes, the mobile library vehicles are being replaced due to the age of the existing fleet. Three replacement vehicles are currently being brought into service and a further three vehicles have been ordered with delivery anticipated in September/October 2020.

Consultations

The public was consulted between 4 March 2019 and 28 April 2019 on the draft criteria to be used when reviewing the routes followed by mobile libraries. In addition, a number of parish councils will be consulted about receiving new mobile library stops using trial days available from 1 June 2020.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Vehicles

There are currently seven mobile library vehicles, of which six are used for the regular delivery of the service with one vehicle held in reserve to replace any vehicle that becomes unavailable. Cabinet has already agreed capital expenditure to replace the entire fleet of ageing mobile library vehicles and the first three new mobile library vehicles were delivered in late 2019 and will go into service during February 2020. Moving the frequency of all the mobile library routes to three weekly will mean that only five rather than six vehicles are required for the regular delivery of the service with a sixth vehicle held in reserve. Therefore, a further three new mobile library vehicles will be ordered and brought into service in 2020.

The bases of the new mobile library vehicles will be reviewed as the new routes are planned but six of the existing seven bases will continue to be used.

Staffing

There are six full-time posts of Mobile Library Officers of which one post is currently vacant but temporarily filled until 31 May 2020. By moving to five mobile libraries delivering the service, the vacant post can be deleted when the new routes are introduced in 2020.

In order to comply with criteria three detailed above, casual or agency drivers would need to be brought in to cover drivers' holidays and other absences whenever possible. As the bases of the mobile library vehicles are reviewed, any changes to vehicle locations might require one or more posts to be re-located and appropriate staff consultation would be conducted.

Financial

The cost of the revised mobile library service will be contained within the existing revenue and capital budgets allocated for the mobile library service. There is the potential for realising vehicle savings by reducing the number of vehicles from seven to six. In addition, the staffing budget would reduce by moving from six to five full-time posts. This saving will offset the occasional cost of the use of casual drivers, to be used only when necessary to comply with criteria three detailed above.

Risk management

Legal

The mobile library service contributes to the overall service offer and thus contributes to the council complying with the obligations of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Equality Analysis

As all existing customers will continue to receive a mobile library service and may be eligible to access the home library service, no-one will lose access to the service.

Personnel

As one of the six posts of Mobile Library Officer is filled temporarily by an existing member of staff until 31 May 2020, the number of posts can be reduced from six to five without any personnel issues. Any change to work location will require appropriate consultation with the staff involved.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
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