

## Report to Cabinet

Meeting to be held on 8 September 2016

## Report of the Corporate Director of Commissioning and Deputy Chief Executive

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| Electoral Division affected:<br>All |
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### Property Strategy (Neighbourhood Centres) – Responses to Consultation and Final Proposals

(Appendices "A" to "Q" refer)

Contact for further information:

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#### Executive Summary

This report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation in relation to the proposals agreed on 12 May 2016 regarding the Council's Property Strategy. It is essential that Cabinet Members read carefully this report, together with its appendices and supporting materials, before considering the recommendations set out below.

In the context of the consultation response the report proposes an approach to be adopted by Cabinet to identify the level of library provision that satisfies the duty set out in section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 based on an assessment of need; recommends Cabinet to agree a Library Strategy consistent with this assessment; sets out alternative options for the provision of a library service for Cabinet to consider; and recommends Cabinet to endorse a new model for an "Independent Community Library Offer".

Cabinet are also recommended to request officers to continue to explore alternative models for the delivery of the Library Service to allow for longer term planning in anticipation of the need to make further budget savings in future years.

The report also identifies arrangements for the use of the Neighbourhood Centre model identified within the Property Strategy, as previously agreed by Cabinet, by the Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service, which incorporates the proposed future arrangements for designated children's centres in Lancashire.

Based on the considerations and decisions set out above Cabinet is recommended to agree to revised proposals for the implementation of the Property Strategy identifying in particular the static libraries and children's centres it is proposed to retain for future service delivery.

Subject to these decisions Cabinet are also recommended to agree to instruct officers to consider the viability of Expressions of Interest received from community groups and other 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for the transfer of premises to them and bring a report

back to the October meeting of Cabinet for consideration.

This is deemed to be a key decision and the provisions of Standing Order 25 have been complied with.

### **Recommendation**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the outcomes of the consultation as set out in the report.
2. Approve the Planning and Needs Assessment for the Library Service set out at Appendix "I" as the basis of determining the level of provision for the Council's statutory library service.
3. Approve the Library Strategy at Appendix "H".
4. Approve the proposed investment in the Mobile Library Service set out in the report.
5. Endorse the proposed model for an "Independent Community Library Offer" as set out in the report on the basis that these community libraries are **in addition to** the provision made by the Council to satisfy section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.
6. Agree to continue to explore the development of alternative options for the future delivery of library services, including, but not limited to, the extended use of volunteers and the development of a potential model which would allow the Library Service to be run independently of the Council as described in the report.
7. Agree to the revised proposals for the implementation of the Property Strategy set out at Appendix "B".
8. Subject to approval of recommendation 7, to agree to consult on the proposal to discontinue use of Upholland Children's Centre, St Thomas the Martyr CE Primary School, on the basis set out in the report.
9. Agree that the buildings identified in Appendix "B" as not to be retained for future use are declared surplus to requirements and that the services delivered from them will be discontinued on the basis of the timeline set out at Appendix "P".
10. Instruct officers to consider the viability of the expressions of interest received in relation to the transfer of Council premises as set out in Appendix "B" and to bring back a further report to the next meeting of Cabinet for consideration.
11. Note the request from the Schools Forum for transition funding for schools with attached children's centres and that this will be the subject of future discussions between officers and the Schools Forum.

## **Background and Advice**

At its meeting held on 12 May 2016 Cabinet agreed, for the purposes of consultation, proposals relating to the future configuration of the Council's property portfolio. The proposals set out a total of 132 properties identified for retention as neighbourhood centres, with the consequence that 106 premises were no longer required to deliver the Council's future pattern of service delivery.

The proposals agreed for consultation were developed in the context of the unprecedented financial challenge facing the Council, with a budget gap identified in the region of £200 million by 2020/21. The Money Matters report included on the agenda for this meeting revises this gap to £147.944 m. However, whilst this appears positive overall, the reduction in the gap reflects the inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Strategy of the impact of increasing council tax by 3.99% (including the 2% Adult Social Care Precept) in each of the next 4 financial years. This has not previously been included within the MTFS. This assumption of increased resources is partially offset by increasing spending pressures in addition those previously identified and agreed.

The proposals in relation to the Council's property portfolio were designed to ensure that all Lancashire residents can continue to be provided with high quality services and to provide a flexible response to future patterns of service delivery. The proposals were developed around the Neighbourhood Centre Model approved by Cabinet in November 2015, which is intended to provide a range of services from multi-purpose premises around the County taking account, in particular, of levels of deprivation.

The Consultation proposals, setting out the methodology for the review process and details of the Neighbourhood Centre Model are set out at Appendix "A".

The following sections of this report set out the details of the response to the consultation and how this information has been taken into account. The report deals separately with how the consultation response, along with the other factors set out in the report, has informed revisions to the original proposals in relation to the Library Service and the Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service (WPEH), and recommends Cabinet to agree to revised proposals for the implementation of the Property Strategy as set out at Appendix "B".

### **The Consultation process and response**

The consultation process commenced on 18 May 2016 for a 12 week period ending 14 August, comprising on-line and hard copy questionnaires, describing the proposals on a district by district basis. The sample consultation documents were presented to Cabinet on 12 May and can be found [here](#). In addition, briefing meetings for county councillors were held across the County, again on a district by district basis, and a number of meetings have been held with district and parish/town councils where that was requested. The Asset Management Team have also responded to many enquiries from councillors, members of the public and organisations on an individual basis.

15,000 hard copy questionnaires have been distributed in 13 versions:

- 12 individual district questionnaires
- 1 with all districts in one document

Around 95% of printed questionnaires are the individual district ones, with 5% being all districts (this is a 70+ page document intended only to be completed by people wishing to comment on multiple districts).

Unfortunately, shortly after distribution, it was realised that a question had been mistakenly omitted from the hard copies of the 12 individual district questionnaires when the final proofs were being created. This question was 'Thinking about this proposal, please tell us if there is anything else we need to consider or that we could do differently'.

Having realised the error the following actions were taken:

- An addendum sheet was distributed on 3 June by email to all libraries and children's centres with clear instructions. The centres were asked to print and insert addendum sheets into the remaining printed questionnaires in their centres. They were also asked to draw attention to the addendum for people returning completed questionnaires. As the questionnaires are anonymous, it was not possible to contact people who had already completed questionnaires without this question.
- Another print run was also organised, including the missing question. These new questionnaires were then distributed to libraries and children's centres week commencing Monday 13th June to replace any existing stock.

It was recognised that people who have completed questionnaires without this specific question nevertheless had the opportunity to have written down their ideas about how things can be done differently in the other two free-text boxes, in response to the questions: 'How will this proposal impact upon you?' and 'Where we are proposing to no longer deliver services from a property, but you think we should continue to deliver services from it, what are your reasons?'

Therefore when analysing the questionnaires any suggestions as to how things could be done differently from what is proposed have been extracted and included in the analysis of the final question to ensure that no suggestions have been missed or excluded. That this would be the case, and that all suggestions would be taken into account wherever they appeared on the questionnaire, was also made clear when the addendum sheet was issued so that people could be reassured that their ideas will be fully considered.

At the closing date for the consultation, 14 August, there have been 3,893 online responses and 3,826 hardcopy; a total of 7,719 responses. Responses have been continuously reviewed and considered as they have been received during the consultation period.

An analysis of the responses is set out at Appendix "C". Where responses have proposed alternative models of provision these are considered in subsequent sections of this report. All of the consultation responses can be accessed [here](#) and a hard copy has been made available in the Members' Retiring Room.

***It must however be noted that, in view of the scale of the consultation response, it has not been possible to redact personal information from hard copy responses received, therefore access has been restricted to county councillors only and is not available to the public.***

In addition to the consultation response, the Council has received a number of petitions and has hosted others on its website. These petitions are summarised in Appendix "C" (page 66) and can be accessed [here](#). Hard copies are available in the Members' Retiring Room.

The consultation process also formed a statutory consultation process on proposed changes to the network of designated Children Centres in Lancashire. The Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help (WPEH) Service have also undertaken further consultation measures to ensure that service users have had additional opportunity to share feedback on the proposals, including how they believe the changes will impact on them. There have been a number of additional consultation methods employed as follows:

- A series of six independently facilitated focus groups for parents/carers who are users of children centres, held at a range of locations around the county. A summary of feedback points is set out at Appendix "E"
- A series of three independently facilitated focus groups for young people who are users of young people's services, held at a range of locations around the county, alongside one with Lancashire Youth Council. A summary of feedback points is set out at Appendix "F"
- A stakeholder focus group with representatives of key partner organisations. A summary of feedback points is set out at Appendix "G"
- A series of drop-in engagement sessions engaging over 900 service users were held at each existing children centre/young people's centre, led by service officers, to enable service users to find out more about the consultation proposals/share feedback and be encouraged/supported to complete the on-line/paper consultation questionnaire.

The consultation response on this aspect is again analysed in Appendices "C" and "D" and must be read and carefully considered before decisions are made on the revised proposals. Along with the other factors referred to later in this report, the consultation response has been an integral consideration in the formulation of revised proposals in relation to the Property Strategy which are set out at Appendix "B".

The consultation response has also informed the development of the Library Strategy referred to later in this report and found at Appendix "H", the Planning and Needs Assessment at Appendix "I", and the revised Equality Analysis documents at Appendices "J", "K" and "L".

The consultation feedback is summarised in more detail in Appendix "C" but taken overall it is clear that many respondents value greatly many of the services provided by the Council out of premises proposed for closure and are concerned about the impact on them of closure. Many premises, in particular libraries, are seen as an important community resource/asset and that closure would impact on access to information, learning help and development; would mean a loss of access to computers/the internet; have a negative impact on wellbeing, employment and education opportunities; and result in inconvenience to access future provision, due to cost and/or distance.

Appendix "D" sets out on a district by district basis a more detailed summary of the issues identified from the consultation, provides a response to those issues and explains the changes that have been made to the consultation proposals and why. (Note: for ease of reference the changes that have been made to the consultation proposals and why are also included in Appendix "B")

*The following sections of the report deal first with the Library Service, followed by the Wellbeing Prevention and Early Help Service.*

## **The Library Service**

### **The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 – a "comprehensive and efficient service"**

Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 provides that upper tier local authorities are under a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in their area that want to make use of it. Local authorities have the power to offer wider library services beyond the statutory service to other groups.

In providing a library service local authorities must, among other things:

- Have regard to encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service
- Lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

There are no specifically defined national standards for library provision, therefore it is up to each local authority to determine for itself what it considers is meant by a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. Each library authority must therefore determine what local needs there are and provide a service that meets the needs of their communities.

A number of principles can be identified from decisions of the High Court (usually in the context of proposed closures) which can be summarised as follows:

- A "Comprehensive" service cannot mean that every resident lives next to a library. Comprehensive means a service accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies,

- Whilst digital technology might assist, distances to and the time taken to reach premises-based library provision must be reasonable and any particular considerations, whether physical disabilities, or created by age or family considerations, must be capable of being met,
- An efficient service must make the best use of assets available to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources,
- Decisions about the service need to be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across diverse communities within the local authority area

The first three of these factors formed part of the methodology adopted as part of the Property Strategy, applying a weighting and scoring methodology (Appendix "A", page 14) to identify premises to be retained as the starting point for public consultation.

The Neighbourhood Centre model, agreed by Cabinet in November 2015, is itself based on the principles contained within the draft Corporate Strategy which have been developed with a clear focus on areas of deprivation. The model identifies neighbourhood centres based on analysis of the indices of multiple deprivation across 34 service planning areas; approved service delivery budget options; and a dispassionate analysis of chosen datasets.

In addition, regard has been had to the outcomes of the Local Inquiry conducted in 2009 into the Public Library Service provided by Wirral MBC. This Inquiry was directed by the Secretary of State to consider Wirral's compliance with the s.7 duty, in particular whether Wirral had made a reasonable assessment of local needs in respect of library services; what those needs were; and on assessment of local needs had Wirral acted reasonably in meeting those needs through its proposals in the context of the available resources and their statutory obligations.

The [final Inquiry report](#) found that Wirral's re-structure proposals to be in breach of their statutory duty, therefore in finalising the proposals set out in this report full consideration has been given to the findings, and they have informed the Planning and Needs Assessment dealt with below.

In addition, the 12 week public consultation, supplemented by numerous meetings with other county and district councillors, other partners and stakeholders, has now been analysed to identify local needs and aspirations to determine what a "comprehensive and efficient service" looks like in Lancashire and, in turn, to inform the proposed Library Strategy. This "Planning and Needs Assessment" is described further in the following section.

The revised proposals recommended for approval also take account of the Council's general duty of Best Value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness".

Statutory guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government, revised in March 2015, provides that under this duty local authorities

should consider value overall, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision.

These considerations, informed by the consultation responses, are an integral part of the revised Property Strategy proposals and the Library Strategy, indeed they reflect the principles that have been applied alongside the Council's duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. In accordance with the guidance, the proposals taken overall, having regard in particular to the recommendations relating to the adoption of the Independent Community Library offer and continuing to explore alternative options for service delivery, plays in the long term to the strengths of voluntary and community groups.

### **Planning and Needs Assessment – The Library Service**

Section 6 of the Local Inquiry Report in relation to Wirral MBC referred to above sets out the Inspector's critical analysis of the evidence submitted by Wirral regarding their assessment of local needs, on the basis of which the Inspector concluded that the Council did not act reasonably in meeting those needs.

The Inspector therefore analysed how the needs of communities had been considered, including the general requirements, as well as the special requirements of adults and children and other specific groups within communities – such as older and young people; men and women; unemployed people; BME groups; and disabled people – in advance of the Equality Act 2010 and the introduction of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Drawing on the principles articulated in the Inquiry report the Planning and Assessment set out at Appendix "I" analyses demographic information in the context of the Council's statutory duty to understand and identify needs across the County against a wide range of factors. Based on this analysis the document identifies the key considerations for the Council to be satisfied that its Library Service is "comprehensive and efficient".

The analysis is wide-ranging, dealing also with broadband coverage – a factor identified in the Wirral Report; benchmarking expenditure against comparator authorities; and, importantly, population density, taking account of mobile library provision as well as static library points. The Planning and Needs Assessment also notes (Appendix "I", page 22) that, whilst there is no statutory definition of an acceptable level of reach for library services in terms of the distance that people live from libraries, both fixed and mobile, the Welsh Assembly has set out defined standards. Whilst it would be wrong to conclude that these can automatically be applied to Lancashire as a minimum standard, nevertheless they provide a useful point of comparison for the purposes of the overall analysis.

The Property Strategy consultation proposals in so far as they relate to library provision have therefore been assessed against the principles set out in the Planning and Needs Assessment and, along with the outcomes of the public consultation and all the other relevant information set out later in this report, have been revised as set out in Appendix "B" and described in more detail in the following section.



## The Revised Proposals in relation to the Library Service

The Council's Library Service currently operates from 73 static libraries, along with the additional library services referred to later in this section. The proposals approved by Cabinet for consultation were on the basis that the number of static libraries would reduce, with a fully staffed library service being delivered from 37 neighbourhood centres and an additional 7 "satellite" services.

A satellite library service is an unstaffed library facility within a shared County Council building with other services being delivered from the same building. The service will have book stock and self-service technology as well as computer provision and customers will be able to request items in the same way that they can at other libraries.

A member of library staff will attend the library each week for a limited time to meet with customers, check that the book stock and other equipment is in order and deal with any other issues which may have arisen in the past week. The service providers in the buildings hosting a satellite library will be given appropriate training to support customers and signpost them towards further information from library professionals.

The proposal to support satellite libraries has also included an option to consider implementing a system which will allow access to the library with no staff at all in the buildings concerned. This will allow the Council to explore how efficiently an alternative library offer could develop as alternative model in the future. It is noted this still will require staff intervention but opening hours could be extensive and it also important to note this model would only work in certain localities.

The changes to the consultation proposals, on a district basis, that are recommended to Cabinet for approval are as follows:

| Building  | Consultation Proposal (Main service delivery)   | Revised Proposal (Main service delivery)   | Rationale   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Burnley   |   |  |   |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |   |  |   |
| Chorley   |   |  |   |
| 28. Chorley Library   | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre), Children Missing Education and Pupil Attendance Team, Library | Proposed for future use by WPEH 12-19+ years, Children Missing Education and Pupil Attendance Team, Library Service, Welfare Rights, Youth Offending Team. | Utilise Highfield Children's Centre for WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre) to meet access and reach requirements for the service. |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | Service,<br>Welfare Rights,<br>Youth<br>Offending<br>Team  |   |   |
| Fylde   |  |   |   |
| 55. Ansdell<br>Library  | Not proposed<br>for future use.  | Not proposed for<br>future use but to<br>delay closure of the<br>building whilst<br>works are carried<br>out to St Anne's<br>Library. | To ensure the provision of<br>a full library service is<br>available to the community<br>whilst works to St Anne's<br>Library are completed.  |
| Hyndburn  |  |   |   |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |  |   |   |
| Lancaster   |  |   |   |
| 86. Halton<br>Library and<br>Children's<br>Centre                                 | Proposed for<br>future use by<br>Library Service,<br>WPEH 0-11<br>years.   | Proposed for future<br>use by Library<br>Service, WPEH 0-<br>11 years<br>(outreach).  | This is currently a satellite<br>of Lune Park Children's<br>Centre (designated<br>children's centre). There<br>are low levels of families<br>choosing to access support<br>at Halton Children's Centre<br>and so the service<br>proposes to add capacity at<br>Lune Park and ensure<br>outreach support for the<br>community in Halton. |
| 91.<br>Morecambe<br>Library   | Proposed for<br>future use with<br>satellite Library,<br>Registration<br>Service,<br>Welfare Rights<br>and WPEH<br>service 0-19+<br>years<br>(designated<br>children's<br>centre). | Proposed for future<br>use with full Library<br>service,<br>Registration<br>Service, Welfare<br>Rights and WPEH<br>12-19+ years.      | A review of the<br>requirements set out in the<br>Library Planning and Needs<br>Assessment identified the<br>need to retain a full Library<br>service in Morecambe.   |
| 99. Carnforth<br>Library  | Not proposed<br>for future use.  | Proposed for future<br>use for full library<br>service pending a<br>detailed site review<br>of Carnforth Hub.                         | It is proposed to retain<br>Carnforth Library due to its<br>current location best<br>serving the access<br>requirements for the<br>service as the complexity of<br>the Carnforth Hub site<br>would require significant<br>investment in order to<br>provide an appropriate  |

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
|   |   |   | library service.   |
| Pendle  |   |   |  |
| 123. Brierfield Library   | Not proposed for future use.  | Subject to on-going consideration.  | Subject to on-going consideration.   |
| Preston   |   |   |  |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |   |   |  |
| Ribbles Valley  |   |   |  |
| 154. Longridge Library  | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-19+ and Library service.  | Proposed for future use by WPEH 12-19+ years and Library service.                           | Recognition that the refurbishment and condition costs will be less through retention of Willow's Park Children's Centre and so do not warrant the potential investment in providing the service at Longridge Library at this time. This will allow for consolidation of the WPEH 12-19+ years offer into the Library with further review at a later date. |
| Rossendale  |   |   |  |
| 169. Haslingden Library   | Proposed for future use by Library Service, Registration Service and Welfare Rights.                          | Proposed for future use by Library Service and Welfare Rights.                              | A further review of the Registration Service has indicated that it is preferable to provide the service at Rawtenstall Library.  |
| 170. Rawtenstall Library  | Proposed for future use by Library Service.   | Proposed for future use by Library Service and Registration Service.                        | A further review of the Registration Service has indicated that it is preferable to provide the service at Rawtenstall Library.  |
| 171. Maden Centre, Bacup  | Proposed for future use by satellite Library, WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre), Welfare Rights | Proposed for future use by, WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre), Welfare Rights | A review of the requirements set out in the Library Strategy identified the need to retain a full Library service in the Bacup area. There are on-going discussions with Rossendale Borough Council about future provision in the area.  |
| 174. Bacup Library  | Not proposed for future use.  | Subject to on-going consideration   | A review of the requirements set out in the Library Strategy identified the need to retain a full Library service in the Bacup area. There are on-going discussions with   |

|   |                              |                                    |  |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
|   |                              |                                    | Rossendale Borough Council about future provision in the area. |
| 180. Whitworth Library  | Not proposed for future use. | Subject to on-going consideration. | Subject to on-going consideration.                             |
| South Ribble  |                              |                                    |  |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |                              |                                    |  |
| West Lancashire   |                              |                                    |  |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |                              |                                    |  |
| Wyre  |                              |                                    |  |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |                              |                                    |  |
|   |                              |                                    |  |

The network of buildings will be available for flexible use by all public facing services as appropriate with further colocation of services to be developed in response to service need and delivery of corporate priorities.

However, it is important to emphasise that static library points form only part of the service offer. Public use of the library service is starting to see a move away from visits to buildings towards the Service's digital offer, including a significant increase in visits to the Service's website, with 1,473,938 visits in 2015/16.

In addition to static library points the following library services will also continue to be provided:

- Six mobile library units which will complement static library provision and which will be deployed to best effect once decisions have been made on where physical library services will be delivered from. Details of future investment in the Council's mobile library service are set out below.
- As part of our digital offer a free e-book service which allows our customers to borrow books for the same loan period as physical books and which can be easily accessed via eReaders, computers, tablets, smart-phones and other devices as an alternative to borrowing traditional printed material. This is becoming an increasingly popular way to borrow books and has seen issues increase over the last three financial years with a 42.4% rise in e-book issues in the 2015/16 year with a total of 105,673 loans compared with 74,225 in 2014/15.
- A free of charge Home Library Service for citizens who are unable to visit their library because of age, disability or ill health. The home library service offers the loan of books, audio visual material and a request service. Loans can be delivered by volunteers if satisfactory arrangements for collection cannot be made.

The Home Library Service is a collection and delivery service for residents who live within the Lancashire County Council geographic area. Any Lancashire resident who is unable to visit a library due to age, disability or ill health is eligible to access the Home Library Service. The Home Library

Service utilises the full range of existing stock from the 73 libraries and 6 mobile libraries throughout Lancashire. Stock includes books, talking books, CDs, DVDs and MP3 talking books (playways.) An assessment will be made by a library manager and the service will be supported by a bibliotherapy officer who will support colleagues across the county.

- A school library service which is available by subscription to all schools in Lancashire including those outside Lancashire County Council's administrative boundary in Blackpool, Blackburn and Liverpool. The service is committed to Inspiring young readers to become lifelong learners with access to over 400,000 titles. A total of 282 schools subscribe to this service including 4 primary and 2 special schools. The service provides book loans, project loans to support the national curriculum, advice and guidance, teacher training opportunities and the promotion of reading for enjoyment through the Fantastic Book Award.

It should also not be forgotten that the universal library offer means that Lancashire residents who are members of the Library Service are free to access library services in other local authority areas, and vice versa. The location of libraries in other local authority areas means that many are accessible to Lancashire residents and the location of Lancashire libraries should not be seen in isolation.

This is universal across England and therefore our customers can access libraries across the country, most immediately all adjoining local authority areas. This is reciprocated by use from customers in other local authority areas. Valuable links also exist with two of Lancashire's universities, Lancaster and the University of Central Lancashire.

The revised proposals therefore mean that:

- at least 95% of people living in densely populated areas would live within 2 miles of a proposed Neighbourhood Centre library or satellite service.
- at least 90% of people living in medium density populated areas would live within 2.5 miles of a proposed Neighbourhood Centre library or satellite service or 0.25 miles of a mobile library stop.
- at least 70% of people living in sparsely populated areas would live within 3 miles of a proposed Neighbourhood Centre library or satellite service or within 0.25 miles of a mobile library stop.

The Library Service are confident that, whilst the revised proposals involve the closure of a significant proportion of static libraries, the library offer overall will in fact not be diminished and will continue to exceed the minimum level of service required to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" service.

### **The Library Strategy**

The Wirral Inquiry Report also identified as a concern the lack of a strategic plan for the Library Service, based on an assessment of need and a contemporaneous review of the service. The Inspector concluded that this hindered the Council being able to describe how its plans would meet the needs of and have due regard to

those who live, work and study in the council's area, including, in respect of resources, the general and specific requirements of adults and children.

In that context the Library Service has therefore reviewed its service offer in the context of the Planning and Needs Assessment and has prepared, for approval, a draft Library Strategy set out at Appendix "H". The draft Strategy identifies the priorities which the Library Service will focus on and the outcomes it aims to deliver for the people of Lancashire.

The draft Strategy demonstrates a commitment to the continued delivery and development of a strong public library service in the County, building on past successes but with a firm ambition for the outcomes to achieve in the future.

It directly responds to the emerging needs of communities and outlines how the Council will work with other organisations to deliver a comprehensive and efficient, responsive and modern library service.

The Strategy also takes full account of the outcomes of the earlier public consultation which took place in January 2016. All Lancashire residents and visitors had the opportunity to take part in the consultation which the Lancashire County Library Service undertook on service design, need and use with 10,566 questionnaires completed and processed, comprising 4,607 paper-based and 5,959 online. A summary of the responses received is at Appendix "M".

This consultation was publicised in all libraries as well as in museum buildings, archive and registration offices. Paper questionnaires were made available in all branches and staff were available to provide assistance to customers to complete the online version in branch.

### **Future Investment in Mobile Service Provision in Lancashire**

Mobile libraries cover the whole of Lancashire, operating from 6 vehicles and making almost 800 stops.

Lancashire's mobile libraries carry a selection of books suitable for all ages, including large print, and in some cases talking books as well. Any item in stock anywhere in Lancashire can be provided on request. If the request is made online, then the item is often available on the next visit. Internet access is not available from Lancashire's existing mobile libraries.

Every mobile library is fully accessible, with a lift for people with mobility impairments. Because of the limited space available, the vans are not suitable for large motorised wheelchairs.

The operating costs of each mobile library is around £36,500 per annum, including salaries, fuel, repairs and maintenance, insurance, road tax and stock. Lancashire currently maintains a fleet of 7 mobile library vehicles. Six are operational at any one time with one held as a spare. The age of vehicles ranges from 6 to 11 years. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions suggests

the typical effective life of a mobile library vehicle is 10 years, therefore within the next 4 years Lancashire will have no library vehicles which meet this guideline.

The proposals for the future delivery of library services in Lancashire have recognised that the mobile library service has an important role to play in ensuring that the Service can continue to reach more rural areas of Lancashire, where people may otherwise have difficulty in accessing static library provision. It is therefore proposed to begin a programme of replacing the existing mobile library fleet to ensure that services to rural communities can be maintained and at the same time to take the opportunity to invest in a fleet which will give the potential for wider community based services, such as offering public internet access from the vehicle.

As part of the replacement programme for the mobile library fleet work must be undertaken to specify the precise requirements. Clearly, the fleet must be suitable for road and environmental conditions as well as to be able to meet the future needs of communities. An important element of design will be to determine the most effective solution to ensure previously unavailable public internet access. Mobile library vehicles also require custom coachworks. The design and build aspects means that it would take around 18 months to bring a replacement vehicle in to operation. Consequently, the first new mobile library vehicle would not be expected to be operational until April 2018.

The estimated cost of each replacement vehicle, including some ICT provision and internet access, is £120,000. To deliver the replacement schedule outlined above would require capital provision as follows:

| Year         | £              |
|--------------|----------------|
| 2017/18      | 480,000        |
| 2018/19      | 240,000        |
| 2019/20      | 120,000        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>840,000</b> |

It is anticipated that the cost of replacement can be contained within the provision of Fleet in the re-profiled Capital Programme.

### **Alternative options – the Library Service**

The imperative to ensure that the Council can secure financial sustainability beyond March 2018 means that we cannot afford any significant delay in either decision making or the implementation of the future model of library service delivery.

However, in moving forward, the Council has the option to continue to explore alternative models, where these provide additionality to our proposed services. A number of alternative community based models are set out in the Arts Council England guidance referred to above and an "Independent Community Library Offer" is recommended later in this report.

The government has responded to the changes in library delivery by establishing a Library taskforce in 2014. This task force has devised a number of toolkits for use in

local authorities and most recently has been out to extensive consultation around its plan for the future with a document called [Libraries deliver - Ambition](#):

The consultation sets out a vision of the value and impact of public libraries as a national network that delivers transformation and progress for people, communities and the nation. Once finalised, the Taskforce will publish its report along with an action plan showing how local and national government and the library profession will work together with local communities and other partners to make the shared ambition a reality. The consultation closed on 3 June. The response submitted by the Library Service was supportive of the Taskforce's proposals.

The consultation, in setting out a vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is predicated on the public library network contributing to the delivery of 7 key areas:

- reading and literacy
- digital literacy
- health and wellbeing
- economic growth
- culture and creativity
- communities
- learning

The consultation acknowledges that the library network needs active management to make sure that it remains relevant to the needs of the public in the context that the majority of public libraries in rural and urban centres have seen dramatic changes in population, transport, technology and patterns of use.

Having reviewed a number of models of service delivery the taskforce sees responsibility and accountability for delivery remaining with local authorities, using their insight into local needs to draw up evidence-based plans for optimal service provision, supported by increased partnerships and programmes at national level.

In terms of evidence-based planning the taskforce refer to active superintendence relying on informed governance combining:

- accessibility of service points for the user community
- quality of services they provide, mapped to local needs
- availability of those services, including opening hours

They acknowledge that there is a need to incentivise libraries to exploit opportunities for collaboration, for example shared service models or combined authorities, which could effectively reduce the number of library management bodies over time. Where there is a reduction in the number of physical service points then they would expect the remaining libraries to provide enhanced services, i.e. fewer but better.

The taskforce therefore intends to publish guidance on how to conduct an evidence-based mapping and planning exercise, based on established good practice.



Before the consultation closed, the taskforce published the feedback that started to emerge from the consultation including views that respondents wanted the taskforce to draw out more the impact of austerity on library funding decisions and what providing a "comprehensive and efficient" service means in those circumstances. They have also acknowledged a split between those who think they aren't being ambitious enough and those who think they are in danger of being unrealistic in their ambitions given the funding available.

No date has yet been set for the publication of taskforce's final report.

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) has been the main negotiating body on behalf of public libraries with the government and other key stakeholders. SCL has built up a range of [key universal library offers](#) relating to the government's priorities.

These universal offers cover six key areas of service which customers and stakeholders see as essential to a 21st century library service. They are:

- Reading offer
- Public information offer
- Digital offer
- Health offer
- Learning offer
- Cultural offer\*

*(\*note: the SCL universal offers in their published document do not include a cultural offer; this has been added by SCL in June 2016 subsequent to the publication. SCL have confirmed that the new culture offer will be formally launched in 2017)*

The Library Service has responded to those offers and incorporated them into best practice in its business plan for the Service and in the draft Library Strategy which is presented for approval.

***The following sections identify and comment on options that should be considered as an alternative to library closures:***

- **Accessing External Funding**

The Council has in the past accessed external funding for the development of library service provision, notably Big Lottery Funding.

In 2007 the Big Lottery Programme announced that for the first time public libraries could bid for a pot of funding to support the development in their areas. The Council bid for £1.3m and was successful. The bid was called "Your Space" and this reflected how the Service would connect effectively with its local communities to develop the Library Service moving forward. Five years on the success of the project in connecting effectively with its local communities is clear.

The prime focus of the funding was to ensure that library services actively involved their local communities. As a result the service developed a constitution for "Friends" groups and several have developed across the county beyond 3 "Big Lottery

libraries" in different geographical areas. Friends groups have raised funds for their specific libraries to purchase equipment and improve library spaces to enhance the library offer.

The Big Lottery success defined the way in which the current Library Service operates within these flexible spaces with local communities and a further five libraries had major additional work undertaken to provide accessible toilets for all our customers.

In 2007 the Council also embarked on a "Regenerate" capital programme to improve the stock of library buildings. As well as the regenerate capital programme the children's centre capital programme enabled the service to redesign three further libraries on the same Regenerate principles as well as winning additional funding for one new build and full refurbishments for a further three from the Big Lottery community fund again using the design from the established Regenerate brand.

However, whilst external funding has been accessed and has led to improvements in service delivery, the availability of external funding has now significantly reduced and what funding is available tends not to be for capital projects, nor can it be used for core revenue funding purposes, rather it is typically focussed on special projects which enhance service provision. Therefore, whilst the Library Service and Friends Groups continue to be alert to the potential to access external funding, it is clear that this is not of the scale or scope to have any significant impact on the Library Service. It does not mitigate the need to make fundamental changes to the way in which the service is delivered, as proposed in the Library Strategy and in turn the revised proposals in relation to the Property Strategy which continues to involve a reduction in the number of fixed library premises.

- **Volunteer Models**

The Library Service already has one of the most successful partnerships with volunteers across the Council, with currently some 264 volunteers. The Service has designed volunteer role profiles for the volunteers as an enhancement to the Service rather than as a direct replacement for paid staff. For the last two years the Service has also successfully recruited over 300 young people to support the summer reading challenge.

More generally, across the Council and indeed the wider public sector in Lancashire, work is underway through the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership to recruit volunteers and redeploy them to best effect throughout public services.

However, the Library Service approach reflected in the Property Strategy proposals is to provide staffed libraries in areas of greatest need/deprivation. This approach has been adopted because experience demonstrates that it is these areas where there are often the most difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Taking everything into account, whilst volunteers will continue to play an important part in delivering the Library Service offer, it is clear that the extended use of volunteers does not provide a realistic alternative other than in the context of the development of Independent Community Libraries as referred to later in this report.

- **Partnerships with other public sector bodies**

A number of local authorities have considered sharing the delivery of their library service, for example in Greater Manchester and in Bromley and Bexley. These are however examples of collaboration between library authorities, rather than between local authorities working in a two tier system.

In Lancashire, partnership arrangements with district councils have however also been developed. For example, Wheatley Lane Library was originally scheduled to close in 2006 but the local community and Pendle Borough Council put forward a proposal which ensured that the library remained open. This remained the case until March 2016 when the Borough Council withdrew funding from the site due to its own budget pressures.

However, as part of the Property Strategy consultation there have been discussions with a number of district councils about the possibility of them delivering the Library Service on behalf of the County Council. These discussions have however been on the basis of the district council proposing that the County Council continues to fund the service. These proposals therefore achieve, at best, only marginal savings and they do not therefore offer a realistic alternative to the Council's current proposals for the re-shaping of the Service.

In addition, discussions with other district councils have been in the context of them submitting expressions of interest in taking over County Council premises in the event of their closure and in some instances these may well develop into Independent Community Libraries as set out later in this report. In some instances this has taken the form of an offer to contribute to staffing or premises costs.

Wyre Council in particular have responded to the consultation expressing their support for the concept of neighbourhood centres and are actively exploring opportunities for co-location of services with other public sector bodies, for a range of services to be provided from community assets. Wyre have also proposed other potential arrangements as described in the following section.

- **Service delivery by an external organisation/community interest company/mutual**

Nationally a number of library authorities have decided to transfer library services out of their hands to external bodies, typically bodies established as not for profit companies or community interest companies (CICs), a prime example being York Library Service.

The York Library Service was transferred from the City Council in 2014 to an independent company established as an Industrial and Provident Society (a charity) on the basis of a 5 year contract to provide library services to the Council. The initial contract value was £2.2 million reducing further in the next two years from its establishment by £450k but also with the benefit of £1.7 million Heritage Lottery funding. The Society is member run with two thirds of the members being library users and one third staff.

The benefits of library services being outsourced in this way include the ability of the organisations being able to bid for other sources of money and encouraging philanthropy.

A number of Lancashire libraries do however already have "friends" groups which provide a platform for local community engagement to enable interested citizens to support and have a say in shaping local services. In addition the groups also have the opportunity to enhance and complement their local library service offer through various fundraising activities including application for grants.

Whilst models for library services using an external delivery vehicle have become more common, they are in no sense a panacea and must be seen in the context of the financial challenge facing the Council. In essence they amount to outsourcing with the service being delivered under contractual arrangements and there should be no assumption that they avoid job losses or even the potential closure of libraries.

As can be seen from the York model referred to above, this has been established on the basis of a reducing budget and will be heavily reliant on volunteers both to deliver services and to serve on the Boards of such companies. Critics of such arrangements also point to the loss of control and accountability and in the North West there is at least one example of such an arrangement failing, with the result that the service had to be taken back into the control of the local authority.

However, despite these reservations, whilst there would be a significant lead-in time to establish a viable "mutual" option, it is recognised that this is a potential option for future service delivery which the Council should now more actively explore.

As part of the response from Wyre Council referred to in the previous section of the report they have proposed the possible establishment of a CIC. Whilst their response is subject to ratification at Wyre's Cabinet meeting to be held on 7 September, the proposal is for a CIC to provide library services from the borough's three libraries included in the consultation proposals for closure. They consider that their evidence suggests that such a model could be financially viable, subject to a full business case being prepared, although there is an acceptance that a reduction in opening hours and/or the level of service provided would be required along with staff reductions.

### **An "Independent Community Library" Offer**

The level of library provision identified within the revised proposals at Appendix "B" has been analysed against the principles contained within the Planning and Needs Assessment at Appendix "I" and are considered to provide a level of service that is sufficient to satisfy the Council's duty under section 7 of the 1964 Act.

However, the consultation responses in relation to library provision included the following issues which go beyond the core library service provision:

- Loss of access to computers/internet
- Loss of an important community asset/social value of facilities

- Accessibility re alternative provision/mobility issues/cost of travel
- Impact on young people's education – access to information and reading.

Some communities have the desire, and maybe the potential, to continue to operate a library service, including operating and managing the associated premises. The capacity to deliver a viable, ongoing service will however raise challenges. However, where that is in place then consideration should be given to providing additional support for community provision.

These "independent community libraries" would not be part of the public library network and not part of the statutory library service, therefore they would not form part of the "comprehensive and efficient" service which the Council has a duty to provide, they would be an additional resource. The proposed model is not restricted to Council libraries that close, the model can be applied to any premises, whether or not owned or linked to the Council.

In considering this offer regard has also been had to guidance issued by the Arts Council in January 2013 regarding community libraries, setting out some guiding principles. The report presents findings of research about the ways in which communities have been involved with their libraries, reflecting the financial challenge that public library services are facing and therefore having to test new ways of working with communities to build sustainable library services for the future.

The research indicates that community libraries are established out of the determination and passion of local communities and that intentions are long-term, not short-term, but could evolve to become a valuable part of 21<sup>st</sup> century public library services. However, it is important to re-state that the model being recommended to Cabinet is intended, at this stage, to provide an additional resource on top of the Council's statutory service.

Going forward however, if community libraries prove to be viable, and in the context of further financial challenges, then it may be necessary for Cabinet to consider independent community libraries becoming a more integral part of the statutory library service.

The Council is already committed to working constructively with community groups and local people to ensure that community asset transfer in Lancashire is successful. The Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy (CAT) (see the following section) states that applicants should either:

- Have the skills and capacity to effectively deliver services and manage the asset to be transferred and/or have access to the necessary skills and capacity; **or**
- Be aware of any need to build capacity within their organisation and demonstrate how they intend to do this, perhaps by working with the Council or other partners.

The proposals for CAT were established on the basis that this will be a 'whole transfer' and communities will be taking on the full costs of running the building and/or providing any services and as a result, no financial support or otherwise will be available from us once the transfer is complete.

However, in discussions with communities through the consultation process it has become apparent that some communities, who are interested in taking on responsibilities for both library service provision and the building asset, might need some additional help to make the transfer successful and to build the capacity enable them to ensure that it is sustainable in the long term.

In response to this it is proposed to provide some additional help to communities who have submitted an expression of interest to take on Council-owned buildings and who wish to use those for the continued delivery of a library service, to local people, for the benefit of the community, as an addition to the statutory library service.

It is proposed that the initial offer to communities to help them become established will include:

- A one-off payment of £5000 to help communities with any initial costs of setting up independent provision
- Providing shelving
- Providing an initial supply of books from the Council's bookstore
- Advice and guidance from a Community Library Development Officer. This will be a time limited role in place to 31/12/2018 and will be primarily focused on skills transfer to enable communities to sustain provision in the long term.

When independent community library provision is operational the Council will continue to provide support through:

- An annual grant of £1000 to help the community to provide some form of public internet access
- Access to the Council's stock request service, enabling people to request additional books from the Council's library catalogue and for those to be delivered to the Independent Community Library, on a weekly basis, if required

The costs to the Council of this proposed offer will be dependent on the number of communities who wish to take forward independent community provision. The estimated annual cost for year 1 and subsequent years for each Independent Community Library is set out in the following Table:

***Estimated annual cost for year 1 and subsequent years***

|  | £            |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Fixed annual cost to 31/12/2018</b>   |              |
| Community library support officer – 1 FTE @ G8 support county-wide development           | 38,484       |
|  |              |
| <b>Initial set-up cost for each independent community library</b>                        |              |
| Set-up grant   | 5,000        |
|  |              |
| <b>Annual cost incurred by the County Council for each independent community library</b> |              |
| <i>Annual grant</i>  | <i>1,000</i> |

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <i>Stock request and delivery – 2 hours per week @ £9.29 per hour</i>                          | 966          |
| <i>Mileage Costs @ £5 per week</i>   | 260          |
| <b>Total annual cost incurred by the County Council for each independent community library</b> | <b>2,226</b> |

Assuming 10 communities wish to progress an asset transfer including independent community library service provision the total cost to the Council, consisting of 2 years support from the community library support officer and initial set up grants, would be in the region of £127,000, the annual cost for subsequent years being in the region of £22,000 per annum.

The key benefit of this model is that if the local community has decided to establish independent community library provision then community funding will be able to tailor its services to community needs.

Consideration is also being given to the possible development of a "Premises Management offer" which communities can choose to purchase. The intention is that this would help to ensure that community groups could be provided with sound advice and guidance on how best to maintain a safe environment and, if required, to help transfer skills to those working within communities.

An offer would therefore in principle deal with issues such as health and safety including legionella testing, and repairs and maintenance. If a package can be developed then it is proposed that this would operate on the basis of a cost recovery model so that there will be no additional costs to the Council.

However, there are some significant obstacles to be overcome if such an offer is to be viable and therefore it is not possible to provide more detail at this stage and it may be necessary to tailor the offer to individual premises which transfer under the CAT process referred to later in the report. Regard also must be had to the need to build resilience into community groups taking over Council premises and a premises management offer carries with it the risk of creating dependency.

### **Community Asset Transfer Policy**

In July 2016 the Deputy Leader approved a revised Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy to enable a proactive approach to CAT that allows not for profit organisations to express an interest in taking over the running of a Council asset declared as surplus, setting out a clear process for decision-making.

The framework for CAT is underpinned by the following principles:

- Any proposed asset transfer must promote social, economic or environmental wellbeing and/or support the aims and priorities of the County Council;
- Where the County Council is calling for expressions of interest relating to an asset transfer, we will consider each expression on its own merit and against a set list of criteria;

- Where the County Council is contacted by an organisation to discuss asset transfer of any building or land, we will open up the EIO opportunity to all community organisations.
- We will encourage collaboration between community based groups and the sharing of assets to optimise social value and value for money across Lancashire;
- Asset transfers to community based groups need to demonstrate benefits to local communities.
- CAT must be considered against the potential market value of an asset against conventional disposal.

The challenging financial settlement for the County Council means that it will increasingly need to develop alternative and innovative ways of meeting its objectives and CAT is one way of assisting this.

CAT must also be considered in view of the potential difficulties the Council could have in reclaiming assets once offered for community transfer and then sold on the open market. Any prospective transfer should be considered carefully in accordance with this policy as the asset could be formally registered under the Localism Act 2011 as being an asset of community value.

This could result in a more difficult situation if the County Council was looking to sell the asset due to the Right to Bid legislation and its restriction on open market sales. The approved policy will enable the County Council to develop and undertake community asset transfers of eligible properties to relevant community groups in a transparent, robust and consistent way.

The Expressions of interest (EOIs) that have been sought from organisations and groups that may be interested in CAT for buildings that may be declared surplus as part of the property Strategy will therefore be considered in accordance with the CAT Policy. Residents or a local organisation may decide that they would like to take on the running of the service and a building.

The current proposals are on the basis that this will be a 'whole transfer' and communities will be taking on the full costs of running the building and/or providing any services and, as a result, no financial support or otherwise will be available from the Council once the transfer is complete.

Where a CAT proposal is submitted and considered viable and appropriate it will take time to ensure that there is a managed and sustainable handover of the building and service to communities.

### **The Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service**

The statutory remit for children and young people's wellbeing, prevention and early help services are set out in two key areas of legislation as follows:



## **(a) Children's Centres**

With respect to children's centres the Council has a duty under the Childcare Act 2006, supplemented by statutory guidance, which provides that the arrangements made by the Council must, so far as is reasonably practicable, include arrangements for sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need which are accessible to all families with young children, and targeted evidence-based interventions for those families in greatest need of support.

The future Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help (WPEH) Service has therefore been designed on an evidence base to meet the needs of children and families, particularly those in need of more intensive support. The new service is designed on the basis of fixed locations – neighbourhood centres – and outreach provision.

## **(b) The Young People's Service**

Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that a local education authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable, secure for qualifying young persons in the authority's area access to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their wellbeing, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

There are no clearly defined national standards for what the local authority should deem as 'sufficient' in the context of either of the above statutory guidance. It is therefore up to each local authority to determine for itself what it considers effective in discharging its sufficiency duty in the context of local needs and in order to provide a service that meets the needs of children, young people and their families.

### **The revised proposals in relation to the Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service**

A similar range of considerations in relation to the assessment of need and the accessibility of premises proposed as children's centres and front-facing premises for the Young People's Service have also informed this report.

The WPEH Service offer and specification is at Appendix "N". This was finalised and amended to include feedback from extensive consultation undertaken with staff, service users and stakeholders arising from formal consultation on the service offer and principles during Feb/March 2016.

The future WPEH Service has been designed on an evidence base to meet the needs of children and families, particularly those in need of more intensive support. The new service is designed on the basis of service delivery through fixed locations – neighbourhood centres – delivering both a programme of group based and drop-in support, learning and developmental activities as well as one to one targeted support for children, young people and their families in the local area. This will be supplemented by outreach provision to meet the particular needs of individuals, groups or outlying/isolated communities.

The Neighbourhood Centre model, agreed by Cabinet in November 2015, is based on the principles contained within the draft Corporate Strategy which have been developed with a clear focus on areas of deprivation. Responding to needs through outreach based provision may involve the service in meeting service users in a range of locations in the community as well as neighbourhood centres. These may include partner locations (e.g.: schools/ health centres/ church halls/ voluntary agencies), public places (e.g.: cafes) as well as within the service users own homes.

The service will use its fleet of vehicles, including mobile centres (of which it currently has 8 units) to provide some visible presence in key settings and promote access to the Service. The Service may be minded in the future to extend the current fleet of mobile service units to ensure more effective coverage of all twelve district areas. Additional mobile units may be particularly effective in responding flexibly to 'hotspots' around young people's needs and anti-social behaviour, and in support of multi-agency working. Each additional unit would cost in the region of £55,000 capital investment with moderate annual running costs around £8,000 per annum.

The WPEH Service will also maximise the use of digital information service provision and use of social media as a helpful platform both for service provision and service user communications.

The changes to the consultation proposals, on a district basis, that are recommended to Cabinet for approval are as follows:

| <b>Building</b>                                      | <b>Consultation Proposal (Main service delivery)</b>                       | <b>Revised Proposal (Main service delivery)</b>                            | <b>Rationale</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Burnley</b>                                       |  |  |  |
| 3. Burnley City Learning Centre                      | Proposed for future use for Conferencing                                   | Proposed for future use for Conferencing and WPEH 12-19+ years (outreach). | Service delivery change - preference by young people not to access social care premises for support. This building provides a suitable neutral alternative for delivery of WPEH 12-19+ group learning activities and meetings. |
| 13. Stoneyholme and Daneshouse Young People's Centre | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre) | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-19+ years.                               | This will be a linked children's centre to The Chai Children's Centre.   |
| <b>Chorley</b>                                       |  |  |  |
| 28. Chorley Library                                  | Proposed for future use by   | Proposed for future use by WPEH 12-  | Utilise Highfield Children's Centre for  |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre), Children Missing Education and Pupil Attendance Team, Library Service, Welfare Rights, Youth Offending Team | 19+ years, Children Missing Education and Pupil Attendance Team, Library Service, Welfare Rights, Youth Offending Team. | WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre) to meet access and reach requirements for the service.   |
| 45. Highfield Children's Centre (designated children's centre)                    | Not proposed for future use.   | Proposed for future use for delivery of WPEH 0-11years (designated children's centre) instead of at Chorley Library.    | It is proposed to retain Highfield Children's Centre (designated children's centre) due to its current location best serving the access and reach requirements for the service. In addition, the complexity of the Chorley Library building would require significant investment in order to provide an appropriate children's centre facility. |
| Fylde   |  |   |   |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |  |   |   |
| Hyndburn  |  |   |   |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation. |  |   |   |
| Lancaster   |  |   |   |
| 86. Halton Library and Children's Centre  | Proposed for future use by Library Service, WPEH 0-11 years.   | Proposed for future use by Library Service, WPEH 0-11 years (outreach).   | This is currently a satellite of Lune Park Children's Centre (designated children's centre). There are low levels of families choosing to access support at Halton Children's Centre and so the service proposes to add capacity at Lune  |

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   |   |  | Park and ensure outreach support for the community in Halton.  |
| 90. Lune Park Children's Centre, Ryelands Park (designated children's centre)                                       | Proposed for future use for WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre).   | Proposed for future use for WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre).                                   | Service delivery change - consultation conducted by WPEH showed preference by young people to access this site for support. It is situated in the Skerton and Ryelands park area which has significant levels of deprivation. Increasing levels of service at this site will ensure support is available without having to cross the river to other buildings. |
| 91. Morecambe Library   | Proposed for future use with satellite Library, Registration Service, Welfare Rights and WPEH service 0-19+ years (designated children's centre). | Proposed for future use with full Library service, Registration Service, Welfare Rights and WPEH 12-19+ years. | A review of the requirements set out in the Library Planning and Needs Assessment identified the need to retain a full Library service in Morecambe.   |
| 92. Carnforth Hub Children's Centre and Young People's Centre, Carnforth High School (designated children's centre) | Proposed for future use for WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre) and Library service.  | Proposed for future use for WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre).                                   | It is proposed to retain Carnforth Library due to its current location best serving the access requirements for the service as the complexity of the Carnforth Hub site would require significant investment in order to provide an appropriate library service.   |
| 95. White Cross Education Centre  | Proposed for future use by Registration Service, WPEH 12-19+, Youth   | Proposed for future use by Registration Service, WPEH 12-19+ and support for families, Youth Offending Team.   | Families with children outside of the 12-19+ age range may need to be able to access support and advice. Additional use of this  |

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
|  | Offending Team.   |   | building will enable the service to better meet access and reach requirements.  |
| 105. Poulton Children's Centre, Morecambe (designated children's centre)                       | Not proposed for future use.  | Proposed for future use for WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre).                                       | A review of the requirements set out in the Library Planning and Needs Assessment identified the need to retain a full Library service in Morecambe. The complexity of the Morecambe Library building would require significant investment in order to provide an appropriate children's centre facility. |
| Pendle   |   |   |   |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation.              |   |   |   |
| Preston  |   |   |   |
| 132. Children's Social Care (St Luke's Centre)   | Proposed for future use by children's social care.  | Not proposed for future use and to re-locate the children's social care service at Sunshine Children's Centre.    | Sunshine Children's Centre will provide accommodation for the children's social care service which is in better condition and within the same reach area.   |
| 148. Sunshine Children's Centre, Brockholes Wood Primary School (designated children's centre) | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre) and children's social care. | Proposed for future use to accommodate Children's Social Care and provide contact/access facilities for families. | The community access WPEH services at Sunshine Drop-in (New Hall Lane) and Preston East Children's Centre (designated children's centre) giving the opportunity to re-locate children's social care from St Luke's Centre to the site.  |
| 151. Preston East Children's Centre (designated children's centre)                             | Not proposed for future use.  | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre) and children's services.                | The community access WPEH services in higher levels at Preston East Children's Centre than Sunshine Children's Centre and so retention of this site will better meet access and reach requirements for the service.   |

| Ribble Valley  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| 154. Longridge Library   | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-19+ and Library service.   | Proposed for future use by WPEH 12-19+ years and Library service.                           | Recognition that the refurbishment and condition costs will be less through retention of Willow's Park Children's Centre and so do not warrant the potential investment in providing the service at Longridge Library at this time. This will allow for consolidation of the WPEH 12-19+ years offer into the Library with further review at a later date. |
| 165. Willows Park Children's Centre, Longridge Civic Centre (designated children's centre) | Not proposed for future use.   | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre).                  | Recognition that the refurbishment and condition costs will be less through retention of Willow's Park Children's Centre and so do not warrant the potential investment in providing the service at Longridge Library at this time. This will allow for consolidation of the WPEH 12-19+ years offer into the Library with further review at a later date. |
| Rossendale   |  |   |  |
| 171. Maden Centre, Bacup   | Proposed for future use by satellite Library, WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre), Welfare Rights. | Proposed for future use by, WPEH 0-19+ years (designated children's centre), Welfare Rights | A review of the requirements set out in the Library Strategy identified the need to retain a full Library service in the Bacup area. There are on-going discussions with Rossendale Borough Council about future provision in the area.  |
| South Ribble   |  |   |  |
| 197. Wellfield Children's Centre, Wellfield High School,                                   | Not proposed for future use.   | Not proposed for future use as a Neighbourhood Centre however                               | The building provides a local facility for the delivery of schools training and  |

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Leyland   |  | proposed to be retained for use by Traded Services (Start Well).  | development functions.   |
| <b>West Lancashire</b>  |  |   |  |
| 206. Upholland Children's Centre, St Thomas the Martyr CE Primary School *  | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre). | Not proposed for future use – SUBJECT TO FURTHER CONSULTATION   | It is proposed to retain St John's Children's Centre, St John's Catholic Primary School (designated children's centre) due to its current location best serving the access and reach requirements for the service. |
| 215. St John's Children's Centre (Skelmersdale), St John's Catholic Primary School (designated children's centre) * | Not proposed for future use.   | Proposed for future use by WPEH 0-11 years (designated children's centre) – SUBJECT TO FURTHER CONSULTATION | It is proposed to retain due to its current location best serving the access and reach requirements for the service.   |
| <b>Wyre</b>   |  |   |  |
| There are no changes recommended to the proposals as set out in the consultation.                                   |  |   |  |

The network of buildings will be available for flexible use by all public facing services as appropriate with further co-location of services to be developed in response to service need and delivery of corporate priorities.

The Service offer, specification and associated staffing model for the WPEH Service is set out at Appendix "N".

## Access and Reach considerations for WPEH Service

The core children centre offer/universal statutory responsibility for provision of access to certain early childhood services means that the location of 'points of access' to services through neighbourhood centres which will operate as designated children centres in Lancashire have to meet certain standards of 'reach' and 'accessibility' as defined in the statutory guidance as set out by the Department for Education.

The WPEH Service has considered these matters in detail in considering the appropriate network of neighbourhood centres to use in the future for service delivery and the impact of this on existing centres used (particularly where designated children centres are concerned). Further details of the impact of proposed changes to locations and the impact on reach and access are set out at Appendix "O".

The impact of operating from a reduced number of (neighbourhood centre based) service delivery points for WPEH by comparison with current service delivery points has been analysed. This has been based on the percentage of children and young people who reside within a 1.5mile radius of a centre (now and in the future).

The 1.5miles distance highlighted is the numerical distance which has been attributed to the children centre national statutory reach guidance. This is based on assessment of walking rather than public transport distance and indicates that it is preferable for access points to be within a 30 minute pram pushing distance (from home). It is recognised that this may be a challenge for some families but would generally be seen to be a reasonable interpretation of distance that can be covered at an ambling walking pace (1 mile – 20 minutes).

The WPEH Service recognises that an urban 'pram pushable' model presents different challenges for dispersed rural populations. The future WPEHS delivery model encompasses outreach methodology to ensure that more remote families can be supported and may make use of existing community spaces; developing joined up ways of working with parish councils, voluntary organisations and those who already serve the rural community, e.g. Health services, Churches, Schools etc. to help us identify families with additional needs; and implementing peripatetic family support services to those families who have additional needs.

It has been identified that currently:

- 98% of the Lancashire's most deprived 0-4yr olds, and
- 80% of Lancashire's least deprived 0-4yr olds

are within a reasonable access distance of a children centre provision.

Based on the future usage model outlined in the consultation proposals for WPEH Service, analysis indicates there will be some reduction in access, where the percentage population comprising:



- The most deprived 0-4yrs within radius may reduce to 94% (a 4% drop in access).
- The least deprived 0-4yrs within radius may reduce to 63% (a 17% drop in access).

From further analysis of the differential impact in different districts with respect to the most deprived children and young people:

- For 4 districts (Burnley, Pendle, Preston, West Lancashire) they experience negligible levels of change (less than 1%) with regard to access to services within the defined range
- A further 4 districts (Hyndburn, Lancaster, Ribble Valley, Wyre) experience change for up to 10% of the cohort no longer residing within the defined range.
- There are 4 districts (Chorley, Fylde, South Ribble, Rossendale) where reduced access within the defined range impacts on between 10-18% of the most deprived children and young people in their areas.

Whilst the impact is more acute on the least deprived children, this is commensurate with the aspiration that future services will be targeted primarily to those in most need.

### **Assessment of Needs – Wellbeing Prevention and Early Help**

The Property Strategy consultation proposals in so far as they relate to Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service provision have been assessed against the principles set out in the WPEH Service demand and resourcing model which is outlined in the Service offer and specification (Appendix "N") and, along with the outcomes of the public consultations and all the other relevant information with regard to needs, have been revised.

The Neighbourhood Centre model itself, agreed by Cabinet in November 2015, is based on the principles contained within the draft Corporate Strategy which have been developed with a clear focus on areas of deprivation. As such the Service is confident that Neighbourhood Centres will provide a suitable and accessible outlet for access to service provision and the allocation of resources delivered through Neighbourhood Centres has been done in direct proportion to local needs.

The WPEH Service has developed a demand and resource allocation model and a service delivery specification for group based programmes, ensuring capacity to:

- Respond to 10,000 early help 'cases' per year based primarily on Level 2 of the Lancashire Continuum of Need and those where a joint working plan has been agreed with Children's Social Care for Children in Need/ Child Protection cases, and
- Deliver 452 group based or drop-in, programmed delivery sessions per week through neighbourhood centres and/or as part of outreach work

WPEH Service will use the Common Assessment Framework to assess children, young people and families and identify unmet needs. It will adopt a 'team around the family' approach and act as Lead Professional for families where appropriate. In delivering its services from neighbourhood centres a flexible programme will be offered where the allocation of resources will be based on needs and largely targeted to those most vulnerable, but also including some universal drop-in services and groups.

The programme at neighbourhood centres for WPEH Service delivery will operate to a core delivery specification (of around seven delivery sessions per week) which may be split across two specific neighbourhood centres in order to better respond to the different access needs of children/families and young people.

One identified neighbourhood centre in each 'district' area will act as a focal point for key service provision and provide an enhanced delivery specification (twelve delivery sessions per week), though this may also be split across two centres for the same access reasons.

Within this number of delivery sessions the service is accessible when most needed, Monday- Friday (inclusive), throughout the daytime and provide some evening sessions, largely focussed on young people. The service will also provide some weekend opening hours as needed.

## **Equality and Cohesion**

In order to fully comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty it is important that the Council, when making its decision as to the future pattern of service delivery provided through its property portfolio, is fully informed of the potential impacts on citizens with protected characteristics.

At its meeting held on 26 November 2015 Cabinet considered a report setting out the requirements of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which requires public authorities to pay "due regard" to the equality duties contained in the section in carrying out all their functions, commonly referred to as the "Public Sector Equality Duty" (PSED). The report can be found [here](#).

In summary, s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the decision maker to have due regard to:

- the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other unlawful conduct under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Equality Analysis (EA) published with the Property Strategy in November 2015 has been reviewed and updated to take account of the outcomes of the consultation process and is set out at Appendix "L". It provides a detailed explanation of what the duty requires and which analyses the potential impact of the recommendations emerging from the consultation.

Similarly the Equality Analyses relating to the Library Service and the WPEH service have also been updated in the light of the outcomes of the consultation and are set out at Appendices "J" and "K".

District Equality Analyses Respondents Protected Characteristics Data is set out at Appendix "Q".

It is important to note that the PSED came into operation on 5 April 2011, a time of straitened public resources, and the courts have made it clear that budgetary constraints do not detract from the force of the PSED and a tight budget does not excuse non-compliance with the PSED, on the contrary the need to assess impacts is as great, if not greater.

***It is therefore important that Cabinet Members, when considering the decisions they are being asked to make, read and consider carefully the Equality Analysis documents and ensure that they have complied with the PSED as described in detail in the report referred to above.***

#### **Possible Asset Transfers – Expressions of Interest Received**

To date, expressions of interest have been received and logged in respect of 115 individual premises – these range from expressions regarding individual buildings to expressions relating to any facilities in certain districts. Organisations were asked to submit expressions of interest (EOIs) by 14 August so that Cabinet could be informed of the potential scale of interest in asset/service transfers.

This means however that there has been insufficient time for officers to assess the EOIs in advance of this meeting of Cabinet, therefore it is proposed that Cabinet agree to instruct officers to consider the viability of the expressions of interest received in relation to the transfer of Council premises as set out at Appendix "B" and to bring back a further report to the next meeting of Cabinet for consideration on the basis of the principles set out in the report in relation to community asset transfer and, if approved, the proposed Independent Community Library Offer.

However, given the possible timescales to achieve asset transfers when balanced against the need to achieve savings, it is not proposed that premises for which EOIs have been received will remain open pending transfer; it is proposed that Cabinet agree that services to be delivered from premises not to be retained will be discontinued in accordance with the implementation timeline at Appendix "P".

Where organisations such as district councils may have, or may wish to, express an interest in funding services which may otherwise close, there is therefore an opportunity before the proposed closure date to submit firm proposals, in which case where those proposals are viable, and involve no continuing cost to the Council, the premises may remain open so that services can continue to be provided.

A number of organisations and stakeholders have also proposed the co-location of services to make better use of facilities and these options will continue to be explored to achieve cost and efficiency savings where appropriate.

## **Proposed Timetable for the Establishment of Neighbourhood Centres**

Details of the proposed implementation timeline for the establishment of neighbourhood centres are set out at in Appendix "P".

The proposed timeline sets out details of five broad categories of buildings as follows:

1. Accommodation is considered fit for purpose for proposed future use and which LCC will continue to be reviewed for best use of space.
2. Works are required to create a Lancashire County Council Neighbourhood Centre, phased between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.
3. Lancashire County Council service delivery will cease on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016.
4. Lancashire County Council service delivery will cease between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016.
5. The full library service will cease between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 but there may be a period of transition as satellite libraries are delivered.
6. Subject to ongoing discussion.
7. Lancashire County Council service delivery in the building will cease by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 and LCC will plan the response where there are other organisations occupying.
8. Lancashire County Council service delivery will be relocated to Neighbourhood Centres between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.
9. Are subject to further consultation.

As noted in the preceding section, where organisations such as district councils may have, or may wish to, express an interest in funding services which may otherwise close, there is therefore an opportunity before the proposed closure date to submit firm proposals, in which case, where those proposals are viable, and involve no continuing cost to the Council, the premises may remain open so that services can continue to be provided.

### **Summary:**

- **Libraries**

The financial pressures that the Council faces are unprecedented and more than ever those pressures mean that cost-effective solutions must be identified to be able to finance a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. The same principle of course also applies to all Council services, many of which are, like the library service, statutory and which are delivered to vulnerable people.

It is also important that changes in the library service must be capable of being delivered in the short-term, the Council does not have the luxury of any significant delay whilst potential longer-term options are developed as to do so would inevitably mean that the longer-term impact on the service would be far greater. Equally the use of reserves to maintain the current level of provision has the same effect and savings must be delivered, to put the service on a sustainable basis, before reserves are expended.

There is no easy, off the shelf solution which will allow the service to continue in its current form without having to achieve savings. Whilst options such as outsourcing to a mutual may seem simple, even if such an option can be developed to be a viable alternative, inevitably such options still involve job losses and funding cuts.

As the report explains, the service offer which is proposed takes full account of deprivation indices, the distance that library users must travel to access a library service and a wide range of other factors which go to a holistic assessment of ensuring that the Council will continue to deliver a "comprehensive and efficient" service. Notwithstanding the reduction in the number of static libraries, it is considered that the level of service will continue to be well beyond any reasonable view of what a minimum statutory service must be.

Buildings are of course only one way in which a library service is delivered and the model of neighbourhood centres will allow access to the service to a much wider section of the public than is presently the case. The library service as a whole, as described in the report, taking account of the continued use of mobile libraries, "satellites", the home library service and virtual library service, with a greater emphasis on a digital offer, will ensure that a sustainable 21st century library service can continue to be delivered.

The proposed development of independent community libraries, in addition to the statutory service, will also allow a longer term assessment to be made of the viability of community-led provision with the potential to move in the future to an external delivery model.

In summary, the proposals for library provision which form part of the revised property strategy proposals are in no way a "quick fix", nor are they in any sense short-sighted cost-savings, rather they are a measured response to a pressing financial imperative

- **Wellbeing Prevention and Early Help**

The Cabinet's proposals, approved in November 2015, for public consultation were designed to transform and fully integrate a range of services within WPEH outlining a new service offer, delivery model and specification. Consultation had been undertaken during February/March 2016 and over 3000 responses were recorded from staff, stakeholders and service users.

Amendments have now been made to the service offer and specification in the light of the outcomes of the latest public consultation and the revised model is considered to be an effective model to deliver an integration of existing core offers for Children's Centres, Young People's Provision, Prevention and Early Help and Lancashire's response to the national Troubled Families Unit national programme.

The children centre offer in Lancashire will in future be delivered as part of this integrated service. The future governance arrangements for the new WPEH delivery model, through which the children centre core offer will be provided, will adopt a group

delivery model arrangement in which 'children centre services' will be clustered at a 'district level'.

Each group will include main centres and linked sites as appropriate. These will be indicative of the scale of provision delivered at each site, however, all will include delivery of early childhood services within a wider 0-19+yrs service. The scale of provision is determined by the availability of 'core' or 'enhanced' resources deployed at each centre and this will determine whether a centre is designated as a main centre or as a linked centre.

The impact of the proposed changes in relation to designated children's centres, linked provision and outreach services is shown at Appendix "O".

The Service are confident that the future delivery model will ensure effective delivery of a wide range of support across the 0 -19yrs+ age range within the context of a whole family response and strongly contribute to the delivery of Public Health responsibilities. The new model will further align with the ongoing re-procurement of Public Health services and create future opportunities to consider the integration of other services like Health Visiting and School Nursing.

The finalised delivery model presents future service delivery arrangements, scope and scale of provision which is considered to be 'sufficient' in discharging the Council's duties under the Childcare Act 2006.

## **Legal Implications**

As well as the specific duty under s7 of the Public Museums and Libraries Act 1964 the Council is also subject to a general duty of best value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness".

Best Value Statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, revised in 2015, makes clear that this duty applies and includes economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision. The relevance of the best value duty is that it formed a substantive ground of challenge in a High Court challenge and, whilst the challenge was lost, set a high benchmark for other local authorities where decisions simply reflect the need to make cuts without reinvesting in widening access to the remaining library service. It is also relevant to the consideration of proposals from community groups wanting buildings or services to transfer to them.

## **Financial Implications**

### ***The overall context***

The Council achieved a small underspend of £0.601m in 2015/16. However, the Council continues to face significant financial challenges over the next 5 years, a position that has regularly been reported to Cabinet in the Medium Term Financial Strategy that was previously reported to Full Council to be £196.444m.

The Money Matters report included on the agenda for this meeting revises this gap to £147.944 m. However, whilst this appears positive overall, the reduction in the gap reflects the inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Strategy of the impact of increasing council tax by 3.99% (including the 2% Adult Social Care Precept) in each of the next 4 financial years. This has not previously been included within the MTFS. This assumption of increased resources is partially offset by increasing spending pressures in addition those previously identified and agreed.

The Council has previously agreed property strategy savings of £5.000m in 2017/18. One-off transitional funding of £2.000m from reserves was agreed for 2017/18 to reflect expected slippage on this delivery.

### ***Revenue savings***

The Property Strategy also facilitates more substantial service expenditure reductions approved by Full Council as follows:

- The Wellbeing Prevention and Early Help Service - c£8.4m over 2016/17 and 2017/18
- The Library Service - c£6.1m over 2016/17 and 2017/18

The closure of the properties as proposed in the report will result in a reduction in revenue running costs from corporate premises. An initial investment in condition, suitability and sufficiency of the remaining premises would be required but this would to some degree be offset by the capital receipts from owned or freehold premises vacated and disposed of and the reduced requirement for investment in condition works of the vacated premises.

### ***Property savings***

The financial implications of the property decisions outlined in this report are as follows:

- Total current running costs of premises in scope - £5.9 million
- Estimated running costs reductions - £1.6 million

These figures are lower than reported to Cabinet in May 2016 due to the removal of buildings within the costings that are working towards their own independent saving rather than being part of this saving e.g. Woodlands. The saving is also reduced due to the inclusion of more buildings that will remain open and some revisions to the running costs and income generation at each building.

The running costs of the 28 externally commissioned children's centre buildings are contained within operational budgets and the running costs savings in respect of these premises will materialise within the reduced budget envelope for the Wellbeing Prevention and Early Help Service.

## ***Capital receipts***

The disposal of surplus property has the potential to raise significant capital receipts. However, there will be potential off-setting charges in respect of dilapidations in respect of leasehold premises where the lease is surrendered. Realisation of capital receipts is also dependent upon the extent to which community asset transfers are agreed. Subject to those caveats the overall financial position is as follows:

- Estimated capital receipt from sale of vacated premises £8-11 million
- Estimated dilapidations costs (terminated or surrendered leases) £1-1.5 million

In order to ensure that the future property portfolio is fit for purpose to provide high quality services and to accommodate building modifications in the move to Neighbourhood Centres, the Council has made capital resources of £20m available within its approved budget for investment in Neighbourhood Centres.

In line with new Government legislation taking effect from 1 April 2016, capital receipts are included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to support revenue. The estimated figures for capital receipts detailed above could change as a result of:

- Open market conditions at the point of sale of individual properties;
- The outcome of the consultation and decision making process;
- Proposals to transfer surplus properties to third party organisations at a nominal sum as an alternative to sale on the open market.

## ***Possible clawback***

A number of Children's Centres are identified within this report as no longer being required to deliver the Council's future pattern of service delivery of WPEH services within the Neighbourhood Centre model. If this proposal is agreed by Cabinet, there is a potential risk of financial claw back in respect of government funding used to develop these premises when they were first established. The maximum risk of clawback for these premises is estimated as £8.8m, being calculated on a sliding scale over a period of 25-50 years.

The basis of the clawback provisions is that where local authorities dispose of or change the use of buildings funded wholly or partly through capital grants then they must be re-paid. However, if the Department for Education is satisfied that the funding for the asset will continue to be used for purposes consistent with the grant, then repayment may be deferred.

In that context, as noted above, the Council has made capital resources of £20m available within its approved budget for investment in Neighbourhood Centres which are central to the delivery of the WPEH Service. The children centre offer will in future be delivered as an integrated model as described in the report and the combination of designated centres, linked provision and outreach services set out at Appendix "O" demonstrate that the Council is retaining substantial investment in the service, therefore its position is that there is no case for clawback being imposed



However, in the event that clawback does arise, the decision to close children's centres would need to be considered against the ongoing revenue savings in respect of the WPEH Service referred to above and would need to be funded from the Transitional Reserve.

### ***Children's centres attached to schools***

As regards Children's Centres attached to Schools where it is either proposed to cease activities or to provide a different service, the Schools Forum have expressed concerns about the potentially detrimental impacts this could have on individual schools finances.

In particular they are concerned about timescale for the proposed changes in service from schools which they feel gives head teachers and governing bodies limited time to find alternative uses for the premises. Schools Forum are therefore seeking transitional funding to allow schools to secure additional income to make up for the expected loss of funding.

How each school financially interacts with its Children's Centre is different but the majority of schools recover costs from the Children's Centre budget for premises costs and the school staff involved in managing and operating Children's Centres. The impact on individual schools will depend on a variety of factors including the exact interaction of the School with the Centre, the costs incurred currently, building condition, the alternative uses individual schools can find for the facilities and the nature of remaining provision within the Centres.

Without further detailed work being undertaken it is therefore difficult to provide an accurate estimate of costs but the scale of the impact is expected to be in the region of £0.5 – 0.7m, albeit the individual school impacts are likely to vary considerably.

This issue is to be the subject of further discussion between officers and the Schools Forum.

### **Staffing Implications**

- Libraries

A draft staffing structure for the Library Services based on the consultation proposals has been shared with staff and the Trade Unions for consultation purposes. However, pending final decisions being made by Cabinet no further action has been taken in relation to implementation other than in respect of those parts of the wider Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars Service which are not directly related to the operational Library Service, for example the Registration Service and the School Library Service.

Prior to consultation on the initial proposed staffing structure (based on the consultation proposals in relation to the Property Strategy) there was estimated to be a reduction of around 50 posts at grades 6 and 7 although this would have been mitigated by options at grade 4. There was also estimated to be a small number of staff at grade 10 and above at risk of compulsory redundancy.

However, following the consultation with staff and trade unions more grade 4 posts are now available than anticipated and there has been some turnover in staff along with increased interest in voluntary redundancy. Whilst it is not yet possible to be certain, it may therefore be that, overall, there are sufficient jobs for staff although this is likely to involve some changes in jobs and work bases, which may be for lower graded jobs.

- Children's Centres

The Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service comprises c.554 fte staff across the Children Centres, Young People's Service and Early Support. Within this, c.157fte staff are linked to 'externally commissioned' Children Centres, in either school/nursery based settings (c.117fte) or within a small number of voluntary organisations (c.40fte).

The staff in these external settings are wholly dedicated to delivering the children centre offer and are therefore eligible for consideration within the WPEH Service transformation and were TUPE transferred to the Council with effect from 1 September 2016. A total of 136.81 FTE staff were transferred.

The agreed staff structure for WPEHS includes 552fte posts, which indicates that overall there is a close correlation between the number of existing eligible staff and posts available, suggesting that the risk of compulsory redundancy may not be high. However, the agreed structure has significantly shifted the profile of the structure towards frontline delivery posts, and as a result there are high risks of displacement for some staff in managerial, business support and technical roles as a result of ring-fencing arrangements and absence of alternative offers of suitable alternative employment.

This has the potential to accrue up to 127fte compulsory redundancies. However, this could yet be mitigated by further voluntary redundancy approvals and/or staff leaving the organisation prior to restructuring.

## **Consultations**

The proposals agreed by Cabinet on 12 May have been the subject of a 12 week public consultation as described in the report. The outcome has informed the development of the Library Strategy, consideration of alternative options as set out in the report, the revised proposals in relation to the Property Strategy and the Community Library Offer.

Similarly the consultation (along with earlier consultations) has informed the revised proposals in relation to the WPEH Service model as set out in the report.

The outcomes have also informed revisions to the Equality Analysis documents referred to above.

## **Risk management**

The Council's Risk and Opportunity Register identifies at CR1 "Failure to implement the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy including the delivery of planned budget reductions" as carrying a maximum risk score.

The delivery of the Council's Property Strategy is key to the delivery of significant elements of the MTFS. One of the key mitigation measures identified is to carry out an effective consultation exercise as described in this report.

The report proposes that 53 premises will be maintained as designated children's centres with a further 7 retained as linked provision. 10 existing centres are therefore no longer required to deliver the future pattern of service delivery by the WPEH Service within the Neighbourhood Centre model. These proposed closures involve a potential risk of claw back of Government funding used to develop these premises when they were first established. The maximum financial exposure is estimated to be £8.8 million

## **List of Background Papers**

| Paper  | Date | Contact/Tel               |
|--|------|---------------------------|
| Responses to County Council 12 week consultation |      | Chris Mather/01772 533559 |