

## Report of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee – Libraries Service Redesign

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Economic & Community Infrastructure	Michele Cusack	25/10/2018	
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>This report contains recommendations from the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee meeting on 24 October following consideration of a report on the Libraries Service Redesign. The report and its appendices, which ran to 831 pages, were considered by the Committee so that it could make recommendations to a meeting of the Cabinet on 5 November. The Committee's discussion which lasted for two and a half hours was also supplemented by comments, questions and statements from 6 members of the public.</p>		
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>The Committee accepted the proposals as outlined in the report and agreed to recommend that the Cabinet:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adopt the Library Service Delivery Plan set out in Appendix 1 to Cabinet report as the basis for the delivery of the statutory 'comprehensive and efficient' library service in Somerset from April 2019. Consideration will have taken into account the Needs Assessment set out in Appendix 2, feedback from the public consultation exercise set out in Appendix 3, and the Equalities Impact Assessment set out in Appendix 4. A summary of the recommendations that will be implemented as a result of adopting the Library Service Delivery Plan is set out in section 2 below.</li> <li>2. Authorise the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning to implement, subject to further consultation where appropriate, the further savings proposals for the library service set out in section 5 of this report.</li> <li>3. To reduce the library service budget for 2019/20 as set out in section 6 of this report, delivering an ongoing saving of £345,000 per annum to be factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20+.</li> <li>4. Authorise the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning to take the actions set out in section 3 and Appendix 5 of this report to provide support to Community Library Partnerships, where such partnerships are established. Support will include the agreement of the headline terms of potential property transfers or leasing arrangements as set out in section 4 of Appendix 5 to this report.</li> <li>5. Notes the process for taking forward Community Library Partnership discussions (summarised in Appendix 5),</li> </ol>		

	<p>determined through an earlier decision by the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community Infrastructure. To also delegate authority for negotiating and agreeing arrangements for the delivery of Community Library Partnerships to the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning, within the framework set out in Appendix 5.</p> <p>6. Endorses the development of an approach and a policy on donations and philanthropic giving for the library service, delegating the approval of the policy to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community Infrastructure.</p> <p>In addition to accepting the above proposals the Committee agreed 3 additional recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To ask Officers to revisit the Risk No 4 (page 36) so it might better reflect the various concerns identified regarding possible impacts to the timescale of the Libraries Service Redesign arising from challenges;</li> <li>b) To ask Officers to identify where Community Library Partnerships are proposed that a list of partners, including a lead partner, is compiled and presented to the Committee's meeting on 11 December;</li> <li>c) To ask Officers to compile a list of the communities where a Community Library Partnership is not possible and to present that list to the Committee's meeting on 11 December.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee also wished to recognise the huge amount of work undertaken by Officers in preparing the proposed changes for the Library Service. Every elected member that spoke during the meeting expressed appreciation to the Officers for either attending meetings in their areas; answering questions; providing explanations and clarification of the proposals; and amending some of the proposed changes in light of the evidence and feedback gathered during the consultation exercise. The Committee noted that the consultation exercise had been very thorough and even those members of the public that had spoken and did not support some of the proposed changes had also recognised the extensive consultation the Council had undertaken.</p> <p>The Committee reflected that in some instances when feedback received in the consultation exercise had not supported all of the proposed changes, Officers having considered that feedback, had attempted to minimise the negative effects as much as possible.</p>
<p><b>Reasons for recommendations</b></p>	<p>See background information.</p>

## **1. Background**

- 1.1.** On 24 October 2018 the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee reviewed the report and proposals for changes to the way library services are provided. The report and appendices contained 831 pages and the Committee's consideration of the large amount of information was aided by hearing comments, questions & statements from 6 members of the public.

The Strategic Manager for Community and Traded Services responded to the points made and it was agreed that a written response to all submissions received would be prepared and published on the Council's website.

- 1.2.** Officers then provided a thorough presentation, to supplement the information provided in the report and its appendices. The presentation provided an overview and general background of the Somerset Libraries journey over the last few years. The report and presentation also provided an explanation and overview of the various aspects of the public consultation that had received in excess of 7,000 responses.
- 1.3.** The Committee considered the list of Libraries (19) that would continue to be operated by the County Council and also the 15 libraries where it was proposed to establish a Community Library partnership with the local community. An explanation was provided of the various types of delivery models for the library service in Somerset.
- 1.4.** It was noted that libraries were valued by communities and individuals and to help reduce loneliness and social isolation, and also attracting younger people to reading and allowing public internet access and other IT facilities. It was noted that people were strongly opposed to changes, particularly the potential closure of library buildings and the preference appeared to be for community library partnership solutions. Officers had made the proposals reflecting changes to population, social need and usage whilst taking care to try to ensure maximum reasonable access.
- 1.5.** In addition to accepting the above proposals the Committee agreed 3 additional recommendations:
- a) To ask Officers to revisit the Risk No 4 (page 36) so it might better reflect the various concerns identified regarding possible impacts to the timescale of the Libraries Service Redesign arising from challenges;
  - b) To ask Officers to identify where Community Library Partnerships are proposed that a list of partners, including a lead partner, is compiled and presented to the Committee's meeting on 11 December;
  - c) To ask Officers to compile a list of the communities where a Community Library Partnership is not possible and to present that list to the Committee's meeting on 11 December.
- 1.6.** The Committee also wished to recognise the huge amount of work undertaken by Officers in preparing the proposed changes for the Library Service. Every elected member that spoke during the meeting expressed

appreciation to the Officers for either attending meetings in their areas; answering questions; providing explanations and clarification of the proposals; and amending some of the proposed changes in light of evidence and feedback gathered during the consultation exercise. The Committee noted that the consultation exercise had been very thorough and even though some of the feedback had not supported all of the proposed changes, Officers having considered all of the information provided had attempted to minimise the negative effects as much as possible.

The Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Chair Cllr Groskop will be attending the Cabinet meeting on 5 November and will be happy to answer any questions.