

**Derbyshire County Council**

**Cabinet**

**3 December 2013**

**Report of the Strategic Director, Cultural and Community Services**

**MEETING BUDGET REQUIREMENTS - PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE  
MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE**

**1 Purpose of the Report**

As part of the overall budget reduction strategy for public libraries, this report sets out the options for achieving significant cost reductions from the Mobile Library Service and seeks approval for undertaking a programme of consultation with the public and key stakeholders as outlined at paragraph 2.9. At a time of unparalleled budget cuts for the County Council it is inevitable that all service areas, including libraries, will be subject to review. The information within this report should be seen as part of that process but it is the intention of the County Council to deliver a sustainable and relevant library service for the communities of Derbyshire, in line with its statutory duties and within the context of significant cuts resulting from government spending plans.

**2 Information and Analysis**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 22 January, 2013 Cabinet agreed changes to the Mobile Library Service which consisted of revisions to the staffing structure, changes to existing routes and the removal of one vehicle, reducing the fleet from 11 to 10. Indicative savings of £232,000 were identified (£185,000 per annum in staffing, £11,000 on vehicle rationalisation and £36,000 on additional savings). To ensure the resulting service was fit for purpose, detailed business analysis and a public consultation exercise were undertaken to assist in the preparation of the proposed changes.
- 2.2 Following agreement by Cabinet, the proposals have been fully implemented and the savings achieved.
- 2.3 Currently, the mobile fleet consists of two Maximum Capacity Vehicles (MCVs) and eight standard mobile libraries. The MCVs are used to serve larger communities without a branch library such as Barlborough and Aston on Trent, usually for a half or full day on a weekly or fortnightly basis. The standard vehicles provide shorter visits on a fortnightly basis, mainly serving smaller, rural and more inaccessible communities and some suburban locations.

- 2.4 Mobile library stops are generally not provided closer than 1 mile from a branch library. The 10 vehicles make almost 1,300 individual stops across the county, accounting for approximately 17% of total library service issues and approximately 7% of the total number of library service visits.
- 2.5 The total cost of the mobile service is £720,000 and of this, £190,000 is apportioned to the two MCVs. A total of 18.2 fte staff are employed in the service.
- 2.6 The mobile service is currently used by a range of customers: older people, families, schools, playgroups, nurseries and young people. By its very nature, the service reaches and touches the lives of some of the county's most vulnerable people, including housebound customers who receive their library service directly from a mobile library. The Cultural and Community Services Department is working with Adult Care and other partners to try and ensure that vulnerable and housebound customers currently served by a mobile library will continue to receive a service following any changes to service provision.
- 2.7 At this stage there are no proposals to reduce the current provision of static libraries.

Four options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

**Option 1:** Withdraw all ten mobile library vehicles and cease to provide a mobile service

**Option 2:** Withdraw eight standard mobile library vehicles, and maintain the two MCVs to provide a limited mobile service. The MCVs currently serve larger communities for either half a day or a full day. These stops are made in communities where the size of the resident population might make the provision of a static library more appropriate. The significant size of the MCVs and the space requirements associated with operating the vehicles safely, e.g. for parking, turning and access, means that they would not be suitable to provide a service to schools. The same factors would also make the vehicles unsuitable for serving smaller, isolated communities where appropriate operating space would not be available.

**Option 3:** Withdraw eight mobile library vehicles, maintaining one MCV and one standard mobile library. The MCV would be used to serve larger communities whilst the standard vehicle would be used to deliver to housebound clients and to maintain the service to as many schools as possible.

There are a number of permutations between options 2 and 3 which would be best explored through initial engagement and consultation with the public; see paragraph 2.9 for outline proposals.

**Option 4:** Community offer. In areas of Derbyshire changes to the mobile library service would mean that many individual stops will no longer be provided. However, should a community group or organisation wish to provide a more local service, e.g. in smaller rural villages, then the County Council may be able to offer appropriate support. An example of such provision might be:

- Working with communities to develop a network of drop-off points in accessible premises and other locations e.g. Children's Centres

Having full regard to the need for securing budget savings, the County Council will need to undertake a programme of engagement with the public to consider the issues and explore the four headline options outlined in this report (see paragraph 2.9). As part of this process, approaches from community groups or organisations wishing to offer local solutions relating to the Mobile Library Service would be particularly welcomed.

There is also the possibility of a further alternative for service provision which could involve use of a vehicle by a partner organisation on a day when it not being used by the Mobile Library Service, at full cost to the partner organisation.

- 2.8 The full impact of changes to the Mobile Library Service on the communities of Derbyshire is not clear but given the nature of the service, it could be significant and far reaching.
- 2.9 In line with the Council's commitment to transparent decision making and in order to ensure that all those affected have the maximum opportunity to comment on any proposed change, it is proposed therefore that the Council undertakes:

Stage 1: An initial phase of consultation with the public to:

- Set out the financial context and challenges within which any decisions on future service delivery will need to be made
- Set out and share some broad principles for the future delivery of the public library service
- Share and explore the four headline options outlined above
- Receive feedback on the potential impact of any/all of those options
- Within the scope of the engagement process, identify more detailed options for changes to the mobile library service – particularly in relation to options 2 and 3

In advance of any consultation with the public, work will be undertaken internally to develop a more detailed understanding of the current level of mobile library provision, particularly in relation to the demography of the communities served. This work will support more meaningful dialogue with the public as part of the engagement process.

The Council's existing engagement mechanisms, including the Citizens' Panel and Consultation Compact, will be used to support work at Stage 1 to ensure that input from both library users and non-users is secured as far as possible and that vulnerable groups are provided with the best opportunities for input. On-line surveys, social media and face to face meetings e.g. at town and parish councils may also form part of this initial process.

## Stage 2: Engagement on Detailed Options

The feedback received at Stage 1 will then be analysed and used to further develop the four initial options into more detailed proposals (most likely in relation to options 2 and 3).

These proposals will then form the basis of more targeted discussions with key groups (particularly those groups identified through the analysis of Stage 1 feedback), affected individuals stakeholders and communities to explore issues in more detail, potential impact, scope for refinement, opportunities for mitigation of impact etc.

In addition, specific dialogue will be undertaken at this stage with any community, voluntary or other organisation coming forward in relation to option 4.

It is proposed that an equalities impact assessment be undertaken in parallel with the above engagement process and that identified issues, feedback and proposals be used to inform the assessment.

An outline timetable for the above process is set out below:

- December 2013 to January 2014: desktop exercise to establish a clear understanding of the baseline of current mobile provision
- January to February 2014: Stage 1 engagement with public
- March 2014: Evaluation of results, consultation with elected members and preparation of detailed options

- April to end June 2014: Stage 2 consultation with the public on detailed options
- July and August 2014: Evaluation of feedback and preparation of final proposals
- September 2014: Cabinet report

2.10 The potential staffing implications may need to be the subject of formal consultations with individual employees and the trade unions in accordance with the Council's policies and statutory requirements according to which, if any, of the options is proposed to be proceeded with.

### **3 Financial considerations:**

3.1 **Option 1.** The withdrawal of the whole mobile service will realise a saving of £720,000, which it is anticipated will be achieved over the period of two years, 2014/15 to 2015/16.

**Option 2.** The withdrawal of the eight standard mobile library vehicles with the retention of the two MCVs will realise a saving of £530,000, which it is anticipated will be achieved over the period of two years, 2014/15 to 2015/16.

**Option 3.** The withdrawal of eight library vehicles, with the retention of one MCV and one standard mobile library vehicle will realise a saving of £560,000, which it is anticipated will be achieved over the period of two years, 2014/15 to 2015/16.

**Option 4.** It is not possible to quantify the exact saving from this option until the level of community interest and the degree of financial support required from the County Council has been determined.

3.2 In the past, the County Council has been successful in disposing of surplus mobile library vehicles and there is a modest demand from other local authorities and private buyers. However, the potential sale of eight or more vehicles is unprecedented, particularly at a time when other local authorities are also looking to reduce the size of their mobile library fleets. The fleet of mobile library vehicles were acquired by County Transport through capital borrowing and are leased back to the Cultural and Community Services Department. Of the ten vehicles in the fleet one comes out of its lease period in January 2014 but the remaining nine vehicles still have outstanding lease costs associated with them. These lease costs would still need to be paid on the vehicles until such time as either the lease expired or the vehicles were sold. The length of time these costs would remain a revenue charge on the Cultural and Community

Services Department cannot be determined at this stage. It may therefore take additional time beyond the forecast two year period to realise all of the savings required.

#### **4 Human Resource considerations:**

- 4.1 The proposals in this report would be subject to formal consultation with staff and the trade unions and will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure and the Redundancy, Redeployment, Protection of Earnings and Buy Out of Hours Policies.
- 4.2 If the need for redundancy should subsequently arise, this will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of Sections 188 and 193 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 as corporately notified to the Secretary of State.

#### **5 Legal and Human Rights Considerations:**

- 5.1 There are two specific legal matters which Cabinet members must consider when making the decision in due course regarding the future of the Library Service.
- 5.2 The first is the Council's duty in relation to the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 section 7 which states:  
  
*'It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.'*
- 5.3 In fulfilling its duty the Council should have particular regard to the desirability of:  
  
*i) Securing that facilities are available for borrowing books, records, films etc. sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the needs of all, and the special requirements of adults and children*  
*ii) Encouraging adults and children to make full use of the service and provide advice*
- 5.4 In considering any potential changes to the provision following consultation Cabinet will need to be satisfied that this will not result in the Council failing to meet its statutory obligations.
- 5.5 The second specific duty is in relation to the Equality Act 2010 which states the Council should give 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization, and to advance equality of opportunity and fostering good relations, in the exercising of its functions [such as library

provision]. This need for 'due regard' specifically applies to nine protected characteristics set out in the Act, including age and disability. An equality impact assessment will consider these issues and will form part of the subsequent report to Cabinet.

**6 Other considerations:**

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, environmental, health, personnel, human rights, property and transport considerations and information governance.

**7 Background Papers:**

Cabinet 22 January 2013 Report of the Strategic Director, Cultural and Community Services Changes to Mobile Library Service

**8 Key decision:**

Yes

**9 Call –in:**

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report?

No

**10 Strategic Director's Recommendation:**

That Cabinet:

- i) Agrees that the four headline options for changes to service delivery outlined in Section 2 of this report should be the subject of consultation as set out in the report.
- ii) Agrees for a two-stage programme of public engagement and consultation to be undertaken alongside a full equality impact assessment prior to any final decision being made.
- iii) Agrees the results of the impact assessment and consultation are presented back to Cabinet prior to a decision being made.

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