



# Report to Cabinet Member for Community Services

Decision to be taken on or after **17 October 2005**

Decision can normally be implemented at least 3 working days after decision has been signed.

Cabinet Member Report No. **CS06.05**

This item is being taken under the General Exception Rule of the Constitution, due to the fact that it has not had the required notice on the Forward Plan, as a consultation is required before a decision is taken by Cabinet on 19 December 2005.

**Title:** Consultation on the impact of proposals to close eight community libraries and to seek views on the provision of alternative library services to those communities

**Date:** 5 October 2005

**Author:** Head of Libraries and Heritage

**Contact Officer:** Bob Strong Tel: 01296 382251

**Electoral Divisions Affected:** Bowerdean, Micklefield and Totteridge, Chalfonts and Seer Green, Great Brickhill, Grendon Underwood, Iver, and Stokenchurch, Radnage and West Wycombe

**Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** Adult Services

## Summary

During 2004/2005 a major review of the Library Service was undertaken and a number of proposals made for service modernisation. A number of the proposals have already been implemented as Phase 1 of the Review, but an outstanding proposal from Phase 2 is to close eight community libraries, and where appropriate, replace them with alternative forms of service delivery. The Local Government Act 1999 requires authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way its functions are exercised and in deciding how to fulfil this duty an authority must consult.

## Recommendation

**That the Cabinet Member for Community Services AGREE a consultation process regarding the impact of proposals to close eight community libraries and to seek views on the provision of alternative library services to those communities**

### A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

- 1 During 2004/2005 a major review of the Library Service was undertaken by officers, supported by external consultants. The Review put forward a range of proposals to modernise the service, to be dealt with as Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 proposals included agreeing a new vision and purpose for the library service, implementing a

new staff structure to deliver the vision and implementing a new Libraries Information Service linked to the Customer First programme. Due to budgetary pressures in previous years and the requirement to make savings of £300,000, a new staff structure was implemented from 1 April 2005.

2 Phase 2 of the Review makes proposals for the revision of library opening hours and for modernising the branch library infrastructure, through the closure of eight small community libraries:

- Chalfont St Giles
- Iver
- Little Chalfont
- Micklefield
- Richings Park
- Steeple Claydon
- Stewkley
- West Wycombe

3 The Review proposes that, where appropriate, alternative library services should be provided where the static library is being closed. Such services could include the provision of a large “super mobile”, or extending the Home Library Service to provide a delivery service to any one who is unable to visit a library in person for reasons of age or disability.

4 It is proposed to seek views on the impact of closure of the eight libraries, and the provision of alternative library services.

5 Under the duty of Best Value the Council under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 must consult:

- representatives of persons liable to pay any tax, precept or levy to or in respect of the authority
- representatives of persons liable to pay non-domestic rates in respect of any area in which the authority carries out functions
- representatives of persons who use or are likely to use services provided by the authority, and
- representatives appearing to the authority to have an interest in any area within which the authority carries out functions

6. It is therefore proposed to consult with:

- County Councillors
- District Councillors
- District Councils
- Parish Councils
- Stakeholders who use the Library
- Buckinghamshire business organisations
- Local communities
- Employees
- Local health services
- Local schools

7. The Library Review is available on the Council website and hard copies will be available to the eight libraries. A response form will be available online and in hard copy. The form will seek views on the impact of the proposed closure and the provision of alternative library services.
8. Officers will seek to make arrangements with local communities, largely through Parish Councils, for public meetings so the proposals can be presented to local communities.
9. Subject to the current timetable proceeding to plan, the consultation would commence on Thursday 27 October and conclude on Sunday 27 November. The results will inform a Cabinet decision on closure of eight libraries and the provision of alternative services.

#### **B. Other options**

There is a legal duty to consult and the Council's Consultation Officer has advised on the process. We have chosen this group of consultees, because we believe they best represent the areas of concern. Others were considered and we will of course be open to representations from people/groups outside of the named list.

#### **C. Resource implications**

It is estimated that hire of rooms would cost £500 and consultation analysis £2,500. This will be resourced from Libraries & Heritage budgets.

#### **D. Legal Implications**

Legal advice has been sought from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and has been incorporated into this report.

#### **E. Other implications/issues**

None.

#### **F. Feedback from consultation and Local Member views**

The purpose of this decision is to seek consultation.

#### **G. Communication issues**

The decision will be communicated to the local media through the Communication Unit and the Council website. Details of public meetings will also be put on the website.

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#### **Background Papers**

Library Review: [www.buckscc.gov.uk/libraries/review](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/libraries/review)

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#### ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

*If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 14 October 2005.. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383610), Fax (to 01296 382538), or e-mail to [cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk)*

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT NO. CS06.05**

**DECISION TAKEN:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**DECISION NOT TAKEN:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_  
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