

Report to Cabinet

Title:	The New Aylesbury Library
Date:	Monday 24 July 2017
Date can be implemented:	Tuesday 1 August 2017
Author:	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health
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Local members affected:	All
Portfolio areas affected:	Community Engagement

For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

This report has been taken under the General Exception Rule which means it has not had the required notice on the Forward Plan. This is due to the need to proceed quickly because of current market conditions.

Summary

The integration of lending and study services will generate savings of £87,000 per annum due to the new library requiring less staff and equipment. This saving represents an important contribution towards the library service MTP targets and will help avoid service reductions and maintain a sustainable library for Aylesbury.

The current arrangement, with lending and reference resources split over two sites, is inefficient and does not reflect the needs of our customers. The absence of a 'shop-front' makes the study centre difficult to find for some customers and disabled access is unsatisfactory.

A capital bid was submitted to enable a scheme to integrate Aylesbury Lending library with the Study Centre and create a modern state of the art Library fit for the future and appropriate for the Centre of Aylesbury. The study centre services and resources will move from the existing space in County Hall and all library services will be then be delivered from the current lending library 'shopfront' premises on Walton Street.

Some initial ideas and designs have been developed (see Appendix A) and these have been shared with elected members.

The outline design offers an attractively refurbished modern library with self-service technology, improved children's facilities, new teenage area, two meeting rooms and improved toilet and baby changing facilities.

Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed to deliver a number of community engagement events to involve customers and stakeholders in the development of the design.

Work would then take place to finalise the design and procure the works. It is anticipated that the scheme could take 12 weeks and so interim library services would be delivered from the study centre during this time.

Recommendation

To agree the proposal to integrate lending and reference provision in Aylesbury in principle and to undertake community engagement on the design for a new and modern library for Aylesbury

1 Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1.1 Key benefits of proposal;

The integration of lending and study services has been proposed because this model will deliver an improved and more accessible library service for Aylesbury at reduced cost.

A new and modern integrated library will:

- deliver a well-designed and refurbished modern library with self-service technology, improved children's facilities, new teenage area, two meeting rooms and improved toilet and baby changing facilities.
- increase the accessibility of the study centre resources ensuring an increase in usage.
- deliver increased opening hours from 43 hrs a week to 46 hrs a week.
- generate annual revenue savings of £87,000 to be realised by reducing staff numbers and equipment.
- provide a strongly branded, high quality shop front for library and council services.

1.2 Outline design

Work has taken place to develop an outline design. The floor plan and a range of 3D impressions are attached as Appendix A to this report.

This design shows only how the main elements of the scheme could work together. These are initial designs and are for illustrative purposes. The designs will be shared with library customers and stakeholders during a series of community engagement events in August.

The outline design demonstrates how all lending and reference services could be delivered from the one site. The following design work has helped to make better use of the space available:

- Create more public space by removing reception desks and introducing self-service technology.
- Reduce the staff work/rest areas and create a new flexible public meeting room space. This space could be used for additional study area capacity during peak times.
- Utilise the columns to create computer work stations.

1.3 Key features of Design

The key proposed elements are as follows:

- Comprehensive refurbishment i.e. paint/decorate, re-carpet, new furniture and shelving
- Improved ICT services
- Improved accessible public toilet and baby changing facilities
- Large flexible meeting room
- New 'island' reception area
- New teenage area
- Low energy 'daylight' lighting throughout
- Small 121 'surgery' meeting room
- New Local Studies / Tourist Information area
- Introduction of self-service technology
- Sound-proofed study / reading area
- Larger children's library with striking 'feature' furniture
- Re-modelled entrance area
- New external lighting and re-designed façade

1.4 Stakeholder engagement

Subject to Member approval, the ideas and designs for the new library will be displayed in the lending library and study centre during August and September. The local press, council eNewsletter and local posters will be used to raise awareness of the proposal.

Open days will also be organised and publicised to provide an opportunity for customers and stakeholders to meet with members of the design team to discuss the designs, offer comments and suggestions and ask questions. The designs and information will also be made available on the Council web-site.

Comment and feedback received will be used to inform the final design and this design will be communicated to customers and stakeholders along with details of interim service arrangements and timeframes for the project.

1.5 Indicative timeframes and interim service arrangements

1.5.1 Timeframes

Work will commence in January 2018 with a view to opening the new facility in April 2018.

1.5.2 Interim service

It is essential to maintain library services during the implementation stage of the project. Consideration has been given to the use of mobile libraries or alternative shop front premises in Aylesbury but by far the most effective arrangement will be to use the existing Study Centre space to deliver library services for the duration of the works.

Library staff will organise effective sign-posting to ensure that customers visiting the lending library site are able to easily find the study centre premises and library staff will also work with the Friars Square Centre to provide sign-posting for customers accessing the study centre through the shopping centre.

2 Other options available, and their pros and cons

The proposal to integrate lending and reference services and deliver a new library for Aylesbury will generate savings of £87,000. If the services are not integrated then savings would need to be found from elsewhere. One option would be to reduce the opening hours of both the lending library and study centre.

3 Resource implications

A bid for Capital Funding was agreed in September 2016 and a total capital budget of £366,000 was formally agreed as part of the Council budget in February 2017.

The new library will generate a reduction in premises and staff costs and deliver a saving of £87,000 every year.

Staff savings will be generated through a staff restructuring and it is likely that redundancy costs will apply. It is not possible to calculate the size of redundancy payments at this stage

At a time of real financial challenge, the one-off investment of £366,000 in this new library will ensure a more cost-effective and therefore sustainable library service for Aylesbury.

4 Value for Money (VfM) Self-Assessment

The integration of lending and study centre services will deliver increased value for money.

4.1 Property arrangements

The integration makes better use of space and the new library will be delivered from a site with preferential lease terms.

4.2 Revenue savings and opening hours

The new library will generate annual revenue savings of £87,000 and also result in increased opening hours.

4.3 Access and usage

The current lending library site is more visible and accessible than the study centre and study centre resources and services will benefit from increased usage as part of a new integrated library on Walton Street.

5 Legal implications

If the proposal is agreed then legal advice will be sought.

6 Property implications

Aylesbury Study Centre is part of the New County Offices (NCO). The total gross space is 420 sq. metres. Access is via the shopping centre or via steps and ramp from Walton street. The lift access is not satisfactory because customers require staff assistance in order to access the lift.

Aylesbury Lending Library is a leased site on Walton Street. The lease is for 60 years at a nominal or 'peppercorn' rent (i.e. nil) and commenced in 1987. The gross space is 883 sq. metres. The lending site benefits from ground floor level access, good footfall and an attractive and extensive shop-front.

The Library Service is currently engaged within the Council's strategic property asset initiatives. These are the Location & Asset Strategy Review (LASR) which looks at the utilisation and efficiency of the Council's portfolio and the One Public Estate initiative (OPE) which seeks to identify opportunities across a range of public sector partner's asset base and land holdings. Each initiative seeks to promote efficiency in use, lower running costs and better access to services.

In each instance, the service was represented (and continues to be engaged with OPE) in the formulation of the strategic aims and multi-agency aspirations of each of these initiatives.

As part of this engagement, there was specific consultation on the plans for Aylesbury Library. It was confirmed that this proposal does not impede any of the broader initiatives proposed under the banners above and is positively supported by Property Services as embracing the ethos of promoting more efficient use of assets, delivering lower running costs whilst providing a more customer-focussed service for the people of the area.

7 Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

Two Member briefing events have been organised to share the business case and outline design with BCC elected members.

The key areas of feedback are:

- proposal endorsed by all attendees
- request that vending or café facilities be considered
- suggestion of naming new facility to reflect modern vision for service

- consider re-positioning children's area to allow more window space

Subject to Member approval, the ideas and designs for the new library will be displayed in the lending library and study centre during August and September. Open days will also be organised and publicised to provide an opportunity for customers and stakeholders to meet with members of the design team to discuss the designs, offer comment and suggestions and ask questions. {see 1.4 Stakeholder engagement}

I. Communication issues

If the proposal is agreed, a media campaign to promote the community open days and engage stakeholders in developing the design for the new library will take place.

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 Member Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 21 July 2017. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk