



Report to the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee

Title: Face of the Council - Heart of the Community:
Developing a vision and strategy for the library service

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Report signed off by Cabinet Member: Cllr. Martin Phillips,
Community Engagement

Electoral divisions affected: All divisions

1. Purpose of Agenda Item:

The Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee considered a report on Buckingham shire Library Service on 8th April 2014. This report provides an update on the following committee recommendations:

- {i} The Cabinet Member/Service Area design and plan a long term strategy and vision for the future of library services, including a clear strategy on how budget changes will be dealt with.
- {ii} Develop more defined objectives over how the council library services can work in partnership with other organisations (e.g. co-location opportunities/community hubs) and proactively pursuing opportunities in a coordinated way.
- {iii} Provide the committee with an update in 6 months, on the longer term plan for the future of library services over the next 5 years.

2 Executive summary

Buckinghamshire library service is developing a vision for the service best articulated through the term; Face of the Council - Heart of the Community

The report summarises the legal context and emerging national picture for public library services (Sections 3 & 4) and explains that with the year on year decrease in library usage (issues and visits) nationally a new vision for library services is needed in order to ensure relevance and sustainability.

In Section 5, the financial challenge is described. The medium term financial challenge is being addressed by organisational change and opportunities for the longer term financial re-modelling of the service are set out. Moving to new governance and the creation of a trust, co-operative or mutual is considered to offer the most ambitious and innovative opportunity to reduce costs and maintain effective library services whilst also securing continued community involvement. New governance is also considered to be the most effective means of under-pinning a new vision for the service.

Section 6 describes a longer term vision for Buckinghamshire library service that builds on the core priorities of reading, literacy and information and develops partnerships to deliver against local and national priorities such as digital inclusion, jobs and employment, literacy and health and wellbeing. Through partnership working and co-location, libraries are to be developed as vibrant and relevant focal points for the whole community.

The library service is also recognised as having the potential to be the face of the council. With a network of community venues, over 1.7 million physical visits and the second most popular web pages in the council, Buckinghamshire libraries can work closely with the contact centre and web team in sign posting and promoting access to council services – especially digital access.

At the centre of this new vision for libraries is the recognition of the unique and powerful role of library services in enabling digital inclusion. In Buckinghamshire 10% of the population do not have access to a computer or do have access but lack the skills to use it.

The library service is trusted by Buckinghamshire communities and has experience of working in partnership on programmes encouraging digital participation. Library staff have the skills set to teach residents how to use, create and manage information in an informed and safe way.

In some respects our focus on digital inclusion straddles our work as the face of the council and our position at the heart of the community.

For the council it is clear that efficiencies through channel shift cannot be realised unless measures are in place to help the digitally excluded access web based council services. With free and mediated access to ICT, the library service is perfectly positioned to deliver this.

In terms of wider community engagement, it is the case that partners such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Job Centre Plus in particular need to access ICT in a safe, welcoming and neutral community space in order to support clients with welfare benefits , job search etc.

Section 7 summarises the key actions and priorities necessary to deliver on this vision including a proactive and co-ordinated approach to partnership work and co-location opportunities.

3 Legal context

Individual public library services are delivered by 151 library authorities in England, and they have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, set in the context of local need, specifically of those who live, work and study in the local area, and within available resources. Public libraries are run by local authorities who receive their funding from three main sources: grants from central government, (paid through the local government settlement, administered by the Department for Communities and Local Government) council tax and other locally generated fees and charges for services. Local authorities therefore decide how to allocate funding to public libraries in the light of their statutory duties and local priorities, and in 2012-13 authorities in England invested £783m in their public library services.

The 1964 Act imposes a duty on the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to oversee and promote the public library service and to secure discharge of the statutory duties of local authorities as well as providing certain powers to take action where a local authority is in breach of its own duty.

The Government is responsible for national library policy and works closely with the development agency for libraries, Arts Council England.

4 National strategy

The four '*Universal Offers*' (2012) and *Envisioning the library of the future*, a report produced by the Arts Council in 2013, have provided a framework which has informed work on developing a vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire Library service

4.1 The Universal Offers

The four 'Universal Offers' have been developed by the Society of Chief Librarians and partners including Arts Council England and The Reading Agency. The offers – Health, Reading, Information, and Digital – are the four service areas which modern users regard as integral to public libraries and the offers identify where libraries can provide real value to local people.

The Public Libraries Information Offer focuses on supporting people to access information and services online in life-critical areas such as careers and job seeking; health; personal financial information and benefits. Central to this offer is helping people to use vital government online information and services.

The Digital Offer articulates the important role that libraries have in ensuring that everyone has access to the digital world and what a customer should expect from their public library.

The *Universal Reading Offer* identifies how we develop, deliver and promote reading services, including supported online access, community outreach and services for targeted audiences.

The *Public Library Health Offer* focuses on the public library contribution to the health and well-being of local communities.

4.2 Envisioning the library of the future

Envisioning the library of the future is a 2012 programme of research commissioned by the Arts Council to help develop a long-term vision for public libraries in England. The research has confirmed that public libraries are trusted spaces, open to all, in which people continue to explore and share the joys of reading, information, knowledge and culture.

The research also indicates that public libraries face many challenges in the coming years, including: advances in technology, which affect the ways in which people want to connect to information and culture; reduced public expenditure; the increasing involvement of citizens in the design and delivery of public services; and the needs of an ageing population.

In order to nurture the library sector to be as successful, sustainable and enjoyable as possible in light of these challenges, the Arts Council has set out four priority areas for development:

- Place the library as the hub of the community
- Make the most of digital technology and creative media
- Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable
- Deliver the right skills for those who work in libraries

4.3 Sieghart review

An independent report on the public library service in England has been commissioned from philanthropist, entrepreneur and publisher William Sieghart by Culture Minister Ed Vaizey and Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis.

The report has been jointly commissioned by the Culture Department and the Department for Communities and Local Government. Mr Sieghart will lead an expert to take evidence and report to ministers by the end of the year. Key questions for the panel to address include:

- What are the core principles of a public library into the future?
- Is the current model of delivery the most comprehensive and efficient? and
- What is the role of community libraries?

Buckinghamshire Library service submitted evidence to the Sieghart review and this submission is attached as Appendix A

5 Financial challenge

Since 2009/10 the library service has succeeded in reducing costs by over £1 million without closing libraries or reducing opening hours and the service has generated a net decrease in spend every year since 2009/10.

Year	Total cost	change on previous year
2009/10	£6,134,267	
2014/15 (est)	£4,806.586	22%

5.1 Existing MTP targets 2014/15 – 2016/17

The report submitted to the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee on 8th April 2014 set out the medium term plan efficiency targets for the library service. Targets relating to self-service technology and staffing reorganisations amount to £459,000 by 2016/17. When the savings for 2015/16 and 2016/17 have been realised the reduction since 2009/10 will be approximately 26%

- 2014/15 £190,000
- 2015/16 £143,000
- 2016/17 £126,000

A staffing review to reduce the cost of the operational management structure took place earlier this year.

Formal consultation on proposals for organisational change was launched at two meetings on 29th April 2014. The consultation extended for 45 days and ended on 13th June 2014.

The team was reduced by close to 50% (from 25.5 fte to 13 fte) and the savings targets for 2014/15 and 2015/16 have been met. A further review process, seeking to deliver a more flexible deployment of front line staffing, will take place early in 2015 in order to address the target for 2016/17

The library service has been able to deliver year on year savings through a combination of re-modelling and internal transformation. However, given the existing and challenging MTP targets relating to staffing reductions it is the case that further savings in staff costs (i.e. over and above existing MTP savings) cannot be achieved without a reduction in opening hours.

5.2 Longer term Finance Plan

The library service will continue to be challenged by reductions in funding over the longer term. Work on developing a vision for the service has to include a clear plan to deliver on further savings and a number of options have been considered.

Devolving more services to communities

The library service in Buckinghamshire is delivered through a county and community model. This is a successful and innovative model of partnership working where there is a mixed economy of delivery for library services. The breadth, scope and expertise of the county support the delivery of community based local library services.

Work has taken place to explore the scope for further devolving services to communities. The remaining libraries are considered to be too big for self-managed models. The volunteer-managed model involves shifts of volunteers working three hours every other week. Volunteers are not easily able to acquire the skill or knowledge necessary to consistently provide a complex range of services in a busy library and the more that resources are committed to sustaining volunteer-managed or community-supported operations the less capability in the service to deliver against important agendas around digital inclusion, employment, literacy and health and wellbeing.

Having reviewed the scope for devolving more libraries to communities, the considered view of library officers is that the current balance between county and community is right. The effort required to push further in terms of devolving libraries is disproportionate to the benefit accrued. There is a real risk that devolving more services to communities would degrade the robustness of the county network and jeopardise the ability to effectively support community libraries.

Alternative Delivery Vehicle for Library Service

The council's Future Shape programme challenges all services to consider the viability of alternative delivery vehicles in order to improve efficiency and reduce costs. A new model could offer the opportunity to generate additional income and reduce costs in order to deliver a more cost effective and sustainable service over the longer term.

Two options to consider could be either a company limited by guarantee (e.g. Bucks County Museum Trust) or industrial and provident society (e.g. Explore York or Suffolk Libraries). Either one of these types of organisation can be used for a charitable trust or a mutual (or less likely, for community management or social enterprise). BCC would remain the statutory library authority, and monitor the performance of the library service through a framework that forms part of the delivery contract. The library service has the critical mass to spin out alone, but could partner with other services to spin out with e.g. Explore York is libraries together with archives.

With freedom to trade and develop a more entrepreneurial approach the library service will be able to capitalise on income generating opportunities.

- Consortium and collaborative working

Since 2007 Buckinghamshire Libraries have been working with 11 other authorities in the South East in order to gain benefits of scale by jointly procuring a shared, supplier hosted Library Management System. (The 11 partner library services are currently Brighton & Hove City Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Kent County Council, London Borough of Camden, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Medway Council, Milton Keynes Council, Royal Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council and West Berkshire Council).

This consortium arrangement has enabled us to both develop the service we can offer to our customers and also streamline back office work, saving cost. We plan to maintain this joint arrangement and develop opportunities to extend the collaboration between library services to mutual benefit.

- Developing a trading arm

The library service has the ability to develop a trading arm and compete to deliver services on behalf of other library services for profit. For example Brighton & Hove recently tendered for the provision of stock services which Buckinghamshire library staff could have provided. As a directly delivered local authority service, the tender could only have been submitted on the basis of cost recovery. However, through a change in governance as described above it would be possible to operate at profit and then reinvest in the organisation.

- Income from commissioning and accommodation

As the library service continues to develop libraries as community hubs offering a broader range of services, a number of income generating opportunities arise. The internal re-modelling of library spaces will generate hall hire income and rents generated through co-location will reduce premises costs further. Partnership working with Public Health, Adult Social Care, District Councils etc. will be developed to allow the library service to be commissioned to deliver against specific targets and generate income.

Consideration will also be given to the utilisation of library building space for other commercial offerings e.g. concessions, village shops, post offices, delivery points etc.

Summary

A longer term vision for the library service is best realised and underpinned through a change in governance rather than by devolving more to communities. The library service will be better positioned to adopt a more entrepreneurial and commercially minded approach and to benefit from collaborative working and the development of a trading arm.

6 A vision for Buckinghamshire Library Service Face of the Council - Heart of the Community

We know that libraries are highly regarded by residents and that we can make a real difference to their lives. In line with the national strategy described earlier in this report, Buckinghamshire library service is developing a vision for the service best articulated through the term; Face of the Council - Heart of the Community

A commitment to reading and literacy remain at the heart of Buckinghamshire libraries and the service has responded positively and successfully to the demand for new virtual e.lending services.

Nevertheless, visits and issues for all public library services nationally have been in decline every year since 2006. The legal duty to provide a library service remains (see section 3) but a new vision for library services is needed in order to ensure relevance and sustainability.

Community library partnerships have reduced the operating costs of smaller local libraries in Buckinghamshire and enabled sustainable partnership models. For the wider county service though, there is now a need to create a vision for the future that builds on the core priorities of reading, literacy and information and develops partnerships to deliver against local and national priorities. This vision will further develop the library as a vibrant and relevant hub and focal point for the community. At the centre of this new vision for libraries is the recognition of the unique and powerful role of library services in enabling digital inclusion

6.1 Face of the Council

With a network of community venues, over 1.7 million physical visits and the second most popular web pages in the council, Buckinghamshire libraries are developing as the Face of the Council. With phone, web and face to face access we work closely with the contact centre and web team in sign posting and promoting access to council services – especially digital access.

Libraries are bringing the council closer to the community and can help to reduce costs through co-location with other council services. We work closely with localities to improve community engagement and currently host surgeries for Trading Standards and Registrars. Our Mobile libraries have Internet access and been converted to provide a discreet meeting space. This means that we can provide access to council information and services to the most physically isolated residents in partnership with other council services.

Research has shown that when residents are better informed about council services they are more satisfied with the council as a whole and libraries have an important role in promoting council information and services. The library service has been successful in promoting several council campaigns such as Adoption and Fostering, Get Online and Customer Services week. Library staff engage with visitors face to face and the service makes good use of digi-screen technology, social media such as Twitter and Facebook and digital newsletters to promote the council.

6.2 Heart of the Community

The safe, welcoming and non-territorial community space, the availability of free access to ICT, extensive free information resources and trained staff means that we are uniquely positioned to make important community based contributions. Libraries host a range of activities for school children, Bounce and Rhyme for Under 5's, Over 50's / Knit and Natter groups and enable meetings , lectures and discussions across a wide range of subjects.

Libraries have been proactive in forging meaningful partnerships to deliver improved health and wellbeing, advice and welfare, business, employment and support for the elderly. With a rapidly developing network of partners using library community spaces we are developing as focal points for the community. Already, library services are enhanced through partnerships with Bucks Floating Support, Thames Valley Police, Children's Centres, Bucks Business First, Credit Unions, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Careers Advice.

Importantly, the library service has developed effective partnership arrangements with Public Health and has been successful in delivering Health checks in libraries and in promoting 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. Our contribution to wellbeing is further strengthened through our partnership with Healthy Minds and the successful 'Books on Prescription' scheme.

6.3 Libraries and Digital Inclusion

The digital by design agenda, nationally and locally, requires effective support to be made available to ensure that residents without computers and/or the ability to use them are not left behind.

- In Buckinghamshire 10% of the population do not have access to a computer or do have access but lack the skills to use it.
- 90% of jobs require basic internet skills (Nielsen Company 2009) and people with good ICT skills can earn up to 10% more than people without such skills (Centre for the Economics of Education, 2007)

- Being online can combat the social isolation and loneliness experienced by 3.1 million over 65 year olds nationally who see a friend, relative or neighbour less than once a week (Participle.net)
- The average household could save up to £560 a year by shopping and paying bills online (Race Online 2012)

The Library service can make a significant contribution to increasing digital inclusion and participation. The library service is trusted by Buckinghamshire communities, has experience working in partnership on programmes encouraging digital participation and library staff have the skills set to teach residents how to use, create and manage information in an informed and safe way. With free access to computer use, wi-fi and online training, county libraries currently deliver 12,000 free computer sessions a month. Library service officers are important contributors to the council's digital agenda and are actively engaged through the Digital inclusion working group, Digital Implementation Board, Digital Champions Network and Social Media Forum.

'Learn My Way'

Working in partnership with the Tinder Foundation, Buckinghamshire Libraries are delivering facilitated computer and internet help sessions, using 'Learn My Way' www.learnmyway.com

- We are already working with internal and external partners e.g. Job Centre plus, Bucks Adult Learning Community Learning Team, Contact Centre, National Careers Service and Bucks Floating Support who are referring customers to us for assistance in improving their digital skills.
- Customers telephoning the BCC Contact Centre because they do not have access to a computer or the appropriate skills to find the information online are being signposted to 'Learn My Way' sessions at Libraries.
- Over the past 12 months nearly 500 customers have registered and are working their way through LMW at Bucks Libraries.

6.4 New delivery model

Detailed work on an options appraisal for new governance needs to be carried out as described in section 5.3. The potential benefits that be:

- Immediate National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) savings of approx. £250,000 as a not for profit organisation
- Increased opportunities for income generation through a more entrepreneurial approach and development of new commercial partnerships
- Development of a trading arm providing freedom to compete in a growing market. This could enable the provision of services to other local authorities, delivering commissioned services and creation of new collaborative arrangements.
- Opportunity to 'badge' as charity and tap into community appetite and capacity to offer financial support through donations, legacies, fund-raising,

- Expertise of existing community library Trustees in business development
- Facility to apply for sources of grant funding currently denied to local authorities
- Motivation: employees and/or members ownership as in the mutual model, brings higher levels of commitment and productivity
- Freedom to employ: increased flexibility with terms and conditions
- Freedom to procure: purchase of fit for purpose systems allowing innovation and potentially better value for money

7 Priorities and actions to deliver on vision

In line with the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee recommendations from 8th April 2014, this section sets out the key objectives and priorities for the library service in delivering on the vision.

Face of the Council

The re-modelling of library spaces will enable the library service to move forward with co-location opportunities and to create discrete spaces for meetings, surgeries, and other partnership / community activities. This approach has been successfully implemented at Chesham library and during 2015 work will take place on a similar project in Buckingham.

Preliminary work on the development of a brief for the remodelling of Buckingham library has taken place and ideas are being developed to enhance the children's library / study facilities, to design new meeting / activity spaces and create a Bucks Business First drop in area. Importantly, this scheme will see the library reception integrated with the centre reception to enable seamless access to council information and services an increased access to the centre facilities as a whole.

We will also develop a business case to secure funding for the remodelling of Aylesbury library. Discussions are taking place with AVDC regarding the relocation of the Tourist Information Centre into the library and Aylesbury CAB is also keen to discuss the use of space for outreach work. The scheme has the potential to create a 'hub' offering an increased range of services to residents and can also deliver a high profile / high impact shop front for the council. The re-modelling at Aylesbury would include the introduction of self service technology.

New governance and strategy

Work is underway to complete an options appraisal for new governance arrangements for the library service. The preferred model will be agreed by April 2015 and a detailed business case prepared for consideration. A new delivery model could be achieved by September 2016.

A detailed strategy will be developed with actions and targets set out in The Library Service Business Plan 2015/16. Work to develop meaningful performance measures and outcomes will also inform the business plan.

Staff engagement will be kick started at the Library service staff conference on 19th November 2014 and engagement with community partners taken forward in the spring.

Digital Inclusion

The Society of Chief Librarians, Arts Council England and the Tinder Foundation have developed a national training programme for Library staff to position Libraries as key partners in the Government's Digital by Default strategy. Between October 2014 and March 2015 every single member of staff will complete this workforce development training. This training will be offered to all community libraries next year.

Digital Access

Libraries are working closely with the contact centre and web team to increase the take up of self service. Online payments will be launched later this year, web-chat will be used to identify priority areas for web- page improvement. Work will take place to develop self-service kiosk technology to support digital access to council services

The library service is a key player in the roll out of the council's digital strategy. Library services are included in wave 1 and 2 projects and library innovators will be active in helping to support the roll out of digital sessions across the council to promote and support the use of Twitter, Facebook, eBooks, Audiobooks, e.Magazines , the TfB app, Yammer and Lync.

We are also working to extend public Wi-Fi access to all Buckinghamshire libraries.

Co-location objectives

TVP partnership arrangements are already in place in Burnham, Farnham Common and Great Missenden. Work will now take place to determine the feasibility of co-locating with TVP in Gerrards Cross, Chesham, Wendover and Buckingham

Tourist Information services are now collocated in High Wycombe and Wendover libraries. Work is taking place to co-locate TIC's in Princes Risborough and Marlow and discussions are taking place with AVDC regarding the co-location of TIC into Aylesbury library.

Bucks Business First are funded by BCC to promote the development of business and jobs. A drop in facility has been created in Chesham library and work will take place to establish the feasibility of establishing a similar presence in Buckingham Library.

Library spaces will be evaluated as part of the Corporate Landlord agile working initiative to create remote work spaces for BCC staff with secure Wi-Fi.

Partnerships

Citizen's Advice Bureaux recognise that the demands generated by the introduction of Universal Credit require access to computers in community spaces and 'surgery' type arrangements are in place across several libraries. Discussions regarding the potential for co-location into two county libraries are taking place and libraries will be important partners for CAB in enabling community outreach

Surgery type 'drop ins' and/or co-location can help improve access to council services and reduce costs to the council. Work to further develop partnership arrangements with the Registrar's service, Trading Standards and Transport (pot hole reporting) will be taken forward during 2015/16 and the scoping of new areas for consideration will also take place e.g. Blue Badge support/ District Council services?

Building on successful work with Public Health the library service will be proactive in supporting an annual calendar of health and wellbeing promotions e.g. Dry January, Stoptober. Also, the 'Books on Prescription' partnership with Healthy Minds will be extended across the county.

8 Moving Forward – next steps

This paper provides an overview in terms of developing a longer term vision for the library service. Work will now take place to develop a detailed strategy and action plan with clear performance measures and outcomes. Work will also take place to engage staff and community partners with the vision for the library service.