

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **MONDAY 11TH MAY, 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE.)**

SUBJECT: **MEDIUM TERM PLAN FOR LIBRARIES – PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP NEW HUB LIBRARY AT DEESIDE LEISURE CENTRE AND RE-LOCATE HAWARDEN, MANCOT AND QUEENSFERRY LIBRARIES**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide members with an outline of this proposal, and feedback the results of the consultation exercise, so Scrutiny Committee can provide views and comments to inform the Cabinet decision in May 2015.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 Cabinet received a report in April 2015 outlining an overall medium term plan for libraries and the Councils Flintshire Connects facilities. Each major element identified a timeframe for consultation. The first of these is the proposal for the development of a new Hub Library at Deeside Leisure Centre as a sixth hub library to add to those in existing towns, and that could serve the communities of Hawarden, Mancot and Queensferry.
- 2.02 The vision for a sustainable modern library service is one that provides access to reading, learning and information. To achieve this the service needs to be built on three key elements: the buildings; the community based services such as mobile services; and where there is interest from local communities locally provided bookstock and IT supported through the Community Asset Transfer programme. This view of a service fits with how people behaviour is changing in relation to libraries, with many more people wanting to use on line services or pick a book up, or visit a library after or before undertaking another activity. In addition with a 30% reduction (approximately £0.600m out of a £1.9m) in the library budget anticipated, we are no longer going to be able to provide the number of library buildings that we currently do, so therefore building the library service on these three elements and not just buildings is critical.
- 2.03 Towns in Flintshire provide the best opportunity for maximising footfall, therefore the main library hubs in future are proposed to be

situated in the following towns: Connahs Quay, Mold, Buckley, Flint and Holywell. In addition the major attraction of Deeside Leisure Centre provides an opportunity for co-locating a library in a facility with major footfall that can serve three communities (Queensferry, Mancot and Hawarden), which currently have small libraries, that either have low footfall or building limitations and are not sustainable in their current form. This is a real opportunity to sustain provision for these three areas, and at the same time develop a modern library integrated with other services. This library would be the first to deliver a self-service provision in Flintshire and in doing so will make a big difference through increased access which should become a model for future provision.

2.04 Cabinet agreed to consult on the proposals for the development of a new hub library at Deeside Leisure Centre with services from Hawarden, Mancot, and Queensferry libraries being re-located to the new library as outlined in this report. As part of this approach they also received an Equality Monitoring and Impact Assessment for the New Library at Deeside Leisure Centre, attached at Appendix A of this report.

2.05 At this scrutiny committee in January 2015 it was reported that the Library Service has commenced work on the following strands of a local Libraries framework. It was stated that the framework addresses the findings and recommendations of the Libraries Expert Review by CyMAL (2014) and also the requirements of the Council to deliver services within the available budgets. These key strands, which were discussed and commented upon, were identified as follows:

- Flintshire Library Service will develop an evidence and outcomes approach to commence in 2015-16;
- The service will implement efficiencies during 2015-16 to meet budget targets whilst operating the full current network of libraries;
- Work will take place to develop the use of volunteers within the next two years, following guidelines and good practice developed by CyMAL;
- Flintshire Library Service will continue to collaborate with the library authorities in North Wales to implement a shared Library Management System and a shared bibliographic services unit, funded by CyMAL;
- The Council will work with town and community councils and other community groups where appropriate to consider asset transfer of libraries to the community;
- We will work to explore all innovative and alternative ways that might sustain future service provision post 2016, including the co-location of services.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The objective arguments for the development of a co-located library at Deeside Leisure Centre are strong, as identified in Appendix A, and can be summarised as follows:

- The library at Deeside, and the service to the three communities, fits with the vision for a modern and sustainable library service in Flintshire
- This library falls within the Public Library Standard for access by Hawarden, Mancot and Queensferry communities which is 2.5 miles, of which the furthest community away is Hawarden at 1.7 miles;
- Deeside offers a co-located venue with over 550,000 visits per annum;
- CyMAL have recently announced their grant awards and the proposed Library at Deeside will, if approved to progress, receive over £0.090m, which will cover the majority of the costs for the new library;
- This grant decision validates the location for access, the design and the layout of space, and the importance of providing access to libraries for those living in Communities First areas;
- The new library with re-locations will save in the region of £0.050m per annum;
- Each of the three current library buildings are not sustainable in the long term for the reasons identified below, and it is likely that with reducing year on year budgets a future decision will need to be taken about their future at which point we would not have the same access to CyMAL funding to provide an alternative library facility for these communities:
 - Queensferry : lowest visits per opening hour of any library;
 - Mancot : 1960s lightweight, prefabricated building that needs replacing;
 - Hawarden: internal spaces not suitable for a modern library with a series of small rooms creating an inflexible space.

3.02 However it is recognised that libraries are community facilities and while objective arguments are strong the views of communities and users are equally as valid. Therefore a consultation exercise took place during March 2015 and April 2015 with four main types of groups: community representatives including Town and Community Councils and schools; library users; young people; and the equality assurance group. During this period we also received a range of additional responses which are detailed as a fifth group. A report detailing the results of the consultations is provided at Appendix B.

Advice was sought from Participation Cymru to ensure the methodology being adopted for the consultation was suitable for the topic under discussion and would meet the needs of the audience.

3.03 A summary of the results of this exercise are as follows:

Consultation Group	Summary of Response
Community Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses by schools by letter and email. • 1 response welcoming the new library at Deeside Leisure Centre, being concerned about the loss of local provision and asking for the feasibility of mobile provision to be looked into with an offer of a location within the school grounds. • 1 response whilst recognising it is a sad situation stating they are sure we have made the right decision.
Library Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 124 adult library users consulted in meetings in each of the three communities affected. • Stated that they do not want to lose their own libraries and felt strongly that they should be retained in each of their 3 communities. • They recognise some elements of their community will use Deeside leisure centre but are concerned that particular groups including older people, children using the library by themselves and for homework, traditional library users who enjoy a quite space, may be put off by the location. • They have concerns at Deeside about: access by public transport, parking, safety due to gangs of young people, noise levels, and size of the library. • They value community based services such as housebound, mobile provision and see these as being supplementary to any provision at Deeside. • They are all interested in asset transfer as a way of running something locally themselves with one off support that may again supplement any provision at Deeside.
Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion at the County Forum and 7 young people attended the meetings in each of the three communities affected. • Positive in particular about the design and

	layout. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people at County Forum positive about location whereas young people in communities concerned about loss of local library.
Equality Assurance Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location was identified as good. • Specific reference made to the diversity of people using the centre. • Self service was welcomed. • Some concerns raised about safety, transport and access to IT.
Additional Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small number of letters and emails plus petitions from Hawarden and Mancot with 470 and 568 signatories respectively. • Strongly against the re-location of their local library.

3.04 With the objective assessment and the consultation exercise it is possible to reach the conclusions identified below. They recognise, that while community feelings are very strong locally about the loss of their libraries, it is still in the overall best interests of library provision for communities in Flintshire to progress with this work, and that in progressing a number of areas of consultation comments need to be incorporated into the next stages of work. A real concern would be that if in two or three years' time we have to undertake this process again, while community asset transfer of current buildings to local communities may still be possible, there would be no option to develop a new library serving these communities at Deeside Leisure Centre or in their own local communities as a CyMAL grant would not be available. The grant criteria do not enable an application to be progressed for Hawarden or Mancot as there are no major co-locations possible, and it priorities Communities First areas. The conclusions are as follows:

- That objectively a library at Deeside Leisure Centre does make sense both in terms of location and to serve the three communities of Hawarden, Mancot and Queensferry;
- Representatives of communities who responded whilst recognising the difficulty of the situation accepted the reasons and offered some additional suggestions.
- Library Users do not want to lose their local libraries.
- Young People are excited about the design of the proposed new library at Deeside Leisure Centre.
- The new library will offer a location that is attractive to a diverse range of users.
- A solution based on the vision for library services and all comments received is to design a service for the three communities of Hawarden, Mancot and Queensferry that is not

just seen to be served by Deeside Leisure Centre but that is supplemented by additional community based services, e.g. mobile, and locally run services supported where feasible by the Community Asset Transfer scheme.

- 3.05 In line with these conclusions it is proposed to proceed with the development of a library at Deeside Leisure centre re-locating services from Hawarden, Mancot and Queensferry, but in light of the libraries vision and the consultation to work with the three communities specifically to:

- (1) Address the concerns raised about the Deeside location;
- (2) Plan community library services for each of these areas;
- (3) Identify if a community asset transfer is feasible and can be supported.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the committee provide comments on these proposals, taking on board the results of the consultation exercise, to inform the Cabinet decision in May 2015.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The capital cost of the proposals for a new library development at Deeside Leisure Centre are approximately £0.130m for which a grant application has been made to CyMAL for over £0.090m with the remainder to be found within existing budgets.
- 5.02 The proposed re-location of three libraries into a new library facility at Deeside Leisure Centre will make a significant saving in relation to building costs and future repairs and maintenance. As part of the development, plans will be put in place for integrating staffing from the current three libraries which will also reduce operating costs. This is estimated at over £0.050m. This will contribute to the overall £0.600m savings that are anticipated will be needed in library services. If this cannot be achieved then alternative solutions will need to be looked at including considering library buildings and community based services.
- 5.03 If a new library was to be built in the future, and it is the equivalent size of the current Mancot library, either to serve these communities or replace current provision which is not sustainable in the long term, then this would cost in the region of £0.750m (based on today's prices) for the building alone.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 The impact assessment at Appendix A provides a detailed analysis of how the proposals for the development of a library at Deeside Leisure Centre impacts on particular groups and how these can be mitigated.

A hub library in a Communities First Area supports the delivery of anti-poverty priorities.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 Environmental considerations are taken into account in the development of proposals for a new library at Deeside Leisure Centre.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 A draft equalities impact assessment is attached at Appendix A for the proposals relating to the library at Deeside Leisure Centre.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 Staff reductions will occur if a decision is taken to re-locate services from three libraries to Deeside Leisure Centre.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 Consultation has taken place as identified in this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 11.01 Whatever decisions are taken by cabinet in May further work will take place with all three communities to implement these decisions in the best way possible.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 Appendix A - Equality Monitoring and Impact Assessment for New Library at Deeside Leisure Centre
- 12.02 Appendix B – Summary of Consultation

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Cabinet Report 17th March 2015 : Medium Term Plan for Library and Connects Services

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