



APPENDIX B

Flintshire County Council

Library Services Consultation

HAWARDEN, MANCOT AND QUEENSFERRY

Summary Report

April 2015

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The purpose of the consultation:

- To seek views and opinions on the proposals for the development of a new Hub Library at Deeside Leisure Centre with services from Hawarden, Mancot and Queensferry being re-located to the new library.

The period of consultation:

- Tuesday 17 March 2014 – Friday 17 April 2015

Who was consulted?

- Letters outlining the proposals and inviting feedback were sent to:
Hawarden Community Council
Queensferry Community Council

Hawarden High School
Hawarden Village Church School
Ewloe Green Primary School
Penarlag Primary School

John Summers High School
Queensferry Primary School
Sandycroft Primary School

- Three consultation events were held for library users on the following dates:
Tuesday 15 April Hawarden, Tithe Barn 5.15 – 6.45pm
Wednesday 16 April Mancot Village Hall 5 – 6.30pm and 7 – 8.30pm
Thursday 17 April Deeside Leisure Centre 5.15 – 6.45pm
- Young people attending the above events were given the opportunity to work in peer groups facilitated by youth workers. The County Youth Forum were also asked for their views and opinions.
- The Equality Assurance Group were consulted at their meeting on 17 April 2015

Consultation Responses:

- Written responses were received from two schools.
- 124 people were engaged through the face to face library user consultation events.
- 7 young people provided their views through peer group feedback at the library user consultation events. The County Youth Forum also provided a response.
- Members of the Equality Assurance Group provided views and opinions on the proposals.
- Six additional written responses were received from residents.

What people told us ...

Community Representatives

Responses provided by the schools were supportive of the new Hub Library at Deeside Leisure Centre (DLC) and its potential to extend library use to a wider range of people within the community.

There was concern about the relocation of smaller libraries and the impact that would have on communities, particularly around accessibility and the continued promotion of reading for enjoyment. A potential solution to this, it was felt, was regular planned visits of the mobile library service with an offer to use school premises for parking during school holidays.

Schools were empathetic to the current situation and whilst they would be sorry to see the relocation of local libraries they understood and were supportive of the needs driving the change and the difficult decisions the Council had to make.

Library Users

It was evident at all four community consultation events that library users place a very high value on their local library services and enjoy the personalised experience a traditional visit to the library offers.

The first choice in each community was to retain their local service. Each community also felt there was a case for relocating the other two library services to sit within their own and questioned why the CyMAL grant could not be used for this purpose.

There was a consistent view in all three areas that whilst some people may use the new hub at DLC there would be many others who wouldn't, particularly older people, parents with young families and children and young people. In the main the reasons given for this were:

- Lack of available car parking in an already busy car park
- Poor public transport links with a lack of accessible bus stops close to the centre
- Personal safety covering a number of issues:
 - the car park during the evenings and alleged antisocial behaviour
 - independent library use by younger children with parents being unwilling to allow visits unaccompanied
 - traffic congestion and the need to cross busy roads
- The overall environment of a large busy centre, its many distractions and the lack of available quiet space
- Accessibility for digitally excluded children and young people needing to use computers after school for homework
- The security of book stock during self service hours

When considering the extended provision of community services in each community there was general agreement that whilst mobile services would be welcomed, visits would need to be frequent and for long durations, situated in locations and at times that would be accessible to the whole community. The lack of computers and the range of available books was of concern, however, increasing visits of the mobile service to schools would be welcomed.

Each community expressed an interest in further exploring the potential for Community Asset Transfer (CAT) and it was felt there would potentially be sufficient support for the development of a community library service and debate covered the following main points:

- A need to understand the concept in greater detail to make a more informed decision e.g. start-up costs, revenue costs, book stock transfer, etc.
- Level of Community Council interest in supporting a CAT
- The availability of a suitable alternative buildings (Mancot)
- The longevity of the existing library buildings (Hawarden and Queensferry)
- Who would need to be involved in taking a CAT forward and what would be the next steps

Children and Young People

Peer group feedback at consultation events

It would be fair to say that the young people who took part in the four library user consultation events were somewhat conflicted in their views. On the one hand they valued the whole experience a visit to their local library offered and didn't want to see it relocated, on the other they were excited by the design of the proposed new hub library.

"I love to go to the library pick a book with my friend, then we buy a sausage roll, use the post office, go to the park, sit on the bench, read our book and eat our sausage roll. It means a lot"

"Cool colours. I could picture myself in that tennis seat"

Many of the issues they raised mirrored those covered by others in the room:

- Lack of public transport to the centre
- Lots of busy roads to cross
- Too far away and too big and busy. Younger children would not be able to visit on their own and it would be too much responsibility for older brothers and sisters to take them
- Lack of quiet space and lots of other distractions
- Personal safety

Considering the potential of the new hub they talked positively about:

- a new and modern environment
- better computers
- different books
- somewhere where parents could drop children off whilst they went shopping to Lidl or Asda

In the event that local libraries were relocated to DLC children and young people were very supportive of a CAT, many being willing to volunteer their time to help run a community library.

County Youth Forum

The Flintshire Youth Forum (FYF) is a group of young people between the ages of 11 and 25 who are a representative voice of the views of young people in Flintshire.

Whilst members of the Forum recognised and valued the role of community libraries generally they were very positive about a new hub at DLC. They considered this to be a central location attracting young people from far and wide for lots of different reasons, e.g. ice skating, skatepark, fast food outlets, shops and that young people would combine activities with a visit to the library.

Most agreed that generally there was no need for them to visit a library to borrow books as much of what they needed could be done on-line. They also felt that traditional libraries were perhaps a little dated and mainly catered for young children or older people. It was felt that a new library hub in this location would modernise the image of libraries and provide a vibrant and inspiring place to visit making the link between healthy bodies and healthy minds.

Equality Assurance Group

The Equality Assurance Group provides a representative voice of the views and opinions of the groups of people protected by equalities legislation.

On considering the proposals the group felt the location at DLC was good with a diverse range of people visiting the centre. The provision of a self-service facility was positively received.

There was a view that in the development of a hub at DLC consideration would need to be given to the availability of parking, personal security, the cost of public transport.

Whilst it was acknowledged that extending mobile services to each of the three communities would not fully replace the current service provision it would ensure the continuation of a localised library service.

It was felt that CAT could provide a 'mix and match' opportunity, with local community libraries being accessed for some reading needs and hub libraries being used for other IT, research needs.

Additional Responses

Much of the feedback received in the additional responses mirrors that referred to above highlighting concerns around accessibility, cost, future use of existing buildings, impact on young people and the elderly and the loss of a valued traditional library service.

Petitions

The following petitions were submitted to County Council on Tuesday 14 April 2015

- Petition to keep the library open in Hawarden – 470 signatures
- Petition to keep the library open in Mancot – 568 signatures

Next steps

The outcomes of the consultation will be presented to Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Friday 30 April and to Cabinet for final approval on 19 May 2015.

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