

CABINET MEETING

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 January 2016
Report Subject	Medium Term Libraries Plan – An Assessment of the Feasibility of the Community Asset Transfer of Rural Libraries
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Organisational Change)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2015 Cabinet agreed a Medium Term Libraries Plan that outlined a sustainable libraries infrastructure for the future. This included designated hub libraries in Mold, Holywell, Connah’s Quay, Deeside Leisure Centre, Buckley and Flint. For rural libraries it recommended, during the autumn of 2015, assessing the feasibility of community asset transfers.

The re-location of libraries in Queensferry, Mancot and Hawarden to a new library in Deeside Leisure Centre was recommended and approved by Cabinet and this will be completed by March 1st 2016. The last element of the proposal was to progress with the transfer of library buildings, not services, to communities in Holywell and Broughton, this approach along with a continuing mobile and housebound provision is seen as a sustainable library service for the foreseeable future in Flintshire.

This report provides feedback on the assessment of the feasibility of community asset transfers in the areas of Hope, Mynydd Isa and Saltney. It recommends a way forward for each library and a timescale that fits within the context of the medium term libraries plan. It aims to support the achievement of the £0.544m of savings through Community Asset Transfers put forward as a budget efficiency proposal for 2016/17.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider the assessment of the feasibility of community asset transfers for the libraries in Hope, Mynydd Isa, and Saltney in particular reviewing the formal consultation with communities and the draft notes from Organisational Change Scrutiny Committee.
2	To proceed with community asset transfers in Hope and Mynydd Isa, with a target date range of April-June 2016 for completion and, with the final basis for transfer to be brought back to Cabinet.
3	In Saltney, based on the formal community consultation, to give to the end of February 2016 for further consideration by the community to express an interest with a final date of the end of June 2016 for any final transfer.
4	That if no interest is expressed by the community of Saltney by the end of February 2016 that provision of a library service is ceased from 31 st March 2016.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE FEASIBILITY OF A COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER FOR RURAL LIBRARIES
1.01	At the March 2015 Cabinet a Medium Term Plan for Libraries was proposed and agreed. This report deals specifically with the rural libraries (Hope, Mynydd Isa and Saltney). As agreed in the Medium Term Plan for Libraries an assessment of the feasibility of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of these libraries has taken place and this report now proposes a way forward.
1.02	Since March 2015 work has taken place to support ideas brought forward by each of the three communities. This includes:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hope, supporting the local Ward Member and the school to look at how integrating the school library and community library might enable the library to be more sustainable.• Mynydd Isa, work has taken place to provide details to Argoed Community Council of how a CAT might work and supporting Café Isa to consider if a CAT of the community centre, youth centre, and library might be feasible.• Saltney, where information has been requested about the community library then this has been provided, initially an expression of interest was received for the CAT of Saltney Library, although little discussion has taken place since about finding a solution for a CAT of the library to the community.
1.03	To ensure formal as well as informal consultation about the feasibility of a CAT of these libraries has been undertaken an information document asking for formal responses was sent out in November 2015 to town and

	<p>community councils and schools and was made available in libraries to library users. The deadline for responses was Friday 11th December 2015. A detailed analysis of these responses is provided at Appendix A including a copy of the consultation document.</p>
1.04	<p>In summary the responses can be detailed as follows</p> <p>Hope – An interest in a CAT from both an emerging ‘Friends of Hope Library Group’ and Hope Community Council. Castell Alun School are supportive of working with the community and enabling the library to be open to the community during school time. The local Ward Member, while supporting the integration of school and community library, asks for continuation of paid for library staff during the school holidays.</p> <p>Mynydd Isa – An interest in a CAT from Caffi Isa. Local Ward Members and residents have a range of queries about how this CAT may work</p> <p>Saltney – No interest at present from the Community Council in taking forward the CAT, Ward Members both ask for an extension for consideration of a CAT but have differing views about how this might best be achieved.</p>
1.05	<p>There are two potential solutions for a Community Asset Transfer as outlined in the consultation document and in line with Welsh Government identified best practice</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The community operate a book stock and IT equipment with no professional library input. This is relatively low cost with only the costs of the building and replacement of book stock and IT equipment required. (2) The community buy back professional librarians and / or access to the library management system for recording and ordering issues. In this way the library remains part of the library network but the community have to pick up a large proportion of the current costs of the library. .
1.06	<p>The early work to support the communities and the formal consultation show that a CAT is feasible in both Hope and Mynydd Isa as there are community organisations coming forward with a commitment to make a CAT work. In both instances it is likely that option (1) in 1.05 is the more likely solution. More work is required now to support the community to finalise their plan for a CAT. It is proposed a target date of March 31st 2015 is set for completing this work while recognising it may require more time. A final date for completion of these CATs and therefore provision of library services in these areas is proposed at the end of June 2016.</p>
1.07	<p>The early work to support the community and the formal consultation show that a CAT at present is not feasible in Saltney. Given the consultation responses ask for more time, while recognising there are proposed budget savings attached to this work for 2016/17, it is proposed to give the community of Saltney until the end of February 2016 to consider again if a CAT is feasible and how this might work. It is proposed to make clear that if an interest is not expressed by this stage then the service ceases at the end of March 2016. The final date for completion of this CAT and therefore</p>

	provision of library service in this area is proposed at the end of June 2016.
1.08	<p>The results of this assessment of feasibility of the community asset transfers in these three areas was taken to Organisational Change Scrutiny Committee for comment on 11th January 2016. The draft notes from a constructive discussion detail the following:</p> <p>1. That the assessment of the feasibility of community asset transfers for the libraries in Hope, Mynydd Isa and Saltney, in particular the formal consultation with communities be received, subject to:</p> <p>a) the holding of a meeting with interested parties in Saltney within the next four weeks;</p> <p>b) the provision of the information requested on the operation of the Library Management System; how it currently relates to book stock and acquisitions and how it could be developed for the future;</p> <p>c) the increase in the 'lent book stock' to community operated libraries being set at 100 books</p> <p>2. That the committee's views on the feasibility of Community Asset Transfers and alternative acceptable solutions for the three libraries is noted and referenced by the officers in further developing solutions.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS										
2.01	<p>Financial Implications</p> <p>The cost of current library provision in each area are as follow:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Library</th> <th>Cost £</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hope</td> <td>£13,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mynydd Isa</td> <td>£34,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Saltney</td> <td>£41,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Total</td> <td>£88,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>A Community Asset Transfer of these libraries or a cessation of service would, on an annual basis, save the amounts indicated above.</p> <p>As part of a CAT consideration would be given to one off revenue start-up funding for the first year and a one off capital grant towards capital building costs associated with the condition survey. These amounts being capped at the maximum figure as outlined in the report to Cabinet on the 15th June 2015</p>	Library	Cost £	Hope	£13,000	Mynydd Isa	£34,000	Saltney	£41,000	Total	£88,000
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2.02	<p>Human Resource Implications</p> <p>If either CATs are progressed as identified in option 1 in 1.05 or a cessation of service occurs then no library staff will be required in future.</p> <p>If either CATs are progressed as identified in option 1 in 1.05 or a cessation of service occurs then no library staff will be required in future. The total number of staff employed at these libraries at present are 5</p>										

	<p>people or 1.08 ftes. The way forward for this is to follow normal Human Resource procedure including staff consultation. It is likely in this instance that staff will be redeployed/assimilated into vacant posts in the library network.</p> <p>If communities did identify funding to continue a professional library service then posts would be retained, however, this is considered unlikely.</p>
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Informal consultation has taken place with parties interested in CATs including Town and Community Councils, school and community groups.</p> <p>Formal consultation with Town and Community, schools and library users as detailed in Appendix A.</p>

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>Key Risks and Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That communities do not come forward with a sustainable CAT proposal – services cease at the latest in these libraries by the end of June 2016. (2) Communities do not have the required skills and capacity to take on a CAT – support will be provided by the library service and Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and if, at the end of this, it is not considered feasible then services will cease. (3) Communities can manage a CAT for a short period of time but not in the long term – the building returns to the Council and the Council consider best use of the asset. (4) Loss of these services puts at risk performance against Public Library Standards – Flintshire will still meet the standard of providing libraries for 75% of the population within 2.5 miles.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix A – Library Service Consultation In Relation to the Feasibility of a Community Asset Transfer of Hope, Mynydd Isa and Saltney Libraries : Summary Report</p> <p>Appendix B – Equality Monitoring and Impact Assessment – CAT for Hope, Mynydd Isa and Saltney Libraries</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Medium Term Libraries Plan – Cabinet March 2015</p> <p>Contact Officers: Pennie Corbett, Principal Librarian Telephone: 01352 704402 E-mail: pennie.corbett@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Community Asset Transfer – The transfer of a building to a community organisation with a 27 year lease and peppercorn rent.</p> <p>Public Library Standards – Welsh Governments assessment of the quality of public library services, it is not an assessment of whether library services meet their statutory duty.</p>