

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **17TH MARCH 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE 1**
(IRB)
CHIEF OFFICER ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE 2 (NC)
CHIEF OFFICER COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE

SUBJECT: **MEDIUM TERM PLAN FOR LIBRARY AND**
CONNECTS SERVICES

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To consider future plans for Library and Connects Services, that include proposals for the development of a new library and Connects in two new locations, and agrees to public consultation on specific elements of these proposals.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Library Services are a key way of ensuring people can read, access information, learn and have free access to computers. Flintshire has a good track record of delivering against Public Library Standards and is committed to ensuring an effective and sustainable network of library services.

2.02 As the Council are facing the enormous challenge of delivering services within reduced resources the Council's Library services are working on a plan of how to ensure an effective and sustainable network, with a maximum of 70% of current resources. The first stage of this plan was to reduce the budget by 10% in 2015/16 by providing services differently (e.g. housebound services) or reducing service provision (e.g. reduction in opening hours). In 2015/16 the aim has been not to close libraries. However, for 2016/17 onwards unless there are significant changes to the library network then there is a real risk that this may happen. This report outlines significant proposals to change the library network that if successful provides the best chance of ensuring an effective and sustainable network of library services. A summary of key facts in this report relating to the library proposals is provided at Appendix A and an equality and wider impact assessment of proposals relating to a new Library at Deeside Leisure Centre is provided at Appendix B.

2.03 Connects services have been effectively set up at Holywell, Flint and Connahs Quay. Library Service links with Connects have already been made at Connahs Quay and this has proved very successful and

incorporates a museum space within the facility.

- 2.04 There is a desire to extend this provision to other geographical areas but a realism that to do this it needs to be by integrating with other services and being as efficient as possible. This report outlines a plan for doing this working closely with the provision of library services.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 There is a recognition that modern libraries need to be situated in places that will have maximum footfall such as high streets or by co-location and integration with other services in a 'hub' type of facility.

- 3.02 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, 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), currently with 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.

- 3.03 Smaller libraries in Mynydd Isa, Saltney and Hope provide very valuable but limited services to smaller communities. During 2015/16 the opening hours of these libraries based on usage and demand has reduced significantly. In the current context to continue to manage library buildings and provide services in these locations is not sustainable. However, the community asset transfer scheme, developed by the Council, does give communities an opportunity to take on these assets with the potential for one off funds for establishing a service and/or contributing towards buildings repair and maintenance. Halkyn currently pay towards the costs of a library service provided a building they own and operate.

- 3.04 Broughton is a community with a growing population and falls between being seen as a hub location or a smaller library. There is the potential to provide some library services in Broughton if integrated with other provision such as Connects, but to be sustainable this would need to be within a community managed building.

- 3.05 It is now proposed that plans for linking Library and Connects development be made at Mold, Buckley, (and a peripatetic service for Broughton). Connects has improved face to face service delivery, it has enabled the closure of cash offices realising efficiencies, has provided savings to back office service delivery in many areas and has

made savings in the running costs of Council assets.

It is now proposed to develop Connects centres in the libraries in Mold and Buckley. They will offer the full range of services but will not be on the same scale as the existing Connects centres. This will improve access to services across all the main towns in Flintshire.

There is adequate accommodation at Buckley library on the first floor for Connects and space on the ground floor to install a cash payment machine.

The tourist information centre is due to close at the Mold library by the 1st April 2015 this space can be utilised for a Connects service. The payment machine has already been installed in the library.

Connects staffing levels are adequate to cover the three existing Connects centres plus the proposals for Buckley and Mold. However this would be subject to the reduction of the current opening hours to align to customer demand. The intention would be to reduce Connects opening hours slightly Monday to Friday and to close on Saturday mornings.

Connects would work closely with the library service to deliver a joined up customer facing service, these proposals could be medium term arrangements while town centre master planning is considered over the next few years.

For Broughton it is proposed to develop a Connects Lite Service. This would be an outreach service available for a fixed number of sessions per week at the library. Subject to service integration between library and Connects staff should there be any revenue costs these will be minimal. It is not anticipated that there will be any capital cost incurred at Broughton.

Service demand for all Connects will be assessed regularly so that services can be adjusted in terms of opening hours, and range of services needed to meet local need.

- 3.06 The table below indicates a medium term plan for Library and Connects provision that has the best chance of providing effective and sustainable provision. It includes proposals for the development of a new library and two new Connects services within libraries.

Library	Proposal	Proposal for Connects and / or other hub services
Mold	Hub Library	Proposed new Connects and some Tourist Information provision in the library

Flint	Hub Library	Explore potential for integration with Connects and other services
Connahs Quay	Hub Library	Already linked with Connects
Buckley	Hub Library	Proposed new Connects within the library
Deeside Leisure Centre and Library	Proposed New Hub Library with the relocation of Queensferry, Mancot and Hawarden Library Services	Leisure facilities including soft play and café plus Library Headquarters base, this proposal has the potential to attract grant funding to develop the library within the leisure centre
Holywell	Hub Library	Potential to consider integration with any community asset transfer of the leisure centre and opportunities for Connects links in the future
Broughton	Community Library	Library services and some Connects services to be operated from within a community managed facility
Mynydd Isa Saltney Hope (Halkyn)	Community Asset	Supplemented by a range of library services e.g. mobile service, housebound service.

3.08 This medium term plan can be implemented in stages and at each stage it is critical to consult with communities prior to final consideration of any proposal. Outlined below are the key stages and dates for considering proposals and consulting with communities.

- March / April 2015 – consult with Queensferry, Mancot and Hawarden communities about the proposal to develop Deeside Hub Library, to include stakeholder meetings in communities.
- May 2015 – consider final proposals for a Deeside Hub Library based on funding decision from CyMAL (see section 5) and the result of public consultation.
- Spring 2015 – start development of Connects provision in Mold and Buckley libraries.

- Summer/Autumn 2015 – consult and assess the feasibility of community asset transfers for Mynydd Isa, Saltney and Hope Libraries and the feasibility of a community library with some Connects provision in Broughton.
- April 2016 – implement new model of provision.
- Summer 2016 – explore and consult about further integration of provision within each of the Hub Libraries.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 To commit to developing an effective and sustainable network of Libraries and Connects Services based on 6 hub locations in Connahs Quay, Mold, Flint, Buckley, Holywell, Deeside Leisure Centre.
- 4.02 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.
- 4.03 To develop new Connects services in Mold and Buckley that are located within the libraries.
- 4.04 To engage with specific communities during 2015 to:
- assess the feasibility of a community asset transfer in Mynydd Isa, Saltney and Hope libraries;
 - explore the potential of a community library and some Connects service provision in a community managed building in Broughton.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 There are a range of financial impacts that are detailed in the report. Most of these are either contained within existing budget proposals or will make efficiencies for future years.

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 approximately £0.100m with the remainder to be found within existing budgets. If the grant is unsuccessful or CyMAL require further match funding then future consideration would need to be made about how this can be achieved.

The proposed re-location of three libraries into the library 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. A full financial analysis will be provided in the final decision report which is planned to be brought forward in May after community consultation.

There is currently £0.250m identified in the capital budget for both Mold and Buckley Connects. It is expected that works to deliver a connects and Buckley and Mold Libraries should not exceed £0.100m in total.

Longer term plans for Community Asset Transfer, Community Library development and the further integration of services at hub libraries will deliver efficiencies that will aim to ensure services are sustainable. Detailed financial plans will be put in place prior to implementation of the model in April 2016.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The Connects proposals aim to sustain and develop services for communities most in need. The impact assessment at Appendix B provides a detailed analysis of how the proposals for the development of a library at Deeside leisure impacts on particular groups and how these can be mitigated.

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 and new Connects Services.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 A draft equalities impact assessment is attached at Appendix B 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 3 libraries to Deeside Leisure Centre. Further integration of work between libraries and Connects services will be required. Further extension of the Connects service has been described in Section 3 of the report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 As detailed in the report in relation to the library proposals.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Consultation with ward members in relation to Connects is taking place on an ongoing basis as is consultation with groups working through community asset transfer.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 Appendix A – Key Benefits and Facts relating to the Medium Term Plan
Appendix B – Equality Monitoring and Impact Assessment for New Library at Deeside Leisure Centre

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS - None

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