

Cabinet	CAB/004/11
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LIBRARY SERVICE – REVISED SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

Report by Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

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Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to bring before Cabinet proposals for Essex County Council's Library Service to make savings of £4 million over the two financial years, 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to consider the recommendations to achieve **£1.957M** savings per annum through the following areas:

- Review of staffing levels, capacity and need. This will deliver £744,000 per annum in savings and will impact on 21 posts.
- Review of library service opening hours, helping to save £857,000 per annum. It is proposed that opening hours of the 73 static libraries be reduced overall by 16% from 2,652 hours per week to 2,232 hours, with library opening hours based on 6 bandings linked to catchment area population. It is proposed that no branch library be closed down.
- Review of mobile library routes and fleet. This will deliver £106,000 per annum in savings and will impact on 2 FTE posts. Routes are being re-configured but with no reduction in communities served.
- Reduction in the stock resource fund. This will deliver savings of £250,000 per annum.

Decisions

Cabinet is asked to approve the recommendations in this report.

Background context

The Library Service has already undergone a significant degree of transformation over the last 5 years, using for example, technology such as digital books and subscriptions to automate elements of the service. The Service:

- has significantly increased customer self service enabled by radio frequency identification (RFID);
- has identified the highest stock discounts available;
- is working in partnership with a number of organisations to co-locate and integrate services within libraries to make the most efficient use of property and provide seamless services to communities e.g. with North Weald Parish Council and Braintree District Council; and
- is identifying significant new income streams through trading such as winning the Slough library contract.

Implementing these measures has delivered a very efficient and lean service; however further savings do need to be found and as such the following proposals will affect opening hours and staffing levels in many libraries.

The library service reductions outlined in this paper comprise the following elements, each having a different impact to be considered:

1. Staffing Review	£744k
2. Review of service hours	£857k
3. Review of mobile library fleet	£106k
4. Reduction in the stock resource fund	£250k
Total savings	£1,957k

Areas of the county affected

These proposals affect library services across the county. The library service is a universal one, regarded as high performing, having won awards and recognition for the quality of service it provides and for its innovative approach, especially in the areas of technology. These factors were recently recognised as contributing to the successful winning of the tender to deliver Slough's library service.

According to National Indicator NI9, Essex libraries have been used within the last year by over 50% of the adult (over 16) population. Chelmsford Library is the 2nd busiest in England in terms of loans. Further, in 2010, a peer review which followed the Scottish Government's Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM) framework, rated Essex as a level six (the highest possible rating) in both information and reading services and hailed Essex Libraries as an 'outstanding sector leading' service.

Options/ Proposals

1) Staffing review:

The proposed review will reduce the overall number of posts for:

- Group Library Managers
- Customer Service Supervisors
- Audience Development Officers

Job title	Current structure	Proposed structure	Working to
Group Library Managers (North)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braintree • Clacton • Colchester • Harlow • Harwich • Saffron Walden • Witham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braintree Group • Harlow/Saffron Walden Group • Colchester Group • Maldon/Witham Group • Tendring Group 	Library Locality Manager North
Group Library Managers (South)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basildon • Billericay • Brentwood • Canvey • Chelmsford • Loughton • Maldon • Rayleigh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basildon/Canvey Group • Brentwood/Billericay Group • Chelmsford Group • Epping Forest Group • Rochford Group 	Library Locality Manager South.
Customer Service Supervisors (North)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braintree x 2 • Clacton x 2 • Colchester x 4 • Harlow x 2 • Saffron Walden x 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braintree Group x 1 (based at Braintree) • Harlow Group/Saffron Walden Group x 2 (1 at Harlow, 1 at Saffron Walden) • Colchester Group x 3 • Tendring Group x 1 (based at Clacton) 	The appropriate Group Manager
Customer Service Supervisors (South)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basildon x 2 • Billericay x 2 • Brentwood x 2 • Chelmsford x 4 • Loughton x 2 • Rayleigh x 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basildon/Canvey x 1 (1 at Basildon) • Brentwood/Billericay x 2 (1 at Brentwood, 1 at Billericay) • Chelmsford Group x 3 • Epping Forest Group x1 (based at Loughton) • Rochford Group x 1 (based at Rayleigh) 	The appropriate Group Manager
Audience Development Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience Development Officers x 19.5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience Development Officers x 14.5 	The appropriate Specialist Manager

The proposed number of posts reflects the Council's targets for spans and layers of management. This applies to Group Managers and Customer Service Supervisors only.

Proposed impact on current posts

Post	Grade	Current structure (FTE)	Proposed structure (FTE)	Difference (FTE)
Group Library Manager	Band 5	15	10	-5

Customer Service Supervisor	Band 4	26	15	-11
Audience Development Officers	Band 4	19.5	14.5	-5
Total				-21

This will realise £744,000 towards the savings target.

2) Review of Service Hours:

The current level and pattern of opening hours of static branches is based on historic practice. The level and pattern of opening hours have been reviewed in relation to the catchment area population that they serve¹.

The proposed total hours per library have been calculated by categorising each library into a band according to its catchment population, namely:

1. Over 100,000 population – 59 hours per week
2. 30,000 – 100,000 people – 48 hours per week
3. 20,000 – 30,000 people – 42 hours per week
4. 10,000 – 20,000 people – 34 hours per week
5. 7,000 – 10,000 people – 24 hours per week
6. Under 7,000 people – 16 hours per week

The appended list of libraries (in background papers) sets out the new/proposed opening hours. 54 libraries will see a reduction in hours, 6 will have no change in the number of hours allocated and 13 libraries should have an increase in hours on the basis of their calculated areas but will not see this implemented until funding is available. The only potential exception to the uniform bands will be when a partner pays for or provides support in opening the library for additional hours.

As far as is practical the service will follow the preferred pattern of when one library is closed, another in the vicinity will be open to ensure continuation of service.

Impact on staffing

The Service proposes that all operational posts which are currently vacant will not be filled. Some vacant posts have been filled on a fixed-term basis. These fixed-term contracts will end at various times up to, but not beyond, the end of June 2011. This measure may result in some operational pressures in some libraries which can be overcome by introducing greater mobility of location among staff. (See option 3.)

The measures mentioned above will not result in all the savings required, therefore further options have been considered – see below.

Option 1

All staff in scope to reduce their working hours. The reduction required would be between 5% and 10%. This option could be applied equally across all posts. This option would have a financial consequence for all staff involved and would be a relatively expensive way administratively of delivering savings.

Option 2

A full review of all staffing requirements for every library, bringing in a revised number of posts with a uniform pattern of hours, for example, the majority of posts to be 18.5 or 37

¹ Catchment population is determined by plotting postcodes of customers using a specific library and identifying the population numbers of those areas using census ward population data

hours, resulting in a reduced number of posts overall. All staff in scope would be required to apply for new positions. While this option would give the opportunity for a rationalised staffing structure to be put in place, possibly leading to more efficient management and other processes, it would disproportionately affect some staff more than others and require considerable time and resource to implement. This option would also require compulsory redundancies.

Option 3

The majority of the element of the staffing budget previously allocated to peak relief is withdrawn and used to achieve the savings requirement. This option would require all staff to work more flexibly across days, times and locations to cover for colleagues' absences and for the deleted vacancies and fixed-term posts mentioned above. A small peak relief budget would be retained for specific purposes. The risks inherent in this option are that small libraries which experience unplanned staff absence may occasionally not be able to open. This option would require a degree of management and administration to deliver and could raise the level of operational risk to the service. The benefits of this option for permanent staff would be that no-one would be required to reduce their hours or be compulsorily made redundant. For the public there should be very little difference in normal service levels apart from the changes in opening hours.

This would release £857,000 towards the savings target.

Of these options, **number 3 is recommended** as the preferred option, on the basis of:

- Ability to deliver savings within the calendar year
- No redundancy provision needs to be made in the staffing budget
- Flexibility to introduce opening hours reductions as agreed
- Ability to involve the permanent staffing establishment fully in the changes
- Risk of small library closure due to unplanned staff absence can be contained by effective service management

3) Review of Mobile Library fleet:

A review of the Mobile Library fleet, with the operational fleet reducing from 12 to 11 vehicles and removing the reserve vehicle. The routes will be recast so that no reduction in communities served will occur. There will be the loss of 2 mobile supervisor posts from the structure.

This will release £106,000 towards the savings target.

4) Reduction in stock resource fund:

The Service proposes to reduce the fund by £250k to an annual budget of £2,679,081, representing a reduction of 8.5%. It is proposed that this saving will be found primarily from expenditure on DVDs and music CDs, both areas of stock having experienced a decline in demand in recent years.

This will release £250,000 towards the savings target.

Conclusions

The four areas identified above deliver savings of £1,957,000.

In order to make the required level of savings some changes to service are required. However officers are confident that by following the proposals above, a good quality library service can be maintained, whilst retaining sufficient ability to win business from external contracts. The latter will be a key element for budget sustainability for the service over future years.

Relevance to ECC corporate plan and other Strategic Plans

Essex County Council has a vision of delivering the best quality of life in Britain. Essex libraries help support the achievement of the following corporate priorities:

- Supporting vulnerable people
- Increasing educational achievement and skills
- Promoting health and leisure
- Delivering value for money

In addition, Essex County Council has an overarching priority of **putting the customer first**.

The proposals in this paper are focused on delivering value for money whilst ensuring that no libraries are closed down.

The proposals could impact on the County Council's property and people strategies, in that some savings attached to these strategies are enabled by Essex Libraries with its WiFi intranet providing touchdown centres for peripatetic staff. Whilst specific numbers of staff, locations and touchdown times are yet to be provided, the proposal to reduce the library opening hours by 16% may impact on these corporate strategies. Discussions are therefore ongoing with other ECC departments to ensure that the Library service supports these wider corporate objectives.

Internal and External Consultation

Internal consultation began in week beginning the 10th January 2011 with all staff having the opportunity to attend a consultation meeting by the 25th January. Staff consultation will be ongoing.

ECC members have been informed of proposals and invited to feedback.

External consultation on local preferences for opening hours will run from the 14th February 2011– 27th March 2011.

Legal Implications (Monitoring Officer)

This proposal does not raise governance issues. In so far as it has employment implications for the staff involved care should be taken to ensure that the correct procedures are put into effect.

Finance and Resources Implications (Section 151 Officer)

The proposed savings are consistent with those highlighted during the budget setting process and are incorporated to the same extent within the draft 2011/12 budget. The s151 Officer notes and welcomes the proposals to reflect more creatively around the methodology and options to achieve savings within staffing costs.

Human Resources Implications

The proposals have a significant impact on staff across the service and, given the prescribed consultation periods, senior managers have recently completed a round of consultation meetings to present the context and rationale for the proposals and to hear the views of staff and Trade Unions. Staff have appreciated this early opportunity to be consulted and to understand the choices available to them. A communications plan is in place to assist in maintaining effective staff engagement throughout the change implementation. For frontline staff, acceptance of greater flexibility in deployment will help to minimise compulsory redundancy and reduce expenditure on temporary cover. Measures taken by management to hold vacant posts together with the use of fixed term contracts will also smooth implementation.

The internal consultation with staff has made the offer to all permanent staff that (with no guarantee of being successful) any of them may apply:

- to reduce their working hours
- to change their work base to a different library
- for voluntary redundancy

The time scales and processes for such applications are built into the 90 day consultation process.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Staffing review:

The rationale for the proposed new structure reflects future service needs and budget provision. All staff within the scope of this review reflect the current diversity of the Library staff. Ring fencing arrangements reflect the Council's Organisational change policy which itself aims to ensure best practice, fairness and equality and fairness when implementing organisational change. The policy itself has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

2. Review of Service Hours:

The proposed opening hours review will reduce the availability of static libraries during some evenings and weekends. All libraries are and will continue to be open on Saturdays. (These proposals will be subject to a public consultation on packages of proposed opening hours to ensure that users have the opportunity to express a preference for a pattern that best suits their needs.)

Provision via the internet is available and will be increased; this mode of accessing services enables activities such as reserving books for collection on a subsequent date.

3. Review of Mobile library fleet:

Mobile service users may experience a change in the day or time of their service, which may be unsettling or inconvenient for some. A consultation process with mobile library users will both draw attention to changes and engage users in the proposed mobile library service route solutions.

4. Reduction in stock resource fund:

People unable to use print material might potentially be disadvantaged in their use of the library service to a greater extent (as opposed to those who are able to use print) by any

reduction in spending on audiovisual material. However, the proposed reductions will be targeted primarily at DVD and music CD collections, which are used equally by all categories of user, rather than, for example, audiobooks which have a greater importance for print-disabled people.

Also, the primary purpose of providing DVD and music CDs (for which there is no legal requirement in the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act) has been to generate income, which has been declining in recent years in light of competing format; this reduction in expenditure reflects that decline.

Background papers

Opening hours schedule showing current and proposed hours by library. The below spreadsheet is published as CAB/004/11 Appendix 1.



opening hours
changes in total.xls