

CABINET

23 July 2013

Title: Future Management Arrangements for the Library Service	
Report of the Leader of the Council	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
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Accountable Divisional Director: Paul Hogan, Divisional Director of Culture and Sport	
Accountable Director: Anne Bristow, Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services	
Summary <p>When it set the budget for 2014/15, the Council agreed a saving of £593,000 from the library service.</p> <p>Specific options for how this would be achieved were not subject to the scrutiny process at that time. Instead it was decided that Ward Councillors would lead a consultation exercise about the library service to inform the development of new ways of delivering the service at a lower cost.</p> <p>The Safer and Stronger Select Committee met on 19 June 2013 to consider the findings from the consultation process and different options for the future management of the service. This pre-decision scrutiny by Members has been used to shape the proposals for the library service for consideration by Cabinet.</p> <p>This report recommends that a mixed economy approach should be adopted for the service, which, if agreed, would see a library service being delivered by directly employed staff, as well as through a community management arrangement and by using volunteers.</p>	
Recommendation(s) <p>Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Agree the implementation of Option Two as set out in this report in respect of the future management arrangements for the Library Service;(ii) Authorise the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services, in consultation with the Divisional Director of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. conclude the transfer of the Rush Green library building to the Housing Service subject to agreement by the Divisional Director of Finance of the sum required,	

and

b. approve the leasing arrangements for the Robert Jeyes library;

- (iii) Note that savings of £400,000 will be achieved from implementing the above proposals in 2014/15;
- (iv) Agree that the difference between the agreed budget saving of £593,000 and the anticipated saving of £400,000 will be managed by the application of corporate contingency funds in 2014/15, and that for 2015/16 the shortfall will be addressed as part of the budget savings requirement; and
- (v) Agree that where appropriate and feasible, officers will bring forward the implementation of these proposals into 2013/14.

Reason(s)

The budget savings proposals are designed to contribute to the challenging budget shortfall and enable the Council to achieve a balanced budget while having regard for the Council's key priorities and its statutory obligations.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 As part of the 2013/14 budget round, Cabinet agreed a saving of £593,000 from the library service for 2014/15.
- 1.2 One of the ways this could potentially be achieved would be through introducing a three tier service delivery arrangement that combines directly managed libraries (Dagenham Library and Barking Learning Centre) alongside services delivered by volunteers and/or community organisations (Valence, Thames View, Marks Gate, Rush Green and Robert Jeyes).
- 1.3 To enable Members to make an informed decision about the viability of this and other potential management options, relevant Ward Councillors agreed to undertake a series of public consultation meetings in November and December 2012 at Robert Jeyes library, Valence library, Marks Gate library, and Thames View library. A consultation event for Rush Green library service users was held in April 2013.
- 1.4 A meeting with voluntary sector organisations was held in January 2013 to see what appetite there is for community management of libraries. There was a low turnout at the meeting and so it was difficult to gauge at that stage what interest there is from existing groups to pursue this type of arrangement.
- 1.5 A pre-decision scrutiny review was undertaken by the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee on 19 June 2013 about the findings from the consultation process. The views provided have been used to shape the recommendations for the future management of the library service that are set out in this report.

2. Consultation findings

2.1 A summary of the key findings from the public consultation events is set out below:

- There was scepticism about the likelihood of being able to recruit and retain enough volunteers to maintain a good level of service across several libraries;
- There was concern about security of stock and buildings if there were only volunteers running the service;
- Libraries play a key role in the development of children's literacy and provide a quiet place for study and research;
- Not everyone has access to the internet at home but they can get this at the library;
- Libraries are important community facilities that are safe and accessible to everybody;
- Libraries are used for lots of reasons not just to take books out;
- Library staff are valued by service users. They don't believe that volunteers will be able to provide the same quality of service. Staff provide training, advice and information in a way that volunteers won't be able to;
- Service users would accept changes to opening hours and different uses of library space to bring in more income if this would save jobs;
- The Council has a legal duty to provide libraries, so cuts should be made to other services before libraries;
- Older people value libraries because they are safe and warm places where they can meet and socialise and because staff are friendly and helpful. Concerns were expressed that older people will become more isolated and lonely if the way libraries are being run is changed (there are 2,500 people over 60 who are Active Borrowers - about 9% of the total);
- If changes have to be made, service users would prefer it if an arrangement was put in place that combines volunteers with some staff;
- Savings should be made from the book stock fund and back office costs to protect front line services;
- Concerns were raised around the cost of training volunteers who might then leave;
- Opportunities to lever in external funding and business sponsorship should be pursued as a way of reducing costs; and
- There was scepticism about the viability of introducing community management because this type of arrangement is so new that there aren't many longstanding examples of where this has worked in the long term.

3. Options

3.1 Three options have been developed for consideration by Cabinet, which are summarised in table one below.

Table 1 savings options

Option	Description	Saving (£)
<p>Option 1 Volunteers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council directly manages Dagenham Library and Barking Learning Centre (as now). • Volunteer delivered services at the following libraries: Valence, Thames View, Marks Gate and Robert Jeyes. • Rush Green library closes. Enhanced service provided at Barking and Dagenham learning centre (Rush Green Campus) • Staffing restructure undertaken to reduce posts across all facilities. 	<p>593,000</p>
<p>Option 2 Mixed economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council directly manages Dagenham Library, Barking Learning Centre, Valence Library and Thames View Library (as now). • Reduced opening hours at Valence library (43 hours per week down to 36) and Thames View library (43 hours per week down to 30). • Community management arrangement introduced at Robert Jeyes Library. • Volunteer delivered service at Marks Gate Library but facility still managed by the Council. • Rush Green library closes. Enhanced service provided at Barking and Dagenham learning centre (Rush Green Campus) • Service restructure undertaken to produce savings. 	<p>400,000</p>
<p>Option 3 'in house' management but reduced service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All libraries directly managed by the Council but with reduced service. • Staffing restructure is undertaken to produce savings. 	<p>200,000</p>

3.2 Option 2 incorporates the responses received from the pre-decision scrutiny by the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee. In addition to the options

prepared by officers, Members specifically asked for proposals to be included to provide savings by reducing opening hours at Valence and Thames View libraries.

3.3 Scrutiny Members considered but did not support options to close Barking Learning Centre on Sunday and to close libraries to the public over lunchtime. They were also undecided about changing working patterns for staff to achieve savings and expressed concern about the impact that this would have on the workforce.

3.4 Some assumptions have been made for all three options (except where specified):

- Rush Green library closes;
- Book stock budget is reduced;
- IT software, hardware and support continues to be provided by the Council for any volunteer or community management arrangement;
- Self service terminals (RFID) to be provided by the Council at each library, which will allow service users to borrow and return books themselves as well as extend loan periods;
- Library service to provide recruitment (inc. Disclosure Barring Service checks), induction and training of volunteers;
- Specialist support for specific activities, such as storytelling workshops, to be provided by the Library service; and
- Library service continues to have responsibility for cleaning, building maintenance and other running costs except for option two in relation to Robert Jeyes Library.

Rush Green Library

3.5 A meeting was held in January 2013 between Eastbrook Ward Councillors and the Principal and Chief Executive of Barking and Dagenham College to discuss the future operation and viability of Rush Green Library in the context of the College's decision to build a new library with community access, which is scheduled to open in September 2013.

3.6 Following that meeting, officers have met with relevant managers at the College to make sense of how the new learning centre could benefit service users of the Rush Green library. The key points are outlined below:

- The College has agreed that all regular events currently taking place at Rush Green library can be accommodated in the new facility.
- The learning centre will offer enhanced opening hours to that of the present library. This is currently open 3 days a week with one late evening until 7pm. It is envisaged that the library in the learning centre will be open at least 6 days a week with longer opening hours but these have yet to be finalised.
- We are exploring the best way to provide membership to residents and at this stage we are looking at running two library systems side by side. This will ensure that residents will continue to be able to access Borough library book stock.
- All stock in the College library is to be available to loan by the public who join at Rush Green campus. This means an improved range of stock will be available to users.
- Stock purchasing – LBBB library service has offered to purchase children's stock, adult fiction and spoken word materials for the College library. This will

be done through our current procurement arrangement as part of the London Libraries Consortium.

- Many more PCs will be available and for much longer than is currently the case with Rush Green library, however, the number of terminals has yet to be finalised.
- When the library opens in September 2013 it is proposed that groups of local residents and existing library service users will be invited to have tours of the new facility. These will be conducted by Barking and Dagenham library staff. This is to enable service users to familiarise themselves with the new building and layout and how they can join and use the new library.
- The College library will offer additional services not currently available at Rush Green library: extensive study spaces; access to a range of journals, magazines and newspapers; a café; and access to a range of online resources

3.7 The Ward Councillors agreed that the opportunity presented by the new College facility would be the key point for discussion at the consultation event for Rush Green library service users in April 2013. Following that meeting, the Ward Councillors have indicated that they would not be opposed to the closure of the library if this was to be considered appropriate and approved by Cabinet.

4. Options appraisal

4.1 Option 2 is the preferred option. This is because it has a significantly lower risk of failure than option 1 and is expected to realise double the level of savings compared to option 3.

4.2 It is estimated that option 2 will achieve a full year saving of £400,000 for 2014/15. Where appropriate and feasible, officers will bring forward the implementation of these proposals into 2013/14.

5. Financial implications

Prepared by Dawn Calvert, Group Manager – Finance

5.1 The net budget for the library service for 2013/14 is £2,201,000, a reduction of £669,000 on the 2011/12 net budget of £2,870,000.

5.2 It is estimated that savings of £400,000 will be achieved from the implementation of the proposals set out in this report; however, this is £193,000 less than the savings figure agreed by the Council for 2014/15.

5.3 Members are asked to agree that the funding gap will be managed by the application of corporate contingency funds in 2014/15. For 2015/16 the shortfall will be addressed as part of the budget savings requirement.

6. Legal implications

Prepared by Lucinda Bell, Senior Solicitor

6.1 This report provides a range of options to deliver savings that are required to meet budget pressures. Local authorities are under an explicit duty to ensure that their financial management is adequate and effective and that they have a sound system

of internal control and management of financial risk. The duty to secure Best Value requires local authorities to plan, deliver and continuously improve local authority services.

- 6.2 The Council has a duty under section 7 of the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 to provide '*a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof*' and this should be so evidenced by an examination of the needs and a suitable service plan to continue to meet the duty.
- 6.3 Where there are proposals for the closure or discontinuance of a service or services, appropriate consultation will need to be carried out. The savings proposals that affect staff will require consultation with Unions and staff.
- 6.4 The Council must have due regard to the duty imposed on it under s149 of the Equality Act 2010, that is to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that the Equality Act 2010 prohibits, and to:
 - Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those individuals who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.5 To achieve this, Members will need to be sure that a relevant Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out before the proposals are decided by Cabinet, and consider the results of this in full.
- 6.6 Decisions to reduce library services have been the subject of judicial review proceedings. In order act in accordance with public law principles it is important that any decision taken is reasonable, rational and procedurally correct. It is important that all relevant factors and considerations are taken into account, especially the consultation and the duty referred to above, under s149 of the Equality Act, and that Members retain an open mind.
- 6.7 Members must also consider the practical impact of the proposed decision, and the alternative courses of action that were proposed, and whether any adverse impacts arising from the decision to cut or withdraw funding or services can be mitigated, and give proper reasons for their decision.

7. Other implications

7.1 Risk management

Option 1

There is considered to be a high level of risk associated with this option because its success is dependent upon the recruitment and retention of a large number of volunteers to provide staffing cover during opening hours. The service could also be disrupted on a regular basis and at short notice if volunteers do not attend as expected.

Whilst there are about 50 volunteers currently working in LBBB libraries, many of whom would support the delivery of this service model, this is a low number when

compared to volunteering levels in other libraries in the Borough's benchmarking group.

The latest figures (2011/12) for Merton and Lewisham councils, both of which are in Barking and Dagenham Council's CIPFA benchmarking group, shows that Merton had over 500 volunteers giving nearly 25,000 hours of their time annually with the corresponding figures for Lewisham being over 300 volunteers giving nearly 30,000 hours of their time each year.

It is estimated that a total of about 600 volunteer hours per week, roughly 30,000 hours each year, will be required to maintain current opening hours and provide adequate cover for holidays and short term absence. The current figure is about 40 hours per week; however, it should be noted that there has been only limited effort to date to actively promote volunteering in the Borough's libraries.

There is no pattern to how volunteers currently choose to spend their time with the library service: some will have a day that fits with their other commitments, others can be flexible or prefer a morning/afternoon to fit with childcare or other commitments. Saturday volunteers tend to be those without other commitments. The time spent volunteering tends to be either an hour or two at a time

It is also clear that this option was very unpopular with people who attended the consultation events, which may dissuade some people from volunteering.

It will clearly be a big challenge to actively promote, recruit, train and retain the number of volunteers who would be needed to make this model of service delivery sustainable and successful. However, this is a challenge that other councils similar to Barking and Dagenham have successfully addressed over time. It could therefore be anticipated that the number of volunteers could be substantially increased over time.

Option 2

There is a lower level of risk associated with this option compared to option one because the current 'in house' management arrangement for five out of six LBBD libraries would be maintained.

It is considered feasible to operate Marks Gate Library by volunteers but with oversight of the facility by Children's Services staff who are based at the Marks Gate community centre. The community centre complex itself is managed by the Culture and Sport division.

Establishing a community management arrangement for Robert Jeyes library presents more of a challenge but it is considered that this could be achieved with adequate lead in time.

During the consultation process, this was the only library where service users expressed interest in investigating this type of management arrangement as a way of securing the future of the library.

With strong support and commitment from Whalebone Ward Councillors and the Barking and Dagenham CVS, several meetings have been held at the library with service users and a fledgling 'friends of the Robert Jeyes library' group has been formed. Although it is early days in the development of this group, it is considered

that over time it could develop in such a way that it could take on the management of the library but with continued support from the LBBB library service. However, it should be noted that members of the group have expressed concern about their capacity and capability at this time to effectively manage the library.

Exploratory meetings with the Headteacher at the nearby Warren Junior School have also been productive and there is initial interest in having further discussions about the school accessing space and services at the library as well as providing support with regard to governance arrangements.

There is also potential for the library to become a base for other activities for either children or older people.

Option 3

This option has the lowest level of risk. If adopted, all LBBB libraries would continue to be managed 'in house'. The saving would be achieved by a service restructure of the library service management team, which would mean that the current number of libraries would be maintained but the range and quality of service would be reduced.

7.2 **Staffing issues** – it is expected that there will be significant implications for staff, which include the deletion of about 12 full time equivalent posts (if option 2 is implemented). The Trade Unions have been fully briefed on the budget challenge facing the Council. Staff have been briefed around the implications of the specific proposals set out in this report, and following this meeting formal consultation will start in line with the Council's change management policies. Comments from staff and Trade Unions will be taken into account in the final decision making process.

7.3 **Customer impact** - the equalities impact assessment for the library service indicates that women, older people and children and young people would be particularly affected by any reduction to the current level of library provision across the Borough.

At this time it is considered that a good quality and comprehensive library service continues to be provided across the Borough: fewer than 1,000 of the Borough's residents live more than 1 mile away or further than 20 minutes travel time by public transport to a library. This takes into account current library provision in the neighbouring boroughs of Havering and Redbridge.

None of the options outlined in this report envisage a reduction in the number and distribution of the service across the Borough or that there will be any adverse impact to the core offer; however, it is recognised that the quality of service that can be provided by a community managed or volunteer led service is unlikely to be as consistently good as that provided by a wholly Council managed service.

Steps will be taken to minimise any adverse impact by the Council retaining responsibility for sourcing and providing book stock, maintaining IT support including self-service terminals, giving specialist support for activities and events, and support for recruitment and training of volunteers.

7.4 **Crime and Disorder Issues** - the Council has a statutory duty to consider crime and disorder implications in all its decision making. The Council will continue to

provide and support the delivery of quality facilities and activities, which will provide positive activities for all residents and, in particular, opportunities for families to enjoy their leisure time together.

- 7.5 **Health issues** - it is recognised that libraries have huge potential to contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities as well as the needs of the most vulnerable within communities, who need access to good quality information and digital literacy skills to participate effectively in an increasingly online world.

Libraries provide space for people to meet and socialise and schemes like the Home Library Service help to reduce loneliness, which can be a particular problem for some older people especially those who find it difficult to get out and about.

- 7.6 **Safeguarding** - libraries provide a unique resource to help improve literacy levels in adults and children, in particular for those residents for whom English is not their first language. They also offer quiet, safe and well equipped study and research space for residents of all ages.

The service delivers the library service for a number of local schools as well as activities that encourage children and young people to develop a love of books and reading.

All Council libraries operate within the Culture and Sport division's safeguarding policy framework for children and vulnerable adults. The new library to be provided in the Barking and Dagenham learning centre (Rush Green campus) will follow the Barking and Dagenham College's safeguarding arrangements.

The Council will require robust safeguarding arrangements to be adopted for the proposed community management arrangement for the Robert Jeyes Library. To support this it is intended that the Council will provide recruitment (incl. Disclosure Barring Service checks), induction and training support for all volunteers.

- 7.7 **Property/Asset issues** - this report recommends the closure of Rush Green library and the transfer of the Robert Jeyes library to a community management arrangement.

This report seeks delegated authority for the disposal of the redundant Rush Green library building as well as the leasing arrangements for the Robert Jeyes library.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- Report to Cabinet – Barking and Dagenham library strategy (23 July 2013)
- Report to Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee – future management arrangements for the library service (19 June 2013)
- Equality Impact Assessment – LBBD library service

List of appendices: None