

LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

To: **Highways and Community Infrastructure**

Meeting Date: **20 January 2015**

From: **Executive Director of Economy, Transport and Environment**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **2015/013** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose: **The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's views on the draft Strategy for the Future of Library Services and to seek their agreement to this forming the basis for stakeholder and public engagement.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

a) approve the draft Strategy for the Future of Library Services in Cambridgeshire,

b) agree that this document forms the basis of initial stakeholder and public engagement on the future of the Library Service, as set out in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5

<i>Officer contact:</i>	
Name:	Christine May
Post:	Head of Community and Cultural Services
Email:	Christine.may@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 703521

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of the challenging financial situation faced by the County Council over the next 3 years, a new approach to library service provision needs to be identified which will deliver significant savings and secure the long-term future of the library service. The Council's draft Business Plan sets out £1.595M of savings from the service over the next 3 years, along with £240k of additional income into the service. The current budget for the library service (2014/15) totals £4.542M.
- 1.2 The service has already achieved savings in excess of £2M over the past 3 years through the 21st Century Libraries Programme, which was commenced in 2011/12. This included reductions in the mobile library service; wholesale staff restructuring with reductions at every level; rationalisation of library opening hours; greater reliance on new technology including self-service approaches; greater reliance on working with volunteers; and partnership working with other library authorities to bring economies of scale.
- 1.3 Savings proposals for 2015/16, amounting to £540k, are currently being consulted on with staff. These are regarded as mainly efficiency savings in the short term and are designed to minimise the impact on front line services, whilst a longer term strategy for the future is developed. Efficiency savings will result in reductions in support services budgets, and a reduction in staffing at district hub libraries. The proposed 2015/16 savings also include an ongoing £200k reduction to the stock fund from the current annual allocation of £1.034M, which will mean that fewer new titles will be available than in previous years.
- 1.4 Clearly further and more radical approaches will be needed in future to deliver the level of savings required for 2016 onwards. At the same time, there is a growing recognition of the valuable role the service fulfils and the important outcomes it has for people, which provides great opportunities for others to harness, especially when linked to other public services. Work is underway across the Council and with partners to explore the potential of joint service provision.
- 1.4 The Government's Departments of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have recently published the report of a national review by William Sieghart of public library services, which states that *'Libraries are among the most valued of civic spaces. They have a cross generational appeal that other local authority services can only dream of and are a gateway to information, ranging from public health to adult learning, jobs, volunteering, the police and other cultural services. Against a background of austerity the future of libraries has to be considered as part of the overall council service offer to communities. Libraries are most likely to be viable when they can demonstrate their value to the widest possible group of users.'*

2. DRAFT STRATEGY FOR FUTURE APPROACH TO LIBRARY SERVICES

- 2.1 A Service Transformation Programme for Cambridgeshire Libraries has been instigated with the objective of delivering a viable and stable service within a reduced funding situation. The aims of the review are to:

- Develop a new strategy for the service that meets statutory responsibilities and community needs at substantially less cost
 - Transform the focus and the culture of the service whilst retaining its core role and outcomes.
 - Maximise the potential for joint provision of services to reduce costs across the public sector
- 2.2 This work is being carried out in the context of wider discussions across the Council relating to growing community resilience, integrating services and delivering holistically to agreed outcomes, maximising the use of our assets, and a 'digital first' approach to service delivery. The draft strategy is embedded within these themes, and also seeks to dovetail with other Council strategies such as Early Help, Transforming Lives, Poverty, Channel Shift and Customer Service strategies.
- 2.3 A draft of the Strategy is appended to this report for approval. It sets out a future approach to the service based on four key themes:
- Building community resilience
 - Digital First
 - Enabling more than delivering
 - Maximising the use of our assets
- 2.4 With substantial budget reductions, there will inevitably be an impact on the level of service that the Council can directly provide. A key aim of the review will be to target resources where they are most needed and most effective at achieving the Council's objectives, whilst retaining a comprehensive service. Equally, by engaging more effectively with communities and securing increased levels of local support and volunteering, it is anticipated that services can be geared much more towards local needs and priorities.
- 2.5 Cambridgeshire has an impressive history of building community engagement in library provision and it is anticipated that the knowledge gained from past initiatives will provide a firm basis for the future of the service.
- 2.6 It is important to note that building related costs are not included within the library service budget. The review will link with the Council's ongoing review of its property portfolio to identify and deliver savings that will reduce costs to the authority and our public sector partners.
- 2.7 The proposed Strategy has strong resonance with many of the themes in the Sieghart report and is complementary in many ways. The report comments: *'The library does more than simply loan books. It underpins every community. It is not just a place for self-improvement, but the supplier of an infrastructure for life and learning, from babies to old age, offering support, help, education, and encouraging a love of reading. Whether you wish to apply for a job, or seek housing benefit, or understand your pension rights or the health solutions available to you, or learn to read, the library can assist.'*
- 2.8 In developing the strategy through the consultation stage, we will take on board the findings of the national report and keep a watching brief on the work of the Task Force that will be established to take this forward at a national level, and will seek to reflect this in our local strategy as appropriate.

2.9 Once approved by Committee, it is intended to engage in a series of conversations with a wide range of stakeholder groups during the early part of 2015 in order to discuss and refine the strategy and to build consensus about the future approach to library services in the county. This will help inform the development of more detailed and specific proposals for public consultation later in the year, in time for the development of 2016/17 business planning proposals.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

Library services provide essential support for people to develop their skills and to seek and apply for jobs online. The future approach looks to build on the support that libraries can provide, with an increased focus on supporting business start ups, by working in partnership with others.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

As set out in the draft Strategy, the primary purpose of library services is to help people live healthy and independent lives. Our future approach will build on this and enrich the 'offer' by integrating public services to improve outcomes for people.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

As set out in the draft Strategy, library services support and protect vulnerable people by ensuring that they have equal access to information and essential literacy and digital literacy skills. The future approach will build on this by joining together across public services to ensure services are targeted to those who need them most.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

A new strategy is essential for setting out the Council's approach to how it will meet future savings requirements for library services totalling £1.835M.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

Libraries are a statutory service and must provide 'a comprehensive and efficient service to all who wish to make use thereof' under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. Case law shows that it is important to have a clear strategy that is thoroughly consulted on, and that demonstrates how it meets the needs of all who wish to use the service, in order to meet these requirements. Officers will plan a comprehensive consultation and engagement process in order to minimise the risk of successful judicial review against the Council, and to build consensus on the approach as far as possible.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

As explained above, it is important to ensure the redesigned service continues to meet the needs of all those who wish to use the service. A Community Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the public engagement and consultation in order to ensure that equality and diversity implications are understood and mitigated as necessary.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

Broad stakeholder engagement will be carried out in early 2015 on this draft strategy for the future approach. Feedback from this process will be used to inform the development of more detailed and specific proposals that will be the subject of a further report to this Committee in due course. Full public consultation will be carried out on detailed proposals ready for final recommendations to be made to this Committee in Autumn 2015 as part of the Business Planning process for 2016/17 onwards.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Localism is at the heart of the review, which will seek to engage communities and work with them to shape and deliver services in partnership. Library services are a universal service and impact on every community across the county. Therefore it will be important for all local Members to be engaged and involved in the development of this strategy, the formulation of more detailed proposals and their eventual implementation. This will be included as part of the engagement and consultation plan for the Programme.

4.6 Public Health Implications

Health and wellbeing is an important element of the proposals for the future approach, and more integration will be sought across services in order to ensure positive public health outcomes for people. Library services already deliver a range of health information and promotion services, and the future approach will seek to build and develop this in partnership with others.

Source Documents	Location
Independent Library Report for England, published 18 December 2014 by DCMS and DCLG.	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england