

INVEST TO TRANSFORM (ITT) BID FOR RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION (RFID) EQUIPMENT FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **5th April 2011**

From: **Executive Director of Community and Adult Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **n/a**

Purpose: **The purpose of this report is to formally present to Cabinet the bid for Invest to Transform funding required in order to carry out the major Library Service redesign (Alternative Service Delivery) as agreed by Cabinet on 25th January 2011.**

Cabinet Members are required to give their approval to this funding in order that this essential work can go ahead.

Recommendation: **To agree a one-off capital investment of £360,000 from the ITT Fund repayable over three years to purchase the necessary radio frequency identification (RFID) equipment hardware / software required in order to carry out the major Library Service redesign (Alternative Service Delivery).**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 25th January 2011, Cabinet authorised officers to pursue the implementation of an alternative approach to library service delivery, involving restructuring and a reduction in paid staff, self-service operations, the rationalisation of opening hours, and the increased use of volunteers. The Cabinet report was accompanied by a Business Case setting out the benefits, costs and risks of this new approach.
- 1.2 It is predicated on introducing self service machines into all 32 public libraries throughout Cambridgeshire, in order to modernise services and (as part of a wider project looking at process re-design) to reduce the numbers of staff, as an essential part of reaching the overall savings required of the Library Service in the Council's Integrated Plan. Where self service facilities have been introduced they account for 85% – 95% of the transactions (issues and returns) of the library, thereby reducing the routine workload of staff.
- 1.3 Self service facilities have already been introduced in 8 libraries in Cambridgeshire (Central Library and the Hub Libraries at Huntingdon, Ely, March, St Ives, St Neots, and Wisbech, and at the new Great Shelford Library), and will be added as part of the new Ramsey Library, to be opened later this year. It is service policy to include self service facilities in all new libraries as part of a modern and efficient service offer that reflects national best practice.

2. PURPOSE OF THE BID

- 2.1 The bid is for funding to:
- purchase the required hardware and software
 - make necessary property and layout changes to facilitate installation at 23 libraries over the next year in order to enable library users to issue and return books and other materials via self-service rather than, as is presently the case, via a staff mediated transaction. This builds upon a previous successful ITT bid to implement this same system at the 7 largest libraries within the County.
- 2.2 The benefits are that:
- this will enable the Alternative Service Delivery approach to go ahead in order to make staff savings of £100k in 2011/12 and a further £100k in 2012/13, as set out in the Council's Integrated Plan
 - it will significantly increase the self-service use of these libraries, recognising that many people increasingly want the ease, speed and privacy of serving themselves
 - at the same time this will enable libraries to be operated with fewer paid staff, which in turn (together with input from volunteers in the local community) means that they could potentially be opened for longer hours without increasing the staffing costs
 - this will also enable staff to devote time to those who need help and to promoting and presenting the stock and resource collections for customers and their needs

- a single system of dealing with customers will be in place across the county resulting in more flexible cross-location transfer of stock and staff to suit the needs of the service
 - a single system of processing new stock acquisitions rather than the inefficiencies inherent in the current system of preparing stock for both Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and non-RFID libraries.
- 2.3 Hand in hand with the rollout of the self-service technology will be a service restructure into a Hub and Cluster arrangement accompanied by staffing reductions across each group. This restructure is dependent upon the introduction of RFID to make the staff reductions, and the flexibility for staff to work across a range of service points will be enhanced if RFID self service is in place at all libraries.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

This project aligns with the following strategic priorities:

3.1 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The extension of self-service will permit the library service to remain available across a wide range of locations and opening hours despite an overall decrease in the level of paid staffing. Library services support vulnerable people when they most need it, for example:
 - Young people who do not have their own internet access at home can use the public computers to study, stay in touch, and do homework
 - People without their own digital access can gain new skills and access to become active digital citizens
 - People who are isolated value libraries as a safe welcoming facility that is open to all, where they can feel part of the local community
 - Library services are often described as a 'lifeline', particularly by elderly residents and young families, who often do not have access to resources and information or other community facilities

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Self service facilities in libraries will help people to use library services independently without needing to queue at counters or interact with staff (unless they want or need to). They will also provide the potential for the community as a whole to operate the service independently if they wish to, for example by extending library opening hours using volunteers with the self service facilities.
- Libraries help people to live healthy lives by providing information and resources to support people with medical conditions (the Books on Prescription service) and to promote healthy living. The regular use of libraries by older people helps keep their minds and bodies active.

3.3 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The extension of self-service will permit the library service to remain available across a wide range of locations and opening hours despite an overall decrease in the level of paid staffing. By preserving libraries, local access to information and advice services to job seekers will be maintained (including library learning services providing essential skills and qualifications, and giving job seekers access to published job adverts and job clubs etc.) to the benefit of the local economy

3.4 Ways of Working

The following bullet points set out implications identified by officers for '*Making sure the right services are provided in the right way*':

- The issue and return of library items is a routine transaction carried out millions of times each year across libraries. Automating this process as much as possible and enabling customers to carry it out for themselves is the most efficient way to provide this service

The following bullet points set out implications identified by officers for '*Working together*':

- Our approach to maintaining library services for the future is one of partnership with local communities by seeking to create more volunteering opportunities, Library Friends Groups and Library Community Management Boards. Our vision is that this will result in a service that is truly delivered with the input and participation of local people at all levels from the Board of Trustees to individual local volunteers and community run libraries.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource and Performance Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- A one-off capital investment of £360,000 is required from the Invest to Transform (Improve) fund. This investment will enable estimated savings of £240,000 per annum from staffing costs. The service will be required to pay back the capital investment over a period of 3 years.
- In terms of performance, the number of issues carried out by self service is expected to rise from the baseline of 42.6% in the current year to 70% in 2011/12 and to 90% in 2013/14. Self returned items are anticipated to rise from the current level of 39.95% to 70% in 2011/12 and to 85% in 2013/14.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- If the estimated savings of the Alternative Service Delivery approach or other parts of the Library Service Review prove lower than expected, there could be a risk to the repayment of the Invest to Transform funding, since the bulk of the savings that will be made are already accounted for as savings within the Council's Integrated Plan. However, the Service could look to find the repayments from other parts of its budget, or decide not to install self service facilities into any libraries that (following the current public consultation) change to become community run facilities.
- There is a risk that staff and library users will resent the introduction of new self service facilities since these are now linked to a reduction in staffing levels, which has not previously been the case. The concerns of staff and library users will be addressed through the forthcoming public and staff consultation periods. The key message is that the Alternative Service Delivery approach will help to maintain library services across the county and prevent closures.
- The rapid introduction of this technology across so many libraries in a relatively short time span (by April 2012), together with the required property adaptations and staff training, at a time when staff and the service are also undergoing a great many other changes, will place a strain on staff and service capacity. There is a risk that key staff could leave the service during this period, possibly resulting in delays or errors in the implementation programme. However, temporary additional staff resource has been made available to the service and our approach will be to ensure that the work can be managed by teams rather than relying on particular individuals, where possible.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications. Staff assistance will still be available to customers who are unable or unwilling to use self service facilities.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation

Full public consultation is currently underway across the county, building on the large public consultation exercise carried out last year.

Appendices

1. Invest to Transform (Improve) bid form.

Source Documents	Location
<p>Appendix 3 to the Library Service Review report to Cabinet, 25th January 2011: Alternative Service Delivery approach – Business Case at web link:</p> <p>http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/db/council2.nsf/af8076762df199c580256b14003ef043/345ff0d47dc8cfe48025781d004b61c2/\$FILE/110125-3a)%20i)%20Appx%203.doc</p>	County Council web site

