

LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

To: Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee

Meeting Date: 12 March 2019

From: Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Transport

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/a **Key decision: No**

Purpose: **The purpose of this paper is to provide:**

- **An update on charging for computer access, requested by Members at the 11 September 2018 HC&I Committee.**
- **An update on the ongoing programme of work to transform the library service**

Recommendation: **The Committee is recommended to:**

- a) **note the ongoing programme of work to transform the Library Service**
- b) **agree to withdraw the charge for computer access in libraries**
- c) **agree to a debt recovery programme to recover unpaid library charges in order to bridge the income gap in the short term**

<i>Officer contact:</i>	<i>Members contact</i>
Name: Sue Wills Post: Library Service Manager Email: Sue.wills@cambridgeshire.gov.uk Tel: 01223 715945	Name: Cllr M Shuter/Cllr W Hunt Post: Chair/Vice Chair Highways & Community Infrastructure Email: mathew.shuter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk William-hunt@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 01223 706398

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the 11 September 2018 meeting, a report on the Library Service Transformation was received by the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee. That report gave an update about the package of improvements to the Library Service previously agreed by this Committee, including generating new revenue and making progress towards a more sustainable financial model, ensuring that the library service continues to develop and thrive.
- 1.2 The Committee asked officers to bring back a progress report to this March meeting, in particular on charging for computer access, including a more detailed analysis of computer usage in libraries to address their specific concerns. This report provides that update.
- 1.3 Throughout 2018/19 the service has been working hard to increase income through actively pursuing a number of income generation opportunities, as well as charging for computer access. It has also been exploring and exploiting all other options for library service transformation to meet budget challenges in preference to making service reductions.
- 1.4 The service has also successfully bid for capital funding in 2019/20 to invest in the:
 - procurement of two new mobile library vehicles to replace the two that are at the end of life
 - introduction of card payments on the self-service machines to make payments as easy as possible in an increasingly cashless society
 - roll out of a 'Donate' button on the self-service machines, a new development that has not been done before in UK libraries
 - introduction of open access technology in 2019 through to 2021 enabling all the libraries to open for longer unstaffed, and supporting Council staff in place based working
- 1.5 In addition, as reported previously to members, a significant opportunity has come from proposed partnership working with a philanthropic organisation called CIVIC. Our shared vision is to put libraries at the heart of a new and sustainable '21st Century operating system' for community-first public service delivery. This work is ambitious and it is planned to be tested in practice through a number of pilot projects. The aim is to improve the financial security of public services, re-energise the position of libraries in local communities and improve outcomes for our citizens.
- 1.6 Interest in the service and its continuing innovative transformation continues at the highest level. The Head of Libraries Strategy and Delivery at the DCMS is in regular contact with the service and Michael Ellis MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism recorded a special message of support for the launch event on 1 February 2019 of the Business & Intellectual Property Service for the county, a new service offer to support business start-ups and SMEs, supported by the British Library.

2. CHARGED FOR COMPUTER ACCESS

- 2.1 The computer charge was introduced after a number of public engagement sessions were held throughout Cambridgeshire in September and October 2017. Participants were asked about their views and ideas specifically in relation to how the service could increase

financial sustainability. Out of 117 comments received, 102 participants felt that the service should start charging for services, activities or events.

- 2.2 As a consequence of that engagement, charging for computer access was introduced on 1 May 2018. A charge of £1 per hour is made after an initial 30 minutes that is free for all users. Job seekers and people on benefits, and children up to 18 years of age, continue to access the library computers free of charge. Access to www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ and.gov.uk web sites continues to be free for everyone. Libraries also provide volunteer computer buddies and promote free courses available from the Skills & Learning Service to help people get online.
- 2.3 The Service took care to ensure that people who are unemployed or on benefits would not be penalised. That work also ensured essential online transactions (including Universal Credit applications) could be carried out free of charge.
- 2.4 By 31 March 2019 it is anticipated that income of £9,041 will have been raised since 1 May 2018, significantly short of the predicted income of £108k. Although the actual reduction in use is very close to that predicted, the low income reflects the high number of people using the computers that are exempt from the charges, meaning that the service is being used by those who most need it, and the number of users leaving their session after the free half hour.
- 2.5 The Committee has acknowledged that charging for computer access was a difficult decision to make, made in part to manage demand for computers, and it was subject to further scrutiny at the Committee meeting on 9 September 2018. At that meeting, members requested a more detailed analysis of computer usage in Cambridgeshire libraries be undertaken and that has been carried out through a customer on-line survey, with a paper version of the survey available through every library, from 23 October 2018 to 21 December 2018 inclusive.
- 2.6 494 people completed the questionnaire and made 255 comments; of those, 231 comments were negative. Feedback has highlighted the need to upgrade the existing library computers because currently it can take up to ten minutes to log in and start using a computer. It also highlighted the top reason people used library computers: 55.25% of people surveyed used the library computers for printing emails and documents.
- 2.7 All 330 library computers need upgrading and were due to be replaced in the first quarter of 2018/19. That work is now being expedited to ensure it happens in 2019. The current old computers are slow and are not able to run certain software, all of which contributes to a poor customer experience and that is reflected in the questionnaire responses. It is clear that this poor service offer is contributing to the lower than expected income figures from charging for computer access.
- 2.8 The library service continues to monitor the number of computer sessions. Between May and December 2018 the number of adult user sessions dropped by 26.47% from 146,788 sessions to 107,937 sessions. It is noticeable that there has been a significant decrease (by more than 70%) in usage in sessions of between half an hour up to 2 hours, whilst there has been an increase of 15.59% in computer use for 30 minutes or less. An overview of library computer usage of computers is included at **Appendix A**.

- 2.9 In response to this negative feedback, the low level of income generated and the impact on computer usage in libraries, it is recommended that the computer charge is withdrawn and that other means of raising income and managing demand for computers (enabling priority use by those who most need it) are established by the Service.

3. INCOME GENERATION AND COMMISSIONING

- 3.1 The 13 February 2018 report on the Library Service Transformation, agreed by the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee, contained a number of options that were to be pursued to meet the budget challenge for 2018/19 from income generation and commissioning. It was noted that no one stream of income generation could bring in sufficient revenue to guarantee the future of the Library Service. A mixed portfolio approach – likely to generate more income and carry less risk – was essential. It was also noted that funding had been agreed for a short term Business Development Officer post to focus on marketing and income generation for the Service, in order to help secure the additional income.
- 3.2 The service has recognised that it will take time to build new business opportunities to generate income. However, we are confident of closing the remaining gap in future years supported by the Business Development Officer who was appointed in October 2018. There is also a pipeline of further income generation and commissioning initiatives being developed which will be brought forward as each one becomes ready to launch.
- 3.3 A short term proposal is to conduct a one off debt recovery campaign to recover stock items that are overdue and charges outstanding against those items to prevent a gap in income in 2019/20, whilst we continue to build income generation during the year. In October 2018 total outstanding charges stood at £67,769 and there were 5457 items recorded as ‘lost’ worth a total value of £48,021. The Library Service seeks the agreement of the Committee to pursue this outstanding debt.

5. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 5.1 By continuing to provide access to a range of services, libraries assist people to improve their employment prospects. The recent launch of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Business and IP Centre should be of particular benefit to the economy.

Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 5.2 The provision of quality information, guidance and advice in libraries helps people to live healthy and independent lives and make well informed choices.

Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- 5.3 The primary purpose of the Library Service is to support and protect vulnerable people who are otherwise unable to access the books, information, access to the internet, advice and

guidance they need. Libraries will continue to be safe places in communities where people can meet others and engage in a wide range of positive activities.

- 5.4 Commissioning support for vulnerable people through the library service, helps services to reach a wider group of people.

6. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications

- 6.1 The Library Service has been granted one-off funding of £98K from the Transformation Fund for a short-term post designed to develop new income streams. If the service cannot achieve its income targets on an ongoing basis, savings will need to be found from elsewhere.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- 6.2 There are no significant implications in this category. The proposed work with CIVIC will have a positive impact on equal access to services and participation in society.

Public Health Implications










- 6.3 The Library Service is expanding the Public Health offer by providing information to help people choose daily living aids or guide them to other local services which may help to make life easier at home, as well as increasing the offer of events and activities for citizens to promote social interaction in communities. This work builds on and strengthen the Public Health initiatives that libraries already provide though widening access to information and events that engages individuals and communities in taking responsibility for improving their own health, and affords opportunities to complement commissioned public health services with library services through co-location.







Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Paul White
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Elsa Evans

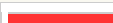
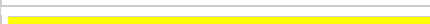

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Sarah Silk
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Christine May
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Tess Campbell

Source Documents	Location
Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee 13 February 2018	https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/
Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee 11 September 2018	https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/

Computer use in Cambridgeshire Libraries

1. What is your age?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under 18		2.88%	13
2	18-24		2.21%	10
3	25-34		7.30%	33
4	35-44		8.63%	39
5	45-54		15.93%	72
6	55-64		28.76%	130
7	65-74		25.88%	117
8	75 or over		7.08%	32
9	Prefer not to say		1.33%	6
			answered	452
			skipped	0











2. How often do you use the library computers?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Every day		10.96%	49
2	Once a week		13.20%	59
3	A few times a week		38.26%	171
4	Less than once a month		16.55%	74
5	Once a month		6.04%	27
6	A few times a month		14.99%	67
			answered	447
			skipped	5

3. Do you qualify for free use of the library computers - for job seeking /claiming benefits?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		19.32%	85
2	No		75.23%	331
3	Prefer not to say		5.45%	24
			answered	440




3. Do you qualify for free use of the library computers - for job seeking /claiming benefits?

	Response Percent	Response Total
skipped		12





4. Do you use the computers for: (tick as many as you need to)

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Job hunting		18.31% 78
2	Staying in touch with families and friends		37.79% 161
3	Finding information for hobbies		41.78% 178
4	Paying bills or booking tickets		24.18% 103
5	Research eg family history		34.74% 148
6	Learning to use computers		11.74% 50
7	Shopping		20.19% 86
8	Entertainment - films, TV programmes, music		16.20% 69
9	Printing e-mails and documents		55.63% 237
10	Printing tickets		25.59% 109
		answered	426
		skipped	26


5. How long do you normally use the computer for?

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	30 minutes or less		46.30% 200
2	30 minutes to an hour		26.62% 115
3	Longer than an hour		27.08% 117
		answered	432
		skipped	20



6. Has the way you use computers changed since the introduction of charges? Now £1 per hour after 30 free minutes.

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I use them less		41.65% 177
2	I use them more		2.35% 10
3	About the same		38.12% 162
4	I use them for less than 30 minutes		11.53% 49

6. Has the way you use computers changed since the introduction of charges? Now £1 per hour after 30 free minutes.

			Response Percent	Response Total
5	I've stopped using them		6.35%	27
			answered	425
			skipped	27

7. Have you paid to use a library computer?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		35.40%	154
2	No		64.60%	281
			answered	435
			skipped	17

8. If you have any questions or comments please add them here:

Sample of typical comments received:

		Response Percent	Response Total
<p>I think computer charging is a terrible idea.</p> <hr/> <p>As a Council Tax payer, I already pay for the library services, and object to being charged even more to use a computer. I am a pensioner, living on a fixed income. I regard this as 'penny-pinching'</p> <hr/> <p>The so-called 30 minute free computer use is only about 25 minutes after logon. Please correct this.</p> <hr/> <p>I feel it is a discriminatory act to charge for computer use when if someone uses a smartphone, lap top, or tablet they can use all day for nothing. I am working but cannot afford these items. why should I have to pay? Libraries should be accessible to all including the use of equipment.</p> <hr/> <p>I understand that the library service needs to seek additional streams of revenue due to council cuts, but I do not think this form of charging for PC use is fair or reasonable.</p> <hr/> <p>Before the charges were introduced, was using the library to improve my social wellbeing. Those two hour sessions three days a week made a lot of difference. I don't expect the old system will be reintroduced, as the library system seems doomed, period; but while it was up and running, I made good use of it and it helped me a great deal.</p> <hr/> <p>I now use Norfolk Libraries as they are still free</p> <hr/> <p>The £1.00 computer charge is regressive. There is less foot fall in the library now. Bring back the 2 hour free computer use. This also encourages people to take out a book to read.</p> <hr/> <p>Free library computers please!</p> <hr/> <p>If we pay council tax why do we have to pay again to use library services?</p> <hr/> <p>I am a pensioner and I regret that I can not afford to pay. So I am unable to watch old b/w films etc which I had previously enjoyed watching. I am limited to sending emails.</p>			