

**REOPENING LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES SERVICES**

- To:* **Communities and Partnership Committee**
- Meeting Date:* **2 July 2020**
- From:* **Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Partnerships**
- Electoral division(s):* **All**
- Forward Plan ref:* **N/A**                      *Key decision:* **No**
- Purpose:* To ensure the Committee are aware of the approaches taken during the lockdown, to set out the plans for reopening services, and to summarise how this will support our Think Communities approach.
- Recommendation:* **The Committee is recommended to:**
- a) Note the role of libraries and archives to continue culture and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic;**
  - b) Note and comment on the proposed first steps to reopening libraries and archives services;**
  - c) Following the decision at Commercial and Investments Committee on 23 June 2020, approve the purchase of a new library service distribution centre, to endorse the location and function as suitable for ensuring effective delivery of the library service distribution centre and support services, and formally consult library staff accordingly;**
  - d) Note the ongoing work to develop the project described at section 2.3 of the report, to deliver services and opportunities at the most local level through the purchase of a vehicle; and**
  - e) Note and recommend the changes to the capital programme budgets from the Business Plan as shown in section 2.3.11, and recommend that General Purposes Committee approves those changes.**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Given the recent announcement from the Government relating to the reopening of libraries, this report is presented to Committee to provide assurance relating to the approach being taken in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 In Cambridgeshire, the public library service is delivered through a network of thirty three library sites, with a support service and distribution centre. The majority of staff that work in the library service are front-facing staff with only a small number being office based. The office based staff include the Partnership, Project and Funding team, the Stock team, the Support team, the Volunteering and Health team, and the Library Leadership Team, who are located in a combination of libraries and the Support Service and Distribution Centre located at the Roger Ascham building in Cambridge.
- 1.3 Cambridgeshire Archives Service preserves and promotes the use of original historical records of Cambridgeshire providing free public access to those records and also offering historical research and reprographic services and outreach activities. A team of ten archive staff are normally based in two sites, providing front-line assistance to the public in our archives search rooms and carrying out regular essential checks of building security, monitoring environmental conditions in strong rooms, accepting accessions of records at risk, providing access to information for essential users, responding to public research enquiries where possible, and building a strong social media presence.
- 1.4 The closure of our libraries and archives service as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown has seen the development of an innovative approach to our services, many of which we would wish to continue to develop and deliver after lockdown restrictions are eased.

## 2. MAIN ISSUES

### 2.1 Service Levels During Lockdown

#### 2.1.1 Libraries

Whilst library buildings are closed the library service has remained open in the form of our digital offer (web and social media channels) comprising:

- e-lending resources including books and journals
- e-audio
- e-experiences, including online author events
- story and craft sessions for children
- cultural performances enabled by the Library Presents team

The challenging circumstances we are in have provided an opportunity to significantly develop and promote our digital offer, and the take-up of digital services has massively

increased (with resources issued more than tripling to 40,000 a month, and a large increase of use in social media channels). In anticipation of greater demand for digital services during the lockdown, additional investment of £20k was made to improve existing and create new digital content, and a further £1k was received from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as part of a national programme to boost digital library offers across the country.

In addition, and in order to support our shielded community, our library service, in partnership with Cambridgeshire Skills, City College Peterborough and Civic, designed and delivered a new website, 'Open New Doors', which provides a variety of activities, experiences and learning opportunities.

Libraries have also been able to support people who do not have digital access through the Libraries at Home service. In April, the volunteering development team explored ways in which they could safely reinstate the service, and from May started to trial a revised Library at Home Service, with bags of specially chosen books or spoken word materials delivered to the doorsteps of those who had to shield or self-isolate due to age or health conditions. After the successful trial, we have continued to expand, and in five weeks around one hundred of our most vulnerable customers received their bags.

### **2.1.2 Archives**

Archives service users have been unable to visit our search rooms to view records and conduct research or access our usual research and reprographic services during lockdown. Customers, including individuals, businesses and organisations, have also been unable to deposit records with us unless at risk of loss or damage. During this time, most staff have not been able to work on the core work of ordering and cataloguing of collections, but have ensured that our buildings and the important assets they contain are safe and secure, and that the storage conditions are appropriate.

## **2.2 Plans for Reopening Services**

### **2.2.1 Libraries**

Following the Government announcement on 23 June, the library service is scheduled to begin reopening from 4 July. This will be managed in a safe, well managed and controlled way to ensure the absolute safety of visitors and staff. To support our work, we will be informed by the best practice modelling from DCMS and Libraries Connected set out in their toolkit.

To maintain a safe environment, we are not allowing open access browsing within our library buildings. Instead, we will be introducing a brand new service called 'Select and Collect'. Customers can select books according to their preference (genre, fiction, non-fiction, talking books, books for children etc) online or via the Customer Service Centre book service. Customers will be notified when their books are ready to collect. Reservations will also be reintroduced to allow customers to request individual titles.

This service will be offered in libraries which will be reopened using a phased approach, starting with the reopening of the nine 'Hub' Libraries:

- Bar Hill
- Cambourne

- Cambridge Central
- Ely
- Huntingdon
- March
- St Ives
- St Neots
- Wisbech

Cambridge Central library will operate for four sessions a week from 10am – 2pm, including Saturday. The other eight hub libraries will operate for three sessions a week from 10am – 2pm, including Saturday. There will unfortunately be no mobile library services in this initial phase due to the challenge of making a confined space COVID-19 secure. In phase two, currently planned for 3 August, we hope to be able to open all remaining libraries for two sessions per week from 10am- 2pm.

We do also recognise that libraries play an essential role in combatting digital exclusion, and provide people with the opportunity to access computers. We will therefore bring back our public access IT services based on 45-minute pre-booked appointments as our libraries begin to reopen, with machines being cleaned between each user.

Throughout July and August, we will review our model to enable us to revise and expand the customer offer, and to determine what we will be able to offer from September onwards. We will also continue to follow the advice provided by the DCMS and Libraries Connected.

### 2.2.2 Archives

To establish the safe reopening of our archives service, we will follow the National Archives guidance, and, as with libraries, we cannot reopen before 4 July. We are planning to reopen on an appointments-only basis to begin with, and all documents must be pre-booked to ensure safety and to minimise risk.

## 2.3 Other Service Developments

2.3.1 Despite the lockdown, work has continued to develop and deliver the new libraries vision, agreed by this Committee in December 2019. That vision firmly places libraries at both the core of the council's business but also at the heart of our communities, and describes how the library service needs to be more than the buildings they operate from. Libraries are trusted settings, and the staff and volunteers who run them are part of their wider community. Building on the success of the Neighbourhood Cares pilot in Soham, this unique set of conditions will form one of the core operating principles for our Think Communities approach, where a place-based model of service delivery and to enabling our communities becomes our new normal.

2.3.2 This approach has been demonstrated throughout the pandemic, as library staff have been redeployed into the countywide coordination hub in various roles – call receivers, coordinators supporting shielded residents, and as part of our community response service providing practical help and support to shielded and vulnerable residents.

2.3.3 Our new vision is enabled by the Cambs 2020 programme, which seeks to establish a place-based approach across Cambridgeshire through more effective use of our buildings. As part of the Cambs 2020 programme, the Cambridge Registry Office is set to relocate to

the Roger Ascham building, currently the base for a small number of library staff, as described in section 1.2.

- 2.3.4 With this in mind, and in line with our new vision for our libraries to be at the heart of communities and to be fully aligned to the Think Communities approach, we have considered the impacts of a relocation from the Roger Ascham site for our staff and services, and have concluded that the needs of the service and our customers would not be best met by a 'relocate and replicate' model into a new building. Instead, a multi-site relocation of the services currently based at the Roger Ascham building is planned, to support the growth and strategic direction of the library service, including basing a number of staff within front-facing library buildings.
- 2.3.5 At its meeting on 23 June, the Commercial and Investments Committee approved the purchase of a new building at the Lakes Business Park in St Ives which will serve as our new library service distribution centre. It is in a location that gives easy road access to all libraries across the County, it meets the size requirements of the service, and it is a property that is available to purchase, giving the council an asset that can be realised at some point in the future.
- 2.3.6 Currently there are twenty two members of staff based at the Roger Ascham building. It is proposed that those members of the team with responsibility for the stock and resources that require distribution across the county will be based in the new building, which represents just over 50% of the team. This includes the volunteering and health team, and their associated store of resources, ensuring that their services can be offered across the County, with a postal, delivery or front-facing service and with staff supporting events as they currently do as and when needed. In addition, it is proposed that the drivers whose main job is stock and resource delivery, and who also undertake the mail distribution for the council, will be based at the new distribution centre, giving access to the good road links across the county (including to Alconbury Weald once the council HQ relocates).
- 2.3.7 It is proposed that all of our remaining staff will be based within front-facing library buildings to ensure they best support service delivery needs, bringing them closer to our customers and partners in the spirit of Think Communities.
- 2.3.8 To further support our Think Communities approach, and building on the experience of our mobile library service, a business case is being prepared for an innovative pilot to purchase one bus-sized vehicle to trial a new Think Communities service delivery arrangement. The vehicle will be equipped with flexible and adaptable space on board, with the technology and assets needed to take services, support and opportunities to the most local level. The project seeks to:
- Supplement and complement fixed, place-based county council and broader service delivery, with a more flexible, agile and adaptable street-level model
  - Target communities with real opportunities that are built based on evidenced need
  - Remove barriers which prevent access to services and opportunities
  - Work alongside our key partners, including town and parish councils, to build stronger and sustainable networks within communities

- Help to manage the demand for costly and often inappropriate statutory intervention, by offering residents and communities the opportunities they need to help themselves and each other earlier than they are currently able

2.3.9 The project aims to reduce isolation, improve access to basic as well as enhanced services, and increase access to skills and employment. Our focus will be on working with communities, engaging and supporting people to prevent issues from becoming crisis through the provision of services, support and opportunity, including:

- Classroom facilities for adult learning
- Careers fairs
- Public Health preventative services
- Drug and alcohol services
- Money management and debt advice services
- Demonstrating digital technology for use in the home, particularly relevant to Adult Social Care and helping people to remain independent
- Public consultation events
- Digital services, including free use of IT to carry out online banking, energy switching, job searching, applying for welfare benefits etc.

2.3.10 The business case is being prepared to be submitted to General Purposes Committee, with a request to purchase and fit out the vehicle, subject to a full review of the funding request, any service or revenue implications, mitigation of any risks and issues, and an overall assessment of value for money.

2.3.11 Finally, there are a number of capital projects relating to the library service which this Committee has responsibility for. These are set out in the table below. Although the total budget allocation for each scheme hasn't changed, the profile of spend for some of the projects is different, and there is a need to carryforward spend from the previous year into the current year to enable the projects to be delivered. Committee is asked to note and endorse these changes, ahead of them being presented to General Purposes Committee for approval.

<b>Original 2020/21 Budget as per BP £'000</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Revised Budget for 2020/21 £'000</b>	<b>Total Scheme Revised Budget £'000</b>
340	New Community Hub / Library Service Provision Darwin Green	340	340
74	Library Service - Card payments in Libraries	148	148
486	Community Hubs - Sawston	922	1,874
-	Replacement of existing Mobile Libraries	327	-
-	Libraries – Open access & touchdown facilities (hub libraries)	567	-
-	Libraries – Open access & touchdown facilities – further 22 libraries	605	-
5,000	Community Fund	5,000	5,000
<b>5,900</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,909</b>	<b>7,362</b>

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 A good quality of life for everyone**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.2 Thriving places for people to live**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### **4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

Any purchases to support this project will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

#### **4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### **4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### **4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### **4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### **4.7 Public Health Implications**

When libraries and archives services reopen, they will meet the new COVID-secure guidelines.

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva
<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?</b>	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Christine Birchall
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Iain Green

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
None	N/A