

AT A REMOTE MEETING of the Culture and Communities Select Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held on Tuesday, 28th July, 2020:

Chairman:

* Councillor Anna McNair Scott

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| * Councillor Christopher Carter | * Councillor Pal Hayre |
| * Councillor John Bennison | * Councillor Dominic Hiscock |
| * Councillor Fred Birkett | * Councillor Rob Mocatta |
| * Councillor Jackie Branson | * Councillor Michael White |
| * Councillor Ann Briggs | |
| * Councillor Zilliah Brooks | |
| * Councillor Peter Chegwyn | |
| * Councillor Daniel Clarke | |
| * Councillor Rod Cooper | |

*Present

94. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Members were present and no apologies were noted.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

96. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020 were agreed by the Committee as a correct record.

97. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

98. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had several announcements as this had been the first Committee meeting since the Covid-19 lockdown and ongoing national crisis. The Chairman expressed thanks to all staff who had worked so hard to manage throughout the epidemic. The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Many culture and community services had been required to close at the onset of the national lockdown. The Chairman was pleased to add that, at the time of the meeting, all services had begun to re-open based upon Government guidance and with emphasis on customer and staff safety.
- In accordance with guidelines, Country Parks had opened some facilities on 13 May and farm attractions and Titchfield Haven had opened on 6 July. Camping, toilet facilities and the cafes had reopened at Calshot, Tile Barn and Runways End with the Hampshire Mountain Centre in Wales remaining closed in line with Welsh policy.
- Libraries reopened on 6 July for short visits and with reduced hours. Digital library provision had been ongoing and had been extremely popular throughout the lockdown period. Demand for digital services had understandably increased by a significant percentage. Many services were now being delivered using social media with interactive videos, clubs, groups being available online. The home library service had resumed deliveries in the week of 18 May.

99. LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION - STRATEGY TO 2025

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services regarding the Library Service Transformation to 2025 and proposals to achieve required savings as part of the Transformation to 2021 programme.

The Chairman noted that she had received some County Councillor requests to speak on this item and invited these Members to address the Committee. Councillor Glen spoke regarding the proposed closure of Odiham Library and expressed his concerns that Basingstoke and Fleet library branches were too far to travel should Odiham be closed. Councillor Burgess spoke regarding the volume of responses received as part of the consultation and noted that he echoed the views of the majority of respondents from the Lee-on-Solent area who had requested that the library remain open. Councillor Frankum spoke regarding the proposal to keep Chineham Library open and thanked officers for their work on the consultation and for assessing the data in detail. Councillor Westbrook urged the Committee to look at other options for the evolution of the service as opposed to closing libraries particularly South Ham Library, noting the important role that libraries play for young people from deprived communities.

After Councillors had spoken, the Chairman thanked them for their comments and invited Nicola Horsey, Assistant Director – Regulatory and Community

Services and Emma Noyce, Head of Libraries, to deliver a presentation and introduce the report.

The following information was noted by the Committee through the presentation:

- From 9 January 2020 to 18 March 2020 the County Council conducted an open consultation, seeking the views of people who live, work and/or study in Hampshire, and of wider stakeholders, on proposed changes to the Hampshire Library Service.
- The supporting information within the consultation set out the context for making the planned savings of £1.76million as part of the County Council's Transformation to 2021 programme (T21). The programme was established in response to the Council £80million funding 'gap' due to a significantly reduced Central Government grant, growing demand for statutory services and rising costs and inflation. Savings totals were agreed by the County Council across all departments at its meeting in November 2019 and this included the Library Service.
- The consultation had been widely promoted and received many responses reaching 21,200 in total. Following extensive analysis, some of the main findings of the consultation were set out for the Committee within the presentation slides.
- The impact of the Covid-19 national crisis on the service was highlighted, in particular that it would not be possible to meet the income generation target and that other planned activities would need to deliver more to make up for the loss.
- The options for making the planned T21 savings were set out. The Committee also reviewed the role of the Task and Finish Group (T&FG) who had, alongside officers, investigated these options and had contributed towards the development of the proposals. Members noted that comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments had been compiled for both staff and for service users.

In response to Members' questions, the following information was confirmed:

- That the £210,000 planned additional savings for 2020/21 referred to on slide 16 of the presentation related to vacancy management savings that were being realised as staff had left their roles. Assurance was given that there were no plans to close any additional library branches on top of those which had been proposed.
- That officers were intending to hold discussions with community representatives from all eight libraries proposed for closure to enable work to begin on transitioning to become independent libraries should the community wish to pursue this option.
- That should the proposals in the report be agreed, a network of 40 physical libraries countywide, a comprehensive and growing digital offer (for which the County Council Library Service was renowned on a national scale), options for those who are unable to visit their local library, membership schemes, specialist services, resources and reference materials, the School Library Service and the online social media interactive offer were considered to satisfy the statutory requirement within the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 for local authorities to 'provide a comprehensive and efficient Library Service for all persons'.

- That notwithstanding the opening times consultation taking place in the school summer holidays, the views of students who use libraries for study, and who were acknowledged as a key demographic group of library users, would be sought. The opening times consultation would be available online. It was confirmed that many students and young people had engaged with and responded to the initial consultation online following a successful social media campaign.
- That mother and baby provision would be maintained in a variety of ways were the proposed closures to be agreed. For example, the breadth of the service encompassed physical branches, a comprehensive and interactive digital offer and the group membership scheme open to all Early Years providers. Members were informed that the eight libraries proposed for closure accounted for 5% of all Hampshire library visits and assured that high quality service provision would continue to be provided.
- That discussions were ongoing with officers from Eastleigh Borough Council around the relocation of Eastleigh Library from the Swan Centre to a more accessible location in Eastleigh town centre. This was a priority for both authorities working in partnership relocate the branch.
- That the way in which the standardisation of opening hours had been calculated was to group comparable libraries to ensure a fair approach to the distribution of hours. Following specific reference to Lockswood and Hedge End libraries, it was confirmed that Lockswood had historically had shorter opening hours whereas Hedge End had historically had longer opening hours. This meant that as the standardisation was applied there would be variance in the percentage reduction.
- With reference to page 40, paragraph 157 of the report, it was confirmed the management, and/or purchase, of premises for the eight libraries proposed for closure by community groups would need different solutions depending on the circumstances. There likely would not be a 'one size fits all' route and that all options were being explored.
- That one-off funding was provided in 2011 towards the purchase of self-service terminals at Hedge End and West End libraries from Eastleigh Borough Council and the two respective Town Councils. Since 2011, this technology had been updated and associated costs had been covered by the County Council.
- That the option of moving the Library Service into a trust model had been explored. This approach had been investigated in previous years and had been recently re-evaluated at the request of the Task and Finish Group (T&FG). Members noted that the Library Service worked closely with libraries nationwide who operate within a trust and that feedback had not been overly positive for this arrangement with cost benefits not always realised, a strong reliance on generated income and significant initial setup costs. Officers remained open minded but noted that this approach was not appropriate for Hampshire at this time.
- That discussions were ongoing with officers from Havant Borough Council into the relocation of Havant Library from the Meridian Centre to a more suitable location as part of the redevelopment of Havant town centre.

Some Members noted that they felt their experience within the T&FG had not been beneficial and that information on the available options for the Service had not been forthcoming. Councillor Clarke requested that it be recorded that he and Councillor Chegwyn had resigned from the T&FG.

The majority of Members appointed to the T&FG noted how useful they had found the meetings in being able to hold open discussions with officers, to visit libraries and liaise directly with the public, the community and members of staff to influence proposals as they were developed based on their experiences and information obtained. Members of the T&FG viewed their group role as working alongside officers to make difficult choices for the Library Service.

Generally, Members were strongly in agreement that any library seeking to develop into an independent, community branch would require support from the County Council. The Committee noted the passion of local communities in Hampshire and were hopeful that this enthusiasm would carry through into running libraries locally. A suggestion was raised regarding potential sponsorship opportunities for any independent branch and this was noted.

The Committee thanked officers and staff for conducting the significant and challenging piece of work over the recent months and thanked all those who had responded to the consultation.

The Chairman invited the Executive Member for Recreation and Heritage to comment. Councillor Woodward noted that he had observed the full discussion and debate. He was grateful to the Committee for their views and made an assurance that he would consider these carefully, along with all other feedback, in advance of his Decision Day.

Overall, the Committee were understanding that the proposed closure of libraries would be saddening to those affected communities and stakeholders but strongly supported additional resource proposals to help develop the branches into independent libraries.

Taking this into account, the Chairman proposed an additional recommendation to the Executive Member. This was seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Carter.

“That the Executive Member approves the support for Independent Community Libraries to have access to the Library Service Group Membership Scheme to refresh their physical stock and to reserve specific titles from the Hampshire Library Collection, including Ready Reads if collected on behalf of a Hampshire Library customer.”

The recommendations, including the additional recommendation as above, were put to the vote. With 9 votes for the recommendations, 3 against and 1 abstention, it was therefore RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee recommends to the Executive Member for Recreation and Heritage that he:

- i) Approves the achievement of £1.76 million savings through the Libraries Transformation Programme.
- ii) Approves the operations target to be increased by £75,000 to £1.115million in order to compensate for the under delivery of the income generation target.
- iii) Approves the Library Vision to 2025.

- iv) Confirms that that he is satisfied that the Library Service described in paragraph 66 of the report meets the statutory requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, comprising a comprehensive and efficient service which meets the needs of those who live, work and study in Hampshire.
- v) Approves the closure of the eight libraries listed in paragraph 153 of the report: Blackfield, Elson, Fair Oak, Horndean, Lee-on-the-Solent, Lyndhurst, Odiham and South Ham.
- vi) Approves a reduction in opening hours across the Service averaging 20%, together with proposals to standardise hours as far as practical.
- vii) Approves a second public consultation to confirm the actual opening times at each council-run library and delegates authority to determine opening times to the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services in consultation with the Executive Member.
- viii) Approves the Library Service's plan to withdraw support from Lowford, Kingsclere, Milford-on-Sea and North Baddesley community-managed libraries and help them to transition to an independent community library model.
- ix) Instructs the Library Service to explore different and more effective ways to deliver services for Hampshire's most deprived communities, initially in Leigh Park, Havant and Bridgemary, taking into account any opportunities to support communities in Elson.
- x) Agrees the plans to deliver efficiencies of £146,000 from library resources.
- xi) Approves the Library Service's plans to generate income through room hire and leases; reviewing current fees and charges; and encouraging fundraising, sponsorship and donations to the Service.
- xii) Notes that the Income Generation target set out within the consultation document will not be met within the required timescales and therefore adjusts other savings targets accordingly.
- xiii) Gives due regard to the Equalities, Human Resource and Financial impacts of each of the recommendations and agrees the mitigation proposed.
- xiv) Notes the timelines for implementation.
- xv) Approves the support for Independent Community Libraries to have access to the Library Service Group Membership Scheme to refresh their physical stock and to reserve specific titles from the Hampshire Library Collection, including Ready Reads if collected on behalf of a Hampshire Library customer.

100. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Transformation and Governance which set out the Committee's upcoming work programme.

The following item was proposed to be added, if possible for the September meeting: An update on theatres and entertainment venues across Hampshire.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme, subject to the additions set out above, was agreed.