

Briefing for City Area Committee meetings on the Library Service Review

The following strategy for the future of Library services in Cambridgeshire was agreed by the County Council at their meeting on 15th February:

- **Externalisation of the service to a charitable trust**, together with related services including archives, cultural services, and adult learning and skills. The County Council will still have statutory responsibility for the service, but becoming a trust will provide greater focus and flexibility and unlock funding and savings to which the Council does not have access
- **A shared approach to the delivery of library support and specialised services** – including bibliographic services, reference and online services - with four other local library authorities in order to make economies of scale, in a project called SPINE (Shared Partnership In the East)
- **Service redesign** based on libraries working in groups, enabling more self service use of library services, re-designing work processes, and reducing the number of staff
- **Encouraging much greater community participation** in the management and running of library services through volunteering and acting on Friends Groups, Community Management Boards, and the Board of Trustees
- **A review of the library network** to make savings whilst ensuring a comprehensive and efficient service based on community need. This will include:
 - Exploring the potential for all library services to join with other services as part of multi agency 'community hubs'
 - Inviting more communities to run their own library facilities, in a similar way to the existing community run Library Access Points
 - It may also result as a last resort in some library closures, following careful assessment of the needs of local communities and the use made of libraries, if sufficient savings cannot be found from the above approaches

13 libraries have been selected for priority consideration for the review of the network, following an initial assessment of community need and library performance. These are the 7 libraries that fall within the bottom quartile for both library performance and community need:

- Comberton
- Cottenham
- Linton
- Sawston
- Sawtry
- Warboys
- Willingham

And the 6 other libraries that fall within the lower half for community need:

- Bar Hill
- Buckden
- Great Shelford
- Milton Road
- Rock Road
- Yaxley

This is in line with the Council's focus on prioritising its resources on individuals and communities with greatest need, and on the understanding that communities with relatively less deprivation may be more able to access alternative service points or to take over the running of their own libraries.

In the North area of the city, the two libraries affected by this strategy for the future are Arbury Court Library and Milton Road Library. The impacts on these libraries are as follows:

Arbury Court – in common with all libraries, Arbury will become part of a group of libraries, with most of the management carried out from the 'hub' library (in this case Central Library). Self service technology will be installed so that users can issue and return their own items. Opening hours will be reviewed, and the library is likely to be single staffed most of the time. We will be looking for volunteers to help support the service and enable more activities to take place. As an additional possibility we will be looking in consultation with the community for potential opportunities to co-locate the library with other services as part of a community hub.

Milton Road – as one of the 13 libraries under closer review, the options we will be looking at include:

- Taking the same approach as for other libraries (see Arbury above)
- potential opportunities for redevelopment / relocation with other services as part of a multi agency community hub
- consulting with the community on the possible transfer to the community to run as a Library Access Point. The Library Friends Group and Chesterton Community Association have already expressed interest in this possibility.
- Closure – as a final option if all else fails

The final outcome for this library will not be known until final proposals for the library infrastructure are drawn up later in the year, taking all the above possibilities into account.

Detailed public consultation and engagement will take place over the coming months, before final proposals are presented to Cabinet later in the year.

For further information please view details on our web site at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/news/libservicereview/>