

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**12 April 2016**

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**Subject: Library Service briefing**

**Cabinet member: Councillor Jonathon Seed - Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding**

**Key Decision: No**

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**Executive Summary**

This report provides the committee with a briefing on the library service, the level of spending on stock, and the position on accepting donations of books.

During the past year the library service has successfully remodelled mobile library services and this year is developing a new community hub model at Calne Library to increase access to the building to enable more community use for events, activities and access to information, services and advice. If this new model is successful it is intended to create the hub model at other suitable libraries across the county.

Libraries recognise the need to change to reflect community needs and to be more sustainable in the future.

Currently the number of visitors to libraries is increasing, yet the number of people borrowing books and DVDs is decreasing. The visits are predominantly to participate in events, activities, to study, research and to access information.

**Name of Director**

Laurie Bell

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#### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report provides the committee with a briefing on the council's library service including an update on specific questions asked regarding the level of spending on stock, and the position on accepting donations of books.

#### **Main considerations**

##### **Introduction and background information**

2. Wiltshire Council has a statutory responsibility to provide a library service to all who live and work in Wiltshire. The council currently meets this requirement through a network of 31 static and 3 mobile libraries and a range of online services.
3. Libraries in Wiltshire are safe, neutral places that can be used by anyone. They help people to develop new skills, get online, access information, support learning and literacy and promote a love of books and reading in children. Libraries are key to helping the council to deliver its vision to build stronger and more resilient communities. Libraries offer safe space where communities can participate in learning and events and activities as well as access information, advice and support to assist with their general wellbeing. Libraries promote and encourage volunteers and with the support of more than 750 the council has been able to sustain this valuable service.
4. The library service also has an important role in supporting digital literacy and provides the access to online services and resources for those who do not have use of a computer. Library staff are skilled in supporting the move to accessing services digitally by default and the government's assisted digital programmes. Library staff are trained to help claimants access Universal Credit and Universal Jobmatch. Libraries also improve digital literacy through short courses and technology clubs, many in partnership with Learning Curve and Wiltshire Online.

## **Mobile library review**

5. A review of mobile library services took place in 2015 as part of delivering corporate savings targets (£114K). Following extensive consultation with the local communities the mobile libraries were reduced from four to two.
6. New timetables with stops occurring monthly and fortnightly, rather than fortnightly and weekly were introduced and 245 (of the original 267) stops were retained (90%). 94% of mobile users surveyed said they would continue to use the revised service.

## **Volunteers**

7. Wiltshire is a national leader in this field with the highest level of volunteering within both the regional and nearest neighbour groupings, and one of the highest levels of volunteer support in the country.
8. In total, 758 volunteers support the service in a variety of roles; 335 Community Library Volunteers, and 423 volunteers helping to extend our service offer with the homes service, summer reading challenge, rhyme times, and as computer buddies. In 2014/15 the service recorded 26,938 volunteer hours.
9. The ten smallest libraries in Wiltshire are operated by Community Library Volunteers. A further six operate a hybrid system with some staffed sessions and some volunteers sessions. Wiltshire Council continues to provide stock, self-service machines, IT, buildings costs, and some staff support to these volunteer operated libraries.
10. A new model of volunteer support where volunteers work front of house alongside staff in larger libraries is being piloted at the new Springfield Community Campus. This model will be adopted in other libraries as part of a service review to improve efficiencies and implement a management approach that is in line with organisational requirements.

## **Opening hours and usage**

11. Since becoming a unitary council in 2009, Wiltshire has kept all of its static libraries open and operating and has not reduced opening hours since a service review in 2011. New libraries have opened in campuses/hubs in Trowbridge and Corsham and offer longer opening hours. All opening hours can be found on the library service website at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/librarylocations.htm>
12. Usage of libraries is shown below. Active users have used their library card for any purpose in the preceding 12 months (e.g. borrowed a book or used a computer).

	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>% change</b>
Loans	2,496,382	2,351,195	2,220,016	-11.1%
Visitors	1,870,443	1,834,615	1,852,475	-1.0%
Registered members	205,728	203,196	200,889	-2.4%
Active users	101,953	100,393	102,981	1.0%

Registered membership is 197,829 (42% of the county's population).

29% of active library users are aged 0-14. The service plays important role in supporting educational attainment and reading development through initiatives such as the annual Summer Reading Challenge which last year had 9,000 participants.

13. Wiltshire is just above the regional average for number of active borrowers and book issues per 1,000 population, and just below for number of visitors for library purposes per 1,000 population. Although there is a national trend towards a reduction in loans, Wiltshire still loans 4,154 books per 1,000 population compared with the national average of 3,483.
14. Salisbury Library is the second busiest library in the south west region for number of items borrowed, having issued 308,860 items in 2014-15.
15. Although library loans are declining, visitor figures remain reasonably stable and in some libraries; particularly Corsham and Trowbridge numbers have increased. The way people use libraries is changing, as well as borrowing books the purpose of a visit may be to participate in an event or activity, to study/research or to make use of the free internet connection. In October 2015, the library service took part in the national Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) survey of library users. The table below gives the survey finding on what the public use Wiltshire's libraries for:

Health and well being	31.4%
Family/relationships	18.5%
Meeting people	25.1%
Study/learning	43.0%
Getting online	21.0%
Personal finance/consumer matters	6.4%
Job seeking	7.1%
Your job	7.8%
Your retirement	20.3%

### **Health and wellbeing centres (formerly campuses) and hubs**

16. The library at Springfield Community Campus is performing well following its opening in 2014. Visitors have increased by 56% and issues (books, DVDs etc) have increased by 38%.

17. Work is currently underway to develop a community hub in Calne Library. A building management system will be installed to allow the building to be programmed to open and close securely and be fully utilised by the local community outside of the current library opening hours. Libraries will move into new campus sites in Tisbury in 2016 and Melksham in 2018.

### **Budget 2016/17**

18. Libraries, Heritage and Arts will deliver savings of 25% in 2016/17 as part of the overall organisational savings of £25 million. This will be achieved through a management restructure, back office savings, and a £250k (48%) reduction in the stock fund from £517k to £267k. The £250k reduction in the stock fund is expected to be for one year, it will be restored fully or in part next year. After essential non lending stock spend, the service will have £141,494 to spend on lending books. The essential non lending stock spend relates to: items purchased for income generation e.g. DVDs, reference materials, newspapers, online information services, catalogue data, interlending service subscriptions, RFID tags and other acquisitions costs.

Although savings need to be delivered the council will retain all its static libraries. New models for delivering the service are being tried to ensure future sustainability of this valuable service.

19. The library service currently holds 585,680 items of stock. This includes reference items and the performing arts collection. To allow for a replacement rate of 12.5% for lending stock, based on an average shelf life of 8 years, the service needs to purchase 51,000 books per year. The reduced stock fund will mean approximately 16,250 books can be purchased.

### **Donations**

20. Donations of recently published material in good condition are actively sought. Information on donations is available on the library website and via posters displayed in all libraries. In the 12 months to January 2016, the service added almost 5,000 donated items (this compares with 43,000 items purchased in 2014/15).
21. Whilst donations of stock are welcome they are not a substitute for a planned profile spend. The selection of stock donated is random and cannot alone provide the range and quantity the service requires to meet the diverse needs of library users and to keep the stock current.

### **Customer satisfaction**

22. The library service is highly rated by its customers with 98.3% rating the standard of customer care as good or very good. The table below shows the results of the CIPFA customer satisfaction survey undertaken in 2015.

	% of respondents who responded very good or good
What do you think of the library opening hours	89.0%
What do you think of the attractiveness of the library outside	74.3%
What do you think of the attractiveness of library inside	91.0%
What do you think of the standard of customer care	98.3%
What do you think of the choice of books	80.1%
What do you think of the physical condition of the books	91.6%
What do you think of the computer facilities	77.6%
What do you think of the information provision	85.1%
Overall, what do you think of this library	94.6%

## **Recommendation**

That the Committee note the update listed in the report.

**Laurie Bell**  
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## **Background Papers**

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None