

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

25 January 2011

Subject: Library Review

Cabinet member: John Thomson – Adult Care, Communities and Libraries and Deputy Leader

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary

This report proposes a positive vision and strategy for the library service in Wiltshire, based on wide ranging consultation with residents. It would enable Wiltshire Council to provide a professional, comprehensive library service, using funding efficiently, keeping customer satisfaction levels high, and yet reduce operating costs.

Work on the Library Service Review began in December 2009 with the purpose of ensuring that the service was focused to meet customer needs and to help the library service deliver budget savings.

The review gathered views and key messages from respondents, through focus groups, the web, and at all Area Boards. It also takes into account feedback from library staff, statutory requirements, and what is happening regionally and nationally to inform the approach. This includes work being carried out on the Future Library Programme by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the Local Government Association Group.

The consultation work carried out as part of the service review shows that, libraries in Wiltshire attain high levels of customer satisfaction and are valued as places that can be used by anyone. They help people learn new skills, read, access information, get on line and promote a love of books and reading in children

The paper sets a customer focussed vision that will enable libraries to offer the service customers want, whilst contributing to the broader goals of the council and Big Society objectives.

Rationalised opening hours based on a core offer for communities of similar size and ensuring that opening times are focused on periods of highest demand. Traditional services will be underpinned by a high quality online library service, accessible from home as well as libraries, and making use of Web 2.0 and social networking to draw in new users, widen access, and put the library service at the heart of working with customers.

There will be wide opportunities for volunteers and communities, to work in partnership with the service to operate smaller libraries, and to extend the core hours of other libraries. The library service already has considerable experience with volunteers and currently works with over 270 across the county, who support the service in a variety of ways, including assisting with the Summer Reading Challenge, and with the home delivery service for housebound residents.

The proposals depend on a new mechanism of delivery in libraries, for which a business case is provided. This would require investment of £546,500 but would then release year on year savings. An ongoing cost of £38,000 will be necessary for maintenance and support of the system and units.

Proposals

1. That Cabinet agree the proposed vision for the service, developed through consultation with users and non-users, including key groups.
2. That Cabinet approve the bid for capital investment in Radio Frequency Identification (R.F.I.D) technology, subject to the Council's capital programme setting process through the Capital Assets Committee. The council would then be in a position to provide:
 - 21 council operated libraries
 - 5 mobiles libraries including a special service mobile
 - 10 libraries operated in partnership with local communities – providing opportunities for volunteers
 - Opportunities for volunteers to extend the opening hours available at many local libraries, and for the library service to make best use of staff to keep libraries open for core/streamlined hours

Reasons for Proposal

- Maintain a professional, countywide, library service as defined in the Public Libraries Act 1964, and through the library review work with Wiltshire residents
- Involve communities in extending library service opportunities
- Improve efficiencies within the service, to achieve the required savings level of £505,000 within 2 years. This is part of the overall Comprehensive Spending Review savings requirement of 28.4%
- Reduction in staffing costs, without affecting service levels
- Place the library at the heart of the community and as the local face of the Council

Sue Redmond
Corporate Director of Community Services