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# Library Service Proposals – Supporting Information

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## 1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The provision of a local authority library is covered by statute, the Libraries and Museum Act 1964 (the Act) which requires the provision of a comprehensive and efficient service. Despite being over 50 years old this piece of legislation still applies today.
- 1.2 Since 2012 the Library Service's Net Revenue budget has been reduced from £1,809k to £1,576k. A staff restructure of branch libraries took place in 2014,
- 1.3 Subsequently, in anticipation of the need for further savings, the service considered performance data and the needs in West Berkshire's communities. Key elements of the work included consideration of the network of branch libraries, the mobile service and staffing within central support and at Newbury Library.
- 1.4 During 2015/16 the 3 year savings target was amalgamated into one year to meet greater savings needs. The Revenue Support Grant provision announced in December 2015 increased the savings need within library services to £690k in 2016/17. To meet these savings, a reduction in the library service was proposed including closing all branch and mobile libraries except for Newbury.
- 1.5 There was a high level of response to the public consultation a majority of which was in objection to the proposal. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) also contacted the Council expressing their concerns and advised that a more detailed Needs Assessment would be expected to support a proposal of this level. The Council decided to commission a fuller, externally led Needs Assessment to advise on ways to re-shape the service to make savings whilst remaining compliant with the legislation.

## 2. The Needs Assessment Process

- 2.1 RedQuadrant, a consultancy which is active in the library field, was commissioned to carry out the Needs Assessment. This assessment analysed demographic data and performance statistics from the existing library service to determine the needs of each community across the district. In addition to the Needs Assessment, RedQuadrant were also asked to assist with options for a transformed service that made savings whilst remaining compliant with the Act and accordingly reducing the likelihood of challenge against the Council for reducing the library service.
- 2.2 The Council continued to receive correspondence from the community following the public consultation exercise, some of it indicating a strong interest in working with the Council to retain branch libraries. As part of the Needs Assessment RedQuadrant engaged with community groups and parish/town councils through a meeting.

- 2.3 A Project Board provided oversight during the Needs Assessment process and considered the options for a new library service.
- 2.4 Project Board concluded that, whilst significant savings are achievable, it is unlikely that the full target saving of £690k can be delivered.

### 3. Supporting Information – Future Options for Service Delivery

- 3.1 The Council recently conducted two public consultations about its library service. In Autumn 2015 the public were consulted on a proposal to close Burghfield Common library and one mobile library. In February 2016 they were consulted on a proposal to close eight branches and one mobile library, thus retaining the central library at Newbury.
- 3.2 Now that there are new proposals, a further public consultation is required in accordance with the Council's consultation policy to give all stakeholders an opportunity to see the details of the proposals and to comment.
- 3.3 The level of savings for each option assumes implementation of efficiency savings. They include streamlining the way the frontline service is offered at Newbury Library and reorganising the mobile service into a single vehicle. These actions should deliver a saving in the region of £230k.
- 3.4 The proposed levels of savings attributed to each option assume that parish/town councils, who have generally shown strong interest in maintaining their local library, will be prepared to make an annual financial contribution to support the service. The total of these contributions is assessed at the present stage as contributing about £150k in total to the saving.

### 4. Options for Consideration

- 4.1 Options for the future make efficiency savings by a reduction to one mobile library, streamlining staffing at Newbury library, closing Wash Common library and seeking increased income.
- 4.2 The consultants acknowledged the willingness of parish and town councils to support their local library, and calculated that a financial contribution from councils with a library in their area could deliver at least £150k towards achieving the Council's target saving.
- 4.3 On top of these economies and contributions, they identified four options for making savings, a choice between closing libraries or running them in a different way.
- 4.4 One option would require closure of a number of libraries. This option contains serious risk of challenge and does not move the Council forward sufficiently from the position which was consulted on in February. This option is rejected. The remaining three options suggest that all branch libraries remain open, except Wash Common, but be run with reduced staffing and the use of volunteers from community groups.
- 4.5 Libraries run by volunteers would need to be under direction of a local community group, with support from the Council including stock, training and advice. It should be remembered that the support from the Council must enable the Council to prove

their accountability for the service provided in order for that library to be considered part of the statutory duty.

- 4.6 Libraries run by volunteers would require a service level agreement to clarify both the core library service offer to be delivered and the Council's support for the library. The service level agreement should cover a period of about 3 years.

## 5. Proposals

- 5.1 The following table sets out the merits of each of three options identified in the Needs Assessment for managing branch libraries. This table includes an estimated saving for each option;

Options
<p><b>A. 50% Reduced Staffing in Branch Libraries.</b></p> <p><b>Eight static libraries retained, Wash Common closed</b></p> <p><b>Newbury Library run by paid staff</b></p> <p><b>Seven branch libraries run by paid staff, assisted by volunteers, with their staffing reduced by half.</b></p>
<p><b>Benefits</b></p> <p>Minimum risk of legal challenge</p> <p>Retained staff expertise in all libraries and thus much reduced chance of reputational damage to the Council.</p> <p>Maximum sustainability and scope to extend services through libraries as the Council's front door.</p> <p>Responsive to stakeholder feedback from recent public consultation and engagement</p>
<p><b>Risks</b></p> <p>Full savings target not achieved (<i>estimated £580k</i>).</p> <p>Community groups may be less attracted to this model, as it may frustrate their ambitions to influence and run their local library.</p> <p>Increased pressure on branch staff to deliver services if volunteers are not forthcoming or are not retained.</p>
<p><b>B. Hub and Spoke Library Network</b></p> <p><b>Eight static libraries retained, Wash Common closed</b></p> <p><b>Newbury Library run by paid staff</b></p> <p><b>Two "hub" branches run by staff, assisted by volunteers, with their</b></p>

<p><b>staffing reduced by half.</b></p> <p><b>Five “spoke” libraries run by volunteers, with appropriate support from a Libraries Team, but with no paid staff present day to day.</b></p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Provides a hub library in the West and East of district.</p> <p>Allows distribution of staff to East, West and Centre of the district.</p> <p>More flexibility than Option C to manage resilience issues.</p> <p>Achieves greater savings than Option A. <b>(estimated £620k)</b></p> <p>Blends staff expertise and volunteer enthusiasm.</p>
<p><b>Risks</b></p> <p>Potential risk of challenge to service offer in the five spoke libraries.</p> <p>Risk of challenge if the Council’s agreed support is not fully provided or is seen not to be fully provided.</p> <p>Service level agreements would need to be in place with community groups at spoke libraries to clarify the responsibilities of all parties and to cover sustainability issues, including “what happens?” when volunteers don’t fulfil their responsibilities.</p> <p>Reduced level of expertise in customer service across five libraries.</p> <p>Community groups may be less attracted to this model than Option C.</p>
<p><b>C. Seven branches fully volunteer run</b></p> <p><b>Eight static libraries retained, Wash Common closed</b></p> <p><b>Newbury Library run by paid staff</b></p> <p><b>Seven branches run by volunteers, with appropriate support from a Libraries Team, but with no paid staff present day-to-day.</b></p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>A greater financial saving <b>(estimated £645k)</b></p> <p>Local community groups and councils may find this model attractive</p>
<p><b>Risks</b></p> <p>Higher risk of challenge.</p> <p>Risk of challenge if the Council’s agreed support is not fully provided or is seen not to be fully provided.</p>

Service level agreements would need to be in place with community groups at spoke libraries to clarify the responsibilities of all parties and to cover sustainability issues, including “what happens?” when volunteers don’t fulfil their responsibilities.

Reduced level of expertise in customer service across seven libraries.

Less opportunity for extra services to be delivered through libraries.

- 5.2 As stated above at 4.1 and 4.2, as well as assuming the adoption of efficiency measures, all the Options rely on financial contributions from parish and town councils to help achieve the target savings. Engagement before and during the Needs Assessment process would indicate willingness among parishes to support their library.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Library service is a statutory service within the provisions of the Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act defines this as providing a comprehensive and efficient service.
- 6.2 A Needs Assessment provides an analysis of community needs to inform proposals to change service provision.
- 6.3 There are a number of efficiency measures that can be introduced immediately and these are estimated to achieve in the region of £250k without affecting compliance with the Act.
- 6.4 To achieve the estimated savings, these options rely both on frontline work by volunteers and financial contributions from parish/town councils. Accordingly they do come with the risk of ongoing resilience to frontline operations and the chance of not securing the assumed level of financial support from councils
- 6.5 All of the options propose a change to the frontline service and accordingly should be subject to public consultation.

## 7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1 RedQuadrant engaged with stakeholders but did not carry out any formal consultation.
- 7.2 They held a meeting to which Friends of Libraries groups and representatives of Parish and Town Councils with a static library were invited.
- 7.3 A drop-in event was held in all 9 static libraries to encourage anyone from the community to call in and speak to a consultant. People who could not attend these sessions were invited to contact RedQuadrant by email or hand in written comments.

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**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

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**Wards affected:**

Whole district.

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**Strategic Aims and PrioritiesSupported:**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

☒ **HQL1 – Support communities to do more to help themselves**

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**Officer details:**

Name: Mike Brook

Job Title: Library Service Manager

Tel No: 503672

E-mail Address: [mike.brook@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:mike.brook@westberks.gov.uk)

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## Appendix B

### Equality Impact Assessment – Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage 2, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

<b>Name of policy, strategy or function:</b>	Library Service Restructure
<b>Version and release date of item (if applicable):</b>	
<b>Owner of item being assessed:</b>	Mike Brook
<b>Name of assessor:</b>	Mike Brook
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	31.08.2016

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Is changing	Yes
Service	Yes		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
<b>Aims:</b>	To achieve a saving of up to £690k
<b>Objectives:</b>	To achieve the savings and retain a legally compliant library service that is comprehensive and efficient and which meets the public sector equality duty
<b>Outcomes:</b>	Transition library service to a hub and spoke structure with reduced staffing and increased use of volunteers
<b>Benefits:</b>	Financial saving

<p><b>2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</b></p> <p>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)</p>
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Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Older people, children and families	Loss of service where a library fails would impact more on older people, who often rely on their library for social interaction, and on families, who source cheap and accessible activities at the library.	Library Drop-in sessions and previous consultations have found that local libraries contribute to health and wellbeing and combat social isolation and loneliness. Families with young children often rely on opportunities delivered by the service.
Households without IT	Loss of service would impact more on families reliant on their library for IT access, either for homework, access to government services and general information	In a generally wealthy area, West Berkshire has some small pockets of high need and deprivation. Lack of a PC at home is a disadvantage to children and families, and still often to older people who would suffer from the removal of a soft learning environment to learn about IT.
<b>Further Comments relating to the item:</b>		
<p>The proposal does not envisage closure of libraries, but the new model for the service includes a risk that libraries which no longer have staff may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) fail to deliver because a suitable community group does not come forward to run the service</li> <li>b) suffer interruptions to service if volunteer scheduling arrangements fail on specific days</li> </ul>		

<b>3. Result</b>	
<b>Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p><b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b></p> <p><b>Reliance on volunteers to provide the day to day service in the majority of libraries could lead to less fair treatment of some groups of customers. This would be mitigated by effective recruitment and training of volunteers</b></p>	
<b>Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p><b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b></p> <p><b>Employment opportunities will be greatly reduced by the removal of paid staff from the majority of libraries and the reduction in staffing levels at other libraries.</b></p>	



**Staff who retain a post should be energised by the new service, but it is also very possible they could become overworked and de-motivated if the process of culture change is not handled sympathetically.**

**If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.**

**If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.**

<b>4. Identify next steps as appropriate:</b>	
<b>Stage Two required</b>	Yes
<b>Owner of Stage Two assessment:</b>	Mike Brook
<b>Timescale for Stage Two assessment:</b>	
<b>Stage Two not required:</b>	

**Name: Mike Brook**

**Date: 31.08.2016**

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**Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.**