

**22 January 2019**

**Overview and Scrutiny (Regeneration and Culture) recommendation 2:**

*That consultations also be undertaken with the Council run libraries (to include Manningham, Bingley, and other areas) to reflect the diversity of the district as part of the budget proposal consultation process. That, following this consultation, the Committee Members be advised of the information gathered by email.*

**Financial context**

The library service is part way through the delivery against a 4-year budget plan (2018-21). Savings of £305,000 have been achieved since 2017/18. Savings of £950,000 for 2019/20 have been agreed.

The current library services net budget for 2018/19 is £3.2M of which £2.6m is spent on staff costs, £430,000 on supplies and services, and £610,000 on premises and other 3<sup>rd</sup> party payments (including support to existing CMLs). The service generates income of £160,000 from council run libraries.

**The proposal**

A number of themes have been identified that underpin the future design of the library service. A need for greater community engagement and outreach to shape the service, stronger relationships between the council and community manages libraries, increased commercial and business activity, enhancement of the current volunteer scheme, and closer partnership working with other council services.

At CMT in January 2019 it was agreed the direction of travel for the service (2019/20) that all current libraries (both the council and community managed) across the district will remain open, with no visible changes to library users being seen. Therefore it was agreed to achieve the complex aims of reducing costs whilst delivering our ambitions that we needed to jointly redesign 'back office' resources across libraries and museums and galleries.

The workforce changes require:

- A new staffing structure with new posts across both libraries and museums to enhance business and commercial activity and learning and community outreach,
- Efficient management structures and roles and deployment of front-line staff,
- Reduced management team,
- A new operating model for public opening times at two museums

**Wider budget consultation**

The wider budget proposal consultation took place between December 2018 and January 2019. Consultation on the budget proposals took place with the public via the Council's website and other channels. Consultation also took place with partners, local businesses, parish and town councils, voluntary and community organizations and other interested parties.

By the end of the consultation on 27 January 2019, the Council had received 588 comments from people or groups (not including consultation with the trade unions).

The proposals generating the most comments were:

- Welfare advice and customer services
- **Libraries**
- Raise in Council Tax
- Youth service

### **Online feedback**

The wider online budget consultation identified a number of common themes relating specifically to the Library Service and budget reductions. These included:

- Concerns that future reductions in the library service would have a negative impact on the quality of provision
- Reductions in provision would have a greater impact on the more diverse communities in the district
- The Community Managed Library model assumes there are volunteers to run these. This is not the case
- A reduction in library provision (ICT) would impact on those people who are on universal credit or job seekers allowance
- A recognition that a library service is more than lending books and are often play a wider role in the community
- Concerns that children and families could be disenfranchised as their local library service is either lost or reduced
- Future provision of “hubs” could exclude elderly and more vulnerable people (including low income) who do not always have the ability to travel to a library
- Concerns over any future loss of the home delivery service and the impact on those house bound

### **Public consultation venues and times:**

The service undertook a series of engagement events to help gain local views on the proposed changes for 2019/20. 10 Public meetings were held between the 17<sup>th</sup> January to 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019:

- Eccleshill library
- Ilkley library
- Keighley library
- Shipley library
- Wibsey library
- Bingley library \*\*\*
- Laisterdyke library
- Manningham library \*\*\*
- Holmwood library
- Thornbury library

\*\*\* Indicates libraries included at the request of Elected Members.

**Purpose of the meetings:**

The purpose of the meetings was to share with the public the current (2019/2020) proposals for the future delivery of the service against the impact of delivering a library budget saving of £950k and to receive comments and views that would help inform the future design of the Service.

**Location of meetings:**

Prior to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019, Officers had chosen a number of locations where meetings were held in the evening and weekend.

Locations had been carefully selected for their accessibility (Public transport infrastructure), suitable space to accommodate members of the public and staff to accommodate evening and weekend meetings. Geographical spread was also considered.

**Officers' messages:**

Officers were briefed to ensure consistent messages were presented to the members of the public. The messages included:

- Proposed activities for 2019/2020
- The Council's ambitions to retain all libraries for 2019/2020
- The agreement for the use of £420k central financial support relating to the City Library lease
- Establishments of Community Hubs in Shipley, Keighley and City
- Links to wider council initiatives including; prevention and early help strategies and work on single estates
- Central services restructure

**Communications:**

The Council's Marketing and Communications Team supported the publication of consultation dates and locations. In addition press releases, posters, the use of social media and website information was published.

Details of the consultation events were also distributed across all libraries and community libraries using direct mail and public notices.

The use of *Stay Connected*, an email alert from the Council to those who wish to receive notification of council issues including wider library issues and library consultation events was delivered to over 5000 people, including Elected Members.

**Attendance:**

Across all 10 public meetings there were 207 people who attended the public consultation events. Individual contact details were taken from 70 people interested in future consultation events.

### **Issues raised at the consultation events – summary:**

Generally positive response given that there was no direct impact on library provision across the district for 2019/2020, but concerns over future year budget reductions and changes to provision i.e. reductions.

Aligned to the level of budget reductions for this year and next, questions were asked if the public can support the Council by campaigning as well as establishing Friends Groups, fund raising and “Support Your Library Campaigns”.

Comments that the Council needs to stop “vanity” projects, WYCA etc to prevent unnecessary spend.

“The Council is skimping on the cultural lifeblood of the city, Libraries and Museums should be retained, the book fund should not be cut, it contributes to the health and well being and fuels education”.

Concerns regarding specialist knowledge of library staff being lost or reducing, and staff being replaced by volunteers. Volunteers, many are seen as capable, but not the same as paid professional library staff. The quality of the service will reduce as a result of using volunteers.

A number of questions raised around how the Council has arrived at the selection on three library hubs. Rationale explained e.g. venue size, location, and opportunity for growth. Specifically asked why Ilkley and Bingley library were not considered as hubs. Explanation that criteria is the starting position for 2020/2021 service changes and that is there are opportunities in the future to grow the model to have more hub libraries and the public consultation in the summer will inform this.

Concerns were raised about problem children at some libraries and asked what the Council is doing about this, as people won't come to the library because of it.

Views expressed about the lack of marketing for the library service to increase footfall.

Provided re-assurance that more detailed and wider consultation would take place during the summer (2019) and everyone had the opportunity inform the proposals.

Concerns around the future of Community Managed Libraries were raised and what happens no in relation to 2019/202 and beyond?

### **Feedback to the Executive:**

Copies of the notes taken at consultation events were submitted to Kathryn Jones, Policy Officer as part of the Councils wider budget consultation process.