

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting8th September 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Library and Information Service Asset Reconfiguration

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report relating to the library service.

Cabinet was reminded that a comprehensive public library service was a Local Government statutory requirement.

The Library and Information Service assets within Stockton were:

- 11 Static Libraries
- Mobile Library Service with 2 vehicles (outlying districts, schools, residential care homes and individuals who are housebound or carers)
- 1 Neighbourhood Centre Library (Ragworth run by the Community Officers)
- 2 Prison Libraries (SLA with HMP OLIS contract)
- 1 Hospital service (using volunteers)
- 1 Bibliographical Service area (Thorndale Centre)

It was explained that Stockton Libraries were included as part of the Corporate Asset Review of Community Buildings. The core library offer was a book collection which was refreshed and relevant to the community it served. Thanks to technology, finding out what books and services were available, and gaining access to them was getting easier, and the means by which people get to the items they want are getting more varied and flexible. Many of the Library functions could be incorporated into other public service delivery points, and a small but growing number could be delivered remotely via the internet.

E-books, and digital audio books were a growing part of the public library service offer, adding to the range of services available on-line. However, the physical stock of books, the free internet access, and the help and expertise of professional librarians, made it essential that the Council maintain a network of library sites.

It was noted that libraries provided a focal point for communities,

frequently offering meeting spaces, a rich and diverse range of activities, and confidential consultation areas for sensitive services such as health information work.

Stockton Council delivered a range of services through face to face contact. The more often the Council could combine those services on a single site the better the experience for the customer. Libraries could provide a base for the delivery of other services, or be integrated into other public service facilities. Refurbishment of Thornaby Library included the incorporation of Customer Services on the same site. With very positive effects for both services. At the same time, Library Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) self issue systems were introduced. 100% of the book issues that could go through the system did so. RFID released staff to help customers and deliver a wider range of information services. The same technology could be used to automate other transactions. This transformational change at Thornaby had seen an increase of 210% in actual visits and an 82% increase in the number of items issued, with Children and Young people's issues up by over 300%.

Using the differentiated service rationale within the Corporate Asset Review, the Council would design the Town Centre Libraries to accommodate the enhanced range of Library services. As already demonstrated with Thornaby Town Centre Library, those larger sites with enhanced service provision were more economical to run and could be cost effectively opened for longer hours.

Town Centre Libraries would be complemented by a combination of smaller Community Libraries, mobile services, and services provided from within other Council buildings delivering other compatible services to the local community. Community based library provision would be differentiated and targeted directly to the service needs of the community in question (identified using highly sophisticated and detailed Library local area profiles).

The principle of a differentiated service would initially be applied in the Asset Review options analysis, but also over time, allowing for the long term development of the hub and spoke model.

In effect the Council would replicate a system which was commonplace in retail and commercial leisure sectors, where main sites were open longer hours and delivered the widest possible range of services, whilst smaller, staffed satellite points provided a targeted subset of the total range of services, designed through intelligent behaviour/needs analysis of the local customer base. This model also allowed for the local delivery point to become a conduit for mobile or 'provided to order' goods or services.

Members noted that the next stage would be to develop an action plan for differentiated Library Service Provision within the Community Asset Review and develop a linked consultation strategy.

RESOLVED that the principle of a differentiated Library Service based on Town Centre Libraries providing a wide range of services, and community libraries offering services targeted to the needs of local communities. the proposed revised policy be approved.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To inform the detailed analysis of library site options within the Asset Review.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday 16 September 2011

Proper Officer
12 September 2011