

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 6 March 2018

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Update on the Libraries Transformation Programme – revised Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy, 2018/19 to 2022/23

Purpose: To provide Cabinet with the results of the public consultation on the draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy and for Cabinet to consider the resulting changes made to the draft Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS: Cabinet is recommended to:

- (1) note the findings of the public consultation on the draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy, which took place between 21 September and 14 December 2017, and the resulting changes made to the Strategy which are described in this report (at 2.12).**
- (2) agree the new library services that, in response to the consultation, the revised Strategy would implement, including an enhanced, modern eLibrary with greater investment, a new children and young people’s offer to support literacy and numeracy, increased outreach work in our most disadvantaged communities, and new Community Library Membership and Teachers Library Membership.**
- (3) agree the revised Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy and its implementation, which will create a modern, sustainable library service that reflects the changing ways people access the service and which prioritises resources, including allocation of the Stock Fund, more closely towards specific groups and communities where we have identified highest need.**
- (4) agree that, as part of the overall Strategy, Langney, Mayfield, Ore, Pevensey Bay, Polegate, Ringmer and Willingdon libraries and the Mobile Library close on 5 May 2018, and support to Northiam Village Library also ceases from this date.**
- (5) agree to give delegated authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive, to consider any viable community proposals to take over the running of the seven libraries or the Mobile Library, and to enter into appropriate agreements on behalf of ESCC.**

1 Background Information

1.1 The East Sussex library service remains popular, with over 230,000 registered members and 1.48 million visits to County Council libraries in 2016/17. However, patterns of library usage are changing locally and nationally. There has been a major decline in visits to libraries and loans (visits are down by around 40% in East Sussex in the past 10 years with no evidence of a likely reversal of this trend), and an increase in take up of use of the eLibrary. This reflects the fact that people increasingly access information and reading materials, as well as wider public and commercial services, online.

1.2 In December 2015, Cabinet approved the Libraries Transformation Programme (LTP), including an Internal Review of the Library and Information Service (LIS) and the development of the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy (LSCS). The LTP was designed to deliver a modern and sustainable Library and Information Service for East Sussex, based on current and future needs for the county, and to deliver overall savings of up to £2m. In September 2017 Cabinet agreed the recommendation to publicly consult on the draft LSCS between 21 September and 14 December 2017.

1.3 Under section 7 of the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* it is: ‘the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof’. The draft Needs Assessment and all other Technical Appendices (Appendices 8 to 13) considered

carefully whether the draft LSCS would enable the Council to continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient service. The conclusion drawn in the draft LSCS was that it would.

1.4 Drawing on the Needs Assessment (Appendix 8), the draft LSCS proposed a Vision for the service which recognised the importance of the LIS to support residents and communities by promoting reading and knowledge as a route to leading fulfilling lives. Four draft Strategic Outcomes proposed the future focus for delivery of the service. These were: improving child and adult literacy, supporting the economy, better health and wellbeing and increasing digital inclusion. Each of the proposed Strategic Outcomes would be delivered through a range of enhanced and new services which were described in the draft LSCS.

1.5 The Accessibility Analysis (Appendix 11) undertaken for the draft LSCS drew on national research to establish that a journey time of 20-25 minutes by car or public transport is reasonable to get to a library. Considering also the evidence from the Needs Assessment of where needs are greatest across East Sussex, the draft LSCS proposed a smaller network of 17 library buildings: Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Eastbourne, Forest Row, Hailsham, Hampden Park, Hastings, Heathfield, Hollington, Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Rye, Seaford, Uckfield and Wadhurst. It proposed the closure of Langney, Mayfield, Ore, Pevensey Bay, Polegate, Ringmer and Willingdon libraries and the cessation of the Mobile Library Service. It also proposed that ESCC funding and the supply of books for the Northiam Village Library would cease. Overall, the draft LSCS identified that the proposals would still ensure that there remained a very high level of accessibility to a library by public transport or by car across the county within a reasonable journey time, including in rural communities, and would also ensure that libraries were geographically well-placed to meet the identified needs.

2 Results of the public consultation

2.1 In total 3,633 consultation questionnaires were returned, although not all respondents answered all questions. 1,902 of these were paper copies and 1,731 were completed online. Overwhelmingly the respondents to the consultation questionnaire on the draft LSCS were current library users (92% had accessed the library service in some form in the past 12 months) and the majority of respondents (68%) were users of one or more of the seven libraries we proposed to close, the Mobile Library or Northiam Village Library. A further 1,102 representations made by email, letter and poster were received and we received one series of video submissions relating to journey times to libraries. There were also 12 petitions, totalling 8,878 signatures.

2.2 41% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that our proposals focussed our limited resources in the right areas, as described by the draft Vision and Strategic Outcomes. 12% neither agreed nor disagreed. 44% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked whether our proposals provided a reasonable range of different ways for people to use the Library and Information Service according to their needs, a lower percentage strongly agreed or agreed (28% of respondents in total). 9% neither agreed nor disagreed. 61% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. There was a significantly higher level of support (58% compared to 28%) for the proposals from respondents who were not users of the seven libraries, the Mobile Library or the Northiam Village Library. These responses and the submissions received in email and written comments, as well as the strength of feeling in local campaigns, reflect the fact that libraries are highly valued locally by their users. 1,103 (32%) respondents had not used any of these libraries.

2.3 Overall, 66% of respondents who stated they had used one of the seven libraries, the Mobile Library or Northiam Village Library, said that they would be able to access the library service in another way if the proposals were implemented. The most suitable alternative way to access the service was Eastbourne Library (686), followed by the eLibrary (463) and Hailsham Library (300). 907 respondents (34%) said they would not be able to use any alternative. The most common reason cited for not being able to use an alternative was 'other' (1,886), followed by 'unable to travel' (710), 'not knowing how to use the eLibrary' (493) and finally 'not having access to a computer/mobile device' (467). Most people choosing 'other' stated it was due to not wanting to travel to an alternative library or that travelling to an alternative would be too difficult. It should be noted that the Home Library Service, one of the alternatives available, provides access to people who cannot access a library because of disability, frailty or full-time caring responsibilities.

2.4 All comments about the proposals received, either through the consultation questionnaire or made directly to the Council, have been read and grouped according to the frequency of common themes. Comments largely related to people's objections to proposals not to retain libraries and the reasons they did not agree with the statements in the consultation questionnaire, rather than having any particular objection to other aspects of the draft LSCS, such as the Vision and Strategic Outcomes. The three most frequently

raised themes were that the elderly and disabled and vulnerable/less well-off people would be disadvantaged; children, young parents and families would be disadvantaged; and the proposals would have a negative impact on education, schools and literacy. However we did also receive comments that supported the proposals. The Public Consultation Analysis report (Appendix 4) provides more detail of all the comments and the Council's consideration of and response to the issues raised. Copies of all the responses received as part of the consultation, together with a report of all the verbatim responses received, have been placed in the Members' Room and Cabinet Room.

2.5 During the consultation period we held conversations with Town and Parish Councils and community groups. We have discussed in detail the rationale behind the proposals and the impacts and costs related to individual libraries. We have also continued our engagement with stakeholders including Action in Rural Sussex, Sussex Downs College and Sussex Coast College Hastings, Sussex Association of Local Councils and National Numeracy (a national charity). We met again with the East Sussex Seniors Association and the Youth Cabinet, both of whom understood the financial challenges for the council and felt that the proposals represented a reasonable response in the circumstances. They felt that the new elements of service delivery and an opportunity to promote different offers, particularly the eLibrary and free online reference materials, were positive steps. Staff and volunteers provided their views and have enabled us to fully formulate some of the offers and mitigations that were outlined in the draft LSCS, as well as providing helpful guidance on ways positively to promote the service to meet the new Vision and Strategic Outcomes.

Review of the evidence base for the LSCS

2.6 In light of the comments received during the consultation, we have reviewed the entire evidence base presented in the Technical Appendices from which the proposals in the draft LSCS were formed. We have carefully considered whether any new evidence has been put forward through the consultation, by individuals or organisations, which is contrary to the detailed evidence which supported the draft LSCS, with particular regard to the Needs Assessment and the Accessibility Analysis (Appendices 8 and 11 respectively), which are the key Technical Appendices providing evidence for a smaller network of 17 libraries, without the Mobile Library Service.

2.7 Many respondents described the potential negative impacts of the proposals on them or on people in their communities, as is summarised in paragraph 2.4 above. Some respondents also felt that individual indicators of lower levels of need within the Needs Assessment were important to their communities, and should justify the retention of a library. We recognise that in every community across the county there are individuals and families with needs and that in those communities where it is proposed no longer to retain a library or the Mobile Library Service, there are individuals who would be affected by the loss of the service. The purpose of the Needs Assessment (Appendix 8) is to identify which communities have greater levels of needs than others, so that the resources of the council can be prioritised towards those communities, achieving the best outcomes for the population of the county as a whole, whilst ensuring that all communities still have a high level of accessibility to library services overall. The evidence base shows that, of the libraries proposed for closure, only Langney and Ore libraries are in communities with higher levels of need, but in both cases these communities would be served by nearby central libraries (Eastbourne and Hastings) and one other library (Hampden Park and Hollington) and targeted outreach activities.

2.8 Representations were made that the journey times cited within the draft LSCS and supporting documents were not realistic, particularly with regard to car journeys. The Accessibility Analysis was undertaken in conjunction with consultants with expertise in travel analysis, who developed the methodologies and undertook the analysis. Car accessibility is based on a robust methodology using satellite navigation data from billions of vehicle journeys on the actual routes between libraries, and is therefore 'real world' not modelled or estimated data. It was also tested by routes to alternative libraries being driven at least ten times to verify the journey times. We are confident that the Accessibility Analysis is a suitable and robust basis upon which to determine reasonable journey times for travel to libraries and that it represents a proper assessment of the accessibility of the library service to the population of the county.

2.9 Some respondents commented that we did not recognise the different levels of use and varying rates of decreasing use between libraries, compared to the county-wide figure of a reduction of around 40% in usage over ten years. It is important to reiterate that, whilst we need to recognise decreasing use of the library service overall in developing the LSCS, the proposals were based on relative levels of need in different areas and county-wide accessibility rather than the level of use for any individual library or the Mobile Library.

2.10 As previously announced, Peacehaven Library will move to a smaller site within the Meridian Centre when the current lease expires in October 2018. This move will save the Library and Information Service in excess of £45,000 per year and contribute towards the overall level of savings of £653,000. The proposed library relocation will not affect accessibility for the public or opening hours.

2.11 Having analysed all of the responses and revisited the evidence base again, we do not consider that new information has been presented in the consultation responses and other forms of stakeholder engagement which means that the evidence base for the draft LSCS was incorrect or had been wrongly interpreted. In view of this, and taking into account the draft Vision and Strategic Outcomes for the East Sussex Library and Information Service and the context in which it needs to operate, which includes the financial position of the council, we believe that the original proposals for a smaller network of 17 libraries are correct. This would result in the closure of Langney, Mayfield, Ore, Pevensey Bay, Polegate, Ringmer and Willingdon libraries and the Mobile Library Service, and the end to support for Northiam Village Library.

Revisions to the LSCS following public consultation

2.12 Based on feedback and support for new service offers received during the public consultation, we have made a number of revisions to the LSCS, which are summarised in Appendix 1. These provide a fuller picture of how we will create a modern, sustainable needs-based library service, with resources, including allocation of the Stock Fund, targeted more closely towards specific groups and communities where we have identified highest need. Key new services are summarised as follows:

- Greater emphasis on the role of libraries to promote numeracy, as well as literacy, to support the life chances of both children and adults is now highlighted in the first Strategic Outcome, better reflecting the range of materials and services already provided and proposed in the revised LSCS.
- Closer alignment of spending on the library service to meet identified needs, ensuring we can deliver the Vision and Strategic Outcomes. This primarily involves:
 - re-assigning the work of librarians so that engagement with communities is focussed on work that will promote and deliver against each of the Strategic Outcomes.
 - increasing our outreach offer to serve communities with higher need, including Ore and Langney, with activities taking place at the East Hastings and Shinewater Children's Centres.
 - seeking additional external funding and sponsorship to enhance delivery of the Strategic Outcomes, building on our successful £130k Advantage East Sussex project.
 - profiling spending on stock and resources to prioritise investment to meet needs, including materials and support for children and young people.
- Prioritised investment in a modern eLibrary service to meet the needs of a growing online customer base, countering to some degree the decline in visits to libraries, and also by providing round the clock access to manage loans of items from the library and download new items. This will include additional Computer Buddy support, particularly for people who may benefit from practical support to overcome an initial lack of skills or confidence to use the eLibrary, and advice on the potential devices that can be used to access the eLibrary.
- A new Community Library Membership, following significant support for the idea, aimed at supporting more rural communities, to enable them to make library materials available at times and in a location of their choosing, compared to the limited availability, duration and frequency of the Mobile Library Service.
- New pilots of Homework and Study Clubs in libraries, based on feedback from young people about how the service can meet their needs better at significant points in the academic year, and the continuation of our popular new Code Clubs for children and young people.
- Replacement of the Schools Library and Museum Service (SLAMS), following very useful feedback from schools, with a more flexible and affordable offer. This would comprise:
 - launching a new Teachers Library Membership for East Sussex schools, which allows them to borrow items on a long loan from libraries for use in the classroom.
 - a pay-as-you-go service, which will include the more affordable and popular of our current charged services and be available to all schools in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove at cost.

- free support for schools in more deprived communities in East Sussex, including rural communities, prioritised according to need, within the overall level of resources available to us.

Community run libraries

2.13 The draft LSCS invited communities to submit proposals for community-run or community-funded libraries if Cabinet decided, following public consultation, to implement the proposals. We heard from communities during the consultation that the initial costs of stocking a community-run library would be high, and that the costs of renting or buying at their market value the buildings in which the libraries are currently based would be a significant barrier, considering all of the other challenges that there would be in setting up a community library.

2.14 We have taken on board this feedback and whilst evidence for the revised LSCS does not support an ongoing financial contribution from the Council for community libraries, if Cabinet endorse the recommendation to close the seven libraries listed above, we propose changes to the support that ESCC could offer local communities who wish to develop a viable proposal. This includes potentially the offer of a lease on a peppercorn rent to a community group that has such a proposal to take on one of these libraries in a building that we own (Ore, Polegate and Willingdon libraries). We may also lend, again on a peppercorn basis, a selection of core starter stock and the current fixtures and fittings of the library, to help overcome these initial barriers. We will also do our best to assist in the transfer of the library lease or licence, where possible, if we do not own the building in question (Langney, Mayfield, Pevensey Bay and Ringmer libraries).

2.15 We have received a number of community led proposals to potentially provide alternative provision should Cabinet agree to the closure of the 7 libraries. Depending on the Cabinet decision we anticipate that further communities may come forward with other proposals. We are committed to providing information and advice to anyone who may seek to develop a viable proposal for alternative library provision and all such proposals would be given careful consideration. It is therefore recommended that authority to consider such proposals and to enter into appropriate agreements on behalf of ESCC in that regard is delegated to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive.

Key impacts and mitigations (including EqIA)

2.16 The benefits of implementing the revised LSCS would be the achievement of the Vision and revised Strategic Outcomes. Our analysis shows that 100% of the members of the seven libraries which would close under the revised LSCS live within a 20 minute journey time by car to one of the proposed 17 remaining libraries, and over 96% are within a 30 minute journey time by public transport. 92% of members of the current 24 libraries are registered to one of the 17 libraries we would retain and would therefore be unaffected. 82 of the 88 Mobile Library stop locations are served by public transport to an alternative library building, on a day when the closest alternative library is open, of which 76 have a journey time of 30 minutes or under. All 88 Mobile Library stops are within a 20 minute drive of an alternative library.

2.17 As set out in the revised LSCS and in this report, there would, however, be impacts as a result of the proposals, and in making a final decision about whether to agree the revised LSCS, Members are required to give careful consideration to these impacts, and in particular, must have 'due regard' to the duties set out in Section 149 of the *Equality Act 2010* (the Public Sector Equality Duty or PSED). The EqIA is carried out to identify any adverse impacts that may arise as a result of the proposals for those with protected characteristics. The results of the public consultation have allowed us to address gaps in our knowledge during the draft EqIA process related to the likely impact of the proposals. The results have been used to complete the final EqIA including a detailed assessment of potential mitigations that can be undertaken to minimise any negative impacts of the revised proposals. The EqIA is appended as Appendix 5. Members must read the final EqIA and take its findings into consideration when determining these proposals.

2.18 Three main groups are identified who it is considered are likely to be more affected by the proposals. These are people aged 75 and over, people with certain disabilities, and people in rural communities. Those aged 75 and over, and those with certain disabilities, have primarily been identified for a common reason, in that they are less likely to be able to travel to an alternative library and in some cases may be lacking the digital skills or technology to access services via the eLibrary. For people living in rural communities the likely impact is that they would have further to travel to an alternative library. Rurality is not a protected characteristic under the *Equality Act 2010* but is an additional factor that ESCC takes into account.

2.19 The revised LSCS provides detail about the services we will provide to mitigate for the known impacts of the proposals. These include mitigations for groups with protected characteristics who are likely to be more affected by the changes than other groups, but also more general ways that we consider we can extend the reach of the library service by encouraging communities and other professionals to share our resources beyond library buildings. The mitigations include the Community Library Membership, the Support for Schools offer (described in 2.12) and the Home Library Service, for those who cannot get to a library (due to disability, frailty or full-time caring responsibilities). The revised LSCS and the EqIA provide more detail about all mitigations.

Implementation

2.20 The revised LSCS covers a period of five years from 2018/19 to 2022/23. Subject to agreement by Cabinet, implementation would start from 1 April 2018. If the revised LSCS is agreed, a full implementation plan would be developed as part of the business planning process for the Library and Information Service. The seven identified libraries and the Mobile Library Service would close at the end of business on Saturday 5 May 2018. This will provide time for customers to be informed of the changes and to be provided with information on alternative library services that are available to them.

3. Financial Analysis

3.1 The LTP has an agreed savings target of £2m by the end of the current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period in 2018/19. The net revenue budget of the LIS in 2017/18 is £5.4m (including depreciation costs of £853k), consisting of £3m of staffing costs (94.5 full-time equivalents) and £2.4m of non-staffing costs. The LTP is on target to deliver in full the identified savings of £1.25m from the Internal Review of the service by 2018/19. The Internal Review included a reduction in front line and back office staff (£500k), the implementation of new opening hours (£500k) and a reduction in the libraries stock fund (£250k)

3.2 The proposals within the revised draft LSCS would deliver a further saving of £653k as a result of the implementation of a needs-based library service and through a combination of income generation and shared efficiencies by co-locating LIS services with other ESCC services. This is £97k less than the £750k savings target for the LSCS in the MTFP. The shortfall would be met from increased income generated by the Registration Service (£46K) and savings achieved through a planned staff restructure of the DET support team (51K). Overall, this would equate to £1.903m of total savings for the LTP. If the revised LSCS is agreed, the net revenue budget for the LIS will have been reduced by 46% since 2014/15.

4 Libraries Scrutiny Review Board (SRB)

4.1 The Libraries SRB was established to provide critical challenge to the development of the draft LSCS. The SRB was formed of Members from the Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee. The SRB will have met a further three times between the September 2017 Cabinet meeting and the presentation of the revised LSCS to Cabinet in March 2018. It is expected that a report in response to proposals in the revised LSCS and supplementary documents will be produced by the SRB prior to the Cabinet meeting.

5 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The revised LSCS would enable the Council to create a modern, sustainable library service for East Sussex, which prioritises the needs of the county and is able to adapt to future needs, and which would enable the Council to meet its statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service that can be accessed using reasonable means. The revised LSCS would secure £653k of savings, comprising the final part of a Libraries Transformation Programme which would deliver a total saving of £1.9m.

5.2 In addition to providing a core library offer that would retain a very high level of accessibility to all those who live, work and study in East Sussex, by re-prioritising and developing new, more targeted services the revised LSCS presents a key opportunity for us to support and empower those with the greatest needs to make potentially transformational changes to their life chances. The implementation of a needs-based library service would enable resources to be targeted to communities where we have identified the highest needs.

5.3 Having carefully considered all of the consultation feedback, we do not consider that new information has been presented which means that the evidence base for the draft LSCS was incorrect or had been wrongly interpreted. In light of this, and taking into account the Vision and Strategic Outcomes for the East Sussex Library and Information Service and the financial and wider context in which it needs to operate, it is

recommended that the revised LSCS is agreed. This would result in a smaller network of library buildings, with 17 libraries in appropriate locations across the county according to need. 92% of members of the current 24 libraries would be unaffected. Over 86% of East Sussex residents would be within a 20 minute journey time to a library by public transport and over 99% within a 20 minute journey by car.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None