

Libraries' Transformation Programme

Appendix 2: Elements of the Libraries' Transformation Programme

The internal review and development of the Strategic Commissioning Strategy, as well as any subsequent implementation of changes to the library service, will happen in a number of stages. Each stage will be supported with appropriate Communications Activities and Chief Officer and Member engagement.

1. Stock Fund

1.1. In a comparison of eight similar authorities, based on the latest published CIPFA data (financial year 13/14), our annual spend on stock per 1000 population was the second highest at £1,887. In contrast, Cornwall has the lowest spend per 1000 population at £1,365. From recent discussions with a number of these authorities we understand that many are currently considering a reduction to their annual spend on stock.

1.2. The proposed £250k reduction in the stock fund would mean our spend per 1000 population would fall to £1,143 during the next Medium Term Financial Plan Period. Of course, we do not know how much other authorities will be spending on their stock in future, but in the current financial climate there will be further pressure on all authorities to reduce expenditure on library stock.

Table 1: Comparison of spend on stock per authority (13/14 CIPFA figures)

| Authority | Pop. 13/14 | Total spend on stock (per 1000 pop.) |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Cornwall | 541,300 | £1,365.00 |
| Suffolk | 735,900 | £1,367.00 |
| Buckinghamshire | 516,100 | £1,444.00 |
| WSCC | 821,400 | £1,507.00 |
| SCC | 1,152,100 | £1,715.00 |
| Devon | 758,100 | £1,778.00 |
| ESCC | 534,400 | £1,887.00 |
| Norfolk | 870,100 | £2,107.00 |

1.3. 13/14 is the most recent published CIPFA data available. We have approached colleagues at other local authorities to compare 14/15 stock fund data and are awaiting this data for more up to date benchmarking.

1.4. It is anticipated that the proposed reduction in the stock fund can be achieved with limited impact on the public, by focussing particularly on a reduction in spend on materials that are in declining demand (e.g. music CDs, reference books and periodicals) and a move towards greater use of digital and online content, for which demand is growing.

2. Reduction in opening hours

2.1. A detailed analysis of current library usage in East Sussex shows that our libraries are not well used at all times of the day. The opening hours proposals focus on reducing library opening hours at quieter times, whilst ensuring that people have access to services across the county when they are most used. It is proposed that libraries would not open before 10.00am or close after 5.00pm, except for those libraries that are currently open later than 5.30pm, which would retain one late night opening until 6.00pm on a Thursday evening. Overall the proposal would result in an average reduction to opening hours of around 25% across East Sussex. A detailed draft impact assessment, based on current library usage has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 4. It is recommended that a public consultation on proposals for changes to opening hours be undertaken from January to April 2016, following which the impact assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) would be finalised, with updated proposals presented to Cabinet in the summer of 2016. There would also need to be consultation with staff around the reduction in staffing that would result from a reduction in opening hours. Subject to the outcome of the consultation with the public and staff, and Cabinet approval, the reduction in opening hours would take effect in September 2016.

3 Review of Library Staffing

3.1 A review of staffing has begun, which has identified potential efficiency savings that would create a leaner service, focussed on our current agreed priorities. A staff consultation on a proposed new staffing structure was launched in November 2015.

3.2 A recent external review of health and safety has highlighted that lone working would be appropriate across many library branches. There are already four single staffed libraries in East Sussex (Ringmer, Forest Row, Wadhurst and Mayfield) and extending this to other sites would create savings through staff reductions. Single-staffed libraries are widespread and successful in other local authorities. However, appropriate risk assessments need to be undertaken and mitigation measures put in place before this can be introduced more widely in East Sussex.

3.3 In addition, a time and motion study undertaken in 2014 demonstrated that there is the opportunity to reduce staffing further alongside the implementation of single staffing. The 11% decrease in visits to libraries and 20% reduction in stock issues over the past five years, accompanied by an exponential rise in use of e-services, means that there is less demand on staff time within libraries and therefore fewer staff are needed.

3.4 There would need to be consultation with staff around the reduction in staffing that would result from both lone working and reduced staffing operations, and this would be combined with the consultation with staff on the implications of the reduction in opening hours, so that all of these issues can be considered together.

4 Strategic Commissioning Strategy

4.1 The level of savings achieved through the commissioning strategy depends on the outcome of the needs assessment and detailed analysis of all available options. The estimated savings in business rates would only be possible if the service transfers to a new or existing external body with charitable status. A charitable model would also have access to external funding streams that are not available to local authorities. There may be comparable financial and non-financial benefits of alternative models and these will be explored during the planning phase of the strategic commissioning cycle, in response to the findings of the needs assessment.