

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee

Monday 1st June, 2015 10:00 am

Libraries in a Connected Staffordshire (part 4)

Recommendation/s

- 1.To consider and comment on proposals to redefine and reshape Staffordshire's mobile and travelling library service, set out in this report.

Report of Michael Lawrence Cabinet Member for Children, Communities & Localism

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

2. To scrutinise the principles that have been developed which it is proposed will inform the future planning of mobile routes.
- 3.To comment upon the proposed routes for Staffordshire's Mobile and Travelling Library Service which will be subject to public consultation.
- 4.The Library Service welcomes comments from the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee which will feed into the proposals to be considered by Cabinet on 17 June 2015.

Report

Background

5. The purpose of the report is to update the Select Committee on work that has taken place further to the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee meeting on 23 January 2015 and Cabinet on 18 February 2015 to adapt and reposition the mobile and travelling library service.
 6. Subject to comments from this Committee and Cabinet agreement, specific initial service recommendations will be tested with communities through a formal public consultation. These recommendations have been developed on the basis of an analysis of usage, financial performance and a set of principles that aim to ensure people with the greatest need continue to receive a mobile or travelling service.
 7. As outlined in Achieving Excellence – Libraries in a Connected Staffordshire: Part, Part 2 and Part 3 (see previously published papers) the way that people access information and reading, the way they socialise and interact with each other and with organisations continues to evolve in the digital age.
 8. To meet these changes, since 2008 Staffordshire Library Service has changed the way it operates, and has delivered £1.1 million of savings without any building closures or reductions of opening hours through:
 - Reducing management and support services;
 - Introducing self-service; and
 - Reducing expenditure on CDs & DVDs.
- A review of the static library service will deliver £1.325 million in savings by April 2017 as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
9. A further saving of £350,000 per year against the Mobile and Travelling Library Service has been identified as part of the 2015-2018 MTFS review.
 10. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 gives the County Council a statutory duty to provide "a comprehensive and efficient library service". The Council is also required to ensure that facilities are available for the borrowing of or reference to books, other printed materials, recorded music and films, of sufficient number, range and quality to meet the requirements of adults and children in the County Council's area. The Council must also encourage adults and children to make full use of library services, and lend books and other printed materials free of charge to those who live, work or study in the area.

11. Within Staffordshire the Mobile and Travelling Library Service is part of the county council's provision and is managed and delivered by Staffordshire Libraries and Arts service.

12. A small percentage of the Staffordshire population are members of the Mobile and Travelling Library Service. During 2013/14:

- There were less than 13,000 members (1.5% of the population)
- 5,600 members borrowed from the service (0.66% of the population)
- Mobile and travelling libraries generated 6.4% of Staffordshire's issues.

13. In 2013/14 there were 104,763 visits to Staffordshire Mobile and Travelling libraries. This is 2.7% of total visits to all Staffordshire Libraries (mobile, travelling and static libraries combined).

14. As with static libraries, use of Mobile and Travelling libraries has fallen consistently over a 10 year period and visits have declined by 7.5%, during the last 4 years.

Mobile and Travelling Library Usage	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Visits	113,315	113,431	101,794	103,056
Issues	360,873	355,517	280,690	218,969
Total Members	16,472	15,165	13,941	12,678
Active Borrowers	7,755	7,188	7,125	5,523
Computer Bookings	723	610	359	202
Number of computers	6	4	4	2
Summer Reading Challenge - Children Starting	355	435	422	393
Summer Reading Challenge - Children Completing	182	273	245	259

15. Mobile libraries reach into 350* communities, making over 800* individual stops. Details of current stops can be found in Appendix 1.

*figures from 2013/14

16. Currently, the mobile library fleet consists of two larger travelling libraries and six standard mobile libraries, with an additional 'relief' mobile library used if one of the vehicles is being serviced or breaks down.

17. The travelling libraries serve larger communities with a regular weekly timetable, providing these communities with at least one day of service per week.

18. The standard mobile libraries predominantly provide shorter visits on a three-weekly timetable, mainly serving smaller, communities, although some larger communities do have a weekly service from standard mobile libraries.

19. Each mobile library carries approximately 3,500 items of stock.

Costs

20. The Mobile & Travelling Library Service costs £652,303 per year to run which includes £39,981 of management time and training costs. It costs almost £7¹ to visit a mobile library compared to approximately £2.26² to visit a static library. A full breakdown of costs are listed below:

Mobile and Travelling Library Service	Budget 2015/16
Staff costs: salaries and on costs of drivers, relief drivers, casual staff and library assistants	£352,420
Vehicle costs: lease, fuel, repairs & maintenance, software licences etc.	£234,991
Management & training	£39,981
Book stock: annual additions to stock	£24,910
Total:	£652,303

21. The County Council agreed as part of the MTFS 2015-18 to review the Mobile & Travelling Library Service and explore options to reduce the annual budget by £350,000.

22. The Mobile & Travelling Library Service is managed operationally by the Library Service District Managers and delivered by the mobile drivers/assistants. Mobile Libraries are single staffed and Travelling Libraries have two staff with 1 FTE Driver/Assistant and 1 FTE Library Assistant to cover the extended hours that the vehicle operates. A full time Transport Manager manages the fleet of vehicles.

23. There may be costs associated with reducing the service should final proposals be agreed by Cabinet. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Termination charge of vehicle leases
- Redundancy costs

Principles

24. In addition to the analysis of usage and our engagement with staff, the following principles have been developed which it is proposed will inform the future planning of mobile routes. We believe that these principles will ensure that the service continues to reach into areas of greatest need.

¹ This is an internally produced cost figure used to show the difference between the Mobile & Travelling Library Service and static libraries. The cost per visit for Staffordshire Libraries (which includes static and mobile libraries) as published in CIPFA 2013/14 was £2.66.

² See above

25. We welcome the Committee's comments on the following principles before we seek views from the public as part of the formal consultation:

1.	<p>Mobile and Travelling library stops will take account of the location of static libraries to ensure that duplication of service is not taking place.</p> <p>It is proposed that Mobile and Travelling Libraries will generally visit locations outside a 2 mile radius of a static library.</p> <p>However there could be exceptions identified through the public consultation that will need to be considered in the final proposals taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The needs of areas of deprivation b. The needs of hard-to-reach groups c. How connected communities are in terms of access to transport to reach static libraries and accessibility to online services and information through Internet access
2.	<p>Based on performance of the last three years, where a mobile or travelling library has received at least three visitors within a community, a mobile or travelling library service will continue.</p>
3.	<p>Each community identified as needing a mobile or travelling library service through this review will receive one mobile or travelling library visit at least once every 3 weeks. This will maximise access to the service across the county.</p>
4.	<p>The duration of the mobile or travelling library stops will be for a minimum of 15 minutes. Length of stop time will depend on the level of use at each stop.</p>
5.	<p>Continuation of service to those in greatest need is a priority.</p> <p>We will consider carefully how the needs of the vulnerable, the elderly and other protected groups can be met if there is a recommendation to change the service in their community.</p> <p>Alternative ways of ensuring service delivery will be explored during the consultation and recommended in the final proposals.</p>
6.	<p>All routes and stops will be reviewed on an annual basis.</p>

Proposals

26. To help inform these proposals the 15.5 FTE Mobile & Travelling Library Service staff have been given the opportunity to comment on them and also to share their aspirations and expectations of the Mobile & Travelling Library Service as it is remodelled.

27. During the staff engagement, Mobile & Travelling Library staff told us that:

- Longer and more frequent stops would be more memorable to customers.
- Timely stops in a central community location would be preferable.
- Rural and isolated stops are typically used by older people and those who find it difficult to get to towns.

28. Having engaged with staff and completed a financial review and performance analysis of the Mobile & Travelling Library Service, it is proposed that communities, individuals and stakeholders are consulted on the principles and the proposed routes and stops for the Mobile & Travelling Library Service.

29. Community groups and alternative methods of service delivery, for example e.g. deposit collections, access points or other alternatives will be explored through the public consultation.

30. The proposed routes can be found in Appendix 2.

31. The stops that we are proposing to retain as outlined in Appendix 2 were selected by applying the principles above and taking into account:

- Existing level of use
- Distance from a static library
- Index of multiple deprivation
- Car ownership
- Access to public transport
- Current level of internet access and provision within a locality

32. In addition to consulting on the principles and the detailed proposal as described in Appendix 2, we welcome views regarding to alternative proposals or delivery methods. The consultation will give the opportunity to share comments and suggestions and all alternatives will be considered.

Consultation

33. Should Cabinet agree to formally consult with the public on these proposals we plan to do so over a 9 week period. Our three weekly mobile timetables will give customers up to 3 opportunities to access their Mobile or Travelling Library during the consultation period.

34. All consultation materials will be made available on the County Council's website as well as in hard copy in mobile, travelling and static libraries.

Next steps

35. Subject to Cabinet approval we propose to begin the Public Consultation in July.

36. We will analyse the consultation during September and take final recommendations with a full Community Impact Assessment to Cabinet later in the year

37. We anticipate implementing changes to the service in 2016.

Link to Strategic Plan – Libraries and Arts contribute to all of the County Council outcomes and sub-outcomes through improving and innovating the service to increase engagement and outcomes

Community Impact – An initial scope Community Impact Assessment will be completed to support the 17 June Cabinet report. Findings from the public consultation will feed into a full Community Impact Assessment to ensure the council has a full understanding of the impact of final recommendations and how any negative impact can be mitigated.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix 1 – Current routes

Appendix 2 – Proposed routes

