

**SPECIAL CABINET
22 FEBRUARY 2012**

ITEM NO.

OPTIONS FOR DARLINGTON LIBRARY SERVICE

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Nick Wallis,
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Richard Alty, Director of Place

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is:
 - (a) To present findings from a review of the Library Service and options for the future provision of the service.
 - (b) To seek Cabinet’s view on the recommended options.

Summary

2. In the 2011-15 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that was approved by Council in March 2011 a commitment was made to realise savings within the Library Service budget of £130k per annum by 2011-12 and £250k per annum by 2012-13. A Transformational Review of the service is complete and has delivered £242k of savings through management and operational staffing consolidation.
3. Libraries are a statutory service under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964, however, the scale and scope of libraries services are not dictated by statute. To demonstrate that Darlington’s proposals meet local need, and therefore the requirements of the 1964 Library Act, a thorough ‘Assessment of Local Need’ was completed in 2011. The findings from this Assessment have guided the recommendations proposed to Cabinet in November and in this updated report.
4. The Review of the Library Service considered options as to how the service could be delivered more efficiently while still meeting statutory duties. The future delivery options considered were to:
 - (1) Remain in current locations
 - (2a) Remain in current locations but operate ½ time at Cockerton

- (2b) Close Cockerton and operate from Crown Street only
 - (3a) Keep Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to Central Hall
 - (3b) Close Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to Central Hall
 - (4a) Keep Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to the Town Hall
 - (4b) Close Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to the Town Hall
5. The Review also included an assessment of the mobile Library Service and opportunities to deliver shared services.
6. The Review identified that a second phase of change could deliver additional savings, principally through the closure of Cockerton Library (option 2b) in the summer of 2012.
7. At the 22nd November 2011 Cabinet, Members asked for further work to be done, looking at the impact of closing Cockerton. Findings from this work have been used to inform recommendations in this report. A summary of the findings is attached as **Annex B**.
8. Appendix 13a of the main MTFP report refers to the views and comments on the Library Service from Place Scrutiny Committee. This report seeks to answer most of the Committees comments. Following the Cabinet decision on the Library Service, Officers will continue to work on addressing these issues around how best to support a successful Library Service in Darlington.

Recommendations

9. Members note that for the 2012/13 financial year and beyond, an annual budget reduction for the Library Service of £242,000 has been achieved through consolidation of management and operational structures.
10. That Member recommend to Council that the budget for Cockerton Library be reduced to £60K per annum in 2012/13, achievable by reducing the opening hours at Cockerton Library from 50 to 28 hrs per week.
11. That within the wider context of work on exploring options for the delivery of Council Services, further opportunities for savings should be considered for 2013/14 and beyond.

Reasons

12. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) The Library Service has already made significant savings through transforming processes and reducing staffing numbers with a minimal level of impact on the service.
 - (b) The assessment of the impact of closing Cockerton Library indicates that closure would have a significant impact on young people, on residents living in economically disadvantaged wards (accessing computers in the Library) and on people with a disability who find Cockerton Library easier to access than Crown St Library.
 - (c) The option of reducing opening hours at Cockerton Library realises further savings, whilst still providing a Library Service accessible to all members of the community,

including the groups described above.

- (d) To reflect the statutory requirement for the Council to provide a Library Service.
- (e) Recognising that although the Library budget has been reduced substantially (around 20% since 2010/11), through alternative governance arrangements or ways of working there maybe further opportunities to make savings.

Richard Alty
Director of Place

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no significant impacts.
Health and Well Being	The Library Service provides a safe environment for a number of specific users groups, for example mothers and children and older people.
Carbon Impact	There are no significant impacts.
Diversity	The Library Service will continue to focus on providing opportunities for all sectors of the community.
Wards Affected	Residents from all wards use the Library Service. The Library buildings are located in Central Ward and Cockerton West Ward.
Groups Affected	Specific groups using the Library Service include housebound residents, mothers and young children, school children and people without access to the internet at home.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report is part of the preparation of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan
Key Decision	This is a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Library Service contributes to learning and cultural life in Darlington, supporting outcomes around education and skills and providing opportunities for all members of the community to access literature, music and the internet..
Efficiency	The review of the Library Service has identified substantial efficiency savings and recommends further work on achieving savings by exploring new ways of delivering the service.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

9. In the 2011-15 Medium Term Financial Plan that was approved by Council in March 2011 a commitment was made to realise savings within the Library Service budget of £130k per annum by 2011-12 and £250k per annum by 2012-13. The savings were to be achieved through the completion of a transformational review and development of a draft library plan to ensure that the Library Service continued to meet the needs of the local community.
10. A Transformational Review of the service is complete and the Library Service has achieved £242k of savings (20% reduction in budget) through management changes and operational staffing consolidation, whilst protecting the services to members of the public.

Wider Arts and Leisure Review

11. In parallel with the libraries transformational review, work is ongoing to assess the potential financial impacts of transferring leisure and/or cultural services management to a Non Profit Distributing Organisation (a 'Trust' or 'NDPO') or a Commercial Operator Trust Hybrid Model. This work will also consider the scope of collaborating more widely with the delivery of Cultural Services in partnership with other Local Authorities with the potential for different delivery models that will reduce costs but preserve core services.
The recommendations in this report will not impact on any future plans for the governance and delivery of cultural services, including the Library Service.

Libraries – The Statutory Libraries Duty

12. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide a library service for those residing within its area but the scale and scope of the service is not dictated. As with many other services a strong public response is expected in relation to any proposed change to services and as a result a number of legal challenges are mounted about decisions to change services, some of which have been successful. It is therefore important that any proposed changes are introduced having followed a robust decision making process.
13. An 'Assessment of Local Need' was completed in 2011. The findings from this Assessment and further work looking at the impact of closing Cockerton has guided the recommendations proposed in this report.
14. The Authority has also sought guidance from and involved the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) during the Libraries Review and the MLA has expressed their support for how the review process has been completed.

Future Libraries Programme

15. In August 2011 the MLA and Local Government Group published a report on the Future Libraries Programme. This programme began in 2010 and was designed to support 36 library authorities in developing innovative ways to modernise services.

16. The paper identified four options which could help libraries survive and adapt in the 21st Century. These options were:
- (a) Running libraries in partnership with the private sector, charities and other councils.
 - (b) Extending the reach and range of Library Services by integrating them with other community facilities like churches, shops and village halls and providing public services such as health centers and the police surgeries in existing libraries.
 - (c) Sharing services like back offices and mobile libraries with neighbouring local authorities to make stretched resources go further.
 - (d) Giving library users the ability to play a more active role in running Library Services themselves.

Darlington Libraries Service

17. Darlington Libraries Services operates from two physical buildings as well as operating a mobile library. The physical buildings comprise the Central Library, which is located in Crown Street in Darlington Town centre and a satellite branch library located in Cockerton on the North West side of Darlington. The mobile library provides access to Library Services across the borough and particularly targets rural areas and residential homes. The Service is wholly within the ownership and control (buildings and staff) of the Council and falls within the Cultural and Leisure Section of the Place Services Group.
18. The Library Service has an annual budget in 2011/12 of £1.011m and from January 2012 has 26 fte posts. There are currently 47,500 library members, and in 2010/11 the service issued over half a million books, had over 400,000 visits to the three libraries, and provided over 93,000 sessions on public access computers. In the half year to September 2011 Crown Street Library accounted for 63% of the library issues, with Cockerton Library accounting for 25% and the Mobile Library accounting for 8%. Services to the housebound and residential homes accounted for 3% of the issue.

Assessment of local need and key principles of library plan

19. The Assessment of Local Need was the first step in the transformational review of the Library Service. The Assessment's purpose was to give a detailed understanding of the needs of the local community for a Library Service and how close the current Library Service is to meeting these needs. This included understanding both the needs of the general population and also the needs of specific groups such as, young people, older people and people with disabilities. Principal areas of investigation covered in the assessment were:
- (a) Information on Service Delivery Points (Libraries)
 - (b) Information on Services Provided
 - (c) Information on Service Users
 - (d) Findings from Consultation
 - (e) Summary and Conclusions

20. Consultation for the Assessment took the form of a survey that was completed by close to 4000 members of the local community between November 2010 and January 2011. The survey provided valuable information on the type of services people use, how regularly these services are used, which services people consider most valuable and how people would like to see the Service change in the future.
21. There were a wide range of findings from the Assessment of Local Need with the most significant of these being summarised in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1:

	High Performing	Low Performing
Meeting Community Needs	All aspects of each of the three libraries (Crown Street, Cockerton & Mobile) are rated by library respondents as Good to Very Good	Having only the three service points gives Darlington the highest population per library of any authority in the country with the average number of libraries across all authorities being 15.
	Library membership currently stands at around 47,500 people, with 21% of the total population of Darlington borrowing books in the last year. This is the fifth highest active borrower rate amongst all the English unitary authorities.	The Service is the worst performing service for 'Floor Space per 1000 Population' with 12sqm. The average of those authorities who responded is 22sqm.
	The Service issues over half a million books every year, deals with 844 enquiries for every 1,000 population and sees over 400,000 visits each year across all three service points.	The Service has the highest figure for 'Population per service point' with 33,600. The average is 16,652
	The public access computers, in all three libraries, are used for almost 80,000 sessions each year, for everything from job applications to social networking.	The Service supplies 47% of reserved books within 7 days, 65% within 15 days and 80% within 30 days which is below average performance for reservations.
	There is an even split of membership and usage across the borough.	
Needs of Specific Groups	The average membership level in the 10 most deprived wards in Darlington is 43% which is in line with the average membership levels of all wards.	The Library Service has poor information concerning the number of people from BME groups who use the service.
	0-15 aged members are significantly overrepresented as a proportion of the total population.	11-16 year olds were the least satisfied with opening hours/frequency of stops. 11-16 year olds also gave the lowest rating averages across all five aspects of each of the three libraries.
	The housebound service which is well used and integrated into social services and voluntary services.	There is a lower frequency of usage in the younger population, especially 11-16 year olds.
	The mobile library visits more remote areas and residential homes.	
	The Library Service has a wide range of audio books which have a high turnover rate showing a significant level of usage from people with physical disabilities.	
	The library survey indicated that the computer and internet facilities are more valued by people living in deprived wards than those living in more affluent wards.	
Value for Money	The Service issues over half a million books every year, with the fifth lowest cost per issue of £2.12p, of those authorities who completed their return.	The Service has average performance for 'Physical visits per 1000 population' with 4.108. The average is 4,785
	Darlington spent £11.28 per head of population on library services in 2010/11, which is the third lowest among all unitaries.	The Service supplies 47% of reserved books with 7 days, 65% within 15 days and 80% within 30 days which is below average performance for reservations. This performance is linked to the fact that the service has the lowest stock levels and highest stock turnover per item of all unitaries.
	Staffing levels are the second lowest	

	High Performing	Low Performing
	among the unitaries, and the average cost per employee is tenth lowest, although the proportion of the budget that they take is high, reflecting a low overall budget compared to other authorities.	
	The Service has the highest figure for 'Population per service point' with 33,467. The average is 16,208	
	The Service has higher than average performance for 'Active Borrowers' as a percentage of the total population' with 21%. The average is 19%	
	The Service is the best performing service for 'Issues per stock item' with 8.3 issues per item per year. The average is 4.7.	

22. The performance statistics have been taken from the 2010-11 CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounts) reports as these are the most recent reports available. It should be noted however that a large number of authorities are currently completing library reviews in response to budget pressures. The result of these reviews may alter the performance of each authority and in turn how Darlington's Library Service is performing within the national context.
23. Based on the findings of the Assessment of Need and the priorities identified in Darlington's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) six key principles for the Library Plan were identified as outlined below:
- (a) Environments which are accessible to the community and provide sufficient space for borrowing and reference material
 - (b) Provision of an outreach service to ensure that the most vulnerable and difficult to reach individuals have access to the Library Service
 - (c) Supported learning space with access to ICT services
 - (d) Continued investment in borrowing and reference material
 - (e) Provision of an intergenerational learning environment
 - (f) Delivery of a service which is integrated with and enables the delivery of a wide range of local priorities and services

Detailed Library Reviews

24. The Needs Assessment has established a detailed understanding of both how the Library Service currently serves the community and on how the Library Service could continue to meet community need in the future.
25. In parallel with the Needs Assessment a number of reviews were undertaken looking at operational aspects of the Library Service. The findings of these reviews are summarised in points 28 – 51.

Staffing restructure

26. The staffing restructure, now completed focused on the consolidation of the management structure, implemented by the 1 October 2011 and aligning the operational structure January 2012. This has delivered an annual saving of £242K.

Accommodation Review

27. The Accommodation Review focused on completing a detailed review of the current buildings (usage levels, location and access, condition and maintenance costs, alternative uses) and considering opportunities for delivering the Library Service from other locations. The alternative locations for library delivery were evaluated on their ability to meet local need and the cost savings which would be generated.
28. Options for the future of the Mobile Library were considered and closure of this service would result in annual savings of around £58,000 in staffing and maintenance costs. A leasing agreement is currently in place with the last payment of £16k to be made in March 2012 and return of the vehicle due in March 2013. The Authority will need to negotiate with the provider concerning the use of the Mobile Library from April 2013 onwards with the most likely options being to extend the lease by a further year or make a final payment to take ownership of the vehicle. It should be noted that withdrawal of the Mobile Library would disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and isolated of library users.
29. The future delivery options, considered for library locations were as follows:
 - (1) Remain in current locations
 - (2) Close Cockerton and operate from Crown Street only
 - 3a) Keep Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to Central Hall
 - 3b) Close Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to Central Hall
 - 4a) Keep Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to the Town Hall
 - 4b) Close Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to the Town Hall
30. Findings from the review were that options 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b were not realistic options. Moving the Crown Street library provision to Central Hall or the Town Hall did have some benefits such as annual financial savings of between £61k and £178k, rationalisation of customer access points and integrating service delivery. The negative impacts of the options however, significantly outweighed these benefits. Most notably the options would reduce 'Public Floor Area (sqm) per 1000 population by a minimum of 48% and maximum of 67%, when the Authority is already the worst performing unitary authority in the country for this performance indicator (based on 2010-11 CIPFA stats, for more detail on these statistics please refer to paragraph 24). Another fundamental problem with these options were the findings from the Authority's Estates team who completed a market assessment of options and demand for alternative uses of the Crown Street building. The market assessment concluded that there were no other viable uses for the Crown Street building apart from its current use as a library due to the building's Grade II listing, the covenant which restricts use on an element of the building and the current economic conditions. The refurbishment costs for these options are also prohibitive with estimates being £412k for the Town Hall and £530k for Central Hall.

31. Option 2 ‘Close Cockerton and operate from Crown Street only’ was identified as the only realistic alternative to the current delivery arrangements. This option would reduce the public floor area by 22%.
32. There are a number of negative impacts in pursuing Option 2 the most significant of which being that the closure of Cockerton Library would impact on roughly 7,500 current registered members (based on 2011 data). Cockerton library accounts for a quarter of all library loans completed (25% in the first half of 2011/12) and its closure would reduce the total number of opening hours for the Library Service reducing by 35%. An analysis of the travel times by foot and by bus identified that if Cockerton Library were to close 4,385 people in Darlington would no longer be able to access a local library within 10 minutes.
33. The negative impacts of Cockerton Library closure are partially mitigated by the fact that 95% of the population would still be able to access a library using public transport within 30 minutes and 39% of survey respondents indicated that they use more than one library. Please see **Annex A** for accessibility maps for Crown Street and Cockerton Libraries.

Governance Review

34. This Review examined the potential delivery and governance options available to the Council for the Library Service and the extent to which they meet Darlington’s specific requirements. The Review also identified examples of alternative governance / business models operated elsewhere and considered the impact of these approaches.
35. The review identified seven governance options as outlined below:
 - (a) The Council continues to deliver Library Services “in-house” (no change)
 - (b) The Council continues to deliver Library Services “in-house” but develops an integrated service delivery model including co-location of services as part of “mixed economy” or commissioning model
 - (c) The Council collaborates with a neighbouring Local Authority to develop a joint-service model of delivery
 - (d) The Council supports the establishment of a separate Libraries only company or trust as part of a company structure that secures the (financial) benefits of charitable status
 - (e) The Council supports the establishment of a wider Leisure and Cultural Trust as part of a company structure that secures the (financial) benefits of charitable status
 - (f) The Council considers supporting the establishment of an “employee-owned” model, such as a mutual
 - (g) The Council outsources the service to a private organisation through a competitive process
36. The future governance of the Library Service is now being considered within the wider context of how the Council delivers all Place Services. A Cabinet report exploring the

options and seeking a recommendation on the way forward will be considered by Cabinet in April.

Integration of Volunteering

37. The Volunteering Review considered the initial findings relating to the draft Volunteering Strategy for Darlington, reviewed the current volunteering within Darlington's libraries and considered the suitability and impact of various volunteering models through collaboration with the Libraries Manager at North Yorkshire.
38. The Review considered a range of volunteering models including
 - (a) Traditional involvement of volunteer – such as drivers for housebound delivery service
 - (b) Community Libraries – use of volunteer teams to enhance the Library Service
 - (c) Community Solution Volunteer-Run Libraries – self-service library with volunteer tidying
39. The Review's conclusions were that all operational efficiency savings should be considered before completing a more detailed review of volunteering opportunities within Darlington's Library Service. Once operational reviews are complete it is recommended that the Council consider opportunities such as the provision of a small library facilities in community buildings to reduce usage of the Mobile Library or consider options to operate Cockerton Library as a volunteer-run community hub providing access to a wider range of facilities. A cautionary note is added however that the areas where these approaches have been successfully implemented are characterised by their rural nature and strong volunteering infrastructure and there are risks concerning Darlington's capacity to support these models. Also, even if Cockerton Library was fully operate by volunteers there would be costs of £40k to £50k per annum for buildings costs, systems costs, transports costs and volunteer supervision.

ICT and Shared Services Review

40. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Shared Services Review completed an assessment of the condition of the current ICT infrastructure within the Library Service and looked at opportunities for the development of shared services with other Library Services across the region and sub-region.
41. The review identified that the Library Service currently collaborates with other Library Services across the region. There is a single contract across the region for book purchase negotiated by the North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO) and the region also collaborates to provide inter-library transport for books and other items.
42. The main opportunity to develop further shared services identified in the report was that of a shared Library Management System (LMS). An LMS supports the ordering, invoicing, circulation, tracking and shelving of library stock. Currently each authority has a separate contract for its stock management system and while Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland and Newcastle use the same software, the functionality, contractual timetable and annual costs vary significantly. The authorities are now considering a consortium approach for LMS and are in the feasibility stage of this review. A regional approach to stock services is also being

considered but it was anticipated that the implementation would not begin until 2013-14 so fell outside of the timescales of Darlington's Library Review.

43. The ICT Review also found that the ICT infrastructure was outdated with 18 of the Public Access computers being over 6 years old and the network link between Crown Street Library and the Town Hall suffering from very degraded performance due to insufficient bandwidth. The cost to update these services was anticipated to be £12k per annum. The network link has now been updated, and 14 PC base units have been replaced, retaining the original monitors and keyboards to keep costs down.

Income Generation Review

44. The Income Generation Review was designed to review the existing income generation streams within the Library Service, consider how these can be enhanced and to identify any new opportunities to increase the income within the Service.
45. The Review found that almost all areas of the Library Service, apart from 'in-stock' book loans to members of the local community, generate income. The services which achieved the highest value of income generation included:
 - (a) Book fines and reservations (£33k per year)
 - (b) Printing, faxing and photocopying (£14k per year)
 - (c) DVD and music hire (£9k per year)
 - (d) Internet usage (£8k per year)
 - (e) Book sales (£4k per year)
46. The Review found that Darlington Library Service charges are broadly in line with those applied elsewhere in the Tees Valley, and that there do not appear to be opportunities for any significant increases in income generation.
47. The Review identified however some small opportunities to generate income through book sales and donations and it recommended that the Service explores the potential of promoting donations and arranging book sales on a more regular basis.
48. A review was also completed into the potential option to delivery a café in the Library Service. This review was completed as a result of feedback from consultation which highlighted the provision of a café as the main improvement that members of the public felt could be made to the Library Service. The conclusion of the review was that the creation of a hot food, full kitchen and eating facility within the Crown Street Library is not something that the Council should pursue. This was in part due to the anticipated lack of interest from an entrepreneur and also due to the fact that if an entrepreneur was found who wanted to do this, a long lease would have to be granted and this would restrict the Council's options regarding how Library Service is provided in the future.

Summary of Options

49. Based on the reviews completed, knowledge of the local need and savings required by the Service the options identified in Table 2 below have been identified.

50. The options have been evaluated on the impact each will have in enabling the Library Service to meet the six key principles of the Service. The outcomes of this evaluation and a summary of the costs and savings of each option are outlined in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2:

Option 1	Staffing restructure
Option 2a	Option 1 + Remain in current locations but operate ½ time at Cockerton
Option 2b	Option 1 + Close Cockerton Library
Option 3a	Option 1 + Move Crown Street operation to Central Hall
Option 3b	Option 1 + Close Cockerton and move Crown Street operation to Central Hall
Option 4a	Option 1 + Move Crown Street operation to the Town Hall
Option 4b	Option 1 + Close Cockerton and Move Crown Street operation to the Town Hall

Issue	Option 1	Option 2a	Option 2b	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 4a	Option 4b
Environments that are accessible to the community and provide sufficient space for borrowing and reference material	***	***	*	**	*	**	*
Provision of an outreach service to ensure that the most vulnerable and difficult to reach individuals have access to the Library Service	***	**	**	**	**	**	**
Provision of supported learning spaces with access to ICT services	***	**	**	**	**	**	**
Continued investment in borrowing and reference material to ensure stock is of sufficient volume range and quality	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Provision of an intergenerational learning environment	***	**	**	**	**	**	**
Delivery of a Service which is integrated with and enables the delivery of a wide range of local services	***	**	**	***	**	***	**
Finance							
Capital refurbishment costs	0	0	0	£530,000	£530,000	£412,000	£412,000
Annual revenue savings achieved in 11/12	£130,000	£130,000	£130,000	£130,000	£130,000	£130,000	£130,000
Additional ongoing annual revenue savings 12/13	£112,000	£141,000	£201,000	£173,000	£262,000	£182,000	£271,000
Cumulative ongoing annual revenue savings from 12/13	£242,000	£271,000	£331,000	£303,000	£392,000	£320,000	£401,000

Key	
*	Substantially reduces provision
**	Maintains significant amounts of the current provision
***	Sustains or improves provision

Conclusion

51. A Transformational Review of the service is complete and has delivered £242k of savings through management and operational staffing consolidation.
52. As outlined in paragraphs 31 and 32 of this report, options 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b would lead to unacceptable levels of reduction in the publically accessible space for the libraries in Darlington. These options also have high capital refurbishment cost, of between £412k and £530k, and have no alternative use for the vacated Crown Street Library, making the options poor value for money.
53. Option 2b (Closure of Cockerton Library) is a more acceptable option as public floor area would reduce by only 22%. The option has no refurbishment cost and it is expected that alternative uses could be found for the vacated Cockerton building within six to nine months. However data on library usage shows that Cockerton Library is well used, with 7,500 members and accounts for 25% of book loans
In terms of accessibility a substantial number of local residents (around 4,390) would no longer be able to access a local library on foot or by bus within 10 minutes, though 95% of the borough population would still be able to access a library (Crown Street) using public transport within 30 minutes.
54. There is a potential for the Library Service to continue to meet the statutory requirement if Cockerton were to close but also a significant risk that the Council would be challenged on the basis of not meeting the statutory minimum level of service.
55. An option for continuing to provide a library service in Cockerton, should Cockerton Library close, would be to increase use of the Mobile Library, though unless services were reduced elsewhere this would incur additional costs in running the Mobile Library.
56. Recent work, detailed in **Annex B**, on the impact of closing Cockerton Library indicates that closure would have a significant impact on young people, on residents living in economically disadvantaged wards (accessing computers in the Library) and on people with a disability who find Cockerton Library easier to access than Crown St Library.
57. Operating reduced hours at Cockerton Library (Option 2a), maintains the public floor area provision and the number of service points offered by the Service, has no refurbishment costs and delivers an additional £29k in savings. It should be noted however that Darlington Library Service already has the lowest number of library opening hours of any unitary authority (based on 2010-11 CIPFA statistics). While not as severe an impact as options which consider closing Cockerton, reducing the opening hours at the Library will affect current users of the Service.
58. Retention of the Mobile Library Service will ensure service provision is continued for the more vulnerable library users who are unable to access Cockerton or Crown Street libraries.

59. The service is working to create the right conditions for people to take collective responsibility through a 'Darlington Together' approach, contributing to the future success of Libraries. Officers will therefore develop a 'Darlington Together' strategy and action plan, for involving the community (individuals, community organisations, public and private sector partners) in achieving positive change and outcomes for Libraries in Darlington. This will include a volunteer strategy, looking at opportunities for people to support the library service.

Consultation

60. A detailed consultation exercise took place between November 2010 and February 2011 which resulted in nearly 4000 responses. Findings provided information on use of the Library Service, what services are used and people's views on the services that are provided.

Equality Impact Assessment

61. Alongside the extensive consultation exercise and the detailed needs assessment a high level equality impact assessment was completed in line with the Equality Act 2010. This assessment highlighted that the staffing restructure would have minimal impact on protected groups.
62. Following Cabinet's decision in November further work on a detailed impact assessment has taken place in parallel with impact assessments on all of the Medium Term Financial Plan budget saving proposals. The report on findings from the impact assessments is attached as **Annex B**.