

LIBRARIES SERVICES TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

26 April, 2016

PRESENT – Councillor Carson (in the Chair); Councillors Baldwin, L Hughes, KE Kellyt, Lyonette and Wright.

LS1. LIBRARIES SERVICES OVERVIEW – The Group met to consider the effect of the MTFP proposals on the Libraries Service and the implications of those proposals.

Prior to the meeting a site visit of the Dolphin Centre, the proposed relocation site of the Crown Street Library Service, was undertaken with the Assistant Director – Community Services.

The Assistant Director – Community Services gave an overview of the current service, explained the proposals for each of these areas going forward and the rationale behind those proposals. Members also gave consideration to the Library Survey 2016 to 2010 Comparison; Library Survey Heat Map 2016 (all recognised Post Codes); a plan detailing the current layout of Crown Street Library's existing Library areas; a plan detailing the proposed Dolphin Centre layout of the Crown Street Library Service; Official Copy of the Statutory Declaration (Covenant); and a copy of the CIPFA Public Libraries report.

Details were provided of the financial details around the proposal which included £1.1m to undertake the relocation of the service plus £600k to carry out mechanical and electrical work and upgrading work to the Soft Play Area which would have been necessary in any case. Revenue savings amounted to £400k including £65k per cost of borrowing. It was also stated that the cost of updating the Crown Street Library would be £800k to £1m

A self-service for lending was also proposed resulting in longer hours although a full service would not be available unless Librarians were available.

Local Studies, Art Gallery, Art Collection and Archives

Reference was made to the Local Studies service being relocated to the ground floor of the Dolphin Centre, however, this was work in progress.

Archive storage was 'work in progress' as suitable premises were being sought. It was stressed that storage did not need to be within the Library and options included Bennett House, Dolphin Centre, off-site locations or for the short-term remaining where it was.

In relation to the Art Gallery Members were informed that there was currently no solution and there were no current plans to relocate the Gallery. Investigations were being undertaken to ascertain if any other organisations would be interested in the Gallery and Members were advised that there was a staffing resource if it was proposed to display Artworks in places such as the Town Hall Civic Reception. It

was confirmed that there could be no displays in the Civic Theatre or Theatre Hullaballoon due to staffing resources and there was limited display space available at Head of Steam.

A Member referred to a property in Newcastle which was rented at a Peppercorn rent to students to enable them to exhibit their artwork and the building was not a thriving Arts Hub – it was suggested that commercial landlords be approached to ascertain if this could be a feasible option.

The Council's Art Collection, which was valued at £800k, was currently stored at Crown Street Library and an appropriate storage space was being sought.

In relation to the Covenant on Crown Street Library the Chair agreed to seek the views of the Assistant Director – Law and Governance and report back to members.

The Chair stated that a benchmarking exercise had indicated that Darlington had less expenditure per head of population and that the attitude of the public in relation to the library services was very positive.

The Assistant Director – Community Services advised Members that a Quality Impact Assessment was being undertaken on all three services i.e. Crown Street Library, Mobile Library and Cockerton Library which provisionally showed that Crown Street Library had minimal impact as there would still be a library service in the town centre however there would be a higher level of impact on user certain groups of both Cockerton and the Mobile Library Service.

In relation to the Mobile Library Service it was confirmed that more customers would be encouraged to use the House Bound Service although it was confirmed that schools and some homes did use the Mobile Library Service.

Members suggested that a sponsor for the Mobile Library Service could be sought.

Reference was made to an MTFP report being prepared for June Cabinet which would contain equality impact assessment and library needs assessments of the library service and possible counter proposals for the service from the voluntary sector.

IT WAS AGREED – That the information provided at this stage be noted.