

Proposal for the future of Cockerton Library from Cockerton Library Co-operative

29 November 2016

1. Background

1.1. Given the huge cuts to Council spending and changing priorities for leisure and cultural services local authorities are divesting themselves of libraries across the UK. Darlington is not immune to this and as part of a significant re-shaping of the library service Darlington Borough Council is looking to work with local businesses and people to secure a new future for Cockerton Library.

2. Introducing an exciting future for Cockerton Library

2.1. The ambition of local people and businesses is for Cockerton Library to thrive, not just survive. Darlington Council has presented an opportunity for a unique partnership of the public, private and third sectors to come together to achieve this.

2.2. The proposal to save Cockerton Library is based on developing the building as a vibrant library and community hub by a new organisation, which would have professional library support, supplemented by volunteers. The local community, local business and the local authority would all play their part in a genuine partnership.

2.3. Saving the library is vital because recent impact assessment work by Darlington Borough Council stated:

“It is clear from the impact assessment work and the recent needs assessment work that the closure of Cockerton Library will impact a number of vulnerable groups disproportionately. Key impacts are outlined as follows:

Under 17's have the highest usage levels of Cockerton Library largely due to the regular visits from three local primary schools and 91% of families indicated that they would no longer use the library service if Cockerton Library closed.

People with disabilities and those aged 65 and over highlighted that Cockerton Library has free parking within its grounds and indicated they would not be able to use Crown Library due to the difficulty in accessing the town centre library. Impacts of being no longer able to use the library service centred on impacts to independence and mental health.”

2.4. Under our proposals, the library would contain:

- **A library** - run by a professional librarian, supported by volunteers and the local authorities systems and book stock.
- **An IT centre** - for people to access information online, apply for jobs and benefits and improve their digital skills.
- **Space and resources for the local community** - to be developed in line with the wishes of local people and businesses.

3. Aims and objectives

3.1. Aim - to improve the social and economic life of Cockerton and surrounding areas through the development of an excellent community library and hub

3.2. Objectives

- Enriching community life
- Improving and encouraging reading, literacy and literature
- Improving lifelong learning
- Improving digital literacy
- Improving access to information and resources
- Enhancing the local economy

4. Organisational structure

4.1. Having thoroughly reviewed organisational structures we have agreed to set up as a Charitable Community Benefit Society (CCBS) - a type of co-operative

4.2. The main advantages of this legal form compared to others are:

- There is much more likelihood of the community and local businesses feeling a sense of ownership over the library - as it is a members based model, with democratic principles
- It would be easier to raise money from members (individuals and organisations) via membership fees
- There would be the potential to raise significant capital by the potential for issuing community shares
- It would be easier to take on loans or credit
- It would join a number of other mutuals and cooperatives based in Cockerton

4.3. We will apply for support in setting up a CCBS from [The Hive](#).

5. Library building

5.1. Darlington Borough Council has suggested a 99-year full repairing lease would be an option in terms of transferring the building to a new organisation to run Cockerton Library. This would effectively mean the organisation would own the building unless break clauses were imposed. A 99-year lease without break clauses would therefore allow the organisation to gain funding to refurbish/extend the building and use the building as security against investment. This is critical to making the library sustainable.

5.2. Bussey and Armstrong is supporting us by reviewing the state and fabric of the Cockerton Library building, which along with Darlington Borough Council reports gives us an excellent picture of what is required in the shorter and longer term.

5.3. Bussey and Armstrong's initial advice matches the reports provided by the Council.

- 5.4. Overall the building appears to be structurally sound, bearing in mind it's age. There is certainly no evidence of settlement / subsidence or cracking in the brickwork.
- 5.5. The roof finish appears to have been replaced in the last few years but is a mineral felt finish, which even if high-performance, has life expectancy of 10 years maximum.
- 5.6. Several windows are badly rotten and need repair or replacement. They are all single glazed so the most economic solution would be replacement with uPvc high performance double glazed units.
- 5.7. In order to take over the building on a full repairing lease then we would look to the Council to provide replacement windows (£5-10k) and a guarantee on the roof. The electrics and heating (gas boiler) would also need full inspection and test certificates.
- 5.8. If the windows were replaced the only external decoration would be the deep fascias (that appear to have been replaced possibly when the roof was done).
- 5.9. In time there are possibilities of extending the library to house commercial activity to subsidise the library. Reviewing these options will be part of our longer-term plan.
- 5.10. We want to maximise both community and commercial use of the building as a community hub, as well as library. We will schedule in a whole host of sessions that can operate when the library is open. We will raise funding to pay for movable book stacks, so that space can be maximised for community and commercial use out of hours.

6. Paid staff

- 6.1. A library is not a library without professional librarian resource - it is just a room of books. Darlington Borough Council has very kindly offered 18 hours professional librarian support per week as a transitional arrangement and until we can raise the resources to cover this ourselves. Given the time we estimate before we can generate significant income we suggest that this is transitional arrangement is for five years, with a review after three years.
- 6.2. Given the need for strong volunteer co-ordination (see below) and the need to develop the library to maximise revenue more paid staff hours would be extremely helpful. However given the revenue possibilities raising finance to cover such a post will be very difficult, so will remain a longer-term aspiration. In the meantime we are confident we can identify two or more capable and experienced volunteers to take the lead in day-to-day management.

7. Volunteers

7.1. Recruiting, managing and maintaining volunteers to continually staff Cockerton Library is a significant undertaking. However:

- when eVOLution ran a volunteer day last year to test the waters in Cockerton they found that more than 60 people registered an interest in volunteering for the Library
- Darlington Age UK and DfC will offer systems and policies for volunteer co-ordination

7.2. A very strong and experienced volunteer co-ordinator has already been identified and is starting work on this aspect of the proposal already. In particular they are looking at the role profiles to ensure we cover all the jobs we would need in running the proposed library hub. Critical roles will include facilities management and a lead on income generation.

8. Steering Group

8.1. A steering group with a wide range of expertise has been set up to develop this proposal and set up the co-operative that will run the library.

8.2. The steering group comprises:

- John Whitehouse (local funeral director) - Chair of the Steering Group - significant business experience
- John Dean (DfC) - significant communications and PR, as well as small business, experience
- Ann McMorris (DfC) - significant public sector and leadership experience
- Jayne Tomlinson (Darlington Building Society) - significant financial experience
- Matt Roche (DfC) - significant public, community and third sector, as well as funding, experience
- Susan Carter (Darlington Age UK) - significant voluntary co-ordination and third sector experience
- Steve Rose (Stockton Catalyst and Onsite) - significant public, third sector, partnership, funding and asset transfer experience
- Alec Llewellyn (local scout leader) - significant business and community experience.

9. Expert support and advice

9.1. Local businesses - There are more than forty businesses in Cockerton. Many rely on the footfall from the Library to generate a good income. Many of these businesses have signaled a significant desire to save the library and Cockerton Business Forum has made this one of their priorities, with leadership demonstrated by John Whitehouse (who owns a local funeral service) and Darlington Building Society.

9.2. Darlington Borough Council - DBC has said they will provide librarian support, book

stock and book transfer free of charge. DBC has indicated they also will provide IT systems for books free of charge, which we would expect would include the provision and maintenance of computers necessary to carry this out. DBC will transfer the existing computers, which are used by the public, for free but ongoing technical support and replacement of these machines will need to be identified from elsewhere.

9.3. Darlington for Culture - DfC will help with community engagement and organisational set up. As indicated above DfC will also offer systems and policies for volunteer co-ordination.

9.4. Darlington Age UK - Are keen to be involved and have already committed a representative on the steering group and free support by a paid employee. Darlington Age UK will also offer systems and policies for volunteer co-ordination.

9.5. Onsite - Is a specialist facilities management organisation for buildings transferred from the local authority to the community. We have established a strategic relationship and they will help us to set up on a pro bono basis.

9.6. Locality - Is an organisation with a specialism in transfer of council owned buildings into community hands. Following discussion with a Director at Locality they have guaranteed us free one to one support and also have a whole range of online resources (at mycommunity.org.uk).

9.7. Co-operative movement - Run as a co-operative endeavor support and advice would be forthcoming from The Hive but also from the wider co-operative movement.

10. Projected annual expenditure

Cost	Amount	Notes
Utilities	£3,889	Including water, electricity, gas and waste disposal - using actual figures for 2014/15.
Repairs, maintenance & security	£2,648	Based on actual figures for 2014/15 - with a 20% reduction, to reflect reasonable savings
Insurance	£2,000	Estimate
Printing and stationary	£500	Estimate
Total	£9,037	

Not included in the budget are the following:

- Professional library support and movement of books - £15,000 - this is what it will cost Darlington Borough Council but they will supply this for free in the first instance.
- Non-domestic rates - £5,180 - on the basis that the charitable status of the proposed organisation to run Cockerton Library would mean that access to mandatory and discretionary rate relief will mean nothing will be payable.
- Cleaning - experience from Darlington Age UK suggests that volunteers can be found to undertake cleaning.

11. Sources of revenue

- 11.1. Businesses - as outlined above local businesses are keen to help save Cockerton Library. They could be encouraged to support the library financially via on or more of the following methods:
 - Annual donations
 - The sale of space for local businesses to advertise themselves
 - Membership fees - for joining the co-operative - there could be different levels of membership, with different rewards
 - Naming rights for all or part of the building/service
 - Funding from a Business Improvement District (if set up in Cockerton)
- 11.2. Local people - Many local people feel passionately about the library and would provide financial assistance via:
 - Regular donations
 - Membership fees - the library would be free to use but people could choose to join Cockerton Library Co-operative and there could be different levels of membership, with different rewards.
- 11.3. Fundraising - A friends of Cockerton library or fundraising sub-group could be established to raise funds in a variety of traditional ways.
- 11.4. Grants - There are no grant funds that will cover general running costs for the library but grants could be sought for projects, which would improve the offer of the library and increase footfall.
- 11.5. Schools - There are five schools that use Cockerton Library and one that is considering using it. One suggestion was to ask all the schools to contribute in the same way as the businesses. Again the sum would need to be small to be attractive. One primary school has already offered to send a class a week during term time to support the library and one primary school has offered a yearly contribution to costs.
- 11.6. Beverages - One suggestion worth further exploration is to ask one of the local cafés to provide tea/coffee with a portion of the profits going to the Library. However space means that a vending machine would be the best option and we are following this up with Costa Coffee (the Memorial Hospital has a Costa Coffee machine that takes £1,000 a week).
- 11.7. Clubs/Meetings - A number of people expressed an interest in using the space. There are a number of groups in Darlington who struggle for somewhere to hold meetings. The space could be used for a knitting group, exercise classes, art classes, pre-school reading groups, IT and other community activity, including arts and music performances.
- 11.8. Extending the building for commercial use - There is a possibility of extending the building for use as a café, retail space or other revenue raising

activities.

11.9. An income generation team will be set up to ensure we maximise revenue potential.

12. Projected revenue for first year of operation

Revenue source	Amount	Notes
Membership fees	£3,000	Based on 100 individual members paying £20 per year and 20 businesses paying £50 per year
Additional finance from businesses	£2,000	Sponsorship, naming rights, advertising and sales space
Beverages	£1,000	Estimate
Fundraising	£2,000	Estimate
Hiring building out	£1,560	Based on one 3 hour hire per week at £30 - this is a very conservative estimate
Contributions from schools	£750	Mowden Primary already indicated support of around £250
Total	£10,310	

13. Capital funding

13.1. To improve the current building or extend it finance could be sought via:

- Investment, including from specialist 'social investors' such as Charity Bank
- Raising a community share issue - whereby people can buy withdrawable share capital (FC United of Manchester used this method to raise £2m).

14. Key risks

Risk	Mitigation
Unable to raise sufficient revenue to cover costs	Establishment of a robust revenue strategy, led by local businesses. DBC providing professional library support and movement of books for free. Cockerton Library to be run entirely voluntarily in the first instance.
Ineffective recruitment and management of volunteers	DfC will provide support and training. Capable and experienced volunteer co-ordinator to be recruited.
Unable to run the building and most of the service entirely with volunteers	Recruitment of two or more capable and experienced volunteers to take the lead in day-to-day management, to add to the strong volunteer co-ordinator already in place. Retaining a strong steering group and ensuring a strong Board of the new organisation. Securing the librarian support into the longer term.

15. Next steps

- 15.1. Proposal for future of Cockerton library submitted to DBC - November 2016
- 15.2. Apply for set up and business support from The Hive - January 2017
- 15.3. Ongoing refinement of plans - November 2016 to July 2017
- 15.4. DBC Cabinet to decide whether to accept the proposal for the future of Cockerton Library - January 2017
- 15.5. Start an information campaign in the community by using social media, free newspapers, One Darlington and the Library to encourage additional people to come forward to help and volunteer - January/February 2017
- 15.6. Community Benefit Society to run the library service established - March 2017
- 15.7. Recruitment of volunteers - March 2017
- 15.8. Opening of Cockerton Library under this new proposal - September 2017

Annex A - English Library situation and where we have drawn learning from

There are currently [3917](#) libraries in the UK. There were 4023 in 2013/14, 4482 in 2009/10 and 4622 in 2003/4. Source (CIPFA)

Since 2010 library models are developing. The phrase one size does not fit all is appropriate.

Examples can be found of the following:

- Partnerships with local community groups or forums e.g. Newcastle Fawdon Community library in Fawdon Community Centre
- A library service in a physical building with a local council package of provision e.g. central staff support; a library management system with the service front facing delivered by volunteers e.g. Co-delivered libraries Sheffield; Gateshead Volunteer Libraries
- The library is autonomous - the building is leased; the library book stock updates and the running costs have to be met by the new library and front facing staff are all volunteers e.g. Jesmond Library Newcastle

What are the critical success factors and issues for sustainability and asset transfer:

1. Support from local authority i.e. allocated person for contact could be named officer or volunteer coordinator / development officer
2. Clear identification of what assets and services were being transferred and timescales
3. Pre transfer - Training in library management skills - from computer systems to physical alarm codes
4. A library transfer report “a how to” document
5. Regular meetings with other transferring groups
6. Ongoing support from council after transition for help and advice. Over telephone or a roving person
7. Support from local community. Passion to save changing to enthusiasm to run to sustainability and long term survival
8. Income generation in long term. Per annum costs from 8000 to 28000. Need a full time fundraising team
9. Pool of volunteers to be managed and succession planning for the trustees/ senior management
10. Time - many transfers happened quickly in some instance 3 months. Volunteer library
11. Should the transition be seamless or close as council open week / month later

Sources

CIPFA <http://www.cipfa.org/services/statistics/comparative-profiles/public-libraries>

DCMS Community libraries tool kit -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit>

UK GOV libraries taskforce - <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/>

Public Library news - <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/>

The library campaign - <http://www.librarycampaign.com/tag/dcms/>