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**MTFP LIBRARY SERVICE PROPOSALS**

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

**Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith,  
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval from Members to amend the proposals contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan for the Library service and agree to progress the revised plans.

**Summary**

2. As part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, the proposals for the Library service are that:
  - (a) Cockerton Library closes
  - (b) The Mobile Library service ceases
  - (c) Crown Street Library relocates to the Dolphin Centre
3. Following the Cabinet report on 11 February 2016, where Members considered the initial proposal, a significant amount of further work has been carried out with regard to the relocation to the Dolphin Centre alongside public consultation, development of Equality Impact Assessments and the production of a Library Service Needs Assessment. This work has helped inform the recommendations within this report. **Members must read equality impact assessment forms and the Library Service Needs Assessment in full, rather than only relying on the summary information set out in this report.**
4. During the public consultation phase, an alternative proposal for the Library service was submitted by Darlington for Culture, which is presented and discussed within the report.
5. One of the issues raised relates to the possibility of there being a restrictive covenant limiting the use of the Crown Street property to a library. Work has been undertaken to understand the implications should there be a covenant and this is set out in the report.

**Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Members note and approve the Library needs assessment.
- (b) The relocation of the Central Library service to the Dolphin Centre be agreed as set out in the report.
- (c) Cockerton Library be closed on 31 March 2017 unless sustainable alternative proposal is agreed before December 2016.
- (d) The Mobile Library Service ceases to be provided from 1 October 2016 and additional work is undertaken to promote the housebound service.
- (e) The capital sum of £1.7m be released to relocate the Library Service to the Dolphin Centre. The procurement of this scheme be delivered in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules by the Council's Building Services division and that the procurement be designated as non-strategic.
- (f) The Crown Street building be declared surplus to requirements and the Director of Economic Growth in consultation with the portfolio holder for Efficiency and Resources be authorised to dispose of the building, however interested community groups with proposals for use of the building will be considered as part of the disposal process.

**Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) To enable the Council to achieve the savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- (b) An extension of time will allow for further work to try and develop a voluntary-led solution for Cockerton Library.
- (c) The statutory obligation to provide for library service needs can be met by the proposed changes

**Paul Wildsmith**  
**Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The content of this report does not impact on crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	The library service does have an impact on the health and well-being of people who use the

	service.
Carbon Impact	There would be a reduction in carbon emissions as a result of the mobile library proposals set out in this report.
Diversity	Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out with regard to the proposals and the outcome included in the report.
Wards Affected	All Wards are affected.
Groups Affected	All groups that use the library service will be affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	The MTFP must be agreed by Full Council, of which the proposals are part of.
Key Decision	The MTFP must be agreed by Full Council.
Urgent Decision	It is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The library service does impact on a number of the priorities within One Darlington Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	Efficiencies will be delivered as part of the proposals however they will impact on the service.

## **MAIN REPORT**

### **Libraries Statutory Duty**

8. The duty to provide free libraries is covered in Section 7 (1) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for persons desiring to make use of it.”

Section 7 (2) requires authorities in fulfilling the duty to have particular regard to the desirability of:

- (a) Keeping of adequate stocks by arrangements with other library authorities and by other appropriate means that facilities are available for the borrowing of or reference to books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children, and
- (b) Encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service and providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it.

There is no statutory definition of “comprehensive” or “efficient”.

### **MTFP Proposal**

9. In the Cabinet report of 11 February 2016, Members considered a significant number of proposals to reduce or stop services to save £10.2million. A fund of £2.4million

was also identified in each of the MTFP years to invest in things that were not statutory and not included within the core offer budget.

10. For the Library Service, the proposal including Add Backs from the Futures Fund is as follows:

(a) **Cockerton Library**

Cockerton Library is the only branch library within Darlington and would be closed.

(b) **Mobile Library**

The Mobile Library Service would be withdrawn.

(c) **Crown Street Library**

Crown Street Library would be relocated to a remodelled Dolphin Centre; the following services to be provided following relocation:

- (i) Lending Library
- (ii) Children's Library
- (iii) Reference Library
- (iv) Centre for Local Studies
- (v) Library events
- (vi) ICT facilities

However, there would be a need to reduce the Local Studies Service as the proposal is to reduce existing funding by 50% for this service.

11. During the consultation period, further work has been carried out with regard to the proposal.

- (a) Revised designs for relocation to the Dolphin Centre
- (b) Art Gallery and Collection
- (c) Archive
- (d) Consultation
- (e) Development of an Equalities Impact Assessment
- (f) Completion of Libraries Need Assessment
- (g) Discussion with individuals/organisations with regard to alternative proposals

## **Consultation**

12. A significant amount of consultation has taken place as part of the MTFP proposal. This has both been general on the MTFP as a whole, but also specific on the library proposals.

13. On the general consultation a dedicated budget website was developed ([www.darlington.gov.uk/budget](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/budget)) with a link from the Councils main website home page. This included all of the proposals, timeline details and regularly updated FAQ's and responses received. A considerable number of those were generated relating to the library proposals. The One Darlington Magazine has carried a number of articles on the MTFP proposals. Social media was also used to inform and engage with

people. Local press and media also ran news items on the MTFP. The Northern Echo in particular highlighted the library proposals and campaigning activity in connection with the proposals. There were two general MTFP public meetings. More details can be found in the separate Consultation report.

14. On the specific library consultation concerning the Library proposals the following consultation has taken place:
  - (a) The Library Service Consultation Survey was live from 17 February to 3 April 2016; an online survey was accessible via the Council's website and hard copy surveys were available from Crown Street Library, Cockerton Library, Town Hall Customer Contact Centre and Head of Steam.
  - (b) Two Library Service Public Consultation Events, chaired by Councillor Nick Wallis, (other panel members Ian Thompson, Assistant Director Community Services, Luke Swinhoe, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Mike Crawshaw, Head of Culture) were held on 23 March 2016 at 2.30 pm (Central Hall, Dolphin Centre) and 6.00 pm (Cockerton Methodist Church).
  - (c) Drop-in Sessions with Councillor Wallis were held by pre-bookable appointment on 21 and 24 March 2016 between 11.00 am and 7.00 pm at the Dolphin Centre.
  - (d) Letters were distributed on 11 March 2016 to Library User Groups, Schools, Nurseries, Sheltered Housing and Parish Councils to explain proposals, signpost to survey and advise on public consultation events.
  - (e) Email drop on 14 March 2016 to all library members who had provided an email address on their contact details to explain proposals, signpost to survey and advise on public consultation events.
  - (f) Letters were distributed to squash players at the Dolphin Centre on 10 March 2016 advising them of the proposals, plans, key milestones within the consultation period and the effect on squash in the Dolphin Centre.
15. The library proposals were also considered by Place Scrutiny Committee on 15 April 2016 where members of the public were also present and made representation. Following this meeting a Task and Finish Group was set up for 26 April 2016 where Members initially visited the Dolphin Centre to view the areas where the library is proposed to relocate to and then considered the proposals in detail. Link to Notes from Library Services Task and Finish Review on 26 April 2016 <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/democracy/meeting-details/?id=1971> Also Minutes of the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny on the 26/5/16 <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/democracy/meeting-details/?id=2058>

## Outcomes of Consultation

16. The results from the Library Service Consultation Survey are attached at **Appendix 1**. A total of 3,265 surveys were returned. The survey focused on identifying who used the service, what services were used and how people felt about the budget proposal. Below is a table of the number of survey results returned per

Ward where the individual completing the survey had provided their post code and a brief summary of the results.

<b>WARD</b>	<b>Number of survey returns</b>	<b>% Returns based on known postcodes</b>
Bank Top & Lascelles	98	4.3%
Brinkburn & Faverdale	126	5.5%
Cockerton	194	8.5%
College	150	6.6%
Eastbourne	95	4.2%
Harrowgate Hill	98	4.3%
Haughton & Springfield	105	4.6%
Heighington & Coniscliffe	129	5.7%
Hummersknott	156	6.8%
Hurworth	77	3.4%
Mowden	180	7.9%
North Road	87	3.8%
Northgate	75	3.3%
Park East	130	5.7%
Park West	131	5.7%
Pierremont	158	6.9%
Redhall & Lingfield	65	2.9%
Sadberge & Middleton St George	86	3.8%
Stephenson	40	1.8%
Whinfield	100	4.4%
<b>TOTAL COMPLETED</b>	<b>2,280</b>	<b>69.8%</b>
BLANK	598	
ERROR	387	
<b>TOTAL RETURNS</b>	<b>3,265</b>	

- (a) The majority of the individuals who completed the survey were users of the library service (95.46%).
- (b) The majority of respondents 'borrowed books' (88%) with 46% 'finding information and using reference books', 25% 'using the computer and internet facilities' and 29% 'using Local Studies'.
- (c) 91% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with relocating the main library to the Dolphin Centre. 77% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the closure of Cockerton and 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed with stopping the Mobile Library service.

(d) The top three library services that respondents value were 'borrowing books', 'finding information using reference books' and 'Centre for Local Studies'.

(e) The majority of respondents were female (64%) with 71% being over 45.

17. Open questions were asked in the survey with regard to the impact the proposals would have on individuals. Key responses were as follows:

(a) **What impact, positive or negative, would closing Cockerton Library have on you?** (1,993 responses to this question).

76 individuals indicated that the proposed closure of Cockerton Library would have physical capability/access impacts on them as they would be unable/have difficulty in accessing the town centre library.

11 individuals indicated that the proposed closure would have an impact on their mental health/well-being.

(b) **What impact, positive or negative, would the withdrawal of the Mobile Library Service have on you?** (1,809 responses to this question).

57 individuals indicated that the proposed withdrawal of the Mobile Library service would have physical capability/access impacts on them as they would be unable/have difficulty in accessing the town centre library.

6 individuals indicated that the proposed withdrawal of the service would have an impact on their mental health/well-being.

(c) **What impact, positive or negative, would moving the town centre library to the Dolphin Centre have on you?** (2,383 responses to this question).

89 individuals indicated the proposed relocation of the library to the Dolphin Centre (i.e. travelling to and accessing that building) would have physical capability/access impacts on them.

9 individuals indicated that the proposed move would have an impact on their mental health/well-being.

The majority of comments received related to individuals wanting the service to continue as at present and for the service to remain at Crown Street, with a significant number of individuals focusing their comments on the Crown Street building in particular.

18. From the corporate consultation process, the following comments were received where there was a specific issue raised (84 comments). The remaining comments were generally in disagreement with the proposal as opposed to identifying any specific issues. A total of 103 comments were received overall, however a number of comments are duplicated within this figure as they referred to more than one proposal.

(a) **Closure of Cockerton Library**

<b>Summary of Comments</b>	<b>Number received</b>
Why not use volunteers/community led	2
Impact on community, particularly children and older people	2
Loss of access to internet (no home internet)	1

(b) **Withdrawal of Mobile Library Service**

<b>Summary of Comments</b>	<b>Number received</b>
Look for a sponsor for the Mobile Library	1
Suggest a home delivery model would be cheaper	1
Agree with withdrawal of service as it is a waste of money	1

(c) **Relocation of Crown Street Library**

<b>Summary of Comments</b>	<b>Number received</b>
Attachment to Crown Street Building, e.g. architecture/history/love of building, etc.	26
Object to Dolphin Centre as a venue for library	10
Suggestions to generate income in Crown Street	9
Want to keep service as it is	5
Cost of move	5
The move is positive	5
Lack of publicity on proposals/more information required	4
Retain Local Studies provision as it is	3
Wrongly assume library is closing altogether	2
Close all libraries	1
Move all libraries to schools	1
Object to reducing squash courts in Dolphin Centre to accommodate library	1

19. A number of letters and comments were also forwarded by The Northern Echo along with **6,420 completed** 'Save Crown Street Library' coupons.

A breakdown of the letters and comments received is as follows:

<b>Summary of Comments</b>	<b>Number Received</b>
<b>Letters from Mount Pleasant Primary School (regarding Cockerton Library):</b> Don't close Cockerton Library. We go there from school.	21



Summary of Comments	Number Received
<p>We love books.  We learn things and do research.  We visit the library outside of school.  We go to activities on Saturdays and in the holidays.  People go there to use computers.  Long journey to the Dolphin Centre.  Old people might not be able to go into town.</p>	
<p><b>Posters from Mount Pleasant Primary School (regarding Cockerton Library):</b>  Don't close Cockerton Library.</p>	10
<p><b>Selection of letters written by Year 4 Class, Whinfield Primary (regarding Crown Street Library):</b>  Where will the books go, where will the groups go.  We love books.  It is a quiet place.  We go to activity groups at the library.  Closure would affect old people.</p>	5
<p><b>Letters from readers of The Northern Echo (regarding Crown Street Library):</b>  The Council probably has plans to pull down libraries and replace with shops or car parks.  Crown Street could be an Art Centre with galleries and workshops, café, shop selling local arts and crafts and the Borough's Art Collection on view.  Don't close Crown Street Library  I visit the library to trace my family history  If Crown Street closes the town would lose its Art Gallery  No Art Gallery space for significant celebration of railway heritage in 2025.  Edward Pease left £10,000 in his will to build a free library for Darlington.</p>	8

## Equality Impact Assessment

20. A detailed Equality Impact Assessment is being carried out for each of the three library proposals. Copies are attached as **Appendix 2**.

### (a) Closure of Cockerton Library

The main impacts identified as part of the Equality Impact Assessment were:

Impact	Level of Impact	Mitigation
Negative impact on older people with physical impairment or limited mobility who are unable to access the	High	Signpost older people to bus services and transport options to town centre and promote these within Cockerton Library. Explanation of raised bus stop platforms and buses that lower

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Level of Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
town centre library		themselves when stationary to aid access on and off. Provide advice regarding free bus passes. Promote the extension of the Housebound service for those who for health or mobility reasons can't travel to the town centre. Current eligibility criteria for the Housebound service to be reviewed. For residents of Squires Court, to look at leaving deposit collections of books, delivery via the Housebound service and refreshing stock every few weeks.
Negative impact on primary school children attending the three local primary schools who walk to Cockerton library.	High	Primary schools currently use a contracted bus for swimming lessons at the Dolphin Centre. The schools may be able to look at timetabling their visits to the library to coincide with the swimming lessons.  The library service could do more outreach work with the primary schools. The library service will leave the primary schools deposit collections of books, including specific themes for projects.
Negative impact on people with a visual impairment, which could potentially contribute to a loss of independence, increased loneliness and isolation.	High	A familiarisation session with the new central library would be offered to those who felt it would be beneficial to them.
Negative impact on people with dementia and their carers and those with other mental health issues, by closing a library facility that is a safe and familiar place where they feel comfortable and which provides a social outlet and access to a range of appropriate materials.	Medium	A dementia café and a dementia hub are available within Crown Street Library and it is planned to relocate these services to the Dolphin Centre if the library transfers to that venue.  A familiarisation session with the new central library would be offered to those who felt it would be beneficial to them.
Negative impact for those individuals with a learning disability and their carers who live in the local area by closing a library facility that is a safe and familiar place, where they feel comfortable.	Medium	A familiarisation session with the new central library would be offered to those who felt it would be beneficial to them.

**(b) Withdrawal of Mobile Library Service**

The main impacts identified as part of the Equality Impact Assessment were:

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Level of Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Negative impact for older people for whom the journey into town may be a deterrent to using the library, increasing	High	Extension of the Housebound Library service.

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Level of Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
isolation and loneliness.		
Negative impact for those people with a mobility impairment, visual impairment, learning disability, long term limiting illness or multiple impairments, or mental health issues, who rely upon the mobile library for the opportunity to browse and select a choice of books and who may be unable to travel into the town centre. This may create or increase isolation and loneliness and will remove a social outlet.	High	Extension of the Housebound Library service.
Negative impact on schoolchildren on the mobile library route. This may be the only chance some of them have to access a library.	High	More outreach work by the library. Deposit collections of books left with schools.
Negative impact on young children at nurseries visited by the mobile library, as they will lose this early introduction to the library service.	High	More outreach work by the library. Deposit collections left with nurseries.

**(c) Relocation of Crown Street Library**

The main impacts identified as part of the Equality Impact Assessment were:

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Level of Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Negative impact on older people with a physical impairment or limited mobility who may experience more difficulty in accessing the Dolphin Centre than Crown Street Library.	High	Signpost older people to alternative bus stops that would be closer to the Dolphin Centre and promote these prior to any change in location of the town centre library.
Negative impact for people with a visual impairment; the extra effort required to get to the proposed new library in the Dolphin Centre might be a strong deterrent to using the new library.	High	Familiarisation visits to the Dolphin Centre prior to opening of the new library would be made available for the customer and the person who accompanies them.
Negative impact on people with dementia and their carers, and those with other mental health issues, by relocating the library from a building that is a safe and familiar place where they feel	High	A dementia café and a dementia hub are available within Crown Street Library and it is planned to relocate these services to the Dolphin Centre if the library transfers to that venue.  A familiarisation session with the new central

Impact	Level of Impact	Mitigation
comfortable.		library would be offered to those who felt it would be beneficial to them.

## Local Need Assessment

21. A Local Need Assessment has been produced as part of the Library proposal, pulling together a range of information from the consultation, Equalities Impact Assessment, benchmarking and library usage. The Library Local Need Assessment is attached at **Appendix 3**. The Summary and Conclusions from the Local Need Assessment are as follows:

## Local Need Assessment Summary

### Meeting the needs of the general population

#### High performing<sup>1</sup>

- Library membership currently stands at around 52,000 people, with 13,146 (12.4%) of the total population of Darlington borrowing books in the last year.
- The service issues over 370,000 books every year, deals with 575 enquiries for every 1,000 population and sees some 297,539 people each year across all three service points.
- Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population is one of the lowest in the family group.
- The service generally performs at the higher end for issuing books but maintains an efficient service with below average costs per employee per 1,000 population.
- The Centre for Local Studies sees over 7,000 visitors a year, looking for information about local and family history, and deals with around 9,000 enquiries each year.
- Inter-library lending; the service is a net supplier of loans to other authorities meaning the cost of DBC's own inter-library loans is reduced.

#### Low performing<sup>1</sup>

- Having only the three service points gives Darlington the highest population per library of any authority in the country, and the lowest opening hours, with the average number of service points across all unitary authorities being 12
- The service is the worst performing service for 'Floor Space per 1000 population' with 12sqm. The average is 21sqm.

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<sup>1</sup> Where comparisons are used this is with the CIPFA Family Group

- The service has the highest figure for 'Population per service point' with 35,133. The average is 17,318.
- The service supplies 45% of reserved books within 7 days, 56% within 15 days and 61% within 30 days which makes it one of the worst performing unitary authorities

## **Meeting the needs of specific groups**

### **Children and Young People**

- 74 % of the 4 to 12 year olds in Darlington are members of the library, with many visiting the library on class visits.
- The library offers safe, welcoming and neutral space.
- Activities to encourage reading and cultural enjoyment (e.g. Baby Rhyme Time, Summer Reading Challenge, book groups and holiday events).
- Concessions include no overdue fines for late return of children's books borrowed on a junior card.
- Free Baby Rhyme Time sessions.
- Free holiday activities.
- Sets of junior books to support reading groups in schools.

### **Unemployed Adults**

To assist with job searching, unemployed adults have access to functional skills courses at Crown Street Library and additional free time on the public-access computers. Staff are also trained to assist in using web services such as Universal Jobmatch and other Government sites.

### **Health & Disability**

The library offers a range of books on health matters and participates in the Reading Well Books on Prescription Scheme, which aims to bring self-help information to people with anxiety and depression.

A collection of braille picture books for children is available, as well as large print and audio resources.

Multi sensory book bags are available to borrow.

The Book Start scheme has resources for children with additional needs. Packs are available for visual impairment, hearing impairment and sensory impairment.

To provide a social outlet for those with dementia and their carers, a Dementia Café is held monthly in the library, staffed by volunteers from the Alzheimer's Society. In order to provide information and advice, a Dementia Hub operates from the library once a month, staffed by a member of the Dementia Action Alliance. The library also holds a good stock of books and information about dementia and staff are trained as dementia friends.

Action on Hearing Loss hold clinics in the library twice monthly.

For the visually impaired, the Library holds a large stock of Audio Books that are free to borrow and a monthly reading group is hosted at Crown Street.

The proportion of service customers with disabilities broadly reflects the number of people with disabilities in Darlington as a whole.

### **Ethnic Minorities**

The Library Service has limited information concerning the number of people from BME groups who use the service.

The library provides a range of books in foreign languages.

As part of the Book Start initiative, dual language reading materials are available for children identified by partner agencies.

The library stocks a wide range of dual language picture books (text in English plus additional language).

### **Deprivation**

Deprivation covers a broad range of issues and refers to unmet needs caused by a lack of resources of all kinds. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) listed in Appendix 3 of the Local Need Assessment attempts to measure the concept of multiple deprivation across seven distinct domains. Darlington is in the 30% most deprived local authority areas in England, it is ranked 97th out of 326 on the IMD 2015. There are pockets of severe deprivation, with the neighbourhoods in the centre of town, around North Road, Redhall, West Cockerton, Eastbourne and Skerne Park displaying the highest levels of deprivation in the town.

Cockerton Library is located within one of these areas.

The library provides a warm, free space to study. Free access to books and newspapers and to online government services.

Schoolchildren from Mount Pleasant school visit regularly and there are free holiday activities provided to encourage use of the library. Free weekly Baby Rhyme Time Sessions are held and the Library Bookstart Co-ordinator ensures that all young children receive free book packs from the earliest age. She works with targeted groups to foster the reading habit in order to improve life chances.

Libraries play a key role in supporting learning for individuals of all ages. Encouraging a love of reading from an early age is proven to lead to improved life chances and academic achievement.

## **Value for Money**

### **High performing<sup>1</sup>**

- Library membership currently stands at around 52,000 people, with 13,146 (12.4%) of the total population of Darlington borrowing books in the last year.
- The service issues over 370,000 books every year, deals with 575 enquiries for every 1,000 population and sees some 297,539 people each year across all three service points.
- The public access computers, across the service, are used for over 62,000 sessions each year, for everything from job applications to social networking.
- The Centre for Local Studies sees over 7,000 visitors a year, looking for information about local and family history, and deals with around 9,000 enquiries each year.
- The service ranks highest out of 16 authorities for 'Issues per book with 6 issues per item per year. The average is 3.3.
- The average cost of book purchase, total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population, one of the lowest.
- Darlington is 11<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 16 comparable authorities for staffing levels. The average cost per employee is 15<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 16, although the proportion of the budget that they take is high, reflecting a low overall budget compared to other authorities.

### **Low performing<sup>1</sup>**

- Having only the three service points gives Darlington the highest population per library of any authority in the country, and the lowest opening hours, with the average number of service points across all unitary authorities being 12.
- The service is the worst performing service for 'Floor Space per 1000 population' with 12sqm. The average is 21sqm.
- The service has the highest figure for 'Population per service point' with 35,133. The average is 17,318.
- The service supplies 45% of reserved books within 7 days, 56% within 15 days and 61% within 30 days which puts it at the lower end of performance by all English Unitary Authorities

#### **(a) Local Need Assessment Conclusions**

The Darlington Library Service has a mixed performance with the service performing well with regard to the number of active borrowers and number of issues per item, and is one of the lowest cost services in its comparator group,

demonstrating that the service is efficient and provides value for money. However with regard to service points it only has three, therefore its population per service point 35,133; the average is 17,318.

The information clearly shows that book issues are dropping, however the traditional library functions remain important to many customers. Nonetheless the shift towards increasing use of technology will continue to challenge delivery models in the immediate future. This is already being witnessed in the rise of e-book issues and the decline of traditional reference provision, the use of self-service technology and the provision of 24/7 services, accessible without having to visit the library.

Footfall has fallen significantly since 2012/13 across all sites at Crown Street by 28%, Cockerton by 23% (potentially as a result of reduced opening hours), e-library by 15% and the Mobile Library by 65%. The library service overall has seen a reduction in usage of 28%.

The Council is facing extremely difficult financial times with Government funding being cut, a consequence being the need to cease/reduce £10.2million of services.

From the Library Consultation Survey completed by 3,265 residents, which represents approximately 3% of the population, a significant majority support the existing service and would not wish to see any changes.

This support has to be balanced against falling use, reduced book issues and the financial pressure the Council is under.

It would be possible to meet the Council's statutory requirement by providing only one main library within the town centre where approximately 95% of the population are within 30 minutes using public transport.

It is evident there is support for the Mobile Library by those that use it, however with the significant fall in usage it is difficult to continue to support this facility with an ongoing reduction of 65% in the past five years. There will be a need to extend the Housebound Service to cater for those residents that generally are unable to visit the town centre library. This would allow them to continue to be able to access books on a regular basis.

Cockerton Library is the only branch library within the Borough and whilst well supported, it is difficult to continue to justify ongoing financial support when a significant number of other Council services are having to be reduced or cut.

Therefore, whilst there is public support for the existing level of service, with falling book issues and usage the Council will be able to meet the overall need by providing one centrally located library service.

## **Alternative Proposals Crown Street**



22. Attached at **Appendix 4** is a detailed proposal from Darlington for Culture (DfC) which proposes on new model of governance and ideas on how the service can be retained at Crown Street and developed. There is a lot of detail and assumptions made in their proposal and challenges to the MTFP proposal.
23. The proposal identifies more work and time are required to deliver the proposal and indeed to test whether it is deliverable on behalf of the proposers as number of unknowns and risks remain in the submission itself.
24. A number of meetings have been held with the group involved in producing the proposal and a great deal of information shared and advice given by offers particularly surrounding income and profit projections contained within the proposal.
25. The key financial element of the proposal is income generation as it assumes a profit on sales and hires of £154,350 per year by Year 3 of operation. Those figures in officers' views are extremely optimistic. The breakdown of the profits is set out at Page 16 of the Appendix 4. There is clearly some possibility to raise income if investment is made in the building and marketing but such levels do appear unrealistic. Without such profit levels the proposal is financially short of targets set out in the MTFP. An independent review of the business case was commissioned from Price Waterhouse and Cooper (PWC) and this is attached at **Appendix 5**. In which they conclude we do not feel there was sufficient evidence to support the proposed income levels set out in the business plan. In addition, the proposal would see the continued use of Crown Street and this creates an unbudgeted potential financial risk as this building continues to require significant repairs whereas relocation of the service to the Dolphin Centre which has undergone significant refurbishment recently removes this risk.
26. The Council is facing a significant financial challenge and delivery of financial savings is essential to ensure the delivery of a balanced budget, any under delivery or delays in savings will lead to the need to cut or cease more services. Given the state of completeness and the inherent financial risks it is not recommended that this proposal is taken forward.

### **Revised designs for relocation to the Dolphin Centre**

27. In the light of the issues and concerns raised within the consultation, EIA's and Needs Assessment it is the view of the Officers that the proposals for a library within the Dolphin Centre can contribute to mitigating risks and enhancing the quality and access of library facilities to current and new users.
28. Current designs are attached at **Appendix 6a and 6b**. The public floor space used as part of the library at Crown Street is 930 square metres. Within the Dolphin Centre model, the public usable space as part of the library is now 900 square metres.

As can be seen from the plans, the areas to be utilised are:

- (a) Area to the left as you enter the Dolphin Centre from the Market Square where the Healthy Hub is currently located; this space will be used for a quick pick

area of popular books, information point and a number of ICT points.

- (b) Full mezzanine floor to be installed above the Soft Play, meeting the glazed area to the Bistro, for Children's, Teen and Fiction Library.
  - (c) The Wedding Suite and Seminar Room area will be used for Reference, Non Fiction and Study Areas.
  - (d) The existing Registrar's Office area to become the front of house for Local Studies.
29. The final design and layout is currently being worked up and, subject to Member approval, Building Services will deliver the works and will procure those packages of works in accordance with the Council Contract Procedure Rules to ensure that value for money is obtained in the expenditure. It is anticipated that works will commence in October 2016.
30. Alongside this work, Phase 2 of the Dolphin Centre's Mechanical and Electrical Installation Project will be carried out while the building works are being undertaken. Phase 2 includes the areas that will be used for the Library, Squash Courts (that will be used for Soft Play) and Dry Changing Facilities. This work will also be managed by Building Services as part of the overall contract.
31. There are a number of key benefits from relocating to the Dolphin Centre, these include:
- (a) Combining both services into one building provides the opportunity for a sustainable Library and Dolphin Centre
  - (b) Improved baby changing facilities
  - (c) Improved toilet provision
  - (d) Further develop the family learning experience
  - (e) Catering facilities
  - (f) Social spaces
  - (g) Expand a number of programmes particularly for children and young people
  - (h) Updated and increased ICT provision
  - (i) Improved access to facilities for the majority of residents
  - (j) Extended opening hours
32. The intention, if the proposal goes forward is to increase the opening hours at the Dolphin Centre as follows:

Monday to Friday, 9.00 am until 7.00 pm

Saturday, 9.00 am until 5.00 pm

Sunday, 10.00 am until 3.00 pm

33. In addition, the area at the front of the Dolphin Centre will be open during the full Dolphin Centre opening hours where library users can access ICT facilities and quick picks.
34. Since 2010 there have been significant changes to the Library service across the country. Many library authorities have had to review and change their services in this time. Since 2010, figures up to March 2015 (CIPFA) show that 246 libraries have closed. Alongside this, 160 mobile library services have been withdrawn.
35. As part of the changes to libraries, a number have been relocated into leisure centres and other Council buildings. The evidence suggests that these changes have been successful. It has been possible to extend library opening hours and usage numbers have gone up.
36. Councillor Wallis and officers visited two sites in Manchester where libraries had been relocated into leisure facilities. Discussions took place with Neil MacInnes, Strategic Lead for Libraries, Galleries and Culture for Manchester, who is also President Elect of the Society of Chief Librarians. Moving libraries into leisure centres has been extremely successful and Manchester had seen an increase in overall usage of the facilities following the relocation.
37. As well achieving the savings identified in this report by moving the main library to the Dolphin Centre. The proposals will also assist in making both the Library service and the Dolphin Centre more sustainable in future years. The Library and the services provided from the Dolphin Centre are extremely valued, important services and therefore, subject to implementing this proposal, will ensure an ongoing future.
38. It is also anticipated that library use will increase and diversity of users will broaden, benefitting from the significant footfall within the Dolphin Centre of up to 1 million visits per annum. The facilities and activities at the Dolphin Centre will also benefit with the crossover of library users, who may take up activities and use the catering facilities. Therefore not only will the proposal save £310,000 but it will also improve access to the library service and introduce activities at the Dolphin Centre to a range of new potential customers.
39. It is acknowledged that there are inevitably some constraints and, for some users, some potential downsides to the location within the Dolphin Centre. On occasion and in some areas of the Library users may experience more background noise than they are accustomed to at Crown Street. There will be consultation with different user groups as the designs are finalised to explore the best options and to enhance use and user satisfaction.

## **Art Gallery and Collection**

40. To date no solution has been found for the Art Gallery and consideration has been given to using the foyer area in the Town Hall and possible partnerships with private sector. Work will be ongoing however it cannot be guaranteed that it will be possible to provide an art gallery in the future unless a suitable solution can be found.
41. With regard to the Council's Art Collection, this will be relocated and stored within one of the Council's existing buildings. Officers will continue to explore opportunities to provide or facilitate visual art collections including the collection.

## **Archive**

42. The Council's Archive includes items dating back mainly to 1820s, but with some early printed books dating back to 1660s and 1700s, which have been collected by the Library since its opening in 1885. The range of material includes but not exclusively; maps, photographs and illustrations, oil paintings, watercolours, newspapers, books, posters, pamphlets. There are over 205,000 items in stock, mainly focusing on the Darlington and the Borough in detail, but with general coverage for County Durham, Northumberland and North Yorkshire.
43. Work is underway on identifying which items are regularly requested and those less frequently. The proposal is to relocate the archive to a building in the town centre that is in Council ownership and in close proximity to the Dolphin Centre, for which a £25,000 rental allocation has been deducted from the original £400,000 saving for relocating the Library to the Dolphin Centre.
44. It is proposed that Local Studies would be relocated to the old Registrar's Office space within the Dolphin Centre where users of the service can have access to a significant range of material. However, as funding has been reduced and the archive being stored at another location in the town centre, some items will have to be booked for retrieval whereby an individual can return at a time convenient to them to view the requested material.

## **Cockerton Library**

45. The proposal put forward in the appendix is less detailed than the Crown Street proposal. In discussions with DfC, there may well be a sustainable solution and due to the relatively low saving achieved by closure, the challenge is much less than that at Crown Street.
46. To allow further work to be undertaken on the proposal it is recommended that the closure of Cockerton Library be deferred until 31 March 2017 and that DfC be given the opportunity to develop a proposal by 30 October 2016 so that a final decision can be taken by Cabinet in December.

## **Mobile Library**

47. There is no substantial proposal and therefore the service will cease as planned in the MTFP. Should, at some further date, a substantive proposal be made the service could be reintroduced.

## **Financial Implications**

48. The overall saving from the Library proposals is £449,000 broken down as follows:
- (a) Relocating Crown Street to the Dolphin Centre, saving £375,000 less £65,000 for contribution to capital.
  - (b) £53,000 from the closure of Cockerton Library.
  - (c) £56,000 from ceasing the Mobile Library Service.
  - (d) £30,000 from Local Studies.
49. The capital investment for the Dolphin Centre relocation is estimated to be £1.1million for the building works to relocate the Library and £600,000 to carry out Phase 2 of the Mechanical and Electrical works within the Dolphin Centre.  
Note: This would need to be done regardless of the Library relocation.

## **HR Implications**

50. Staff have been involved throughout the consultation period and have all been issued with At Risk letters and subject to Members' approving the Library proposals, further work would be undertaken on the implementation of revised staffing structures and redundancy notices issued as required.

## **Asset Management Advice**

51. Subject to Members approving the proposal, it is intended that the Crown Street building be offered for sale however interested community groups with proposals for use of the building will be considered as part of the disposal process. Planning permission for change of use will likely be a key factor in securing a prospective purchaser. The building has huge architectural and heritage value and proposals will be considered against such important factors.
52. In the event that the building remains the Council's responsibility following relocation of the library service then appropriate maintenance and security costs will need to be met, estimated to be £70k per annum.

## **Procurement Advice**

53. The procurement of both the building works and M&E installation has been considered by the Corporate Procurement Unit and assessed as non-strategic see **Appendix 7**. Cabinet are requested to agree this designation.

54. It is anticipated that works will commence in October 2016. Building Services will deliver the works and will procure those packages of works which it is not delivering in house in accordance with the Council Contract Procedure Rules to ensure that value for money is obtained in the expenditure. Formal contracts for externally delivered works will be entered into by September 2016 with an expected completion date of March 2017.

## **Legal Advice**

55. Upon his death in 1880, Edward Pease bequeathed the sum of £10,000 which was used to build the original library building that eventually opened in 1885. The Council has obtained a copy of the Will in which the bequest was made from the Probate Registry and it states that the £10,000 bequeathed by Edward Pease was 'for the education of the poorer classes' and could be used to either establish or found a free library or Elementary School scholarships for both boys and girls in the Borough of Darlington.

56. 1983 statutory declaration was made by a former Assistant Borough Solicitor about the loss of deeds (possibly during local government reorganisation) in 1974. The statutory declaration indicates the property was thought to be subject to a restrictive covenant that it should be 'used for purposes of a public library forever'. If a covenant subsists, it applies only the northern part - the land on which the library sits was conveyed in three separate tranches between 1885 and 1930.

57. Searches undertaken of adjacent land in Crown Street have not disclosed any land owner who has the benefit of a covenant in respect of the Crown Street property. A search has been conducted on the Charity Commission website and there is no reference to any charitable trust in respect of the Crown Street building. No one has come forward during the consultation with any documentary evidence that clarifies the position. Officers have contacted members of the Pease family during the consultation period.

58. Land Registry records show the Council as the freehold owner, but reference is made to lost deeds and documents and that restrictive covenants imposed before 9 September 2010 are still enforceable.

59. On the evidence currently available there does not appear to be any restrictive covenant capable of being enforced.

60. As matters stand there remains some uncertainty over the existence and nature of any obligations in respect of the Crown Street building. However, concerns about a covenant will not hinder the proposed move from Crown Street. The Council is not required or compelled to provide a library service from Crown Street.

61. Any future options for Crown Street will need to take account of issues identified in respect of the property as well as any additional information that may become available.