
MEETING	LIBRARIES TASK GROUP
DATE	18 APRIL 2013
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS BOYCE, BROOKS, CUNNINGHAM-CROSS AND REID

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests they might have not included on their Register of Interests or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

3. **LIBRARIES SCRUTINY REVIEW-INTERIM REPORT**

Members considered an interim report on the Libraries review which asked them to consider whether any further information was required to conclude the work on the review, whether any further revisions to the report were needed and to identify some draft recommendations, prior to the draft final report being considered by the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 May.

The Scrutiny Officer drew Members attention to the highlight report which presented the findings from the 2012 library consultation (attached to the agenda as annex B) and asked Members to consider those findings.

The Head of Libraries, Information and Archives provided a verbal update on the draft business plan for a potential social enterprise to operate the Council's Library and Archive Services. She confirmed that officers had been working very hard on the social enterprise and as a result:

- The procurement process had been won by Mutual Ventures.
- They had been working with Somerset Council and also with the Service Manager (Prevention and Support Services) from Warden Call to progress their plans for a social enterprise.
- They had obtained legal advice with regard to the legal implications of a social enterprise and are putting together a report on this. They have also consulted with HR and Asset lawyers in relation to issues around staff and property.
- They had undertaken consultation with libraries staff. The Cabinet Member had visited all York libraries and two workshops had taken place with a third planned for early May. Throughout the process, library staff had been given opportunities to put forward their opinions. A staff working group had been established and had a growing membership. They had encouraged staff to be more open and had managed to resolve many issues. As a result staff views had shifted- staff were now more comfortable with the proposals due to better understanding of what was planned and most staff were now broadly in support.
- With regard to public consultation, Question and Answer displays were up in all libraries explaining the proposals in simple terms.
- They were now putting together a business plan which set out the case for a social enterprise – which would be one third owned by staff and two thirds by the community. The aim of social enterprise would be for it to work for the benefit of the community but still remain a professionally run service

Members then considered the interim report and asked if information was available on how much the direct dial phone for housing benefit enquiries at Acomb Library was used. Officers advised that this wasn't used much and agreed to provide Members with exact figures by email.¹

Officers advised they had researched what was happening nationally with regard to the development of community libraries and explained there were different models in operation. In York they advised that the community library was a partnership between the local authority and the community. They informed Members that in North Yorkshire, some libraries which had been

threatened with closure were now run by volunteers. Members acknowledged that the focus was on raising money to keep the libraries open and they had taken on a more community centre approach. They noted that their longevity was not assured.

One Member reported that in the Big York Survey, 13 percent of people who said they didn't visit libraries gave lack of transport as a reason. She suggested the Task Group consider how library services could be made accessible to all residents. Members acknowledged the existing role of the mobile library and virtual library and suggested that Dial-a-Ride routes could be extended to include libraries.

Members agreed it would be useful to have a definition of a "community hub". They felt it should include having a library at the core of the offer, which brought people together as a community by offering a safe, welcoming, attractive and flexible space suitable for a variety of purposes. It was agreed that the exact wording be agreed by officers in liaison with the Chair.

Members agreed that a "community hub" should also aim to provide the following services and opportunities, where space allowed:

- Host Local history events, art exhibitions/craft fairs etc
- Sharing of expertise – use of specialists to promote reading and literacy etc
- Community engagement for council
- Venue for Ward surgeries/MP surgeries on the premises
- Use by organised groups – i.e. craft groups, reading groups – supports informal learning
- Support of life-long learning and skills
- Government and local authority outreach programmes
- Use by community groups for meetings
- Drop in facilities for 3rd Sector agencies i.e. MacMillan, Age UK etc who need access to customers locally
- Offer children's activities
- Provide health information and offer facilities for health checks (blood pressure, diabetes checks etc)
- WIFI/Internet access –encourage people to get online to access council services/ health information etc.
- Support for new businesses – promotes entrepreneurship
- Facilities to provide refreshments/cafe

With regard to suggested recommendations, Members agreed that Library Services should be asked to:

- Investigate possibility of Dial-a-Ride or York Wheels routes being extended to serve libraries
- Investigate provision of refreshments e.g. ensure there were facilities to purchase good quality fair trade coffee/tea
- Encourage more community use of libraries and their facilities by increasing marketing through a variety of mediums
- Consider ways of increasing the number of volunteers and volunteering roles.
- Consider what facilities the community already offered so as not to duplicate facilities or take custom away from existing community facilities.
- Encourage council services to make use of buildings
- Consider the customer base for each library, using available data, to identify ways of encouraging use.
- Consider whether a proportion of the income raised by a particular community library should be ring fenced to allow the service to reinvest it in ways which will specifically support the local community.

Members agreed that each community hub should:

- clearly identify the times when full library provision was available and when other services/facilities were available so customers were fully informed.
- Provide flexible space, using moveable shelving etc, in order that it could be used for a variety of purposes.

Members noted that the final report would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 4 June.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the update on the draft business plan for a potential social enterprise to operate the Council's Library and Archive Services be noted.
 - (ii) That the report be updated to include the information presented at this meeting.
 - (iii) That the recommendations suggested by the Task Group be incorporated into the Draft Final Report for consideration by the Learning

and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee
at its meeting on 1 May.

REASON: To complete the work on this review in line
with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

Action Required

1. Head of Libraries, Information and Archives to FW
provide Members with usage figures in respect of
the direct dial phone for housing benefit enquiries at
Acomb Library

Councillor Reid, Chair

[The meeting started at 11.00 am and finished at 12.25 pm].