

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Wednesday, 25 May 2016, County Hall Worcester - 2.30 pm

		Minutes
Present:		Mr C B Taylor (Chairman), Mr S R Peters (Vice Chairman), Mrs P E Davey, Mr C G Holt, Mr R C Lunn, Mrs E B Tucker and Mr P A Tuthill
Also attended:		Mrs L C Hodgson, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Localism and Communities Mr P M McDonald Mr R M Udall
Available Papers		Neil Anderson (Head of Community and Environment), Carol Brown (Service Improvement Manager - Libraries), Dave Corbett (Information and Performance Officer), Samantha Morris (Overview and Scrutiny Officer) and Jodie Townsend (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager)
		The members had before them: A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated): B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2016 (previously circulated). Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes.
168	Apologies and Welcome	Apologies were received from Stuart Cross.
169	Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip	None.
170	Public Participation	None.
171	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting	The Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
172	Future	The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Localism

Proposed Changes to Library Opening Hours

and Communities and the Head of Service for Communities attended the meeting to discuss the County Council's proposals around the reduction of public opening hours and in turn, the reduction in front line staffing hours.

The Libraries and Learning Service had £3.7m savings to deliver from 2012 through to 2018/19. Progress against this target had largely been achieved through innovation and transformation without the need for closing Libraries or additional day closures. However, proposals had been developed based on usage figures to reduce opening hours in some libraries which would contribute approximately £200k towards the Future Fit savings target during this financial year.

To date savings have been delivered, primarily through re-negotiating contracts, property remodelling, transforming service delivery, increasing the use of technology and the creation of community led libraries. Staff numbers particularly at Management level had also been reduced.

In order to further reduce costs, the service had identified a number of approaches. These included:

- Increasing income generation to achieve a target income of £65k through a range of initiatives.
- Identifying additional co-location opportunities and work with Place Partnership to identify new opportunities to reduce premises costs by sharing library premises with internal and external organisations.
- Introduce un-staffed periods in libraries. This approach would be scoped out during 2016 to test the feasibility of this approach.
- Review and reduce staffing to reflect usage patterns in Libraries.

The Libraries and Learning Service were proposing to reduce library opening hours by 76.5hrs in total across the County (excluding The Hive). Libraries performance data indicating daily patterns of library transaction levels and public computer bookings had been analysed and formed the basis of the proposals. Discussions with local library managers had taken place, and using local knowledge of daily patterns of visitor levels and visitor activity the proposals had been reached with the view to minimise disruption to customer service and co-located services and partners.

The total of 76.5hrs included the re-introduction of a closed day at Stourport Library. Wednesday opening was introduced when the library re-located to the Civic Centre in March 2015, but feedback from the local Library Manager and performance data revealed that activity levels on a Wednesday did not meet those of other week days for the 12 months to end March 2016.

The proposals to reduce the opening hours were part of an overall approach to achieve the necessary savings, without the need for Library closures.

The formal staff consultation was launched on 13 April 2016 and was run for 30 days until 13 May 2016.

Consultation with key stakeholders, including those partners who are co-located within some of our libraries and our community partners was continuing throughout May 2016.

Informal public consultation would take place at individual Libraries during May/early June 2016 with a view to implementing the proposals in July 2016.

During the discussion the following main points were made:

- Although the data for the existing opening times compared to the proposed reductions was unavailable at the meeting, it was confirmed that it could be provided to the Panel.
- Officers were confident that the suggested proposals wouldn't have a significant impact on the library service provided. The proposals would achieve savings whilst protecting services as much as possible.
- The Panel however, were keen to ensure that:
 - The proposals reflected the way in which libraries were currently used with online facilities available as required (they were told that 80% of renewals and 67% of book reservations were made online).
 - Opening and closing times of the libraries reflected the local need and also took into account those service users with working patterns which precluded them from accessing a library between 9am-5pm.
 - Other types of usage were considered - libraries weren't only

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used for borrowing books, they were used for other activities eg studying or accessing a computer.

- Resident's views were listened to and taken into account.
- Worcestershire had managed to secure the second highest amount of funding for Wi-Fi and Superfast Broadband for its libraries and was ahead of the rest of the Country.
- The lowest levels of customer activity were mainly early morning and late evening and had been used to help inform the proposals.
- In response to the question about whether any data analysis had been carried out on disadvantaged user groups, which although small in number were very important. The Panel were advised that a full Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out and the analysis was awaited.
- It was important when considering reducing library opening hours and thus staffing hours not to replace paid staff with un-paid volunteers – there must be a core of professional officers on duty. (currently there were 400 volunteers in the library service working in a variety of areas).

The Chairman thanked the officers for the update and requested a further discussion when the analysis of the Consultation was available.

Meanwhile, it was agreed that the Panel would be provided with the following additional information:

- Data for the existing opening times compared to the proposed reductions would be provided to the Panel.
- Number of paid staff working in the library service.
- Numbers of library users.
- Data on the use of mobile library service including times when the bus is not used.

The Panel considered and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2016/17 agreed by Council on 12 May 2016.

In addition to the items specified on the Work Programme, the Panel agreed to add to its Programme Worcestershire County Council Information Technology and review whether the Hewlett Packard contract was fit for purpose.

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The meeting ended at 4.00 pm

Chairman