

25 May 2018

Member Briefing

Re: School Library Service Notice

Provision of school library services is the responsibility of individual schools and is funded directly from their budgets.

Worcestershire County Council offers a Schools Library Service (SLS) to schools within the LA who can select from a range of services to support their library provision. The service doesn't form part of the local authority's statutory duties under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and is provided separate to the main public libraries service.

The SLS provided to schools by Worcestershire County Council is delivered by a small team of staff to only those schools, who subscribe on an annual basis using funding from their budgets. In 2018/19 the total estimated costs full year effect to provide the SLS service for 2018/19 is £140k.

The number of schools subscribing to Worcestershire's SLS has declined steadily since 2001/2002 from 216 (75.5% of total LEA schools served) to 52 in 2018/19 (24% of total LA schools served). As a result of this decline, the funding model in place is no longer adequate to cover the overall running costs of the service. Initiatives taken over recent years to promote additional buy-in to the service have proved unsuccessful and the current scheme is no longer financially viable. Continuing to support the service is putting a financial pressure on Worcestershire County Council's budget to offset any deficit (estimated in excess of £40k for 2018/19).

To mitigate the financial risk to WCC we have today written to all 52 schools that subscribe to SLS to advise them that their existing SLS Service Level Agreements are due to end on the 31st August 2018 and that it is our intention to not renew these contracts. Schools would under this proposal be responsible for making alternative arrangement for provision of their schools library service from the 1st September 2018.

We have invited schools to comment on this proposal and have set out a range of alternative options so that we can continue to build links with school through the public libraries service. A copy of the letter is attached to the briefing which schools have until the 25 June to submit their response.

A staff consultation will run concurrent to the above process with affected staff it is expected that closure of the service will lead to staff redundancies.

Hannah Needham
Assistant Director CFC