

Member Briefing

23rd October 2018**Re: School Library Service (SLS) Notice**

I write to follow up on my briefing to you dated 13 July 2018 in which I proposed to extend all existing contracts with schools until the end of the first half of the autumn term. This was in response to the feedback from the engagement survey which indicated the importance of the service to a core group of subscribing schools and a real appetite amongst those schools to explore approaches for sustaining the service.

The extension to existing contracts allowed time for work to be carried out in proposing a new model and costing structure for schools which we then shared with schools in early September.

The cost of the new package incorporated a flat fee and a per pupil rate that were higher than current rates and designed to ensure that we could offer a sustainable, high quality and fit for purpose service to schools. The new pricing model was prepared by Schools Finance and put forward to:

- 15 schools who had expressed an interest through the school engagement survey and
- 7 other schools highlighted by the SLS Manager who had not responded to the survey but had informally expressed an interest in considering a revised pricing model.

Of the 22 schools contacted with details of the new pricing model, only 3 indicated that they would continue to subscribe to SLS on revised terms.

Having considered this final feedback from schools, a decision has been taken to close SLS when current contracts with schools end on 2 November 2018, on the grounds that there is insufficient demand for Schools Library Services from Worcestershire schools to ensure the financial viability of the service. As I outlined in my 13 July 2018 briefing, we were reliant on a critical mass of schools to agreeing to this new approach in order to break even as we could not sustain a SLS that costs the Council money. Unfortunately, this has not been achieved.

Schools will be put in touch with Library Services of neighbouring authorities who have expressed an interest in providing library services to Worcestershire Schools, and with the Schools Library Association who provide a minimum SLS offer to schools.

Where the school library requirements of Worcestershire schools are not met by this alternative provision, consideration will be given to the feasibility of extending the public library service offer to meet those requirements. SLS stock will be offered schools to purchase as part of the service de-commissioning process.

Schools received a communication on 19 October 2018 to inform them of the decision to close and SLS contracts with schools will end on 2 November 2018. A plan is being prepared to identify timescales for service de-commissioning. This will include collection of stock from subscribing schools and sale of stock to schools. We expect this process to be completed by 14 December 2018, but the date is subject to change depending on the amount of time required to decommission the service.

Please don't hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or queries.

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