

CABINET

20 JULY 2023

RELOCATION OF REDDITCH LIBRARY

Relevant Cabinet Member
Councillor Marcus Hart

Relevant Chief Officer
Strategic Director for People

Local Member(s)
Councillor Andy Fry – Arrow Valley West (Shared)
Councillor Emma Marshall – Arrow Valley West (Shared)

Recommendations

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities recommends that Cabinet:**
 - a) **Notes the proposals for re-locating Redditch Library as part of Redditch's Town Deal Plan,**
 - b) **Notes the findings from the public consultation as outlined in paragraphs 35-49,**
 - c) **Notes the suggested solutions for mitigating the concerns raised within the public consultation as outlined in paragraphs 50-56,**
 - d) **Notes the detail on meeting the specific commercial, operational and collaboration requirements set out by the County Council,**
 - e) **Notes the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board meeting on the 26 June 2023,**
 - f) **Approves the recommendation to support the proposal to re-locate the Library Service to the Community Hub at Redditch Town Hall,**
 - g) **Authorises the Strategic Director for People and Strategic Director for Commercial and Change in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication to finalise the lease agreement(s) and plans to relocate the library service.**

Background

2. In June 2021 Redditch secured a historic investment of £15.6 million through the Town Deal which will help fund ambitious new projects for the town. The funding represents one of the single largest government investments in Redditch since it became a new town in the 1960s. The Redditch submission was based on vision for the transformation of the town summarised in the Town Investment Plan

3. The priority projects to be funded by the Town Deal have been selected by the Town Deal Board because they will demonstrably boost the productivity and economy of the town, promote innovation and digital transformation, enhance the look, and feel of the public areas and provide increased green and connected town centre spaces. This report focuses on one of three projects - '**The re-development of the current Redditch Library site**'. If implemented this project will involve the demolition of the existing library building, with the library service being re-located to alternative premises, and the delivery of a new public square and associated commercial development.

4. Worcestershire County Council is in support of the regeneration of Redditch with its Town Plan and is a member of the Redditch Towns Deal Board. Redditch Borough Council have approached Worcestershire County Council to request the Redditch Library Service is moved from its current location, into a new Community Hub at Redditch Town Hall, to free up the space for Development of Redditch Town Centre.

5. For Worcestershire County Council to be assured that the proposed move would not be detrimental to the library service or the County Council's interests, it has stipulated, as outlined in the Report to Cabinet on 27 October 2022, that specific Commercial, Operational and Collaboration requirements would need to be fulfilled. These requirements are considered essential in protecting the County Council's interests, and if met will ensure that the County Council will continue to fulfil its statutory responsibilities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and will be not financially worse off because of the relocation. The criteria are required to be met, but it does not follow that Cabinet will automatically approve the move if they are. Before deciding, Cabinet will consider all relevant material considerations, including the consultation responses and consideration of the equalities impacts and mitigation.

6. These requirements were stipulated in the preliminary discussions with Redditch Borough Council, which identified Redditch Town Hall as a potential alternative location to deliver the library service from. In summary, the proposed location within the Town Hall would be comparable with the space in the current library; be walking, wheeling or pram pushing distance from the existing library and the suggested commercial arrangements would mean Worcestershire County Council was not financially worse off. With it being indicated that these requirements could be met, albeit more detail was required, Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 27 October 2022 to commence a formal public consultation to seek opinion and views on the proposed relocation, before making a final decision.

7. This report summarises the rationale for proposed relocation of the library service and presents the findings and responses to the public consultation and makes recommendations for future action.

Rationale for Proposed Relocation of the Library Service - Redditch Towns Investment Plan

8. In September 2019, the UK Government invited 101 towns and cities across England to develop proposals for a Town Deal, outlining projects to address local growth constraints and help to level up the UK economy.

9. In response to this, Redditch Borough Council developed its Town Investment Plan (TIP), which set out a long-term strategy for change to drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth and to tackle the Town's significant challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. These include ageing building assets, growing town centre vacancies, poor quality public realm and a weak leisure, food and beverage offer compared with other competing local centres.

10. Underpinning the TIP is a vision developed and agreed by Redditch Town Deal Board: "Unlocking Redditch forms a vision to transform Redditch from a traditional New Town into a new smart Town fit for the 21st century, which is a great place to live and work and an investment and visitor destination. We will achieve this vision by laying the foundations for Redditch to become a digital, green, connected, and creative town"

11. A key area of focus within the TIP is the Church Green area of Redditch, a characterful and attractive area of the town centre which suffers from poor access between the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and wider town centre, limiting its use by residents and visitors. The TIP refers to a consultation report, carried out on behalf of Redditch Borough Council, from November 2020, completed by Social Marketing Gateway, commissioned by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR), where 650 local residents from a cross section of age groups from 16 through to 75+ and local ethnic communities, were engaged through a quantitative survey, quantitative in-depth online groups and telephone interviews.

12. The consultation found that Residents support investment to change what is on offer in the town centre. People had a lot to say about the 'right kind' of retail, hospitality and entertainment - more local and independent shops and activities that transform the centre into a busy and vibrant place where people want to socialise. It also found that Redditch's residents believe the Church Green area should become the new heart of the town centre, enabled by the demolition of the existing Redditch Library. Although this provides a well-used and important community asset within the town centre, its location currently restricts access between Church Green and the main commercial area of the town.

13. The Redditch Library project will play a crucial role in realising the vision of the TIP and will specifically contribute towards the ambition to create a "Creative" town. This project will do so by contributing towards the theme's specific outcomes to:

- Strengthen town centre viability and vitality
- Make the town centre a more attractive place to live
- Support business creation and growth in Redditch
- Increased business innovation

- Develop the town centre into a cultural and leisure destination

14. The £4.2 million investment, allocated as part of the overall £15.6million for this specific project, will be used to transform the space around the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to drive footfall and improve connectivity to the outdoor market and Church Green, through:

- Demolition of the existing Redditch Library
- Construction of a new 612 sqm building comprising three food and beverage units on the ground floor utilising new basement kitchens and co-working space on the first and second floors
- Remediation and implementation of public realm improvements to the floorspace currently used by the Library into 1,172 sqm of public plaza and events space

15. If implemented, it is expected that this project will provide significant benefits to the local economy and residents of Redditch, by increasing town centre footfall, improving the evening economy, and encouraging further investment to develop a competitive edge. Further information on the proposals for redevelopment of the Redditch Library site and a copy of the Full Business Case for this project can be found within the supporting information (Appendix 1 and 2).

16. However, the implementation of this project, and the use of the £4.2million, is entirely dependent on maintaining all aspects of the current library services by relocating it to alternative suitable premises.

17. The decision to relocate the library service is for County Council's Cabinet to make, as the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service is the responsibility of upper-tier authorities. Town Deal funding from Central Government is subject to a change control process in the form of Project Adjustment Requests (PARs) as outlined on [Project Adjustment Request \(PAR\) changes: Town Deals, Levelling Up, and Future High Street Funds - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Accountable Bodies are allowed to make decisions locally on project changes that relate to up to 30% change in funding profile and up to 30% change in output and outcomes provided the project remains materially the same. Redditch Borough Council have advised that any delay in the decision on whether to relocate Redditch Library will have a significant negative impact on the funding and deliverability of the Towns Fund and may result in the project to develop the Town Plaza not going ahead.

18. Redditch Borough Council is already working on the redevelopment of the Town Hall and plan to go ahead with refurbishments and extension regardless of the County Council's decision on whether the library will move there. Redditch Borough Council does this at its own risk. The Town Investment Plan states that government funding for the redevelopment of the library site is conditional on the library relocation. Tight timelines have meant that Redditch Borough Council have had to continue with planning activity ahead of the County Council's final decision on whether to approve the relocation of the library, in order for the funding deadline of 31 March 2026 to be met. The County Council has provided significant project management expertise, funded by the County Council, to support the development of the project. Cabinet will consider the proposals and consultation entirely on its own merits in terms of the Council's statutory duties as a Library provider.

19. The timescales on the project are ambitious as Towns Fund monies must be spent by March 2026. The library service move, should approval be given, is likely to take place in Winter 2024.

Public Consultation – Activity and Promotion

20. A public consultation to understand residents' and library users' opinions, and the impact of a possible relocation of the library service in Redditch was carried out between 7 November 2022 and 24 February 2023 by Worcestershire County Council.

21. The consultation consisted of background information to the proposals, a survey (available online and on paper), two public face-to-face meetings held at Redditch Library on 24 January 2023 and 9 February 2023 and a local history consultation meeting on 24 January 2023. The focus of the consultation was the proposed relocation of Redditch Library; it did not cover the wider Redditch town centre development proposals. A copy of the consultation activity plan, which sets out the full range of actions taken can be found within Appendix 3.

22. The online survey went live on 7 November 2022 until 24 February 2023 and was made available in Polish and Urdu. Alternative languages and formats could be requested by emailing the Redditch Library Consultation inbox referenced on the website and in press releases.

23. The paper survey was also available from 7 November 2022 until 24 February 2023, and alternative languages and formats could be requested by emailing the Redditch Library Consultation inbox referenced on the website and in press releases. Paper surveys were also placed in the Redditch Library from the start of the consultation and were made available at the face-to-face meetings. A paper survey was also distributed to all Library Service at Home members at the start of the consultation via the Library Services at Home volunteers.

24. An email to all Redditch Library members (15,024 recipients) was circulated on 07 November 2022 and then again on 31 January 2023. The email promoted the consultation and provided the link to the Redditch Library Consultation site.

25. Paper visuals of the proposed library plans were placed in Redditch Library on 07 November 2022 for people to view. Additional images of the proposed interior were also provided and placed on the wall in the meeting room where the face-to-face meetings took place. Simple versions of the Floor Plans were provided, following feedback, approximately two weeks later.

26. The proposed library plans were also placed on the Redditch Borough Council website along with further information about the proposed Plaza. The Redditch Library consultation site provided a link to the Redditch Borough Council webpage where more information could be found.

27. The Worcestershire County Council social media campaign for the consultation ran from 27 October 2022 to 22 February 2023. The social media posts are listed within the consultation plan in Appendix 3, but the overall performance of these posts are as follows:

- Impressions (the number of times a post has been viewed; this could be multiple times from one person) - during this period: 20,828

- Engagements (the number of times someone has 'liked,' commented, or shared a post) – during this period: 499
- Clicks (the number of times the link in a post has been clicked) - during this period: 376

28. Worcestershire County Council also released proactive press on the dates below and copy of these releases can be found in Appendix 3 - the Consultation Activity Plan

- 7 November 2022 – Making people aware that the consultation had launched
- 11 January 2023 – Making people aware of the face-to-face meetings
- 3 February 2023 – Making people aware of the face-to-face meeting
- 15 February 2023 – Making people aware that the consultation would be closing soon.

Worcestershire County Council press releases were picked up by various newspapers including the Redditch Advertiser and Redditch Standard (all Consultation coverage can be found in Appendix 3 - the Consultation Activity Plan).

29. On average, the Redditch Advertiser has approximately 298,500 page views per month, and the Redditch Standard has 380,000 page views per month.

30. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were placed on the Redditch Library Consultation site and were updated regularly based on queries and feedback. These FAQs were also provided to library staff to help prepare them for the consultation launch. Team leaders and staff were given a briefing note alongside the FAQs, to help provide support on how they should respond to queries from members of the public, about the consultation. On 12 December 2022, library staff also had a Q&A session to raise any further questions or queries they had received following the consultation launch.

31. In addition to the activity outlined above, digital posters were placed in local bus stops from 11 November 2022 until 24 February 2023. Digital posters and physical posters were also placed in the library following feedback provided at the face-to-face consultation meetings.

32. Facebook groups, for example "Hands off Redditch Library" also promoted and shared the County Council's social media posts about the consultation.

33. Worcestershire County Council's Customer Services and Relations team were briefed at the start of the consultation, to direct any enquiries that came in via telephone to the Redditch Library Consultation inbox.

34. Full anonymised responses to the survey were published on 07 June 2023 and are available to view here: [Redditch Library Consultation | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Public Consultation – Summary of Findings

35. The independent analysis of the consultation was carried out by Worcestershire County Council's Business Intelligence Team and completed based on the data available, including feedback from all sources. This report can be found in Appendix 4.

36. There were a total of 1467 responses to the survey (including 97 paper surveys). This represents 2.2% of the Redditch population aged over 19. There was good engagement and response to the survey for people aged 30 or over. There were fewer responses received for younger people aged under 30. 81% of survey respondents said they were library members.

37. For the purposes of research, confidence levels of 90%, 95% or 99% are normally used, depending on the level of confidence required (99% being the highest of the three). For the borough of Redditch, with a population of just under 70,000 adults – a sample of just over 650 would be sufficient to achieve a confidence level of 99% (assuming a 5% margin of error). The 1467 responses received therefore far exceeds what would be required for a very high level of confidence in a set of survey results (i.e., 99% confidence that the population would give the same result as the sample). By way of comparison, the annual resident Viewpoint survey in Worcestershire receives between 2,000 and 2,500 responses countywide.

38. In general, there is no correct or minimum number of responses for a consultation. However, the greater the sample size the more likely that the responses are going to be representative of the population. A confidence level describes the probability that a sample survey result is (within an acceptable margin of error) the same as the result that would be expected if the whole population were surveyed.

39. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the new location for Redditch library being the Town Hall. 72.3% of respondents said that they disagree to some extent.

40. Library members were more likely to disagree (77%) with the plans than non-library members (51%).

41. Respondents were asked to give the reasons they agreed or disagreed with the new location for the library. 1425 comments were received. Feedback fell into two broad categories:

- Factors relating to the proposed new location for the library
- Factors relating to the wider town centre proposals

42. The three most common themes given by respondents in relation to the proposed new location for the library were:

- **The proposed location for the new library is not as good**
Comments about it being further from the town centre, bus stops, railway station and car parks were cited
- **Concern that there will be a reduction in the facilities offered by the new location**
Concerns that the move might lead to a degradation of library facilities and services and comments that the information provided at the consultation stage is not sufficient to reassure them that facilities will not be lost.

This theme included concerns about the relocation of some archive collections to Worcester and about meeting room provision.

- **Concern that the relocation will result in a reduction in the size of the new library**

Concerns that the new location would result in a reduction in the size of the library, having an impact on how respondents use the building to read, relax, work, or attend with children.

43. Other common themes around why respondents disagree with the Town Hall as an appropriate location for the library included:

- Concern the new location would lead to a fall in library use
- Concern the new building might be less accessible, e.g., steps, steep ramps etc.
- Safety of the area around the Town Hall and on the approaches to it.

44. There were several common themes as to why respondents agree that the Town Hall would be an appropriate location for the library:

- The new location is only a very short distance away
- It is an effective use of buildings
- They are happy to have the library as part of a hub with services all in one place
- The idea that a move to a new location could include new, modern facilities
- The new location could be more accessible

45. Respondents were asked whether anything would prevent them from using the library in the new location at the Town Hall. 1204 people responded to this question. The most common response to this question, by 36% of respondents, was that nothing would prevent them from using the library in the new location.

46. Reasons given that might prevent use of the library if it were in the Town Hall included:

- The environment or feeling of the new building
- Would not use out of principle or boycott
- Reduced facilities of the new building (if local archives were removed)
- Availability of parking nearby

47. Two public meetings were held as part of the consultation giving residents the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns to a panel with officer and member representatives from Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council. Just over 100 people attended these meetings.

48. Many similar themes were dealt with in the public meetings as were expressed in the survey comments such as not wanting the library to move, how it would be a waste of money and the suitability of the Town Hall as a location for the library service. The notes from these meetings were published on 21 June 2023 and are available to view here: [Redditch Library Consultation | Worcestershire County Council](#).

49. In addition to the feedback received at the face-to-face public meetings and survey, Worcestershire County Council also received correspondence from The Library Campaign on 10 November 2022 and 24 February 2023 as well as submitting freedom of information requests (FOI). This correspondence questioned the public consultation process, which the County Council responded to at the time to confirm receipt and

noted that it would be included in the consultation feedback. The FOI was also responded to in line with expected timescales.

Public Consultation – Responses and mitigations to concerns raised

50. The County Council consultation took place at the formative stage of the plan and is for the purpose of informing Cabinet's consideration of the proposal. No decisions have yet been made about the relocation of the library; the consultation focused on whether the library should move from its existing site to the Town Hall. The option presented focused purely on whether the move should take place. As demonstrated in the comments and responses made during public consultation meetings, should the decision be made to not move the library service, it would remain where it is. It is clear that the public has understood that the options are to move the library or for it to remain where it is.

51. Public consultation meetings were held in accordance with the consultation requirements. In response to the key themes raised through the consultation, work has been undertaken to address some of the key concerns and these are also accounted for the Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 5). Progress to date includes:

52. Concern the new building might be less accessible, e.g. steps, steep ramps

- There is a shop mobility service available in Redditch where customers can access devices to assist with moving around the town. Worcestershire County Council has committed to continue to work with Redditch Borough Council to see how this offer could be improved. Dial a ride service are also available in Redditch, and drop off directly outside the Town Hall
- The proposed new location is 100m from the current location, and whilst this may present a benefit for some customers being closer to some car parks (for example the Palace Theatre Car Park or the car park accessed from Victoria Street) and public transport stops (for example the Trafford Bus Stop), it may also increase the walking distance for others. If a decision is made to re-locate the Library Service, Worcestershire County Council and Redditch Borough Council will work together with partners to map and promote the shortest and most accessible routes from various locations around the town centre. For example, there is a route through the Kingfisher Centre, via a lift, which brings customers out into a covered walkway (Fountain Passage), providing a direct route to the Town Hall. Redditch Borough Council have ensured that this lift is operational in order to enhance this route and improve access to the Town Hall from the parking at the Kingfisher Centre.
- Redditch Borough Council have committed to inclusion of an accessible parking space in the Town Hall car park for library customers, in addition to short stay pick up and drop off spaces. This would enable customers with blue badges to park directly outside the library in its new location.

53. Safety of the area around the Town Hall and on the approaches to it.

- The Town Hall is opposite the Palace Theatre which is well used in evenings therefore the location is not isolated.
- Redditch Borough Council have confirmed that new LED lighting is being added to existing lamps within the Town Centre as a part of Public Realm enhancements, along with all new lighting along the High Street. The canopies of covered walking routes are well lit with spotlights and ornamental fairy lights. There are also foot lights, ceiling lights and colour changing lights behind the murals in Fountain Passage, a key walking route from the Kingfisher Centre.

54. Concern that some of the archive material in the library will no longer be available in Redditch (relocation to Worcester)

- Though the available space for storage would be smaller in the Town Hall, this does not necessarily mean that the space available for archives will reduce by the same proportion. Worcestershire County Archivist is currently working with the Library Service and Redditch History Society to review the best location for all archive materials currently stored in Redditch. Wherever possible most of the local history material and archives will remain in Redditch either prioritised within the available storage space or displayed on the Library floor.

55. The concerns raised in relation to a reduction in the facilities offered at the new location and there would be a reduction in size of the new Library are mitigated by meeting the operational requirements set out in the 27 October 2022 Cabinet Report. Due diligence carried out on proposed floor plans provides assurance that the dedicated library space in the proposed new location is comparable (slightly more when common areas are included) than the current library space. This means that all existing library furniture (e.g., book shelving), public computer network points and activity space can be relocated, and a comparable service can be delivered.

56. There were also concerns raised around the risk of lower footfall (e.g., visits) if the library service were to move to Redditch Community Hub. Whilst this is an accepted risk, if a decision was made to relocate, the service would mitigate the risk by continuing to deliver services that are valued by residents, as well as contributing to the design and directional links incorporated in the new public realm space ('Library Walk'); supporting library outreach activity in the Kingfisher Centre and Public Realm space; and developing specific communication campaigns along with activities like 'Welcome Days' at the library when launched to introduce the new space and facilities.

Assurance against the County Council's Stipulated Requirements for Relocation.

57. The Cabinet report of 27 October 2022 set out several requirements to protect the County Council's interests, both commercially and in terms of service offer / statutory responsibilities. Progress to date against these requirements and the assurance offered in how they can be met are outlined below.

Commercial Arrangements

58. The following explains how the "same cost" and best value for disposal requirements are met:

- The existing library (including accommodation leased to third parties) consists of approx. 1764sqm. The previously reported 637sqm in the 27 October Cabinet report included high level areas reviewed in initial feasibility stages. Further work has been completed in the last 6 months to confirm the size of all areas within the current library building, including areas leased to a tenant, shared areas, back-office space, display space and study areas. The existing spaces within Redditch Library are identified in the below table, and have been verified by Worcestershire County Council Property Services:

Table 1: Existing Library Provision Space breakdown (sqm)

Identified Library Area	Total Area (sqm)
Dedicated Library	
Main Library Area	380
Children's Area	92
Computer Area	28
Multimedia Area	25
Meeting Room	19
Entrance & Lobby	22
Shared Mezzanine with Wall Displays	69
Non-Fiction	147
Meeting Room 2	55
Meeting Room 3	28
Library Staff Desks Back of House (shared)	12
Book Store (archive / basement storage)	200
Office / Crafts Room	33
TOTAL	1110
Dedicated Tenant	
Front of House incl. Interview Room	325
PACE	9
Meeting / Training Room	25
Back of House Office (shared)	107
TOTAL	466
Shared Areas (areas owned by WCC and shared with Library Tenant)	
Library Shared Area with Tenant (computer area)	117
Staff Shared Room with Tenant	43
Server Room	15
Shared meeting room	13
TOTAL	188
<u>Redditch Library Total Area</u>	<u>1764</u>

- As outlined in the area schedule provided by Redditch Borough Council on the 07 July 2023, the area proposed to be leased to Worcestershire County Council within the Redditch Community Hub will provide 1745sqm, therefore providing an

equivalent, albeit slightly smaller, area. The main loss of space is a result of the reduction in library storage requirements. In addition to the dedicated library space of 1745sqm, the proposed new space would also provide access to 330sqm of common areas, including a reception area where library displays and quick return kiosks can be located, and central walkways which can be utilised for events such as job fairs. Based on these floor areas, an open market value of the accommodation to be leased to Worcestershire County Council has been assessed to be of similar open market value to the existing library. An updated set of floor plans and area schedule was received on 07 July 2023 (attached at Appendix 7). At the time of publication of this report these plans had not been 'signed off', however officers are confident that the plans meet the County Councils requirements and sign off is expected on 13 July 2023. Slight changes will not impact overall valuation.

- Worcestershire County Council will be granted a 125-year lease of the accommodation for the library at the Redditch Community Hub with the ability to sublet the whole or part, or to assign the lease in its entirety, subject to approval of both parties, not to be unreasonably withheld. At the end of the lease the County Council or its successors will have the rights to be granted another lease.
- In return for Redditch Borough Council granting a lease to the Hub, Worcestershire County Council will grant a 125-year lease of the Redditch library land and building. The County Council will retain the freehold at all times. Permission will be granted under the lease to allow Redditch Borough Council to redevelop the site, including the demolition of the library building itself. Upon expiry (or mutually agreed termination) of the lease to Redditch Borough Council, the land and any assets situated on it will revert to the County Council's ownership. In relation to both Head Leases neither the County Council nor Redditch Borough Council can dispose of the Freehold, Assign or Sub-Let the Leasehold interests without the other party's agreement.
- Worcestershire County Council currently receives an income from letting space within the existing library plus a proportional contribution to the running costs. If the County Council moves services to Redditch Town Hall, Redditch Borough Council will lease equivalent space to Worcestershire County Council to provide for the library and its current tenant. The County Council would then sub-lease equivalent accommodation to its tenant and therefore still receive similar rental income which is guaranteed until 2028 when the lease ends. Conversations are ongoing with the Council's tenant on their occupancy of the proposed new space, noting the County Council's right within existing lease to relocate them.
- Worcestershire County Council has proposed a mechanism within the draft heads of terms for the lease of the accommodation within the Redditch Community Hub, which will protect it from increased net premises costs which would not otherwise be incurred. The draft proposed heads of terms agreement is attached as Appendix 6. It is proposed that the total cost of occupation must not be more than the agreed cap equivalent to the occupation costs for the existing library, and this figure will rise annually on an appropriate price index but will never be more than the actual proportional costs. The cap has been calculated as per table 2 below.

Table 2: Items included in the cap for occupation costs

Items Included	Cap Total
Security Measures	
Grounds Maintenance	
Building Maintenance	
Utilities (Gas)	
Water Services	
General Fixtures	
Premises Other	
Cleaning Services	
Premises Insurance	
Total WCC Cap	112k

The items not included in the cap are: - electricity, because this will be separately metered and charged to the County Council; Business Rates, which will be charged on proportion of occupation; and tenant cleaning and security costs as these will be recharged directly to the County Council's tenant.

- Other than the known concrete failure in parts of the building which investigations have identified a remedial plan for, there is no other priority maintenance required at the existing library. Redditch Borough Council have proposed that in the 2 Years of the tenancy there will be no charge to the County Council for capital or revenue expenditure that could have been foreseen or planned prior to the start of the tenancy.
- The County Council will have direct responsibility for electric charges as these will be separately metered to reflect actual use. The Town Hall building has new double-glazed windows throughout, electric solar and hot water solar, a new gas boiler and air source heat pump installed using funding from SALIX as part of decarbonisation and upgraded to LED lighting in most areas, with further upgrade to LED expected as a part of the wider refurbishment and creation of the Community Hub. This is expected to support reducing running costs. As an indicative measure of the impact of these improvements, gas consumption at the Town Hall reduced from 915,026 kWh in 2019 (the last full year that the building was in full operation prior to the Covid 19 pandemic) to 432,471 kWh in 2022, a reduction of 482,555 kWh. Similarly, electricity consumption fell from 690,885 kWh in 2019 to 563,265 kWh in 2022, a 127,620 kWh reduction. The large decrease in gas consumption demonstrates the impact of the air source heat pump, replacing traditional gas boilers.
- Net budget position for Redditch library was included in the Cabinet report of 27 October 2022, and further detailed budget information has been shared with Redditch Borough Council. Redditch Borough Council confirmed in writing on 07 June that ongoing running costs for the County Council's area within the Town Hall would be in line with actual spend in 2022/23. An outline of updated likely proportional cost of occupation and proportionate charges for common areas is expected from Redditch Borough Council.
- Redditch Borough Council provided a cost plan in August 2022 outlining the overall project funding to be provided for building works including fixtures and fittings. Since October 2022, further detailed planning has taken place to build the detailed scope

of the requirements for internal and external plans, including a specific focus on Information Technology set up requirements. The provision that Redditch Borough Council will fund all costs associated with the relocation and the detail of specific works covered will be included in the contract to enter into a lease between Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council and confirmed in the draft heads of terms (Appendix 6). The contract will make it conditional that these works are completed before the County Council are bound to complete the agreement to take the lease of the accommodation at The Hub and to lease the Redditch library to Redditch Borough Council. The principle of a 'no worse' position for Worcestershire County Council financially and operationally has been agreed with Redditch Borough Council. An updated cost plan incorporating all further developments such as IT set up costs, installation of CCTV provision, fit out of the areas is yet to be provided, and has been delayed by further amendments to layout plans.

- Worcestershire County Council have provided a detailed furniture audit of the current library and an assessment of which specific items of furniture can transfer to the proposed new location, reducing fixtures and fittings costs. However, until the floor plans for service delivery areas are finalised, it is not possible to confirm which items of furniture can be transferred. It will be a requirement that Redditch Borough Council will cover the costs of any new furniture required directly because of the move, for example, where wall space is limited in the new design, existing wall mounted shelving cannot be re-used, and new freestanding items will need to be procured. This principle is included in the draft heads of terms (Appendix 6). Worcestershire County Council have committed to funding any items of furniture which will require replacement or upgrade for service delivery reasons.
- Should the request to move library services be approved, further support requirements from Worcestershire County Council are yet to be costed including ongoing project management and other support services such as IT, Property and Library Services. WCC resources from a range of service areas have been allocated to Redditch Borough Council's project for the last 12 months at no cost to Redditch Borough Council. Ongoing support cannot be confirmed until Worcestershire County Council have received updated project plan outlining the requirements and timeline.
- Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council continue to progress the proposed heads of terms (Appendix 6) with sign off anticipated for 13 July 2023. Upon agreement, both parties are expected to sign the heads of terms to indicate agreement with the principles outlined within the document, which will form the basis of the eventual lease.

Operational and Service Conditions

59. Worcestershire County Council confirmed in March 2023 that the sqm calculations for the current library space were accurate, as noted in table 1 above and used for comparison to space in the proposed new area. An updated area schedule (square metre calculations) for the Library Space in the Redditch Community Hub was received on 07 July 2023 along with high level floor plans. Sign off of all floor plans is expected to be completed on 13 July 2023. Table 3 outlines the latest totals – though it should be noted that these are still subject to change when due diligence has been carried out on floor plans.

Table 3: Space Comparisons (sqm) existing and proposed Redditch Hub for Library and Library Tenant including service delivery space and back-office space.

Space Allocated to:	Current Library	Proposed Library space in Community Hub	Difference
Library front of house (dedicated, public facing, service delivery)	1110	1226	+116
Tenant dedicated provision	466	519	+53
Shared space between library and tenant	188	0	-188
Total	1764	1745	-19

60. As mentioned in paragraph 58b) above, Worcestershire County Council received updated floorplans from Redditch Borough Council on 07 July 2023, they indicate how the space and shared space are allocated across the lower ground, ground, first, second and third floors of the Town Hall. These plans and the accompanying Area Schedule are available to view in the supporting information, Appendix 7 and Appendix 8. The plans demonstrate that the proposed allocated space within the Town Hall is equivalent to the service delivery area of the current library building. The plans also show current proposed positioning of all the necessary furniture (e.g., shelves and computer desks) required to deliver the library service. Sign-off of these floor plans, from an operational and a commercial perspective, is scheduled for 13 July 2023. At the time of publication of this report, County Council Officers are assured that the proposed space is acceptable for the library service.

61. Worcestershire County Council requires that alternative premises for the library are in a location that retains current footfall levels or where mitigation of a less central location is provided through an increase in the number of co-located service providers. The Community Hub at the Town Hall provides a single building for a range of agencies, including NHS and Redditch Borough Council services (confirmed) and other services (yet unconfirmed). However, it has been confirmed by Redditch Borough Council that NHS space and services will only be accessible by a separate entrance to the Town Hall. Separate entrances at the Town Hall for co-located partners may discourage use of library services and reduce library footfall. A review of methods for measuring footfall may be required to ensure data post-move can be directly compared if entrances are separated.

62. Redditch Borough Council have confirmed that an accessible car parking space will be provided in the Town Hall car park exclusively for library customer use, in addition to short stay pick up and drop off spaces. This would enable customers with blue badges to park directly outside the library in its new location. The current Redditch Library building does not have allocated Blue Badge parking spaces. Further accessibility concerns raised through public consultation are noted in the Consultation section above and are also addressed through the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment in Appendix 5.

63. All plans reviewed by Worcestershire County Council to date show the library service arranged predominantly on the ground and first floors of the Town Hall, with archive and storage space on the lower ground floor. The proposed extension to the Town Hall to accommodate the Community Hub includes a new 2 storey glass entrance and rear glass 4 floor extension, with highly visible signage and increased

glazing throughout. Appendix 9 details the Latest exterior imaging of Redditch Community Hub – fly through video which contains artists impressions of the vision and ambition for all Redditch Regeneration Projects. Planning permission for these external works has been submitted to Redditch Borough Council and is currently live on the Public Planning Portal for comment. The proposed plans provide assurance that the requirement for a high profile, visible, glazed entrance to provide an attractive ‘shop window’ from the street can be met, subject to planning application approval.

64. Based on layout plans reviewed to date and due for sign off on 13 July 2023, the storage space and layout available on the lower ground floor provides sufficient space to be able to retain a substantial proportion of the current archive collection in the new Town Hall location. If the move goes ahead the County Archivist will continue to work with local history groups and local archive volunteers to implement best practice approaches for cataloguing, storing, and facilitating supervised access to Redditch archive collections.

65. Redditch Borough Council have confirmed that the Libraries Unlocked service delivery model can be implemented when a decision is made on the timeline for Redditch. The cost of implementing Libraries Unlocked will be covered by Worcestershire County Council as a part of that programme budget. Confirmation on a timeline for implementation of Libraries Unlocked in Redditch is subject to the Cabinet Decision on Redditch Library.

66. If the move to the Town Hall goes ahead the library service will invite library customers and local residents to share their ideas and suggestions for how the new library space could be used and for new library services that could be provided from the new location.

Collaboration Opportunities

67. Redditch Borough Council have provided verbal assurance that Worcestershire County Council’s requirement for the design of the public realm space to incorporate clear design links and directional links to the proposed new library site to promote visibility of the library and mitigate risk of reduced footfall is being addressed. The County Council are awaiting confirmation from Redditch Borough Council on this matter. It is noted that the proposed location is close to the proposed Innovation Centre development. Worcestershire County Council has requested additional signage, way marking and other features to be included in the Public Realm developments to encourage footfall to the new location.

Overview and Scrutiny

68. To date, the proposal to relocate Redditch Library has been considered by:
- The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) on 25 October 2022
 - Cabinet on 27 October 2022
 - Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 8 June 2023 (comments provided to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities are attached at Appendix 10)
 - Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) on 26 June 2023

69. The Chairperson of OSPB has written to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility following the discussions at the meeting on the 26 June 2023. The full response can be found in Appendix 11. The concluding statement states that the OSPB (and the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel) have scrutinised the Proposal to Relocate Redditch Library and from a Worcestershire County Council’s perspective, there is no compelling evidence that the Proposal would result in any deterioration of the library service or its quality. OSPB therefore believes that the Cabinet has all the information it needs to make an informed decision.

Recommendation

70. Considering the conclusion of the extensive Scrutiny exercise; the responses and mitigating action taken because of feedback from the public consultation; and the confirmation that the commercial, operational and collaboration requirements are all met, it is recommended that Cabinet support the proposal to re-locate Redditch Library Service to a newly refurbished Redditch Community Hub at the Town Hall.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

71. The Council, as the library authority has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 “to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons” for all those that live, work or study in the area. It is considered that if the library is re-located, the Council will continue to meet this duty. The Council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty, and it has completed an equalities impact assessment and the mitigating factors are discussed in this report. The Council has carried out a non-statutory consultation exercise to ascertain people’s views about the proposal to relocate the library or alternatively for it to remain where it is. The product of the consultation exercise should be taken into account and the public’s responses to it carefully considered in order to inform the decision. The achievement of the duty to obtain best value for the disposal of the site has been explained in the report.

72. The last full year of income and costs relating to Redditch Library was 2022/23 and Table 4 below details the premise costs, income and net position. The 2022/23 budget predicted a net surplus of £22k, however due to rising utilities costs and one-off building maintenance costs, the actual spend was £55k over budget.

Table 4 – premises costs, income and net position

	Actual 22-23 £'000
Premise Costs *	233
Income	-178
(Surplus) / Deficit	55

* Excludes DWP additional cleaning and security costs which passed straight through to DWP

73. Based on the commercial requirements, the costs of relocation will be funded by Redditch Borough Council and the County Council is expecting to be fully compensated for the value of the asset in line with S.123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

74. There are 12 staff (8.5 FTE) working from Redditch Library. They would all transfer to the new location. This is not deemed to be a change of terms of conditions if the new location is near the current Library building.

75. There will be additional capital costs to enable the re-location to implement an Open Library approach in Redditch, as well as some equipment that will need to be upgraded to be in keeping with the new facility. These are one off capital costs and will need to be met from the existing capital programme for Libraries

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

76. Joint Impact screening has been completed. Further detailed impact assessment was required for Data Protection, Environmental Sustainability and Equality and Diversity. These full impact assessments have been completed and signed off by relevant officers within Worcestershire County Council and are attached as appendices (Appendix 5, Appendix 12 and Appendix 13).

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Redditch Library Town Investment Plan – Redditch Library Regeneration [Redditch Library site development \(redditchtowndeal.co.uk\)](http://redditchtowndeal.co.uk)
- Appendix 2 – Redditch Library Full Business Case [Microsoft Word - 20220930 Redditch Library FBC - Rectangular FINAL.docx \(redditchtowndeal.co.uk\)](#)
- Appendix 3 – Consultation Activity Plan
- Appendix 4 – Redditch Consultation Analysis Report
 - Appendix 4A – Redditch Library Consultation Survey
 - Appendix 4B – Redditch Library Consultation Supplementary Questions
- Appendix 5 – Equality and Public Health Full Impact Assessment (prepared for Cabinet Decision on 20 July 2023)
- Appendix 6 – Draft Proposed Heads of Terms for County Council Occupation within Redditch Town Hall
- Appendix 7 – Floor Plans shared by Redditch Borough Council on 07 July 2023.
- Appendix 8 – Area Schedule shared by Redditch Borough Council on 07 July 2023.
- Appendix 9 – Latest exterior imaging of Redditch Community Hub – fly through video containing artists impressions of the vision and ambition for all Redditch Regeneration Projects: [Regeneration projects | Redditch Town Deal](#)
- Appendix 10 – Comments provided to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities from the meeting of Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 8 June 2023
- Appendix 11 – Comments provide to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities from the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 26 June 2023
- Appendix 12 – Environmental Sustainability Full Impact Assessment (prepared for Cabinet Decision on 20 July 2023)
- Appendix 13 – Data Protection Full Impact Assessment (prepared for Cabinet Decision on 20 July 2023)

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for People) there are no background papers in support of this report.