

Review of the Community Managed Libraries Stakeholder Feedback Report

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Appendices

- A. Customer Feedback.

1. Introduction and Scope of the CML Implementation Plan Review

The overall Library Strategic Review, LSR, was agreed at Council Cabinet on 12 July 2017. Option B+ which is being implemented fundamentally re-engineers the public library service in Derby. The number of libraries directly run by the Council is being reduced from fifteen to five. The overall Libraries Strategic Review is required to achieve a revenue budget saving of £673,000.

Those libraries no longer run by the Council will instead be operated by Direct Help Advice (DHA) a charitable organisation based at Phoenix Street in Derby whose expression of interest (EOI) to run the libraries was accepted by the Council on 28 February 2018. DHAs EOI confirmed that they would run these libraries as Community Managed Libraries (CMLs) with financial and in-kind support from the Council. Part of the in-kind support package requires the creation of a small in-house Community Development Team, which would be created as part of the Service staffing restructure.

The Libraries that remain part of Derby City Council's statutory library service are:

- Alvaston
- Local Studies
- Mickleover
- Pear Tree/St Augustines
- Riverside

The following ten libraries are planned to be run as CMLs:

- Allenton
- Allestree
- Blagreaves
- Chaddesden
- Chellaston
- Derwent
- Mackworth
- Sinfen
- Spondon
- Springwood

DHA's EOI set out a plan to transfer these ten libraries from the Council to DHA by December 2018.

At the time of this report three libraries have been hand over to the DHA to run as CMLs, Sinfen which opened on 14 May, Spondon which opened on 25 June and Allestree which opened on 31 July.

Following the handover of these three libraries it was agreed, between the Council, DHA and UNISON that there would be a review of the implementation of the project.

As part of the review this report has been prepared which sets out the stakeholder feedback and information gathered up to 20 August 2018.

It was anticipated that this part of the review would provide 'lessons learned' to help inform and consider the future implementation of the CML implementation plan. Whilst the feedback was considered and whilst the subsequent discussions took place, the handover of subsequent CML libraries was paused.

The scope of the review has been to gain feedback from the following key stakeholders:

- Customers
- Project Team Members
- DHA and Partners
- Cabinet Members
- UNISON

Feedback requested has been focussed around:

- What went well?
- What could we have done better?
- What could we change in consideration of the implementation going forward?

A series of meetings have been held with DHA and Partners and with UNISON. A questionnaire has been used to gather customer feedback and Project Team and Cabinet Member feedback has been provided.

2. Feedback from customers

Feedback was sought from customers at Sinfin Library which has been operating as a CML since 14 May and Spondon Library a CML since 25 June. Feedback was not requested from Allestree as this had only been operating as a CML for a few days.

A paper Customer Feedback 2018 questionnaire was available at Sinfin and Spondon libraries between Thursday 26 July and Wednesday 8 August. There were 72 completed questionnaires returned and the full response data is included at Appendix A.

The headlines are very positive with over 94% of respondents satisfied with the service they had received, 90% of respondents felt valued as a customer and 88% were satisfied with overall service provided. However 30% of respondents requested an extension to the opening hours, with many disappointed that the libraries were not open on Saturday mornings.

3. Feedback from Project Team Members

Feedback was received from project team members, including Estates, Legal and IT as well as appropriate Library colleagues.

Feedback highlighted that Sinfin Library had presented the most challenges to transition due to the fact that it was the first library to be handed over and the added complexity around the lease arrangement with DHA and Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB). The size of the library and number of computer points was also a factor. However, the input and commitment of the team members meant that the challenges were overcome and the library was handed over and successfully opened on time, with an immediate large increase in footfall into the building. A 'lessons learned' debrief was convened to seek to improve the handover process going forward.

Revised processes were put into place following the 'lessons learned' meeting, which included increased opportunity for DHA to inspect buildings and enhanced handover procedures and associated documentation. This was used to ensure the successful transition of Spondon Library and subsequently Allestree Library as planned.

A comment raised by project team members was whether it would be possible to consider establishing and communicating an approved schedule for the handover of libraries as far in advance as possible. This could increase certainty and allow greater proactivity, longer term planning and allocation of resources.

Feedback was received that there hadn't been full take up of places for training on the Library Management System (LMS), with some volunteers not wishing to travel to Mickleover Library. In response to this it has been agreed that small group training will take place on a phased basis at other libraries.

Feedback was also received that whilst there may be sufficient volunteers at both Allestree and Sinfin, that there have been challenges for DHA in sourcing enough volunteers currently to cover all shifts at Spondon.

4. Feedback from Direct Help and Advice and Partners

DHA submitted an Expression of Interest in November 2017 having shown an active interest in the opportunity to operate all ten libraries as Community Managed Libraries (CML) in Derby. After a thorough evaluation process they were successful in being accepted to deliver all of the CML libraries and signed appropriate agreements with the Council in March 2018.

Since then, DHA and their associated partners have worked well with the Council to transfer the first three CML libraries as planned and the level of collaborative working demonstrated has been encouraging.

The organisations involved have all worked well together and the collaborative working across the Council has been largely positive. The level of engagement between the charities and the local authority is to be noted as this is the first time that this has been achieved to this level with DHA and any Council. As a result it has kept open libraries in Derby, which are now able to continue to deliver valued services to residents, whilst also working with them to help meet local needs. The range of services at Sinfin Library are growing and the provision of citizens advice services has also been well received by residents, with more visits to the library building being made than previously. Between 14 May and 20 July Sinfin Library had more than 4,300 customers through the door. This exceeds previous visitor numbers.

Over 100 customers have referenced how convenient they consider it is to have citizens advice services located at Sinfin Library.

It is also pleasing that given the very good progress to date, DHA has received interest from other organisations that are also keen to come on board to help them deliver the vision for the community managed libraries in Derby.

A further benefit has been that the types of partners involved to date have enabled funding opportunities to be explored. Citizens Advice South Derbyshire and City (CASD&C) has already attracted external funding that enabled new customer consultation rooms to be installed at Sinfin Library to increase and enhance the services on offer within the library. Customers have provided feedback recently that the building was too hot and this has been positively responded to by CASD&C providing three water coolers and implementing eighteen fans within the building.

There is a strong possibility that other bids for more external funding will be successful in the future and bids have already been submitted to help with tackling social isolation, again to provide an increase of the offer to local residents. Success of these types of bids will support the long term sustainability of the CML programme.

The hard work, dedication, commitment and team work shown by DHA, partners and Council officers in the library service and right across all the Departments involved in implementing the CML implementation plan to date has been exemplary, many going above and beyond on many occasions. Their knowledge, expertise and approach have been invaluable.

The view was expressed that the excellent collaboration between partners that is developing is enabling a unique vision to be implemented for Derby that, given time, should continue to make a significant contribution to communities in Derby and the meeting of local needs in this valuable service area.

We did also receive feedback from DHA and its partners on key topics where they would appreciate further consideration to be given. In their view, having gained experience from the implementation of CML's to date, there are a number of key

areas that could potentially be looked at further to see what improvements could be made to the CML implementation process. These issues are set out below.

Implementation timetable: The timeline for implementation and overall handover schedule has proved challenging, the three to four week planning intervals between handovers, which was included within the original EOI submission, would appear to have been too ambitious; a further time delay is being incurred due to the follow-up discussions following this review. The detailed timeline for handover of individual libraries has also brought challenges related to the close down time between the last day of the Council running the library and the first day that it opens as a DHA run CML. It was also felt that earlier visibility of the handover timeline by communities would make it easier to generate and maintain volunteer interest.

Data Protection: To ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, library staff who are assisting with the transition of the library to a CML continue to operate the library management system (LMS). DHA acknowledge that there are many other tasks within the library that volunteers can be learning and carrying out, but feel the lack of access to the LMS has impacted on volunteer recruitment and retention. The Council and DHA continue to prioritise the implementation of the Data Protection Act 2018 to enable both parties to remain compliant.

Day to day operations: The practical operation of the libraries on a day to day basis is proving to be more challenging than DHA originally envisaged. The transitional arrangements and support of the Council library staff has been vital, as envisaged within the original implementation plan.

The original CML implementation plan envisaged that volunteers would carry out key roles such as opening and closing buildings and managing volunteer rotas, as well as developing the overall skills to manage the library. Whilst in time this would still be the aim, the training and development of volunteers to take on these roles is taking longer than expected. Supporting volunteers through the initial transition period and over the longer term will continue to be a key focus by DHA and its partners, as it is critical to the success of the CML model. However in the short to medium term, carrying out these types of key roles remains a challenge.

The volunteers coming forward to date have been enthusiastic, committed and want to learn and they bring a range of skills with them.

Communication: It will be important that the future implementation plan should continue to prioritise project communications recognising that there are a number of ways of achieving this effectively and looking at how best to communicate the key messages, when and to whom.

5. Feedback from Cabinet Councillors

Councillors have listened to how people were feeling about the implementation of CML's and reflected on the feedback received. This encouraged further consideration of a number of key topics below:

- Monitoring of the implementation of a GDPR solution
- Increasing volunteer recruitment activities and training requirements
- Providing sufficient capacity around the implementation plan
- Considering the number of CMLs
- Exploring the geographical spread of CML's

Councillors were keen to be actively part of discussions on how best to take this project further, given the valuable feedback that had been received.

6. Feedback from UNISON

Feedback from UNISON for the review has been received at two meetings and also in their response letter to consultation on the proposed new staffing restructure.

UNISON felt communication with staff could be improved, particularly regarding the timetable of library handovers, albeit it was acknowledged that improvements were made for the transfer of Allestree library, which was the third library to be handed over.

UNISON aired some concerns about any potential failure of the CML model, resulting in budgetary pressures if voluntary or compulsory redundancies were made before the Council is confident a sustainable library service can be delivered going forward.

There are also a number of operational issues which have been raised directly with the 'library management team'.

UNISON raised a number of key concerns within the review:

- The impacts being experienced by library staff
- The timescales and costs associated with the implementation of GDPR. Though it was acknowledged that the solutions being developed for the implementation of GDPR are minimising costs for the Council and that it was positive that potential costs of implementation had significantly reduced.
- That library team were being used to support service delivery, though it was acknowledged that until the restructure was implemented the costs of staff were being provided from within existing budgets.

7. Key Conclusion and Next Steps

A number of key themes and learning points have emerged from this stakeholder information. Further discussion is required with key partners and stakeholders and key decisions will be required by Council Cabinet, with regards to the way forward.

From the wide range of feedback that has been received, a key conclusion from this stakeholder stage of the review is that with appropriate timescales and support there is no reason why the CML model cannot provide a positive way forward to continue the library offer across the city.