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Community Managed Libraries – Review of Implementation Plan

Purpose

- 1.1 In July 2017, the Council approved the implementation of the Library Strategic Review, LSR, outcomes. The strategic review was instigated to determine the best way to deliver and maintain a modern, high quality library service for Derby whilst delivering essential budget savings. The service was required to make savings totalling £673,000, as set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. The conclusion of the LSR was that the Council should retain five statutory libraries and aim to transfer the remaining ten libraries to a Community Managed Library, CML service model. Following Cabinet approval of this approach, the Council carried out an expression of interest process for the ten CMLs, which attracted a partner, Direct Help and Advice, DHA.
- 1.2 Following the transfer of the first three libraries to DHA by July 2018, it was recognised that a number of challenges had emerged during the handover process and the transitional period between the Council and DHA. The Council, DHA and UNISON agreed that during August 2018, it would be useful to review the implementation process to date to consider the robustness of the overall plan and assess the lessons learned from the initial transfers. This implementation review process has taken longer than anticipated and further library transfers have been paused until the outcome of the review which has now been completed and the findings used to inform this report and associated recommendations.
- 1.3 The review highlighted a number of issues and challenges, as well as a range of positive elements of project delivery, which are documented in the Review of the Community Managed Libraries Implementation Plan- Stakeholder Feedback Report appended to this report.
- 1.4 The key conclusion drawn from the stakeholder feedback that was collated in the review report is that, while there are still some challenges to overcome, with revised timescales and support in place, the CML model can provide a positive way forward to continue the library offer across the city. Essentially this review has concluded that the original handover schedule and timeline had been too ambitious and that more resources, both within the Council and DHA, are required if we are to work towards a successful transition to a CML model for the ten non-statutory libraries.
- 1.5 This report recommends to Cabinet that the transfer of ten non-statutory libraries to DHA should continue to progress, operating under a community managed library

model. It proposes significant changes to the implementation timelines and the levels of resources that should be dedicated to work towards the successful hand over of these libraries to the community.

1.6 It is proposed that;

- the timeline for the transfer of the remaining 7 libraries runs from February 2019 to February 2020;
- additional resources are allocated to the project, to support both Council staff and DHA to deliver the CML Implementation Plan and provide more support to volunteers;
- both parties should prioritise addressing the Data Protection Act 2018 requirements to enable library volunteers to access the library management system;
- communication channels should continue to be improved between the Council, UNISON, DHA and its partners, to ensure a better hand over process for library staff, volunteers and customers.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the information provided in the Stakeholder Feedback report and thank all parties for taking part in the process.
- 2.2 To confirm support for the underlying approach to deliver a community managed library model for ten non-statutory libraries across the city.
- 2.3 To approve the continued transfer of all ten libraries to DHA; this also proposes a longer implementation period which aims for the final library transferring in February 2020 and additional resources for DHA and the Council.
- 2.4 To approve a delay in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 library review savings of £295,000 into 2019/20 and £337,000 into 2020/21 respectively; this has been incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan model as part of a further report on this Cabinet agenda.
- 2.5 To approve the setting up of a library project reserve to provide funding of up to £400,000 from the Delivering Differently reserve to support the proposed additional implementation costs.
- 2.6 To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Communities and Place, in consultation with the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Tourism to approve the terms of the required variations to the various agreements, funding arrangements and revised library transfer timeline.

Reason

- 3.1 From the wide range of feedback that has been received and accepting that there are still some challenges to overcome, the headline conclusion from the review is that with appropriate time and support, there is no reason why the CML model cannot result in a positive and sustainable way forward for the library offer across the city.

Supporting information

Background

- 4.1 In July 2017, the Council approved the implementation of the overall Library Strategic Review outcomes. The review was instigated to determine the best way to deliver and maintain a modern, high quality library service for Derby whilst delivering essential budget savings. The service was required to make savings totalling £673,000, as set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21.
- 4.2 Extensive consultation, a detailed needs assessment exercise and service review were undertaken during November 2015 to February 2016 which helped to inform the development of four options for consideration by Cabinet in August 2016. Cabinet approved that all four options should be subject to further consultation, which took place during September to December 2016.
- 4.3 The outcome of the consultation was that Option B received net support by the majority of consultees. It also highlighted some areas where the approach could be improved. These areas were considered and developed, refining the recommended option to Option B Plus, which was approved by Cabinet in July 2017.
- 4.4 Option B Plus would see the Council continuing to run five libraries as part of its statutory offer – the Riverside Library, the Local Studies and Family History Library, Alvaston Library, Pear Tree Library (currently being relocated to St Augustine's Community Centre) and Mickleover Library. The other ten existing libraries would be transferred to Community Managed Libraries (CMLs) outside the Council's statutory offer, but supported by an annual grant and support from the Council until March 2022.
- 4.5 Following Cabinet approval of Option B Plus, the Council carried out an expression of interest process for the ten CMLs, which attracted a partner, Direct Help and Advice, DHA, and subsequently three libraries have transferred from the Council to DHA management under the CML operating model.
- 4.6 In addition the Council has designed, built and opened the new Riverside Library within the Council House in July 2018. The Council has also facilitated Derby Museums Trust taking over occupancy of the former Central Library building following this transfer.

Review Outcomes

- 4.7 Due to a number of challenges that emerged during the handover of the first three libraries from the Council to DHA, it was agreed to carry out a review of the implementation of the project to date.
- 4.8 This review has provided an opportunity to learn lessons from the initial implementation phase and understand and address the issues faced in transferring the first three libraries. The stakeholder feedback report, containing information gathered from these stakeholders, up to 20 August, is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.9 Key stakeholders engaged in the review process included:
- Customers
 - Project Team Members
 - DHA and Partners
 - Cabinet Members
 - UNISON
- The review considered:
- What went well?
 - What could have gone better?
 - What could be changed in consideration of the implementation going forward?

- 4.10 The key conclusions that have emerged from the review of the implementation of the CML plan, informed by the issues identified by key stakeholders, are:
- In principle, the ten non-statutory libraries should continue to be transferred to Community Managed Libraries, but with an updated timeline and handover schedule to allow more time for transfer and transition and be informed by the points raised in the review.
 - Continued recognition that this process has been extremely difficult for library staff, and their resilience and continued dedication to delivering the library services for the residents of Derby should be commended. Ongoing engagement and communication with staff and unions should continue to be a priority during any further implementation.
 - DHA should continue to work with its partners, such as Community Action Derby, to recruit and train volunteers, working closely with the Council teams on the library related training, taking on board the feedback they are receiving from volunteers. Consideration should be given to how to increase the support to volunteers on a day to day basis, and also focus should be given to developing volunteer supervisor roles and roles to enable opening and closing of the libraries.
 - Recognition that the support provided by the Councils Community Development Team is vital to the continued implementation of CMLs and consideration should be given to increasing the support from the Council during the transitional period to give the CMLs the best chance of success.
 - The Council and DHA should continue to prioritise the implementation of the Data Protection Act 2018 to enable the CML volunteers to operate the library management system independently of any Council library staff involvement, ensuring both parties remain compliant.
 - Communication channels should be improved between the Council, Unison, DHA and its partners to ensure improved handover processes are in place to effectively support staff, volunteers and customers

Proposed Way Forward

- 4.11 Since the completion of the initial work with stakeholders to consider the issues identified and provide a practical way forward, discussions have taken place, separately, with DHA and with UNISON.
- 4.12 It is recommended that all ten libraries continue to be transferred to DHA, but that the timeline is extended, further resources are allocated to both DHA and the Council, and that there is an improved communication strategy to support the project going forward.

- 4.13 Current discussions with DHA propose that the timeline for transfer of the remaining seven libraries is extended to February 2020. It is also proposed that, following the revision of the appropriate agreements with DHA, an indicative implementation timetable is published to give all parties forward visibility of the proposed handover schedule
- 4.14 Following detailed discussions with DHA, it has also been concluded that DHA need additional resources to help it to support volunteers with day to day supervisory support. DHA propose to recruit two employees as volunteer coordinators. It is proposed that additional funding be provided in the remaining years of the agreement with DHA to enable volunteers to be given every support in taking on the running of the library.
- 4.15 It has also been recognised that, even with the implementation of a compliant solution to meet the Data Protection Act 2018, more Council library staff time is required to support the transition period. Additional resources are proposed to be allocated for each transfer. This is in addition to the ongoing support that will be provided by the community development team within the Council's library team.
- 4.16 To cover the costs it is proposed to set up a library project reserve of £400,000, which can be drawn down as required, up to March 2022. It is estimated that this funding would be broadly equitably split between DHA and Council resources.
- 4.17 To respond to the requirement to improve communications, it is proposed that a shared communications plan is established with the key stakeholders. It is also proposed that regular feedback and lessons learned exercises are completed as the project implementation progresses, with the aim of tackling any emerging challenges and issues as they arise.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 To support the Libraries Strategic Review (LSR) a three months public and stakeholder consultation exercise was previously undertaken until February 2016. In this Phase 1 consultation there were over 4,000 respondents and the Community Managed Library model proposal for making the savings enjoyed 15% net support from respondents (53% in favour, 38% against, 9% don't know).
- 5.2 A phase 2 public and stakeholder consultation then took place up until 14 December 2016. Over 4,300 questionnaires were completed and over 1,000 individuals expressed their interest in becoming a volunteer and helping run a local library. Analysis of responses to the consultation also revealed that the Council's preferred option for the future of the library service in Derby – Option B – was the only one of the four options to enjoy net support. Using customer feedback Option B was then developed into Option B+, the model the Council approved for implementation.

- 5.3 There was recognition that savings needed to be made and that it wasn't affordable for the Council to run all 15 of its libraries. Transferring some libraries over to community management was therefore seen as a potential way of avoiding forced library closures, while simultaneously empowering local residents to provide local services to meet local needs.
- 5.4 Having now implemented the LSR to the point that three libraries have been transferred over to community management by July 2018, it was felt important to initiate a stakeholder review so that an opportunity to learn from the initial CML implementation plan was provided. The stakeholder feedback report, attached at Appendix 1 contains information gathered from key stakeholders, up to 20 August. The key conclusions that emerged from the issues identified by key stakeholders are shown in paragraph 4.10 and have helped inform the way forward.

Other options

- 6.1 A number of other options have been considered but the recommended option, considering the lessons learned from the implementation process to date and the findings of the review report, is considered to be more financially viable and deliverable, which minimises the risk of any library closures, whilst providing a sustainable and coherent library service for Derby residents. The other options considered were:
- Continuing to transfer 6 libraries to DHA and put the remaining 4 libraries through a further expression of interest (EOI) process to give local community groups an opportunity to come forward – the council would need to put in place the resources to progress this, including stimulating the local community interest, if needed, and allow time for communities to develop their partnerships – it is estimated that it could take up to March 2021 to transfer these libraries. This option would also require significantly more additional one-off funding and would delay the delivery of the savings further than the preferred approach.
 - To retain the current 3 libraries with DHA and put the remaining 7 libraries through a further EOI process - the council would need to put in place the resources to progress this, including stimulating the local community interest, if needed, and allow time for communities to develop their partnerships – it is estimated that it could take up to March 2021 to transfer these libraries. This option would also require significantly more additional one-off funding and would delay the delivery of the savings further than the preferred approach.
 - Moving to a Community Supported Library model, where Council staff were still employed within the library and work with volunteers. This approach would require a new libraries needs assessment and stakeholder consultation to be carried, which could take 18 to 24 months and also would not meet the current revenue budget savings requirement of £673,000.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 The additional resources for DHA and the Council to support the revised plan are £400,000. It is proposed that this is put into a Library Project reserve, and is funded from the Delivering Differently reserve
- 7.2 The impact of the extension of the implementation timeline is to delay the revenue budget saving of £295,000 for 18/19 into 19/20 and £337,000 for 19/20 into 20/21.

Legal implications

- 8.1 The changes proposed within the report will require a variation to the expression of interest submitted by DHA to capture the proposals relating to the provision of additional funds, resources and the timescale for implementation. This can be achieved administratively, by exchange of letters, setting out the agreed revised terms which will sit alongside the formal expression submitted to the Council earlier in the year. The Grant agreement will also require a variation to reflect the provision of additional funds.
- 8.2 The grant provision for the transfer of the ten libraries to DHA benefits from the culture and heritage provisions of the General Block Exemption Regulations 2014 as operating aid. It is important to ensure that as the detail supporting the qualifying features of the revised grant are developed and resolved, advice is sought from the legal service's commercial law team to maintain continuing compliance with the regulations and state aid implications.

Other significant implications

HR implications

- 9.1 The proposed extension of the timeline will have an impact on implementation of the new staffing structure within the Council's library service. If the extension is agreed, we will continue to apply the Council's Consultation, Restructuring and Redundancy policy.
- 9.2 The Unions have been in regular communication with the Council throughout the project and UNISON has also expressed a number of important matters in letters that have fed into discussions. The proposed extension to the timetable is likely to meet some of the concerns raised by the Unions, as UNISON stated in one of their letters the view that a longer implementation was something the Council could consider. It was also more likely to result in the staff savings being met by voluntary redundancy and natural wastage, reducing the possibility (or at least number) of potential compulsory redundancies.
- 9.3 Members of staff remain key stakeholders in the project and it is acknowledged that this process will have been very difficult for library staff. The proposed extension of the timeline may alleviate some concerns, though will also extend the period over which the project will be implemented. The resilience and continued dedication demonstrated by the staff in delivering the library services for the residents of Derby should be commended. The Council are grateful to the staff for their patience and their continued forbearance.

- 9.4 Appropriate engagement and communication with staff and unions will continue to be a priority during any further implementation.

Property/Health and Safety implications

- 9.5 The transfer of libraries requires leases to be granted to DHA with the Council continuing to be responsible for building maintenance. As the lessee and the operator of the library service DHA also assumes responsibility for health and safety compliance.
- 9.6 The form of lease and terms for the remainder of the transfers will be similar to those that have already been transferred and the respective responsibilities of DHA and the Council are now understood. Learning from the initial transfers the process of building handover, including check-in and induction for DHA has been established.
- 9.7 Property Services will continue to support the project team by managing the leasing, maintenance and handover of each of the transfers within the programme.

Equality Implications

- 9.8 A robust Equality Impact Assessment was completed for this project. We have also asked DHA to do all they can to make sure that their volunteers and library management are from all sections of the community. This is also included in part of monitoring the project.
- 9.9 There are currently some access issues with the toilet provision at Allestree Library that require resolving for disabled people to be able to volunteer there. Work is being progressed with a view to addressing this.

This report has been approved by the following people:

| Role | Name | Date of sign-off |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
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