Derby City Council
Neighbourhoods Commission

ITEM 10

Review of Libraries

- **Part 1 - Executive Summary**

Background

1.1 The Neighbourhoods Commission was created in July 2010. This was part of the reconfiguration of the overview and scrutiny function to mirror the four Strategic Directorates and the Chief Executive's Office. The new Chair, Councillor Batey, was keen that the new commission should avoid the temptation to simply be a continuation of the previous Planning and Transportation Commission. To do so the first Work Programme would need to be balanced across its range of responsibilities.

1.2 Many suggestions were put forward by Members and these were discussed by the Chair and Vice Chair with the Strategic Director. The resulting recommendations were accepted by the September meeting, when it was agreed the Libraries should be the first review.

Process

1.3 In choosing Libraries to be the first review, there were several motivations put forward by individual Members. One issue was the varying distribution of opening hours between the libraries; another to be addressed was the scope for libraries to serve as one stop shops giving local access to council services. A general wish was to make a light touch overall assessment about the City's library service. The aim was to keep the review compact with the evidence gathering achieved through three activities. The components were:

- An across-the-table dialogue with the key officers, on 14 October
- A mini-tour of some of the Derby libraries, on 26 October
- A visit to Northamptonshire, on 11 November, an authority chosen because it had an innovative approach and track record regarding one stop shops

1.4 More by co-incidence than design the review was conducted in parallel with announcements:

- regarding the Comprehensive Spending Review,
- over the front-loaded savings expected of local government *and*
- of other councils' proposals to close or severely restrict their public libraries – which carried widespread media coverage.

1.5 A further meeting was to be held to distil the evidence and arrive at the conclusions and recommendations. This was intentionally deferred until 21 February when the shape of the Council's own proposed budget savings was known. Given the context it was with a combination of relief and pleasure that while Derby would have some library cut backs, although these were *regrettable* they were *relatively modest* compared to elsewhere.

Outcome

1.6 On 21 February the Commission made a number of specific conclusions and recommendations – but also made this Overall Judgement:

Our wholehearted consensus was that Derby has a good library   service, and with professional staff, which should be kept and nurtured.   The libraries are on the right course and should continue to develop on   the current strategies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

> **Overall Judgement**: Our wholehearted consensus was that Derby has a good library service, and with professional staff, which should be kept and nurtured. The libraries are on the right course and should continue to develop on the current strategies.

The conclusions and recommendations below are of equal importance. The *conclusions* are assessments or opinions. The term *recommendation* is only used where an action would be required.

Conclusion A Reading and learning are a vital part of the of the City's cultural life.

Conclusion B Charges should not be introduced for services that are currently free, in a phrase: 'we don't and we shouldn't'

Conclusion C The Commission were impressed by the inter-agency links and partnership working.

Recommendation 1 The potential for further development of inter-agency links and partnership working could be pursued. Variation in size, location and facilities mean a 'blue print' would be inappropriate but a council-wide framework may assist.

Conclusion D The wide variation in usage between libraries is affected in part by building condition and location.

Conclusion E The proposed model opening hours as set out in the 15 February Cabinet report will provide welcome consistency for library users.

Recommendation 2 The allocation of the libraries the tiers should be reviewed periodically to take account of possible changed usage of the individual libraries.

Recommendation 3 There should be localised marketing of the tier 3 libraries promoting the 'offer' of all three, including the increase in opening hours at Allenton and Mackworth

Recommendation 4 The use of volunteers is supported and should be expanded but this should be to complement and not replace paid staff.

Recommendation 5 The possibility of out-of-hours use of libraries with opening and locking up by volunteers should be explored, with hiring charges to recover the extra cost of heating and lighting.

Conclusion F The cessation of CD and DVD loan services under the Stage 2 Budget Proposals for 2011/12 is likely to lead to a reduction in library usage by children and young people and in turn the likelihood they transfer to reading books

Recommendation 6 The library 'offer' during school holidays should be weighted toward encouraging visits and usage by children; this could include story telling by volunteers

Recommendation 7 The potential for greater engagement with some schools should be realised.

Recommendation 8 Primary schools should be encouraged to take classes in to local libraries and library volunteers could be used to make arrangements.

Recommendation 9 Libraries should develop as 'one stop shops' to concurrently be the 'hub of the community' and the' local face of the council'; initially the key link needs to be with Streetpride.

Recommendation 10 The option of renaming the libraries to reflect their broader role should be considered when the pilots are evaluated but the word 'library' should be retained.

- **Part 2 - Evidence gathered and key points**

2.1 The three components to the review provided Members with a range of perspectives. For each case there is an overview about the evidence gathered followed by the key points. The references are to the pages in the Evidence Bundle.

Component 1 - Introduction to Derby's Library Service - 14 October

2.2 The across-the-table dialogue with the key officers, on 14 October, had the overall heading of an 'Introduction to Derby's Library Service' but was itself divided into five strands. The venue was the new and visibly well used library in Mickleover. The presentations were led by David Potton, Head of Libraries, and his two deputies, Fran Renwick and Mark Elliott.

2.3 The first part, the 'welcome and introduction', covered the statutory responsibility to provide a comprehensive service' under the 1964 legislation, Derby's own vision and strategic objectives plus basic facts and figures (see pages 6 and 7) on usage levels and customer feedback (pages 8 to 10).

2.4 The second part (pages 11 to 15) was 'How libraries involve their users' which covered the range of volunteering opportunities, including case studies, and the concept of library panels. The panels were initially established to directly engage the local community in designing the layout, selecting the stock and staff and promoting the five new libraries. The panels now have a continuing advisory and participative role.

2.5 The next theme was 'working with partners to increase the use of libraries'. It was noted that partnerships can take many forms. There has been a move to co-location by other public service agencies, in some cases creating community hubs. A helpful table set out the various partnerships under the council priority headings (see pages 17 to 22), with case studies on links with the University and other learning partnerships.

2.6 The fourth theme on 14 October was the Libraries' emerging role as Council information points (see page 25). This directly linked to the Commission's wish to consider the scope for libraries to serve as 'one stop shops', giving local access to council services. A number of the 13 libraries had been chosen as pilots. It was noted that this should not require new computer systems, instead just arranging for library staff to have access to the existing Customer Services systems.

2.7 The fifth part of the meeting covered the partnership with the Museums Service, getting museum displays into the local libraries. This happens routinely at 9 of the network. Where library panels exist they can suggest themes and help select the artefacts for display. As pages 26 to 27 show, there are practical challenges as well as the clear benefits.

Key Points from Component 1 – Introduction to Derby's Library Service – 14

- The Libraries Act 1964 is the governing legislation, requiring a 'comprehensive' (but undefined) library service, with free book loans…
- The Act is showing its age, lacking guidance for the modern age
- Some of Derby's libraries are rather old and limiting…
- … including central library which is too small for its purpose
- 5 libraries are new, 3 being funded by the Big Lottery plus Derwent's through the NDC…
- These were developed *with* the local community
- All 5 have Library Panels to influence and promote library services [11]
- City-wide 2010 surveys showed high levels of customer satisfaction pages [6 to 10]
- Derby has greatly expanded the role and opportunities for Library Volunteers, benefiting the libraries and the wide base of volunteers [12]…
- … with four case studies [13]
- The libraries host/assist many projects/services through inter-agency partnerships…
- …listed and cross-reference to Council's corporate priorities [16 to 22]
- Derby's libraries have an emerging role as Council information points...
- Pilots have been selected
- There is also a developing partnership with the Museums Service

Component 2 - Tour of Derby Libraries – 26 October

2.8 As mentioned above the meeting on 14 October had been held at Mickleover Library so that the Commission could see it in action. It should be remembered that this was intentionally a compact review, but to get a flavour of the Derby library estate it was decided to visit three sites varied by size, facilities and age. In order these were Pear Tree, Allenton and Alvaston. In each case a Factsheet was provided and there was the opportunity to see the facilities – staff as well as public side – and to talk with staff. Pages 28 to 32 include the factsheet plus a number of points that came out of the discussion, of both a local and general nature.

Key points from Component 2 – Tour of Derby Libraries – 26 October 2010

- Pear Tree, Allenton and Alvaston libraries were visited, which varied by size, facilities and age
- Pear Tree opened approx 1918 (refurb'ed in 1984 and later), Allenton in 2009 (purpose built), and Alvaston 2004 (former shop in parade)
- Fact sheets were given out on each [28 to 32]
- Before unitary status in 1997 libraries were under the County's Education Department…
- … in education departments libraries may be a low priority
- Residents are entitled to a library card from birth
- Family library clubs can be a means to get parents and children to attend together…
- …which can beneficially break through the barriers of scared parents worried about being seen as failures

- All branch libraries are closed one day per week (in addition to Sunday) but it is a local decision as to which day
- The average annual cost of one extra hour's opening per week is about £1,100
- Libraries can have a 'Members' Club image which may discourage potential new users
- The library service produces an e-mail newsletter, which could go to Commission members

Component 3 - Visit to Northamptonshire County Council – 11 November

2.9 One of the issues the Commission wished to address through the review was the potential the scope for Derby libraries to serve as 'one stop shops', giving local access to council services. The senior managers of the service were asked to suggest an appropriate council which had implemented the concept. Northamptonshire was nominated and the visit arranged for 11 November.

2.10 Prior to the visit Members were provided with the Northamptonshire County Council Customer Service Strategy.

2.11 Fran Renwick and Mark Elliott accompanied the Commission members and were able to assist with comparing and contrasting with Derby.

2.13 The first part of the day was an evidence-gathering dialogue at the Central Library, Northampton. This was with Grace Kempster, Customer and Libraries Manager, plus Cllr Andre Gonzalez de Savage, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Customers and Communities.

2.14 As pages 35 to 37 show, under the branding 'Library Plus' NCC has introduced many positive innovations. Less positive - in the considered view of the Commission – were the upfront charges payable by Northamptonshire residents for services that would be free in Derby's libraries.

2.15 The second part of the day was a visit to Desborough Library to see and hear what the Northamptonshire approach meant at the frontline. Julie Buckland, library supervisor, was present plus library staff and Friends of the Library and the local housing officer. Over lunch Members had one to one discussions with those present. In addition to the local housing provider, the Northamptonshire Constabulary also holds surgeries here. How the public can access computer based information was discussed.

2.16 The views were generally positive but the Friends aired concerns about the fees charged and a policy change means that when a book is loaned from another library it is now no longer returned to its origin. This was seen as having a compounding effect (explained on page 37).

2.17 Returning to the NCC Customer Service Strategy, this had included detailed work on unit costs, arriving at the conclusion that there are economies of scale in using libraries as one stop shops. Whereas transactions through customer services cost in the range of £5 to £7 each, library transactions cost only £1.80 each.

- Northamptonshire is a shire area with one county council and several districts but no unitaries
- NCC has 36 libraries, 8 or 9 of which are in Northampton itself, employing 206 fte in total. Many of these are single staffed. Derby's libraries have 80 to 90 fte staff
- Library Plus links to NCC's Customer Service Strategy
- As one-stop-shops all the libraries offer on-line access to council services.
- Self-service is available in each library and 85% of people now check out their own books…
- Freeing up library staff to make better use of their para-professional skills.
- Staff are super-users of the NCC web-site, acquiring knowledge of large amounts of it.
- On-line forms are available for a range of services, which can be used directly, or with staff support, by customers…
- The approach is 'helping you to help yourself, helping you when you can't'.
- There are economies to using libraries as one stop shops: transactions through customer services cost £5 to £7 each, whereas library transactions cost only £1.80 each…
- …the win/win solution is to make the most use of cash strapped libraries.
- Raised community engagement had seen County artefacts on display in libraries or loaned to schools
- There are already 15 Friends groups in Northants and the aim is to have one for each library.
- There are 12 different roles for volunteers, including meeter-and- greeter
- Volunteers are CRB-checked, provided with induction and then support.
- Additionally 83 young people have been buddies to 13,000 Summer reading Challenge youngsters.
- Compared to Derby, Northamptonshire has a much greater culture of upfront charging for services…
- These charges and associated policies were the subject of some criticism from the Friends met during the visit to Desborough library.

- **Part 3 - Conclusions and Recommendations**

The conclusions and recommendations below are of equal importance. The *conclusions* are assessments or opinions. The term *recommendation* is only used where an action would be required.

Conclusion A Reading and learning are a vital part of the of the City's cultural life.

Reason for Conclusion A

The data provided on usage and customer satisfaction showed that the library service is highly valued by the public of Derby. In addition to the general availability of

books and learning resources, the Commission had been provided with a thorough document (available on request) which proved a revelation as to the many and varied events that that take place at each location.

Conclusion B Charges should not be introduced for services that are currently free, in a phrase: 'we don't and we shouldn't'

Reason for Conclusion B

It may well be that largely free library services are almost taken for granted in Derby. Indeed some fees that were previously charged have ceased in recent years, eg to obtain a book from the County Library service. The Member visit to Northamptonshire showed that there is an alternative approach, with an upfront range of charges and fees. This included a fee to join the 'Friends of' the libraries, which broadly correspond with our Library Panels. While that approach may work for Northamptonshire there was a cross-commission consensus that it is not for Derby.

Conclusion C The Commission were impressed by the inter-agency links and partnership working in Derby.

Reason for Conclusion C

Just as the extent of library activities was a revelation to the Commission (at A above), so was the impressive range of inter-agency links and partnership working (set out at pages 17 to 24).

Recommendation 1 The potential for further development of inter-agency links and partnership working could be pursued. Variation in size, location and facilities mean a 'blue print' would be inappropriate but a council-wide framework may assist.

Reason for Recommendation 1

It is not to detract from Conclusion C to observe that the Commission had a sense that the many valuable initiatives were locally developed. This may well have reflected a mix of local needs and of local connections between public service managers. Indeed such innovations are virtuous. Recommendation 1 seeks a systemic way for librarians to share experience their experiences about the achievement of good inter-agency practices. That could enable initiatives that provenly work elsewhere in the city to be adopted by another local library as a new activity for them and also allow possible pitfalls to be anticipated and avoided. It is recognised there can be no one size fits all and it is neither possible or desirable for each library to replicate what each of the others does.

Conclusion D The wide variation in usage between libraries is affected in part by building condition and location.

Reasons for Conclusion D

While the aim should be to optimise library usage, realistically there are factors which mean a straight catchment population to usage cannot be a fair measure.

Naturally the building age, layout and heating system will affect the ambient temperature and therefore the footfall. A cold, Victorian library with a high ceiling is unlikely to be seen as an attractive location to spend time during winter; in contrast the new libraries will be more appealing.

Another factor is location, so a library on a main road, with free parking and a frequent bus service has a natural advantage over one that is tucked away in a side street, or where parking is in short supply or charged for or not accessible by public transport.

Conclusion E The proposed model opening hours as set out in the 15 February Cabinet report will provide welcome consistency for library users.

Reason for Conclusion E

Leaving aside both the Central and Local Studies, there are 13 local libraries in Derby. As the table on page 7 of the Evidence Bundle shows there are 8 different arrangements for the total opening hours. Only three share the same weekly total (27 hours) while two have 38 hours and two have 43.5 hours. Five out of the 13 have unique total hours. Nor has there been a correlation between a higher weekly total and the number of evening openings.

In the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the front-loaded savings expected of local government *and* in other councils the proposals to close or severely restrict their public libraries, the budget proposals for Derby libraries were relatively modest compared to elsewhere. Rather than simply salami slice the existing opening hours, a detailed review was conducted which saw a three tiered approach being put to Council Cabinet on 15 February. In total the hours have reduced but the total has also been redistributed with model opening hours adopted.

While there is a case – and some limited discretion retained - for local flexibility, the Commission believe that the new approach of consistency will mean opening hours are much more easily understood by the public.

Recommendation 2 The allocation of the libraries the tiers should be reviewed periodically to take account of possible changed usage of the individual libraries.

Reason for Recommendation 2

Although the tiering scheme is supported by the Commission, the allocation of individual libraries to the new tiers should not be set in stone but should be capable of revision in light of changing demand.

Recommendation 3 There should be localised marketing of the tier 3 libraries promoting the 'offer' of all three, including the increase in opening hours at Allenton and Mackworth

Reason for Recommendation 3

It is a matter of concern that a Tier 3 needed to be separately identified in the new scheme of opening hours. While the general aim should be to optimise usage at all libraries, a special effort should – and can – be made in respect of the least used libraries. As assets they are underused both as buildings and in their potential to improve life chances for local residents in these relatively socio-economically deprived areas.

There could be relatively cheap methods of promoting the libraries very locally through fliers to residences, through local schools, posters. For Allenton that could include directions in order to offset the back street location (as mentioned at Conclusion D). Both Allenton and Mackworth are to benefit from a modest increase from 27 to 28 hours opening per week and that can be used as a very positive marketing point in the general context of public service reductions.

Recommendation 4 The use of volunteers is supported and should be expanded but this should be to complement and not replace paid staff.

Reason for Recommendation 4

The Commission were impressed by the role of volunteers in both Derby and Northamptonshire. Page 12 of the bundle shows the varied ways that volunteers assist in Derby. The case studies showed how this can act as a stepping stone for people seeking work as well as for residents not in the labour market who simply want a to make a contribution to society. It should be possible to make and monitor volunteering arrangements that provide 'additionality' and avoid claims of job substitution.

Recommendation 5 The possibility of out-of-hours use of libraries with opening and locking up by volunteers should be explored, with hiring charges to recover the extra cost of heating and lighting.

Reason for Recommendation 5

The libraries are public assets from which the public maximum use should be gained *provided* there are no adverse effect on library operations, or net additional call on the Council budget or worsening of wear and tear. One way of economically promoting that additional use would by using volunteers to open/lock up and avoid caretaker/site manager overtime. There would issues about security and insurance but those should be positively addressed rather a reason to discount the recommendation.

Conclusion F The cessation of CD and DVD loan services under the Stage 2 Budget Proposals for 2011/12 is likely to lead to a reduction in library usage by children and young people and in turn the likelihood they transfer to reading books.

Reason for Conclusion F

The budget proposal was not known at the time of the review. When it was put forward it was not objected to by scrutiny members because it was recognised that the saving was needed to square the Council's budgetary circle. However, there

could be an enduring, negative consequence. It had been explained that in the modern age many children don't make their early visits to a library to read or borrow books. Instead it is access to computers and the loan of CD's and DVD's that draws them through the doors. Proximity to the book shelves means that over time they will hopefully start to see the value in the printed word and come to enjoy books. Under the agreed budget cutback the loan of CD's and DVD's will cease and – while computer access is unaffected – it will reduce the reasons for young people to set foot in our libraries.

Recommendation 6 The library 'offer' during school holidays should be weighted toward encouraging visits and usage by children; this could include story telling by volunteers.

Reason for Recommendation 6

It is recognised by educationalists that children's literacy and numeracy can decline during the school holidays, particularly the long summer break. So in terms of local library events and exhibitions it would be desirable to profile across the year with:
- children focussed activities outside of term time and
- more adult focussed activities during term time.

While this is a recommendation in its own right it does link to making more use of volunteers and also may help offset the problem identified at Conclusion F. Where the activities are over and above the normal 'offer', appropriate volunteers could be used to provide 'additionality'. A number of examples of events and the role of volunteers were mentioned to Members, so this seeks to build on the existing strengths.

Recommendation 7 The potential for greater engagement with some schools should be realised.

Reason for Recommendation 7

Examples were cited of good links between libraries and schools. The Commission did have a sense that this was based on local links between library staff and teachers. That is virtuous but there may be scope to make such good practice more 'mainsteam'. That would still need local connections but it may be made easier if the library service senior managers spoke at an appropriate Heads forum, either city-wide or on a cluster basis. This could include the schools promoting holiday events/displays in local libraries (as at recommendation 6); or pupil-produced pictures or project work being displayed in the local library.

Recommendation 8 Primary schools should be encouraged to take classes in to local libraries and library volunteers could be used to make arrangements.

Reason for Recommendation 8

This relates our twin themes of making more use of volunteers (recommendation 4) and greater engagement with schools (recommendation 7). It was the staff at Pear Tree library who so enthusiastically explained about the visits from local schools and

nurseries and appreciation that in one case quite a journey was involved. It is a very good way to introduce children to public libraries and to make links between the staff. It may be that in other cases the teachers or librarians are too busy to make similar arrangements. To overcome that the liaison could be carried out by a local volunteer with possesses organisational skills and enthusiasm.

Recommendation 9 Libraries should develop as 'one stop shops' to concurrently be the 'hub of the community' and the' local face of the council'; initially the key link needs to be with Streetpride.

Reasons for Recommendation 9

One of the express purposes of this compact review was to consider the scope for libraries to develop as one stop shops. Libraries are locally based and have always been information providers. The central issue is whether they can be developed to allow two way transactions with the Council, to access services, to pay bills. Overlapping with that is the concept of libraries as community hubs. The strands can include co-location of public services. Existing examples of co-location in Derby are that the local Neighbourhood Manager is based in Peartree library and Derby Homes have a presence in Sinfin library. Much of this will revolve around the physical space available and which services have a high profile in a locality. There can be no blueprint.

The Commission might be said to be pushing at an open door as five of the 13 Derby libraries had been chosen as pilots. It was noted that evolving into a one stop shop should not require new computer systems, instead just arranging for library staff to have access to the existing Customer Services systems. In Northamptonshire the library staff were seen as equivalent of the customer services agents in their call centre but also being trained to be 'superusers' of the Council website. The approach is 'helping you to help yourself, helping you when you can't'. The Commission have concerns about Northamptonshire's propensity to charge for services, there is no similar unease about the one stop shop strategy – and it is important to note that the two policies are not interdependent.

It is worth noting that the Northamptonshire accountants had found that transactions through customer services cost £5 to £7 each, whereas the library transactions cost only £1.80. This strongly suggests that localism not only provides more accessible public services, they can also be considerably cheaper.

Recommendation 10 The option of renaming the libraries to reflect their broader role should be considered when the pilots are evaluated but the word 'library' should be retained.

Reason for Recommendation 10

At the outset of the review one school of thought among the Commission's members was whether a name change from the term 'library' might better reflect a broader purpose and / or might offer a refresh for a valued but traditional service. Northamptonshire had adopted the branding 'Library Plus'. Reportedly more radical name changes have occurred. The Commission's support for the 'one stop shop'

principle would *not* extend to rebranding our libraries with either that title or as 'community hubs'. It is precisely because the public know and like *libraries* that they have the potential to *function* as a one stop shop or hub. So there may be a marketing purpose in a modest rebranding but this would need to be tested out on the Derby public, for example via the Derby Pointer Citizens' Panel.

Overall Judgement: Our wholehearted consensus was that Derby has a good library service, and with professional staff, which should be kept and nurtured. The libraries are on the right course and should continue to develop on the current strategies.

RD
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