



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Neighbourhoods Commission
19 October 2011

Report of the Strategic Director of
Neighbourhoods

ITEM 7

RELOCATION OF THE LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY

SUMMARY

- 1.1 As a result of its office accommodation strategy, the Council proposes to vacate the St Mary's Gate building around the end of 2012. This will require the relocation of the Local Studies Library.
- 1.2 Two reports to Leadership in 2010 identified a number of options for the future of the Local Studies Library, but all were rejected as impractical, unaffordable or otherwise undesirable.
- 1.3 It would be possible to relocate Local Studies to some non-public service areas of the Blagreaves Lane Library building at a cost of £363,000. A source of funding has been identified that would cover this cost.
- 1.4 Consultations with users and stakeholders have identified some opposition to moving a service covering the whole of Derby to a suburban location and a further review of options was undertaken. However this review failed to identify any new options that could deliver an effective service from a city centre location while at the same time being affordable and achievable within the constraints of the timetable imposed by the corporate office accommodation strategy. It was therefore decided to recommend Cabinet to proceed with the option to relocate the Local Studies Library to Blagreaves Lane.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the need to relocate the Local Studies Library.
- 2.2 To note that following an extensive review of options Council Cabinet is being recommended that the Local Studies Library be relocated to Blagreaves Lane.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Commission has asked for a report on the need for and progress towards the relocation of the Local Studies Library.

Background

- 4.1 The Local Studies Library stores, maintains and provides public access to information relating to Derby and the surrounding area. It delivers a service for researchers seeking information about the city and local region, and also offers a number of resources for family historians.
- 4.2 The library is located in the St Mary's Gate building, occupying around 750 square metres of the ground floor and basement. St Mary's Gate will be vacated by the Council around the end of 2012 as part of the corporate office accommodation strategy. The Council therefore needs to find alternative premises from which to deliver the Local Studies service from 2013. From its inception the strategy included no budget specifically earmarked to pay for the relocation of the library.

Options considered at an early stage

- 4.3 A report to Leadership on 17 August 2010 identified the following options –
- Discontinuing the service entirely and disposing of all the stock through sale or donation to other organisations
 - Digitising the entire stock and disposing of all hardcopy material stock through sale or donation to other organisations
 - Relocating to the Central Library, using its basement for storage
 - Relocating to a newly built facility on the Pickford's House car park
 - Relocating to the Council House
 - Delivering the service from a central location – possibly part of the Central Library – but storing all hardcopy material at a remote location, with a regular collection and delivery service between the two.

All of these options were discussed and rejected at the meeting as impractical, unaffordable or unsuitable for effective service delivery.

- 4.4 A report to Leadership on 2 November 2010 identified the following options –
- Relocating to the former magistrates' court building on Full Street
 - Relocating to one floor of the Silk Mill Museum
 - Relocating to the Derby Museums store on Bold Lane
 - Relocating to the County Council's Records Office building in Matlock, with one variation including the retention of some electronically accessible elements of the service at the Central Library

All of these options were discussed and rejected at the meeting as impractical, unaffordable or unsuitable for effective service delivery.

- 4.5 Earlier this year we explored the option of the building at 30 Market Place, which benefits from Council ownership and a central location. However with a floor area of just 170 square metres it is too small to accommodate the service and its stores.

The Blagreaves Lane proposal

- 4.6 Most of the options considered had been predicated on retaining the Local Studies Library in the centre of Derby. However when all of these had been rejected it became clear that the best chance of finding a cost-effective solution might lie in relocating to one of Derby's 13 neighbourhood libraries. Closer examination these revealed that only one – Blagreaves Lane – had the potential to accommodate the Local Studies Library.
- 4.7 On 2 February 2011 Chief Officer Group requested an investigation into the possibility of relocating the Local Studies Library to part of the non-public service space at Blagreaves Lane Library.
- 4.8 Blagreaves Lane Library opened in 1974. Although there was, and is, a modest public service point, the building was intended to serve mainly as an administrative hub for the Libraries Service. The mix of functions has changed over the years, but the building remains primarily the home of various “behind the scenes” library activities serving the whole of Derby, and it is this that gives scope to accommodate the Local Studies Library and other activities without significant impact on the existing public service point.
- 4.9 Detailed investigation demonstrated that by reorganising the internal spaces at the Blagreaves Lane Library building it would be possible to accommodate the Local Studies Library there. Some staff would be relocated to the Central Library. Closed access stores at both the Central and Blagreaves Lane Libraries would be slimmed down, with low use items being sold off or discarded.
- 4.10 There is sufficient space at Blagreaves Lane to create a Local Studies public research room similar in size to the current facility. The area given over to the storage of Local Studies resources would be significantly smaller, but spaces would be more intensively used. In order to allow space for collection growth in the future it is possible that some items of peripheral significance to the collection's core purpose would have to be discarded. In terms of environmental conditions, moving the Local Studies collection from St Mary's Gate to Blagreaves Lane would deliver significant benefits.
- 4.11 The estimated cost of relocating to Blagreaves Lane, including 10% contingency, is estimated at £363,000. This was reported to the Workstyle Board on 28 June 2011, where it was proposed that the relocation be funded from savings in the accommodation strategy budget due to the lower than anticipated cost of refurbishing the Council House.
- 4.12 The report to the Workstyle Board also noted that delivering the Local Studies service from an existing library site would reduce the number of buildings from which we operate, resulting in an estimated annual saving in premises costs of £12,700.
- 4.13 The Workstyle Board approved in principle the relocation of the Local Studies Library to Blagreaves Lane, and work was begun on writing a report to Cabinet. Part of the preparation for that report including conducting consultations with users and stakeholders of the Local Studies Library.

- 4.14 The consultations revealed some disquiet about the relocation of the library from the city centre to a suburb. Respondents argued that a service with a citywide remit should be centrally located, and that most users who are reliant on public transport would be disadvantaged because they would need to take catch two buses to access the service – one into the centre, then a second out to Littleover – unless they live in the Blagreaves Lane area. Because a high proportion of this library’s users are elderly and elderly people tend to be more reliant on public transport, this age group may be disproportionately disadvantaged. Overall during the consultation period 63 responses were received, of which 60% opposed and 40% supported the relocation to Blagreaves
- 4.15 Having noted the arguments in favour of a city centre location the Cabinet member for Leisure and Culture asked officers to look at whether an affordable and workable alternative to Blagreaves Lane could be identified. However discussions with colleagues from other areas of the Council failed to identify any new options that could deliver an effective service from a city centre location while at the same time being affordable and achievable within the constraints of the timetable imposed by the corporate office accommodation strategy. It was therefore decided to proceed with the Blagreaves Lane option, and a report recommending the transfer of the Local Studies Library to that site will be considered by Council Cabinet on 22 November.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 All of the options considered have been listed in this report.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Director Leisure and Culture
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