



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Cabinet
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<u>Item</u>
Public

Relocation of Pontesbury Library

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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks approval for the relocation of Pontesbury Library from its current location in Bogey Lane to a new community hub building that is being constructed in the summer of 2019 as part of the Hall Bank development in Pontesbury. The development is approximately 0.4 miles or an 8 minutes' walk from Bogey Lane where the existing library is situated. Plans for the Hall Bank development were approved in September 2018 and as part of the overall project the developer Shropshire Homes are providing a community hub building which would be owned by Pontesbury Parish Council. The building would house a flexible library space, provision for partner organisations a range of services and functions including the library and would form a new focal point for the community. No charges will be incurred until the building is open and the existing library is closed.
- 1.2. The existing library building and land is being transferred to the converted Mary Webb Academy trust from January 1st, 2019 as part of the statutory academy conversion process. As part of that process, Shropshire Council are statutorily required to undertake the legal transfer of the land and buildings to the academy trust. However, to maintain the Council's occupation of the library building, a lease has been entered into and the building is currently leased back to the Council for continued use as a library for a 5-year period. The lease includes a 6-month notice break clause that enables Shropshire Council to surrender the lease at a point in time when the new Hub building is ready for occupation. At that point the academy trust will take on full responsibility and liability for the existing library building as it will no longer be occupied by the Council.
- 1.3. This relocation proposal follows 3 years of close working with key local stakeholders including Pontesbury Parish Council and the Friends of Pontesbury Library to identify a sustainable solution for the delivery of library services to Pontesbury and surrounding areas. The current proposal sits alongside negotiations around the future funding of the library to deliver savings in accordance with the Library Service Strategy. The negotiations are based on the principle of a funding agreement to secure financial support from Pontesbury Parish Council. Under this proposal all operational responsibility for the library in its new location would remain with Shropshire Council, supported by key stakeholders to develop the library as a community resource.

- 1.4. A public consultation on this proposal was carried out between 9th October and 20th November 2018. 63 responses were received to the consultation. Overall 77% of respondents agreed with the proposal and a further 10% said they neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.5. The proposal is aligned with the Library Service vision to put libraries in Shropshire at the heart of the communities they serve, and with the underlying principle set out in the Library Strategy that affirms the importance of libraries as community spaces for the provision of a wide range of opportunities and support to local communities.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet are asked to:

- A. Approve the relocation of Pontesbury Library to a new Community Hub building at Hall Bank, Pontesbury.
- B. Authorise the Strategic Asset Manager to surrender the existing lease with the academy trust and agree terms to lease accommodation at Community Hub, Hall Bank, Pontesbury.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

Risk	Mitigation plans in place
The consultation process undertaken is not deemed robust and is formally challenged	An extended period of local discussion with key stakeholders and the public regarding library provision in Pontesbury has taken place over the past 3 years. A 6-week formal consultation and additional focussed stakeholder engagement has been undertaken. The formal consultation period has enabled alternative proposals to be put forward. The feedback from this activity has been recorded, analysed and used to inform the recommendation in the report.
The completed ESIIA does not robustly demonstrate how it will take mitigating measures to address the possible high negative impact identified.	An ESIIA has been completed using the information gathered during the period of formal consultation. This is attached at Appendix 3. It has not identified any high negative impacts associated with this recommendation, although points on access and car parking have been noted and are part of considerations put

	forward to the developers for the entire Hall bank development.
The delivery of the public library service is compromised due to delay in the completion of the Community Hub building.	The lease for the current library site does not expire until 15 th November 2023 so there is adequate leeway for delays in construction of the new building. A break clause is in place to enable us to give six months' notice to leave the library.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. To fit-out the library in its new location existing furniture such as tables and seating will be re-used where possible. However, to create a modern flexible space that can be used in an efficient way it will be necessary to provide new library shelving, display units and a new library counter, along with certain other furnishings and fittings. The other main cost will relate to the provision of the Shropshire Council corporate IT network into the building to enable operation of library systems, plus Wi-Fi for library customers. To deliver the relocation and create a modern new library, the cost of new IT, furniture and equipment is estimated to be £35,000. These will be capital costs that can be funded from the invest-to-save fund with repayments to the fund coming from library services budgets (roughly £7,210 a year over 5 years).
- 4.2. The Parish Council have estimated approximately 40% annually of an average premises cost of £17,000 for the library space, based on the equivalent square metres of the present location. This equates to roughly £6,800 annual costs. Assuming levels of contributions from External Partners will equate to the full cost of staffing by the end of 5 years, Shropshire Council's net cost of operating the library would be approximately £5,500. This assumes that the library will occupy 40% of the building and that Shropshire Council will retain 100% of income generated. This is a net increase in cost of approximately £2,000.
- 4.3. The libraries services budget would have to take account of the capital repayments too, which would bring the total net cost of the Library to roughly £12,710, an increase of roughly £9,210 (based on £7,210 annual repayment, which is yet to be determined). Discussions are taking place with Pontesbury Parish Council and stakeholders to determine the library contribution to the running costs of the proposed Community Hub. Terms of occupation will be considered for a potential license or lease to occupy space. In accordance with section 2 appropriate terms will be agreed to cover premise costs.
- 4.4. Figures detailed above are illustrated in Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Forecast cost of Pontesbury Library in its current location

Forecast Cost of Pontesbury Library in its Current Location	2019/20 (£)	2020/21 (£)	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£)	2023/24 (£)	Total
Expenditure	18,560	20,250	20,490	20,730	20,980	101,010
Income	(1,090)	(1,080)	(1,070)	(1,060)	(1,060)	(5,360)
Net Cost to Shropshire Council	17,470	19,170	19,420	19,670	19,920	95,650

Table 2: Forecast cost of Pontesbury Library in its new location

Forecast Cost of Pontesbury Library in New Location	2019/20 (£)	2020/21 (£)	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£)	2023/24 (£)	Total
Expenditure	19,700	21,490	21,830	22,160	22,500	107,680
Income	(1,090)	(1,080)	(1,070)	(1,060)	(1,060)	(5,360)
Assumed Contribution from External Partners	(2,810)	(5,620)	(8,430)	(11,240)	(14,050)	(42,150)
Net Cost to Shropshire Council	15,800	14,790	12,330	9,860	7,390	60,170
Reduction in Net Cost Compared with Existing Location	(1,670)	(4,380)	(7,090)	(9,810)	(12,530)	(35,480)
Repayment of Invest to Save Loan	7,210	7,210	7,210	7,210	7,210	36,050
Total Forecast (Reduction)/Increase in Net Cost	5,540	2,830	120	(2,600)	(5,320)	570

5. Background

5.1. Over the past 3 years Shropshire Council has been working closely with key local partners regarding the future of Pontesbury Library service. This includes Pontesbury Parish Council, Pontesbury Library Steering Committee and the Friends of Pontesbury Library, as well as Minsterley and Worthen with Shelve Parish Councillors. The Library Service Strategy for Shropshire (2018 to 2023) highlights the continuing financial pressures on Shropshire Council and recognises that working more closely with appropriate local partners is the best way to secure sustainable library services for the future. The Library Strategy sets out a 3-tier hierarchy of library provision and places Pontesbury Library in tier 2, meaning that Shropshire Council will seek to reduce the cost of operating the library over a 5-year

period. This will be done in partnership with revenue support from community organisations and Pontesbury Parish Council.

5.2. Various Town and Parish Councils across the county are now providing support to their local libraries, either by running those libraries as a commissioned service or by providing financial support to enable Shropshire Council to continue operating those branches. For Pontesbury Library this has led to a funding arrangement with Pontesbury Parish Council, supported also by Friends of Pontesbury Library fund-raising. The 3-year agreement runs until the end of March 2019 and this financial support has enabled Shropshire Council to continue providing and developing library services for Pontesbury and the surrounding areas. A new funding agreement will be negotiated to ensure continued savings to Shropshire Council.

5.3. During this time the Friends of Pontesbury Library have become active champions for the library service within the community by organising and running events, helping to promote the full range of services offered by the library, and generally mobilising local support to ensure that Pontesbury can retain its library in the long term.

5.4. The key milestones relating to Pontesbury Library are summarised as follows:

Date	Key Milestone
April 2015	Public meeting in Pontesbury Public Hall to outline Shropshire Council savings requirements and implications for the library.
May 2015	Friends of Pontesbury Library determine to act as a focus for community support and fund-raising for the library.
April 2016	3-year funding agreement to support library put in place with Pontesbury Parish Council and Friends of Pontesbury Library
November 2017	Parish Council drop-in regarding Hall Bank development proposals.
January 2018	Shropshire Council Library Strategy identifies Pontesbury as a tier-2 library.
February 2018	Pontesbury Library Steering Committee consultation regarding proposed Community Hub building.
October 2018	Shropshire Council consultation on proposed relocation of Pontesbury Library to the Community Hub.

5.5. Relocating the library would enable opportunities to build on these existing partnerships and deliver a shared vision of a library service at the heart of its community.

6. Current Service

6.1. Pontesbury Library is currently located in Bogey Lane near Mary Webb School and Pontesbury CE Primary School. The library is housed in a demountable building offering approximately 144sqm of accommodation and is open for 15 hours per week.

- 6.2. The library provides access to the full range of library services including the lending of books for all ages, large print books, DVDs, and audiobooks on CD. There are free computer facilities with internet access and printing, plus a photocopier and free Wi-Fi. The library holds local studies resources as well as more general information about the local area and events. There are also particular areas of library stock aimed at helping people with their health and well-being.
- 6.3. Through the request service Pontesbury Library enables access to the entire stock held by Shropshire Libraries, and items not held in stock can be obtained via the inter-library lending service. The library provides a service to local reading groups and takes part in national and countywide initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge. Alongside regular Rhyme Times for children the library hosts a variety of events organised by the Friends of Pontesbury Library.
- 6.4. These services are delivered by trained and experienced library staff consisting of a Branch Manager and a Library Assistant with additional cover provided when necessary by staff based at other branches in the Shrewsbury area. The library is also supported by a Team Librarian based at the library headquarters in Shrewsbury.
- 6.5. Pontesbury Library currently has just over 550 'active users'. Between April 2017 to March 2018 there were 8,192 visits to the library and over 15,000 items were borrowed. Over 500 people attended library events.

7. Outline of Proposal

- 7.1. Mary Webb School is part of a Multi Academy Trust as of January 2019 and Shropshire Council are required to undertake the legal transfer of land and surrounding buildings to the academy trust. The Academy Conversion has taken place and the library building and surrounding area is in school ownership with a 5-year lease in place between the school and the Council. For the library service to develop in line with the wider community vision it is being proposed to relocate the library to a new community hub building which is being built as part of the Hall Bank development.
- 7.2. The community hub would be situated alongside a retail unit and a children's nursery all with access to an area of green space. The new building will enable improved access for people with disabilities and the layout of the library will be planned to make it easier for all users to access the services provided. Appendix 1 shows the location of the proposed building in relation to the existing library.
- 7.3. The amount of dedicated library space within the new building would be similar to that which is currently offered. However new modern shelving would offer flexible options for how the space is configured, for example to accommodate events when the library is closed or for other wider community uses.
- 7.4. The library would continue to offer the full range of library services as previously outlined, including access to computers, book/audiobook/DVD loans, Wi-Fi,

photocopying and events for adults and children. The library would be open as it is now for a minimum of 15 hours per week, but co-locating within the community hub could enable opportunities for increasing those hours in the future.

- 7.5. With this proposal the library would continue to be operated and managed by Shropshire Council, whilst continuing to work closely with key partners including Pontesbury Parish Council and the Friends of Pontesbury Library to ensure that the library is sustainable in the longer term. Co-locating the library with other local services would strengthen the position of the library within the community, enable closer working with a wider range of local partners, and offer scope for a greater variety of events and activities.
- 7.6. Moving to a new location is consistent with the Library Strategy and our vision to 'make libraries in Shropshire the heart of their communities' and our mission to 'work in partnership with others to empower everyone to live healthy, resilient and fulfilling lives, and to provide library services that inspire people's learning and enjoyment.'

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. A public consultation on this proposal was carried out between 9th October and 20th November 2018. 63 responses were received to the consultation. Overall 77% of respondents agreed with the proposal and a further 10% said they neither agreed nor disagreed. Appendix 2 shows a summary of the consultation results.
- 8.2. Approximately 92% of the people who responded to the consultation said that they had read the supporting information provided, indicating that people were able to provide an informed response. Over half the respondents are regular users of Pontesbury Library although approximately 10% of respondents had never visited the library.
- 8.3. When asked what they liked about the proposals people said:
- A multi-service/facility hub under one roof - community centred
 - The location - heart of the community, near to other services
 - That the library service was continuing
 - Cost effective premises - sustainable and saving on running costs
 - A new build
 - Car parking facilities
 - The extension of services, new opportunities
 - The opportunity to give views on proposals
 - The size of the new library
 - The opening hours
- 8.4. When asked why they disagreed with the proposals people said:
- Cutting down old trees / building on green space
 - Distance from the schools
 - Lack of detail regarding who would own and maintain the building
 - Inconvenient for pedestrians
 - Not enough parking

- Parish Council supporting the proposals
 - No information on accessibility for people with disabilities
 - Location - should be in Shawbury
 - Library losing its identity
- 8.5. Local feedback with customers will continue as the hub develops with signage to ensure the library is a prominent feature.
- 8.6. The majority of respondents who gave their postcode live in or near to Pontesbury with a small number residing elsewhere in the county.
- 8.7. Local members are also happy with the proposal and welcome the sustainability of the library service in Pontesbury

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Shropshire Library Services Strategy, 2018 to 2023

Shropshire Council's Commissioning Strategy 4th June 2014

Future commissioning and provision of library services and community co-location, Environment Scrutiny Services Committee, 8 December 2014

Update - future commissioning and provision of library services, Environment Services Scrutiny Committee, 22nd June 2015

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr. Lezley Picton

Local Member

Cllr. Nick Hignett Rea Valley

Cllr. Roger Evans Longden

Appendices

Appendix 1. Location Plan

Appendix 2. Summary of Consultation Results

Appendix 3. Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment.