

### Shropshire Council's response to the Church Stretton Library Support Group's alternative proposals to the proposed relocation of Church Stretton library service to Church Stretton School.

Shropshire Council notes the time and energy that members of the Church Stretton Library Support Group have put into the creation of alternative proposals to the proposed relocation of Church Stretton library services to Church Stretton School, and notes its content as part of the consultation process. The council has responded to some of the detail of these proposals within the Decision Report as they were identified through the consultation process.

The council's additional response to these alternative proposals are noted below –

The council has considered the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the alternative proposals and looked specifically at key areas of the proposals, and compared these to its preferred option of creating a joint public and school library at Church Stretton School.

A high level comparison of the key areas of the CSLSG proposal and the school proposal has been made using the information that has been provided.

#### CSLSG proposal compared to the Church Stretton School proposal

	<b>CHURCH STRETTON LIBRARY SUPPORT GROUP – STAGE 1</b>	<b>CHURCH STRETTON SCHOOL</b>
<b>Area of floor space</b>	127sqm	155 sqm - across 2 rooms plus 95 sqm storage room
<b>Opening hours</b>	22 hours a week	9am – 5pm 5 days a week 9am – 7pm 1 day a week Including school holidays 45 hours over 6 days – lunchtime closure on weekdays
<b>Parking</b>	Approximately 10 spaces to be shared with any other tenants	10 dedicated parking spaces within the school parking area rising to 20 -30 spaces and 3 disabled parking spaces at the rear of the library.
<b>Access to IT</b>	Yes – as part of the library within the main room of the building	There would be provision for up to 10 computers and access to printing, photocopying, laminating
<b>Information and advice about other services</b>	Yes	Information, advice and guidance on a range of issues would be available to complement what is already available in the town. There would also be appropriate signposting to services

<b>Space for community activities</b>	Yes, but affected by reduced floor space	All existing activity would be able to continue and opportunities for new activities would be welcomed
<b>Volunteers to support the service</b>	Yes	It is hoped that the current library volunteers would feel able to continue to support the library service – new volunteers would be welcomed
<b>Management option</b>	Shropshire Council during Stage 1 Charity/CIC at Stage 2	Operational management by Church Stretton School as detailed in a SLA.
<b>Wi-fi</b>	No	Yes
<b>Impact of the use of the building</b>	An organisation(s) wanting to move into the current CSP/VIS space and computer room would have to be sought.	A newly created space would accommodate both the public and school library
<b>Income generation ideas</b>	Yes, but detail needs to be confirmed	As per status quo of the current library service
<b>Income generation based on current figures</b>	£4,142	£0
<b>Staffing costs to SC</b>	£23,967 p.a.	£0
<b>Buildings &amp; Services costs to SC</b>	£8,725	£0
<b>Running costs for Shropshire Council of the local service</b>	£32, 692, less income generated	£0
<b>Timeline for implementation</b>	Start of Stage 1 – TBC Period before Stage 2 can start – 12 months	September 2015
<b>Future sustainability</b>	Dependent on continued revenue funding from Shropshire Council in the first year - assumed ongoing support from the council needed through a Service Level Agreement	Sustainability of the library service will be assured through the council's SLA with the school. Future delivery of the library service will not be affected by any further library service budget cuts.

The option of creating a joint public and school library at Church Stretton offers greater opportunity for delivering an enhanced and sustainable library service in the town that fits with the council's future vision for Shropshire's library service. It also provides a greater opportunity for necessary council revenue savings and a shorter timeline to achieving a transformed service.

The potential weaknesses and threats associated with this proposal are demonstrated within this report and the ESIIA and ESIIA Action Plan and mitigating actions identified.

### **Email from John Whitelegg on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

'The library support group is investigating ways we can keep the library where it is and at the same time assist the Council in dealing with its budget constraints. Our investigations have revealed very creative approaches to this kind of community involvement and we are disappointed that Shropshire Council has not shown the same level of initiative that is present in Suffolk and Kent, for example.

Please look at the Suffolk approach on this web site:

<http://suffolklibraries.co.uk/opportunity-and-independence>

Similar original thinking is underway in Kent:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Iraconsultation/consultationHome>

The Suffolk and Kent experiences are very good examples of the problem we drew to your attention when we met at Shirehall on 15.12.14 when we expressed our disappointment that the Council had not worked out a strategy for the whole library service based on different options and had not presented any options other than relocation of the school to residents and library users in Church Stretton.

It is not too late to follow the good examples of Kent and Suffolk and we request that you work up and present us with options of the kind being discussed in these two local authorities'.

### **Shropshire Council response -**

Suffolk and Kent libraries and archive services are large scale service developments that have been developed by the councils as a way of reducing operating costs by merging services and allowing them to become charitable trusts or spinning out of council control. The term spin-out is shorthand for the conversion of an in-house service into a social enterprise, mutual, charitable trust, local authority trading company or a transfer to community management. Spin-outs do not include shared services or outsourcing to an existing private or third sector provider.

Spinning out does not protect service delivery; it looks at ways of delivering the service at a cheaper cost. Suffolk and Kent will have to combine income generating services and have not ruled out closing branches or changing staff contracts as the funding they receive from the main funder who is the host authority will ultimately decrease.

Shropshire Council has identified similar ways of innovation using the locality commissioning model inherent in inventive service delivery by having community models which although different, secure services for the future.

There is a complex range of options for authorities to consider when examining alternatives to direct service delivery. The perception that there is only a choice between private and public provision is no longer true. Increasingly, the responsibility for providing services is shared. Spinning-out is only one option and on average takes three years of planning to implement and of the 353 local authorities only 20 have gone down this route.

Taking into consideration the length of lead-in time to implement these models that is a lone service with little income generation under consideration and the pressing need to implement the three year savings strategy outlined by central government, the models adopted by Kent and Suffolk councils will not be adopted by Shropshire Council in the redesign of its library service.