



Portfolio Holder Decision Making Session

Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e, Culture and
Commissioning (North)

Monday 21st September, 2pm,

Item

1

Public/Private

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF BISHOP'S CASTLE LIBRARY

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1. Summary

This report seeks Portfolio Holder agreement for the transfer for the management of Bishop's Castle Library from Shropshire Council to Enterprise South West Shropshire, a Social Enterprise that supports and nurtures a variety of business and community development schemes in the town and surrounding area.

Shropshire Council will transfer the day to day running of Bishop's Castle Library to Enterprise South West Shropshire, who will run the service under an initial 3 year Service Level Agreement, from 1st November 2015, with the intention to extend this agreement in the future.

The library will remain in its existing location in Enterprise House and maintain the existing opening hours. The existing library staff will be transferred to Enterprise South West Shropshire and Enterprise South West Shropshire will run the same the range of library services currently available to users of the library.

Some alterations to the Enterprise House building will be made to improve access to the library and make it easier for customers to navigate their way around the building

The report provides details of the background to this proposal, including details of a six week formal public consultation carried out between 20th July and 31st August 2015, and the completion of an Equality and Social Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

2. Recommendations

- That the management of Bishop's Castle Library is transferred from Shropshire Council to Enterprise South West Shropshire from 1st November 2015. This agreement will run for 3 years and be supported by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Shropshire Council and Enterprise South West Shropshire
- To delegate authority to the Director of Commissioning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North) to take any further decisions relating to the delivery of the recommendation

Reason(s) for decision:

The agreement of the above recommendation will result in –

- The opportunity to maintain a modern, sustainable and accessible library service in Bishop's Castle that reflects the council's vision for a transformed library service as described in its successful Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) bid
- The opportunity to utilise TCA funding in 2015/16 and contribute to the successful delivery of the wider Community Hub programme in Shropshire

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

A range of meetings and consultation events have taken place over the last 18 months

3.1 Timetable of consultation and engagement work

Activity	Date
Working group established to investigate potential delivery models for Bishop's Castle library and other Council Services run from Enterprise House. Working group involves SC Officers; ESWS reps and	April 2014, with group meeting approximately every six weeks from that date onwards
Updates on Working Group progress presented to Board of Enterprise South West Shropshire on a quarterly basis	April 2014 onwards on the following dates 07/05/2014; 03/09/2014; 05/11/2014; 14/01/2015; 04/05/2015; 01/07/2015
Proposals on future management of library presented to Friend of Bishop's Castle Group	16 th July 2015
6 week formal public consultation	20 th July to 31 st August

3.2 Formal Consultation Process and results

A formal public consultation process has been carried out in Bishop's Castle, and with existing library users, to gain feedback on the proposals for the libraries future.

The consultation ran for 6 weeks from 20th July to 31st August, and was available online via Shropshire Councils Website. Paper copies of the consultation documents were made available in Bishop's Castle Library and press releases were issued to promote the survey, along with publicity through social media. Details of the consultation were also emailed to registered users of Bishop's Castle Library.

Details of the consultation were also shared with the Friends of Bishop's Castle whose input was used to help design the consultation questions.

In the documents members of the public were provided with details of the existing operating costs of the library; together with cost for the preferred proposal of Enterprise South West Shropshire taking on the management of the library.

A second proposal, which would see Shropshire Council continuing to run the library, but with reduced opening hours was also put forward, along with the opportunity for members of the public to suggest alternative operating models for the library, as long as they made the same, or similar savings to proposals one and two. A copy of the consultation documents is attached in appendix 1

110 people responded to the consultation in total, although not all responses answered all the questions. The results of the consultation are as follows and a full list of responses and comments are included in appendix 2

Proposal 1 – Transferring the management of the library to Enterprise South West Shropshire was supported by 107 people (97.27%) while 3 people (2.73%) opposed the proposal

Proposal 2 – Shropshire Council continuing to run the library, but with reduced opening hours and staff was supported by 4 people (4.44%) while 86 (95.56%) were against this proposal

Those opposed to Proposal One stated a reduced quality of service as the reason for their opposition.

The reasons why people did not support Proposal 2 were varied, but can broadly be broken down into three categories

- Reduced opening hours would make it more difficult for children and working people to access services
- Fear of reduced staffing levels at the library. It is clear there is very strong support for the existing staff at Bishop's Castle library
- Transfer of the service to Enterprise South West Shropshire provided security to members of the public as they valued their work in the town.

As part of the consultation members of the public were able to put forward alternative proposals for the library.

28 people responded to this section of the consultation, but most responses (20) were simply in support of the library service, or asking specific questions about the proposals.

In total 8 alternatives were suggested, which can be grouped together in the following categories

- Increase Council tax to maintain Council run Libraries
- Alter the mobile library service to allow library to be staffed
- Look to IT and better broadband to provide services

These alternative suggestions have been considered and are not though appropriate to take forward for the following reasons

There is limited opportunity to increase Council Tax to help offset the library savings targets that Shropshire Council faces. As you may be aware, Shropshire Council has not had to increase Council Tax over the last few years and has managed the savings agenda with minimal impact on frontline delivery.

Any Council Tax increase is limited to 1.99% (anything of 2% and above would require referendum and therefore additional cost to Council Tax payers) and would result in the loss of Council Tax Freeze Grant. Therefore, in the short term, the net benefit to the Council of a 1.99% increase would be less than 3% of the ultimate £80m that has to be found. As Shropshire Council is mindful that many households across the county are also having to manage finite budgets, the decision has been taken not to increase Council Tax.

The mobile library service is a centrally managed service. The south area mobile is parked at Enterprise house but has no bearing on the staffing of the library. The mobile library service is to be reviewed in 2016 as part of the library savings and may have to change the way it is being delivered.

The library service digital strategy which is part of the national library offers is developing more electronic services to aid in modernising the service we give our customers. As the Connecting Shropshire roll-out continues, even more services will be able to upgrade to fibre based broadband. The Local Broadband Plan sets out the strategy for the Connecting Shropshire broadband programme. Shropshire Council is working with BT plc, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and other commercial providers in Shropshire to build networks without the need for public monies.

Bishops Castle is one of the areas now accepting orders for high speed broadband.

Overall the formal consultation exercise has shown very clear support for Proposal 1, the transfer of the library service to Enterprise South West Shropshire, from members of the public. The alternative operating model in Proposal 2 received little public support and further alternative proposals are not considered to be viable, or to provide the same level of savings to Shropshire Council as Proposal One.

3.3 Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation plans in place
Decision making on recommendations not made in a timely fashion, which impacts on the ability to complete the transfer in 2015 and consequently the delivery of the TCA bid programme	Advice from the council's Legal & Democratic Services has been sought to ensure the decision making process is correct and in line with the council's constitution. Attention has been paid to the creation of a

	Decision Report, Background Papers and Appendices that contain the relevant data and information needed by the Portfolio Holder to make his decision.
The consultation process undertaken is not deemed robust and is formally challenged	A 6 week formal consultation and additional focussed engagement work 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 both the recommendations in the report. The Friends of Bishop's Castle Library, and members of the Enterprise South West Shropshire Board have also been involved in the consultation from an early stage
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. It has not identified any high negative impacts associated with this recommendation.
The delivery of the public library service is compromised by being delivered alongside other services available within Enterprise House	Discussions between the council's library management and the staff at Enterprise House are in place and will continue to ensure that each is aware of the needs and expectations of the other. A Service Level Agreement will be put in place between the council and Enterprise South West Shropshire to formalise the service delivery details of the public library and this will be monitored by the council's library management.
The full capital funding package required to complete the transfer and redesign works cannot be delivered	Initial outline costs for works to Enterprise House to facilitate the transfer of the library and its day to day operation have been sort and are achievable in both time and budget. A tendering process will be undertaken once authority for the transfer has been gained. TCA funding of £20K ring-fenced.

4. Financial Implications

The annual library SLA provided to Enterprise South West Shropshire between the financial years 2016/17 and 2018/19 will be £33,000, which will achieve an annual saving of £3,360 on Bishops Castle Library's 2015/16 net controllable budget. In addition to this, Customer Involvement will provide Enterprise South West Shropshire with £5,000 per annum in order to provide a customer services offer, achieving an annual saving of approximately £11,180 on Customer Involvement's current costs.

5. Background

5.1 Shropshire Council's budget is reducing and the way in which it delivers services is changing. We are in the 2nd year of a 3 year financial plan through which £80 - £90m will be saved. Shropshire's current and future population demographics means that vital services such as looking after elderly people and vulnerable children have to be prioritised. Changes to all local and strategic services are unavoidable. The Cabinet approved budget reduction for the library service of £1.3m means that the budget available for Bishops Castle library will not be sufficient to deliver the service in the current way or location. This applies to all of our libraries across the county and the back office function of the service, not just Bishops Castle. We are seeking local solutions to these challenges that will result in a sustainable, if altered library service that meet our statutory duties.

The council is working with partners to re-design existing face-to-face customer-focused services, including its branch libraries to provide places where residents can access services and get the

information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community. This joint-working and co-creation approach is being taken across the county, and services are being redesigned to be delivered by others in flexible ways that best suit their locality and meet the individual needs of people ensuring that those who have specific needs can access services appropriately.

We want to align the future of our libraries with our commitment to locality commissioning, community asset/service transfers and to building resilient communities. If libraries stay directly under council management, then it is likely that our imperative to reduce their operational costs will result in a radical reduction in opening hours or the closure of some. We will have lost the opportunity to impact on a wider set of outcomes and it will become more challenging for us to deliver the services locally that make a difference to people's lives.

The redesigned library service will result in a range of different delivery activities including face to face provision, digital and virtual provision and an outreach programme targeted at specific groups. Alongside this change the network of library buildings will be reconfigured.

The library network will include -

- 6 strategic library hubs in major towns to improve accessibility and cater for the larger populations in the larger market towns.
- 10 local hubs/libraries offering core community services in partnership with town and parish councils, local organisations or voluntary and community groups, with a core aim of increasing opening hours.

Bishops Castle library is in the latter group and since early 2014 Shropshire Council alongside key local partners in the town has been discussing and developing opportunities for new ways of delivering the services currently housed in Enterprise House, in Bishops Castle. Proposals for Enterprise South West Shropshire to deliver the Customer Service Point (CSP) have also been agreed.

5.2 Shropshire Council's preferred option for Bishops Castle's library service is that the management is transferred from Shropshire Council to Enterprise South West Shropshire from 1st November 2015. This agreement will run for 3 years and be supported by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Shropshire Council and Enterprise South West Shropshire.

5.3 Clarification of the council's statutory duties to deliver library services

Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 ("the PLMA"):

Under the provisions of the PLMA, the Council, as a library authority, has a statutory duty (not a discretionary power) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons wishing to make use of it.

The PLMA does not define what is meant by "comprehensive and efficient". However it does provide that the library authority must provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons in the area that want to make use of it and lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

It also provides that in fulfilling the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, it shall in particular have regard to the desirability of:

- Providing facilities for the borrowing of, and reference to, books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirement both of adults and children; and
- encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service, providing advice as to its use, and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required; and
- securing co-operation between the library authority and others exercising public functions within the county.

The recommendations within this report will enable this statutory duty to be met. The recommendations do not propose the closure of the public library or a reduction in the service, they propose a model of delivery that is sustainable at a time of tremendous change in public services.

5.4 The library service in Bishops Castle will reflect the vision for a transformed library service as described in Shropshire Council's TCA bid. The library is located in a natural hub of activity that also contains the primary school, the leisure centre, the Children's Centre and the pre-school nursery. There is real opportunity for the users of this hub of services – who may not be current library members - to benefit from the transferred library service proactively providing the information, advice and guidance and prevention services for mental and physical well-being for all. A Health Zone with the range of Books on Prescription and reminiscence resources will be a key part of the library service and valued activities such as Rhyme Time will continue.

5.5 Another element of the wider vision, reflected in the TCA bid, is the development of Community Connectors. Community Connectors will transcend services, organisations and sectors, but will be specific to a locality. They will be helpful, knowledgeable, friendly and interested people based in communities who know about everything that goes on in places – community and voluntary-wise and have the attitude and aptitude to match people's interests and needs with these. As part of a community's team of first line of support they will also have a knowledge and understanding of the service delivery in their locality and will have a relationship with the people delivering these services that mutually adds benefit to their work. They will be part of an early help team that could also include, amongst others, those delivering information, advice and guidance services, library staff, customer service staff, Community Enablement Officers, town/parish council officers, Community & Care Co-ordinators and volunteers. In Bishops Castle the Community Connector role would work with activities across the town to link up people with services – specifically focussing on building connections between the library and other places of activity.

5.6 With the support of the Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) and Association of Local Councils (ALC), the council has received Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) funding to redesign a number of libraries and Customer Service Points in 2015/16. Investing in this redesign must result in ongoing revenue savings for the council. The proposal to transfer Bishops Castle library to Enterprise Southwest Shropshire will result in annual revenue savings of £3.5K.

5.7 The development of the recommendations being made in this report has been informed by periods of engagement and consultation with Bishops Castle residents. This includes a 6 week formal consultation and focussed engagement with Protected Characteristic groups that were identified through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA).

5.8 Shropshire Council is committed to take mitigating actions to address the concerns that have been raised by consultees in response to the proposal to transfer the library to Enterprise Southwest Shropshire, and these are detailed in this report and in an ESIIA detailed in Appendix 1.

6. Additional Information

Attached within the Background Papers and Appendices

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, given the extent of the engagement and consultation and the responses to these, and having considered all the information, including

- i. the responses received from the formal consultation
- ii. engagement with the Friends of Bishop's Castle Library and the Enterprise South West Shropshire Board
- iii. completion of a ESIIA assessment
- iv. the level of savings and social value to be achieved through the transfer of the library to Enterprise South West Shropshire
- v. the opportunity to create a redesigned library service that plays a key role in providing information, advice and guidance to residents of Bishop's Castle and the surrounding area, whilst also complementing the wider work of Enterprise South West Shropshire

Transferring the library from Shropshire Council, to Enterprise South West Shropshire, will enable the Council to achieve its ambition of keeping its branch libraries open, redesigning the service to provide an important social, economic and community facility in Bishop's Castle and assist in meeting its financial challenges.

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

1. Shropshire Council's Business Plan and Financial Strategy 2014-2017
2. Active Users of Bishop's Castle Library within a 7 Mile Radius (Seen Between January 2013 - February 2015)
3. Shropshire Council's Transformation Challenge Award bid 2015/16
4. Frequently Asked Questions to accompany the consultation document. July 2015

Key Decision: Yes

Included within Forward Plan: **Yes** / No

If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: Yes / No

Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:

Cllr Steve Charmley

Local Member:

Cllr Charlotte Barnes

Appendices:

1. Bishop's Castle Library Public consultation documents July 2015.
2. Bishop's Castle Library consultation results and comments September 2015.
3. ESIA Assessment for Bishop's Castle Library

Declaration of Interest

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

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Signed

Portfolio Holder for

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment :

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Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.