



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Cabinet
14 <sup>th</sup> October 2015

## **Redesigning Shropshire Council's library service and customer service points**

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### **1. Summary**

This report outlines and confirms the approach that Shropshire Council will adopt to the redesign and commissioning of its library service and customer service points, with specific reference to the adoption of:

- a locality commissioning approach for new management arrangements at our smaller libraries – Albrighton, Bayston Hill, Broseley, Cleobury Mortimer, Church Stretton, Ellesmere, Gobowen, Much Wenlock, Pontesbury, Shawbury, Shifnal, and Wem (Craven Arms, Bishops Castle and Highley libraries are already under alternative management) – and Customer Service Points – Albrighton, Bishops Castle, Broseley, Church Stretton, Ellesmere, Shifnal, and Wem (Craven Arms Customer Service Point is already under alternative management)
- a new management and delivery structure for the larger principal market town libraries and customer service points – Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, and Whitchurch
- a review of the mobile library service in 2016

Shropshire Council is working with a range of partners to re-design its face to face customer focused services, to create places where residents can easily access services and get information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community. This approach will support us in our aim to help create and maintain resilient communities at a time of reducing public service budgets and increasing demand on services. These face-to-face services are in the heart of communities and include libraries and Customer Service Points (CSPs). Through this service redesign the council wants to work with a range of partners to find innovative ways to continue the delivery of community focused high quality services, at a lower cost, but with a better overall outcome for both individuals and our diverse communities.

### **2. Recommendations**

- A. That Cabinet confirms and approves the approach described within this report to redesign Shropshire Council's library services and customer service points.

- B. That delegated authority is given to the Director of Commissioning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business, Culture and Commissioning (North) for the future library decision making required as the recommended approach is delivered.
- C. That delegated authority is given to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Support for the future Customer Service Point decision making required as the recommended approach is delivered.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

Shropshire Council is aligning the future of its library service and CSPs with its commitment to locality commissioning, community asset/service transfers and to building resilient communities alongside colleagues in health and social care. If these services and the buildings that house them stay under council management, then it is likely that the imperative to reduce their operational costs will result in a radical reduction in opening hours or the closure of some. The opportunity to impact on a wider set of outcomes will be lost and it will become more challenging to deliver the services locally that make a difference to people's lives.

#### **Section 7 of the Public Library and Museum 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 make facilities for borrowing books and other materials available to people who live, or work, or are undergoing full-time education in Shropshire. 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, 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 redesign of the Shropshire's' libraries will need to meet the three points outlined above. Proposals that are made as part of any local consultation process will have to meet this duty if the library they relate to is to remain part of the council's statutory provision. There is no statutory responsibility for local authorities to provide face to face customer services (CSPs).

#### **Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment**

The potential impact of any change to the provision of library service and CSP users, particularly those who might be more greatly impacted by any change is assessed through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

for both the services as a whole and for each location where change is proposed. These will be kept under review as work progresses and if negative impacts are identified an action plan will be created to show how these can be mitigated.

### **Transformation Challenge Award funding**

Shropshire Council has been successful in winning a share of the Government's £89.4m Transformation Challenge Award. The funding is awarded to public sector organisations who have set out how they intend to improve services for residents, at the same time as reducing the cost of those services.

Shropshire Council has received a grant of £520,000 to support the redesign of six of its libraries (and CSPs) through transferring the management of each library service, CSP service and the building they are housed in to community based enterprises, and to developing these as community hubs that will support health and well-being. The funding is also intended to help increase the capacity and confidence of town and parish councils and voluntary organisations to take on the delivery and management of assets and services.

Detailed below is a high level overview of the risks associated with this area of redesign. More detailed Risk Management Plans are developed for each locality.

### **Risk Register**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation plans in place</b>
Library redesign fails to comply with S7 Public Library and Museum Act 1964	Redesign will comply with the requirements of the act to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service
Library and Customer Service Point redesign fails to meet equality and social inclusion obligations	Will be assessed through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment and if negative impacts are identified then an action plan will be created to show how these can be minimised.
Library and Customer Service Point redesign fails to follow EU and UK procurement regulations, state aid restrictions and the Council's own contract standing orders.	Will continue to take legal and procurement advice as appropriate
Detrimental impact to council reputation and to library and customer service point redesign timetable and aims due to lack of partner engagement and failure to communicate effectively with stakeholders	Resources and time will be invested in early community conversations before any formal consultation and decision is undertaken.
Savings target not achieved due to unrealistic assumptions on future Council revenue support and unforeseen circumstances in the development of new local management arrangements, the implementation of physical building	The alternative to new locally based community management will be a diminished library service within the Councils management and even in some cases possible closure

works and the implementation of infrastructure works	
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## 4.0 Financial implications

### Library savings

Libraries' current net controllable budget is £2.9m, which is split across the following functions:

- Six libraries in principal market towns: £1.31m
- Fifteen smaller libraries: £420,000
- Mobile libraries: £180,000
- Management, administration, I.T. and support services: £1.00m

Shropshire Council's Business Plan and Financial Strategy 2014 -17 (updated February 2015) identifies £1.147m savings to be made within the library service over the corresponding three year period. To date, £599k has been achieved through a range of efficiency savings and improved operating arrangements, leaving £548k to be achieved through library redesign.

2014/15 Savings Achieved	2015/16 Savings Achieved	Savings to be Achieved in 2016/17
£479k	£120k	£548k

Further efficiencies will need to be found as part of the longer term sustainable business model that is being developed by the council.

### Customer Service Point savings

£30,000 savings have been achieved to date at smaller customer service points through commissioning services locally. A further £149k savings are still to be achieved at the larger hubs and across 5 smaller hubs through commissioning services and redesigning wider staff teams accordingly.

## 5.0 Background Information

### Background information on our Libraries and Customer Service Points

The library service in Shropshire includes:

- A network of 22 libraries providing library access across the county in 21 towns: Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Whitchurch, Albrighton, Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Ellesmere, Shifnal, Wem, Bayston Hill, the Library at the Lantern (Shrewsbury), Cleobury Mortimer, Highley, Much Wenlock, Gobowen, Pontesbury, Shawbury, and Broseley
- 4 mobile libraries
- Home visit services
- Public access to computers

Detailed usage figures for libraries for the past five years are given below:

<b>Totals</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>% change over 5yrs</b>
Visits	1,601,522	1,388,579	1,340,186	1,286,582	1,078,927	-33%
Active borrowers	54,279	50,752	47,634	44,286	41,564	-23%
Computer time used (mins)	7,276,705	6,238,920	5,824,934	6,026,964	5,504,397	-24%
Total loans	1,524,582	1,385,091	1,274,871	1,197,643	1,080,888	-29%
Requests	71,132	87,715	87,281	80,217	80,930	14%

The overall decline in key measures reflects national trends. Within Shropshire, online developments mean it has now become easier to access a range of library services remotely, such as renewing and requesting items, e-magazines and e-books, and a wide selection of online reference resources. This will have had an impact on the number of physical visits, but other measures have seen an increase. For example, over the 5 year period 'online' loans (items renewed remotely via the web) increased by 33% and the number of requests placed online increased by 86%.

The number of total loans will also have been affected by the wider availability of discounted paperbacks in supermarkets and from online retailers. Music CDs have also been withdrawn during this period due to lack of demand, and DVD rentals are decreasing. Once again digital developments play a part, and as the service develops its e-book and e-audio services this should have a positive impact on total loans and will attract new users.

The overall drop in computer time used is a reflection of the increase in ownership of internet devices, particularly smartphones and tablets. This in turn is reflected by a considerable rise in Wi-Fi use within libraries, which has gone up by 210% during the 5 years. However, provision of library internet access now becomes even more crucial for those who do not have access at home, particularly given the rise of digital by default services. Volunteer IT support is a key feature of our digital offer, and the number of volunteer hours has increased by 71% since 2010/11. Some libraries also have Friends Groups who support the service locally by helping to organise a range of activities and events, carrying out some specific library duties and by acting as library advocates in their communities.

**Customer Service Points** alongside a variety of other channels including email and a number of dedicated phone numbers, provide Shropshire's citizens with access, advice and help with services provided by Shropshire Council and other organisations including:

- Access to around 52 council and public services
- Help and information on benefits and welfare needs, money and entitlements, access to crisis funding through the local support scheme, care and health as well as leisure activities, what's on and much more
- Specialist advice sessions
- Free on-line access to information and services

Most customers are able to resolve their issues at their first point of contact.

The reasons for people visiting our CSPs differs between our smaller, more rural offices and our larger town offices. In smaller offices over 90% of business relates to customers reporting issues to services or applying for and renewing bus passes and Blue Badges. In our larger offices many more of our customers come to see us about

benefits and related issues and this can account for over 50% of customer enquiries at some sites.

Staffed CSPs are located in 15 market town locations across the county: Albrighton, Bridgnorth, Bishop's Castle, Broseley, Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Ellesmere, Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Shifnal, Wem and Whitchurch (Craven Arms Customer Service Point under alternative management).

Usage over the past five years has been as follows:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Customer visits	86,144	126,366	128,714	97,038	69,225

The peak in numbers in 2011, 2012 and 2013 was caused by a number of factors particularly the bulk renewal of Concessionary Travel Passes during that time. Customer visits are now dropping as people start to use more convenient alternative methods of doing business with the council.

79% of all face to face customer enquiries is dealt with in the 6 main market towns – Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Market Drayton and Whitchurch.

### **Our vision for the Shropshire library service**

Our vision for the delivery of library services in Shropshire is to provide and support inspiring library services for learning, information and enjoyment with the delivery of the library service impacting positively on the lives of people. Reading and the provision of information will remain fundamental to public library provision, but the shifts in society and the opportunities provided by technological developments must be taken into account.

Our aims are to:

- Put customers at the heart of everything we do
- Encourage and enable access to informal learning
- Support activities and information that improve health and well-being
- Promote literacy and inspire reading
- Provide welcoming community spaces that are open to all
- Ensure that services give best value for money
- Enable access to digital information and services
- Build partnerships that place libraries at the heart of communities
- Deliver and develop targeted services for those in most need
- Provide services and activities to support children, young people and families
- Develop innovative services that reflect the changing roles of libraries

Specifically we want to:

- Support the development of modern sustainable libraries through the active involvement of community based enterprises in the day to day operation of the library and the development of self-service facilities with ongoing back office support will be provided by Shropshire Council.
- Explore opportunities to co-locate libraries with other services and partners within community hubs; places where local residents can access a range of services in one place that give them the best chance of finding the support that they need within their community.

### **Our vision for CSPs**

We understand the importance of a face to face service to many of our customers who may not be able to use alternative means of doing business such as over the telephone or online or who need help to use these alternatives. We want to make sure that people are still able to get the direct help they need, when they need it and we therefore propose working in partnership with other providers of help and advice in localities, e.g. town or parish councils, social enterprises and the library service. By doing this, people will be able to access a much wider range of help and services than is currently offered.

In addition to direct face to face help, we will install customer phones and computers that will be free to use so that our customers have an extended range of ways to contact and conduct business with Shropshire Council.

### **Our approach to commissioning libraries and Customer Service Points**

Shropshire Council's Commissioning Strategy sets out how the council will go about commissioning services and the key principles that will be followed. The strategy clearly articulates the different approaches that the council will use to commission services, including locality commissioning.

The council believes that locality commissioning is the right approach for commissioning community based services such as libraries and customer service points where there are opportunities for place based partnership working, sharing resources and providing these services more efficiently. In many cases access to services can be improved as they are designed with individual communities in mind maximising shared resources.

The need and aspiration of communities around each of Shropshire's libraries will be assessed and understood through research and intelligence methods, informal consultation, soft market testing and the gathering of community focussed data and intelligence. The council understands communities well because it has been adopting a locality, place based approach to governance, service delivery and now commissioning for many years. It is a fundamental way of how Shropshire Council delivers and commissions its services.

The council wants to work with a range of partners to redesign existing face to face customer focused services including its libraries and customer service points in order to provide places that residents can easily access services and get information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community.

Our vision is that traditional face to face services will be delivered outside Shropshire Council by community based enterprises which recognise and support the important role played by organisations and individuals active in their communities. A community enterprise is an organisation operating for social purpose with any profits reinvested rather than going to shareholders (this may include but not be limited to community interest companies, charitable trusts, town or parish councils). A community enterprise is an organisation run for communities, based in, and providing benefits to, a particular neighbourhood or community. These enterprises are best placed to utilise their links into communities and maximise every contact that is made with them.

This approach, often referred to as localism, is also a key part of central government's effort to decentralise power and to support communities to be more empowered and to have a greater say on the issues that matter to them.

Two reports taken to the Environment Services Scrutiny Committee on 8th December 2014 and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 summarise progress made on the county-wide redesign of library services.

Two reports taken to Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015 confirmed that the council will commission Customer Services. This includes the locality based CSPs which would be commissioned within the context of the development of Community Hubs, except in Shrewsbury where the responsibility would be maintained by Shropshire Council. The Community Hub approach is built around the creation of support - self-service and where needed, person to person - to individuals within neutral venues and with local partners. CSP provision aligns closely with the library service and their role as gateways to community information. In other circumstances community focussed enterprises separate to the library service may be alternative delivery options

Our detailed approach to the locality commissioning of library services and CSPs is based on a step by step approach:

- We will facilitate local community based conversations, either through local governance arrangements or local partner/stakeholder engagement to identify possible new local management arrangements for our libraries and CSPs. e.g. management of the service and the building by a community based enterprise that is already delivering services within the area.
- The need and aspiration of the community the library/CSP serves will be assessed and understood through research and intelligence methods, the informal consultation activity (community conversations), soft market testing and the gathering of community focussed data and intelligence.
- Should there not be any local proposals we will seek opportunities that meet local needs through wider engagement with potential partners using a soft market testing approach advertised through the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly, on the council website and through the media.
- We will scope proposals to test their viability and then hold formal consultations on them whilst they are at a formative stage to gather local opinion and ideas that could shape what we're suggesting in ways we hadn't thought of. The consultation periods will also enable alternative proposals to be suggested.
- The potential impact of any change to the provision of library service and customer service point users, particularly those who might be impacted more by any change will be assessed through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA). This will be kept under review as consultation progresses and if negative impacts are identified an action plan will be created to show how these can be mitigated.
- The consultation responses will be used to inform necessary formal decision making on the proposals that are recommended to be taken forward, and once this is in place further development work will take place ultimately leading to implementation of the new management arrangements.
- Alongside this we will publish and regularly review a Register of Assets of Community Value.

Our approach will always be to disinvest in the traditional top down council approach to delivering services; instead investing in community capacity. The development of changes to service and activity delivery will be informed by the needs and opportunities within a local community, making best use of all the assets in that locality.



Shropshire Council does recognise that there may not be an appetite in all areas to explore new community delivery models for a library or CSP. When this is coupled with low usage of the service, further discussions will take place to investigate alternative provision and closure of the service may need to be considered and consulted on.

When new management arrangements are in place, the library and CSP will continue to be delivered in line with the Shropshire Libraries and Customer Service Point visions as agreed and through a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The SLA will confirm respective roles and responsibilities and the support, including funding, to be provided by Shropshire Council.

## **6.0 Progress with the redesign and commissioning of libraries and customer service points**

Appendix 1 details progress to date with the redesign of our libraries and CSPs. This is summarised below.

### **A locality commissioning approach to confirm new management arrangements for the smaller libraries and customer service points**

Our vision is that within our smaller market towns traditional face to face services will be delivered through community enterprises that are already active within those communities. A community enterprise is the same as a social enterprise, i.e. an organisation trading for social purpose with any profits reinvested rather than going to shareholders. A community enterprise is based in, and provides benefits to, a particular local neighbourhood or community and is an organisation run for the community. These enterprises are best placed to utilise their links into communities and therefore maximise every contact that is made with them.

This approach will specifically apply to libraries within the following locations: Albrighton, Bayston Hill, Broseley, Cleobury Mortimer, Church Stretton, Ellesmere, Gobowen, Much Wenlock, Pontesbury, Shawbury, Shifnal, and Wem (Craven Arms, Bishops Castle and Highley libraries already under alternative management) -

- and CSPs within the following locations:  
Albrighton, Bishops Castle, Broseley, Church Stretton, Ellesmere, Shifnal, and Wem

Alongside this approach a number of council owned library buildings have been listed as potential Community Asset Transfers – Albrighton, Bayston Hill, Broseley, Church Stretton, Gobowen, Pontesbury, and Shifnal. The opportunities for transfer of the building either by a long term lease or freehold transfer to local community based organisations alongside discussions on future service management arrangements will continue to be discussed.

### **A new management and delivery structure for the larger principal market town libraries and customer service points**

As part of the redesign of the library service and CSPs, it is recommended that steps are taken to scope potential alternative management and delivery structures for the larger Community Hubs.

This approach will specifically apply to libraries and customer service points within the following locations:

Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry and Whitchurch –

- and libraries only within:  
Shrewsbury

### **The mobile library service**

There are currently 4 mobile libraries covering 350 communities in Shropshire on a fortnightly basis. The last major review was in 2011 when the fleet was reduced from 8 vehicles to 5, by a member led task and finish group. All stops were reviewed and reorganised according to a set of criteria laid down by the group. A further vehicle was removed from service when its lease expired in 2012.

A review of the mobile library service is planned in 2016 to reflect the changing ways communities are accessing the service and to respond to budget restrictions.

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p>
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<p>Shropshire Council's Commissioning Strategy 4<sup>th</sup> June 2014</p>
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<p>Future commissioning and provision of library services and community co-location, Environment Scrutiny Services Committee, 8 December 2014</p>
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<p>Hubs commissioning model, Cabinet, 11 February 2015</p>
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<p>Future delivery of customer services in Shropshire, Cabinet, 20 May 2015</p>
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<p>Update - future commissioning and provision of library services, Environment Services Scrutiny Committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015</p>
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<p><b>Cabinet Member:</b></p>
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<p>Cllr Steve Charmley, Portfolio Holder for Business &amp; ip&amp;e, Culture and Commissioning (North)</p>
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<p>Cllr Mike Owen, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Support</p>
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<p><b>Local Members:</b></p>
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<p>The redesign of Shropshire Council's library service and Customer Service Points has a county wide impact affecting all local members</p>
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<p><b>Appendices:</b></p>
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<p>Appendix 1 - Progress with the redesign of Shropshire Council face-to-face customer services</p>
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