

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Culture, Recreation and Countryside
Date:	4 December 2014
Title:	Proposed Changes to Kingsclere and Milford-on-Sea Libraries
Reference:	6263
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

Contact name: Nicola Horsey
Alec Kennedy

Tel: 01962 845423
01962 826681

Email: nicola.horsey@hants.gov.uk
alec.kennedy@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Hampshire County Council's Library and Information Service (LIS) has been required to reduce its revenue budget by 2015/16 by £300,000. In order to do this the Service undertook a large consultation exercise on a number of proposals involving changing service provision in specific areas. One of the proposals was to either close Kingsclere and Milford-on-Sea libraries, and replace them with a weekly mobile library service, or transfer them to be run by local community groups.
- 1.2. This report sets out the reasons behind these proposals, the results of the consultation and Equality Impact Assessments and makes recommendations, bearing in mind that the County Council has a duty under Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide 'a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'.
- 1.3. This report recommends that the Executive Member for Culture, Recreation and Countryside:
 - i) Continues discussions with Kingsclere Village Club with a view to transferring the running of Kingsclere Library to the Village Club on 31 March 2015.
 - ii) Delegates authority to the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services, in consultation with the Executive Member, to reach an agreement on the running of the library or to proceed with closure and replace with a weekly mobile library service, with the final deadline to reach agreement being 19 December 2014.

- iii) Transfers the running of Milford-on-Sea library to Milford-on-Sea Village Hall Trust on 31 March 2015.

2. Kingsclere Library – Background

- 2.1. The proposal to transfer the running of Kingsclere Library to a local group or replace it with a weekly mobile library service was made because it is one of Hampshire's smallest and poorest performing libraries. More details are set out in Appendix 1, but key facts are:
 - On average only 12 people visit the library per opening hour, the lowest in Hampshire. This represents 0.13% of all visits across Hampshire's LIS.
 - On average only 51 items are issued per opening hour. This represents 0.25% of all issues in LIS.
 - The library is within the catchment area of a bigger library in Newbury.
 - The library's lease is up for renewal in 2014.
- 2.2. Kingsclere Library is located within a larger community building in Kingsclere which is owned and managed by the Village Club Trust. The library's lease is up for renewal in 2014 which makes it a good time to review its operation.

3. Kingsclere Library - Consultation

- 3.1. Public consultation on the future of the library started on 2 February 2014 and ran for three months. The consultation included library customers, staff and unions, the Parish Council, the Village Club, District Council and County Councillors. Consultation forms were available in the library for library customers to complete throughout the three month consultation period and there was an online form too. At the end of the consultation:
 - There were 68 responses.
 - Of these, 56% said they would use the library if it was run by a local group.
 - 31% said they would use a mobile library.
- 3.2. During the consultation period a member of the Library Management Team was available on three separate occasions in Kingsclere Library to answer questions and accept feedback on the proposal. Three people put their names forward to be a volunteer in the library, if it was run by a local group.
- 3.3. In addition to this the Parish Council set up a public meeting on 12 March, 7-9pm. Approximately 75 people attended the meeting, along with three officers from LIS.
- 3.4. The Assistant Director, Community, met with the Chairman of Kingsclere Parish Council on 21 August 2014 to discuss the future of the library. At his

suggestion, contact was made with a local resident who had collected names of people willing to volunteer to work in the library. A meeting was then held on 1 October in Kingsclere with potential library volunteers. Councillor Chapman (the local member for the area) attended the meeting with the Assistant Director, Community and the LIS's Group Manager for the area.

- 3.5. If Kingsclere Library is going to be run by the community, then a formally constituted group needs to act as the 'umbrella' organisation to oversee the library and enter into an agreement with LIS. The agreement sets out LIS's responsibilities to provide stock and IT, volunteer training etc whilst the 'umbrella' organisation undertakes to keep the library clean and tidy, manage the volunteers etc. If an appropriate organisation is not found in Kingsclere, then it would not be possible to run a community library there.
- 3.6. On 24 October, the Assistant Director, Community and LIS's Group Manager met the Chairman of Kingsclere Parish Council and the Treasurer of the Village Club to discuss the possibility of the Village Club becoming the 'umbrella' organisation for a community run library. The Village Club is the landlord of the building which houses the library.
- 3.7. At the same time, work has been going on to find an appropriate place for a mobile library vehicle to stop in the village.

4. Kingsclere Library – Equalities

- 4.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken to assess the impact of all the proposed changes to LIS and a link to the assessment is included in Integral Appendix B. Compared to the population of Kingsclere, more older people and children use the library. The customer profile of the library also shows that the majority of customers are female (64%), whilst 51% of the population of Kingsclere ward are female.

5. Kingsclere Library - Conclusion

- 5.1. Whilst it is noted that many people in Kingsclere would prefer the status quo, it is recognised that there are advantages to a community managed library, working in partnership with the County Council.
- 5.2. It does look as though there are enough volunteers to run a community library in Kingsclere, but LIS still needs to find an 'umbrella' organisation in Kingsclere which would be prepared to enter into an agreement with LIS. Discussions are going on with the Village Club to see if it would be prepared to take over managing a community run library. If these discussions are successful, then it is recommended that Kingsclere Library is transferred to Kingsclere Village Club. If these discussions are not successful by 19 December, then it is recommended that Kingsclere Library is closed at the end of March 2015 and replaced with a mobile library service, starting from 1 April 2015.

6. Milford-on-Sea Library – Background

6.1. The proposal to transfer the running of Milford-on-Sea Library to a local group or replace it with a weekly mobile library service was made because it is one of Hampshire's smallest and poorest performing libraries. More details are set out in Appendix 1, but key facts are:

- On average only 18 people visit the library per opening hour. This represents 0.15% of all visits across Hampshire's LIS.
- On average only 25 items are issued per opening hour. This represents 0.18% of all issues in LIS.
- Issues of books and other items decreased by 5% between 2011/12 – 2012/13.
- The library is in the catchment area of the bigger libraries in Lymington and New Milton.
- The library's lease is up for renewal in 2014.

6.2. Milford-on-Sea Library is located within a larger community building in Milford-on-Sea which is owned and managed by the Village Hall Trust. When the library is not open, the room is hired out by the Village Hall Trust to local groups. As the library's lease is up for renewal it is a good time to review its operation.

7. Milford-on-Sea Library - Consultation

7.1. Public consultation on the future of Milford-on-Sea library started on 2 February 2014 and ran for three months. The consultation included library customers, staff and unions, the Parish Council, the Village Hall Trust, District Council and County Councillors. Consultation forms were available in the library for library customers to complete throughout the three month consultation period and there was an online form too. At the end of the consultation:

- There were 107 responses.
- Of these, 81% said they would use the library if it was run by a local Group.
- 21% said they would use a mobile library.

7.2. During the consultation period a member of the Library Management Team was available on three separate occasions in Milford-on-Sea Library to answer questions and accept feedback on the proposal. At these sessions a number of people left contact details as they expressed a willingness to be a volunteer in the library, should it be taken up by a community group.

7.3. The Assistant Director, Community, the Head of Library Operations and Councillor Rice attended a meeting with Milford-on-Sea Parish Council on 28 February to discuss the future of the library.

- 7.4. On 16 May, two members of the Library Management Team attended a meeting of the Village Hall Trust. At this meeting the Trustees expressed a willingness to support volunteers in continuing to deliver a library service at Milford-on-sea. The Village Hall Trust is the landlord for the current Library and appear to be willing to absorb any loss of rent and to act as the “umbrella” organisation for the volunteers. On 27 August a meeting to discuss the way forward was held with local residents, Trustees, Cllr Perry, Cllr Rice and members of LIS staff.
- 7.5. On 17 September the Head of Library Operations and the Community Libraries and Mobiles Manager met with the Village Hall’s Board of Trustees. While the Trustees stressed that they would prefer the library to remain as it is: staffed and delivered by Hampshire County Council, they were prepared to act as an ‘umbrella’ organisation to oversee the running of the library and enter into an agreement with LIS to do this.
- 7.6. The meeting with the Trustees on 17 September was followed by a meeting with approximately 35 local people who were prepared to volunteer to work in the library. Approximately 65 people have added their names to the register of potential volunteers. Two of the volunteers were prepared to be ‘diary managers’: planning the rotas for the volunteers who will work in the library and co-ordinate the training which LIS will provide.

8. Milford-on-Sea Library – Equalities

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken to assess the impact of all the proposed changes to LIS and a link to the assessment is included in Integral Appendix B. Compared to the population of Milford-on-Sea, more older people use the library. The customer profile of the library also shows that the majority of customers are female (66%), whilst 52% of the population of Milford-on-Sea ward are female.

9. Milford-on-Sea Library - Conclusion

- 9.1. While it is noted that the Trustees and many local people would prefer Milford-on-Sea Library to continue to be provided by the County Council, it is recognised that there are advantages to a community managed library, working in partnership with the County Council.
- 9.2. The Village Hall Trustees are aware of the rental income the Village Hall Trust will lose from LIS, and are prepared to absorb that loss. They are also fully aware of their responsibilities with respect to being the ‘umbrella’ organisation for a community run library and their plans are robust and sustainable. It looks as though there are more than sufficient volunteers in Milford-on-Sea for the library to be run by the local community.

10. Financial Information

10.1. The costs for running Kingsclere and Milford-on-Sea libraries for a year are:

	£
Kingsclere	23,500
Milford-on-Sea	20,700

These costs include IT and management support.

10.2. If the libraries were transferred to local community groups, then the IT costs would remain as the IT equipment would still be in use, and LIS would save £29,000.

11. Recommendation

11.1. That the Executive Member for Culture, Recreation and Countryside:

- a) Continues discussions with Kingsclere Village Club with a view to transferring the running of Kingsclere Library to the Village Club on 31 March 2015.
- iv) Delegates authority to the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services, in consultation with the Executive Member, to reach an agreement on the running of the library or to proceed with closure and replace with a weekly mobile library service, with the final deadline to reach agreement being 19 December 2014.
- v) Transfers the running of Milford-on-Sea library to Milford-on-Sea Village Hall Trust on 31 March 2015.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The purpose of this project is to achieve a £300,000 cost reduction by March 2015 through the re provision of Kingsclere and Milford-on-Sea libraries.

The equality groups affected most by the changes are age, gender and disability. Rurality is also a factor to be taken into account with poverty in areas of deprivation.

Age/Gender

The customer profiles for the 2 libraries are very similar in that they are mostly used by older people. The older age profile is dominated by the female population and so there is an inevitable gender bias.

Potential Mitigating Actions

For the 2 libraries, the initial option will be to offer them to a community group to run with help and support from the library service. This will ensure that the community still has access to a Library Service and, experience elsewhere in Hampshire suggests that this is likely to result an increase in the number of opening hours and more community activities taking place in the building. If the transfer to a community group proves impossible then, once suitable parking has been identified, the Library Service could provide a mobile library

stop. Otherwise the use of a library in relatively close proximity to the customers affected could be promoted. The nearest library is probably located somewhere that customers visit anyway, by public transport or other means, for the purpose of shopping, banking or attending medical appointments.

For older people, carers or those with disabilities who are not able to access other libraries then they have the option to apply for Home Library Service where a volunteer selects books and visits customers at least once a month to exchange them. Often this activity also provides invaluable social interaction for people who feel isolated with the volunteer staying longer than just a few minutes to chat about reading. There is also the Good Neighbour scheme designed for relatives or friends who exchange books on someone's behalf. Registration with the scheme means that no fines are incurred in the event of late returns to the library.

The full assessment can be viewed at <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments/2015SavingsLibrariesandMobileLibraries-EIA-2014-03-26.pdf>

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No Impact identified.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? N/A
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? N/A

Kingsclere and Milford-on-Sea Libraries

These libraries have been selected for possible transfer to the community or to be replaced with a mobile library stop because they are two of Hampshire County Council's smallest and poorest performing libraries.

	Kingsclere	Milford-on-Sea	Comment
Opening Hours per week	13.5	10	These are two of the four lowest numbers of opening hours in Hampshire. There is no money available to increase opening hours
Visits 2012/13	8,720	9,342	These are the lowest in Hampshire
Book issues 2012/13	17,659	12,484	These are two of the four lowest in Hampshire
Number of issues per opening hours	25	25	
Active borrowers 2012/13 i.e. used their library card in 2012/13	581	571	These are the lowest in Hampshire
Average no. of customers borrowing items at least once a month	191	197	These are two of the four lowest in Hampshire
% of people living in the ward using the library	11%	12%	These are amongst the lowest in Hampshire
Distance to nearby libraries	6 miles to Tadley	<5 miles to Lymington and New Milton	
Overlapping catchment areas with bigger libraries	Yes, Newbury	Yes, Lymington and New Milton	
Potential for developing the libraries	Low	Low	Both libraries are in part of a shared building
Leasehold/Freehold	Leasehold	Leasehold	Both leases are up for renewal in 2014, rents likely to rise
Costs (including staffing, premises, IT, management & logistical/HQ support)	£23,500	£20,700	Total saving £44,200

2012/13 figures were used because the consultation started in February 2014, before the figures for 2013/14 were available.