

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Culture and Recreation
Date:	8 March 2011
Title:	Restructure of the Library Service, Phase 2 - Review of the Mobile Library Service, Final Proposals
Reference:	1610
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. At her Decision Day on 11 October 2010, the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation approved plans for a wide-ranging consultation exercise about the future shape of the Mobile Library Service. This report summarises the results of the consultation exercise and sets out the details of the proposed reshaped Mobile Library Service. This is due to be implemented on 4 July 2011, subject to the approval of the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation on 8 March 2011.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Hampshire's Mobile Library Service is one of the biggest in the country, with 19 vehicles making over 1200 stops, mostly on a fortnightly schedule. It costs £960,000 to run per year (plus the costs of the stock) and, over the last five years, visits have decreased by 23% and book issues by 39%.
- 2.2. Further details about the current Mobile Library Service are available in the report to the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation on 11 October 2010.

http://www3.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings/advsearchmeetings/meetingsitemdocuments.htm?sta=&pref=Y&item_ID=2139&tab=2

3. First Consultation Exercise

- 3.1. At the beginning of November 2010 three different questionnaires about the Mobile Library Service were distributed to:
- Existing customers
 - District, Town and Parish Councils

- Managers of Care Homes
- 3.2. The questionnaires to customers and the councils described proposed changes to the Mobile Library Service as follows:
- Mobile libraries would no longer stop in places less than two miles by road from a library. Resources would focus on priorities such as isolated rural areas and sheltered accommodation.
 - Where there is demand, the mobile service could run into late afternoons, and in some places Saturdays, to reach young people and working families.
 - There should only be one stop per community. This means existing stops would be combined and could result in a longer visit. In some communities there may not be any stops.
 - The mobile service would aim to stop at times that coincide with an existing local activity such as coffee mornings or lunch clubs.
 - For customers unable to reach revised mobile stops due to mobility issues, the Home Library Service would seek to use trained volunteers to deliver books and audio books direct to their homes. The Service would be actively looking for volunteers to collect books from the mobile and deliver to customers who cannot reach the mobile stop.
- 3.3. In addition, the questionnaire to the councils asked for their views on the best place to stop in their communities and whether there was community transport and a volunteer network in their areas.
- 3.4. The questionnaire to Care Home Managers proposed that a mobile library vehicle would no longer visit the homes in recognition of the fact that so few residents board the vehicle to select library material. Alternatively the Service would seek to work more closely with the Manager/Activity Co-ordinator to maintain a library service. Residents receiving room visits might apply to have books delivered by trained volunteers and book collections for communal areas could continue only on payment of an annual subscription.
- 3.5. The original deadline for the return of the questionnaires was 6 December but, because of the snow in early December, this deadline was put back two weeks to 20 December.
- 3.6. There was a high and positive response rate to this consultation exercise:
- 2400 questionnaires from customers
 - 81 questionnaires from Parish and Town Councils (30% response rate). Two District Councils responded separately.
 - 63 responses from 162 care homes (38% response rate)
- 3.7. Customers think very highly of the Mobile Library Service. Over 90% said they would accept a four week service, albeit reluctantly in some cases and

nearly 60% of customers in the rural areas said they were prepared to travel further to get to a mobile library stop.

- 3.8 The Parish and Town Council consultation has been used to help identify which stops to use for the proposed new service. It will also be used to identify where there are volunteers already set up in the community to deliver books to customers unable to get to the new stops.
- 3.9 From the responses received from care homes, residents board the vehicle at only around 35% of the care homes visited. Whilst 20% of respondents would not be able to accept volunteers delivering books, 80% were positive about this option. Only six Managers expressed an interest in paying an annual subscription for the regular delivery of a collection of library books. 80% of care homes stated there was access to the internet, although in many places the facility is for office use only. Where Activity Co-ordinators have internet access then it is possible for them to search the library catalogue online and reserve specific titles for residents.
- 3.10 In addition to the questionnaires, the first consultation exercise included discussion with staff currently employed in the Mobile Library Service and Union representatives.

4. Priorities for the Mobile Library Service

- 4.1. In September 2009 the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation agreed a set of priorities for the Mobile Library Service. These were reviewed during the consultation period and slimmed down to take account of the need to make significant savings to the running costs of the Service. The revised priorities for the Mobile Library Service are now:-
 - Isolated rural communities – where there is very limited / no public transport and the residents do not have good access to their own transport.
 - Rural sheltered accommodation located where public transport links are poor.
 - Individuals who are housebound.

5. Second Consultation Exercise

- 5.1. A second consultation exercise started on 14 January, setting out details of where the proposed new stops for the Mobile Library Service would be. Over and above the priorities for the service set out in 4.1 above, there were two criteria which determined where the stops would be:
 1. Stops would only continue to communities outside two miles from a static library.
 2. There would only be one stop per community, unless the community was particularly spread out.
- 5.2. By applying these two criteria, it was proposed that the number of stops would be reduced from 1200 to 344 at a cost of about £350,000 per year, a

full year saving of £550,000 to £600,000. The number of vehicles would reduce too, from 19 to six, but each one would be 'on the road' for 48 hours per week, including Saturdays, rather than 30-35 hours as at present. For the first time a minimum usage figure was proposed of 10 people for a 20 minute stop and 30 people for a stop of an hour.

- 5.3. For the Care Homes, the proposals were to cease visits from a mobile vehicle and to work with the Managers/Activity Co-ordinators to supply a library service, sometimes using trained volunteers to undertake room visits.
- 5.4. Recognising the need to train and manage more volunteers to provide a Home Library Service for customers who are unable to reach the new stops and have no one else able to visit the nearest library or mobile stop for them, the proposals suggested creating three new Volunteer Co-ordinator roles.
- 5.5. It was also proposed that the number of staff required would be 8.73 full time equivalent. This included the three Volunteer Co-ordinator posts. This was a decrease of 18.27 full time equivalent posts, from the existing Mobile Library Service.
- 5.6. The second consultation phase, which included discussions with staff and Union representatives, ended on 14 February and, by then, 146 emails and 53 letters had been received, 199 in total. These were:
 - 73 specific about public stops.
 - 61 sheltered accommodation or care home related, plus one petition signed by 41 residents in a sheltered accommodation complex.
 - 17 about the Family Library Link Service in Leigh Park plus two petitions signed by around 100 customers.
 - 11 general comments against the proposals.
 - 8 general comments supporting the proposals.
 - 10 queries from Parish Councils.
 - 8 from playgroups (7 from one playgroup).

The rest were questions about the details of the proposals.

6. Final Proposals

6.1. Public Mobile Library Service

- 6.1.1 Following detailed analysis of all the comments received, and from meetings with the mobile drivers, 31 stops have been deleted (including three duplicate stops included by mistake) and 52 stops have been added, an extra 21 stops from the proposals announced in January of 344 stops. These are all listed in Appendix 1 and total 365 stops.
- 6.1.2 The minimum length of stop will be 20 minutes with the majority being between 30 – 40 minutes. There will be no more individual stops, i.e. where just one person gets on the vehicle. The Service will be provided by

five mobile library vehicles, with one kept fully stocked as a spare to cover when one of the other four vehicles is off the road for more than one day. Once the final proposals have been agreed by the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation, details of the individual routes and timings will be worked out.

- 6.1.3 Most of the public Mobile Library Service stops will operate on a four-week schedule for 48 weeks of the year. There will be two weeks off the road over Christmas and a further two weeks off the road for vehicle servicing and staff training. The Service will operate over six days per week, including Saturdays.
 - 6.1.4 Stops of 2–3 hours in larger rural communities such as Wickham, Liss and Hook will continue to operate on a 1-2 week schedule, as they do now. The change will be that these stops will be undertaken by the same vehicles as the other public mobile library stops (10 tonnes), rather than the larger 14 tonne vehicles at present, which are too large to get round some of Hampshire's smaller roads. It is also more efficient to use the same four vehicles to cover all the stops.
 - 6.1.5 Usage of the service will be closely monitored and reviewed after 12 months. If there are consistently less than 10 customers per 20-40 minute stop and 50 customers at the longer stops of 2-3 hours, then the stop may cease to exist in a year's time. A comprehensive Marketing Plan will be implemented to promote the new Service, working in conjunction with Parish and Town Councils and others.
 - 6.1.6 The Mobile Library Service's stock will be the top priority for the Stock Team for 2011/12. It is proposed that the current Service will cease on Friday 24 June and the following week be used to take all the existing stock off the vehicles and replace new stock in the four vehicles that will be kept to deliver the new service from 4 July 2011. The week will also be used for the drivers to learn the new routes. In order to free up as much room as possible on the vehicles for reading and audio books, the mobile vehicles will not carry DVDs or CDs, neither of which are well-used.
 - 6.1.7 In addition to keeping the five 10-tonne vehicles to provide the Public Mobile Library Service, the Library and Information Service will keep one of the 14-tonne vehicles to be used as a library when a static library is closed for refurbishment. The Library and Information Service has been criticised in the past for not always providing an alternative service when a static library is closed, so keeping a vehicle to do this will help counteract this criticism in the future.
- 6.2 Care Homes
- 6.2.1 38% of the Care Homes responding to the survey receive a collection of books for use by their residents. This means of provision, in the main with books delivered by a large mobile library vehicle, is inefficient. Although there are exceptions, feedback from the Care Homes also indicates that the use of the book collection is not very high. This is partly due to the fact that when residents have been unable to board the vehicle, the library staff have undertaken individual visits to the rooms of library customers, a

practice that appears to be unique to Hampshire. Whilst valued by the residents, this Service could be delivered in other ways.

- 6.2.2 One option is the Good Neighbour Scheme where a friend, family member or indeed a neighbour can register with the local library to exchange books on behalf of the library customer. There is also Home Library Service delivered by volunteers who could deliver books to residents in the same way as they already visit people who cannot get to the library but are still residing independently at home.
- 6.2.3 It is recommended that the current Mobile Library Service to Care Homes ceases. Apart from the options already mentioned, feedback from the consultation suggests that Care Home Managers and Activity Coordinators are interested in a Group library membership where someone is responsible for selecting and collecting books from their nearest library. In response to this suggestion, group membership will be a further alternative means of accessing library material.

6.3 Sheltered Accommodation

- 6.3.1 The current Mobile Library Service will be maintained for sheltered housing locations more than 2 miles from a library.
- 6.3.2 For sheltered housing with a library within 2 miles, it is recommended that the Mobile Library Service ceases to visit. The same options as those available for residents of Care Homes will also be possible for people living in sheltered accommodation. They are Group library membership, the Good Neighbour Scheme or Home Library Service delivered by volunteers.
- 6.3.3 Following feedback from the consultation, the Library and Information Service has also started to explore ways in which residents of sheltered accommodation might make better use of local community transport arrangements to get to the nearest library. Furthermore representatives of some local Residents' Associations have expressed interest in supporting library customers in future by enabling them to visit the local library and select their reading material. These are both potential solutions which could have the additional positive benefit of helping to prevent social isolation from the rest of the community.

6.4. Home Library Service

- 6.4.1 Currently this service is provided by both Library and Information Service staff and volunteers. The service is very mixed with Hampshire residents in different areas being offered varying types of service.
- 6.4.2 In order to provide a consistent level of service across the county, and recognising that some existing customers will not be able to reach the new stops, or have no-one living locally to borrow books for them, the Libraries & Information Service will be putting more resources into the Home Library Service and creating three full-time Volunteer Co-ordinators posts. The intention is to increase the numbers of customers receiving a Home Library Service by a trained volunteer, although it is recognised that it will take time to expand capacity.

6.4.3 The current Home Library Service team based in Fareham (1.81 full-time equivalent being 3 members of staff) will be retained at the moment to deliver the service in the Fareham/Gosport area. This recognises that, with over 200 home visits, it would not be possible to find and train enough volunteers to deliver the Service by July 2011. The team's vehicle, 2.8 tonnes, will also be retained and the Service will be reviewed after 12 months.

6.5 Family Library Service

6.5.1 This Service is provided by one vehicle, based in Leigh Park, which goes out to playgroups, children's centres and so on. It is run by two members of staff, 1.66 full-time equivalent posts.

6.5.2 At Full Council on 24 February, the Leader of the Country Council stated that he would find the funding to keep the Family Library Service going. The Library and Information Service will be talking to the two staff concerned about this as soon as possible, but it will probably mean that they are not in the Mobile Library Service review and that their jobs are now not at risk.

6.5 Mobile Vehicles

6.5.1 There are currently 19 Mobile Library Service Vehicles:

- 4 will be used to deliver the new Mobile Library Service
- 1 will be kept as a spare
- 1 will be kept for library refurbishments
- 1 will be kept for the Home Library Service in Fareham/Gosport
- 1 will be kept for the Family Library Service

Total = 8 vehicles

- 6 vehicles have come to the end of their lease agreement and will be returned in July at no cost to the Library and Information Service.
- 5 vehicles are left which have two to nearly six years left on their 10-year lease, and would cost between £15,000 and £71,000 to give back now. The Library and Information Service will look to sub-lease these vehicles to other library authorities. There has already been some interest in them from five library authorities and this interest will now be actively pursued, subject to the approval of the Executive Member.

6.6 Mobile Library Service Staff

6.6.1 The original proposal in January 2011 specified the need for 8.73 full-time equivalent Mobile Library Service staff, of which 5.73 were drivers (including a Relief Driver), and three were Volunteer Co-ordinators. As a result of the consultation, the number of drivers has increased to 7. This will provide time for drivers, working in their base library, to carry out work associated with reservations, stock circulation etc. Posts for three

Volunteer Co-ordinators remain unchanged; a total of 10 full-time equivalent posts. Currently, there are 33 staff (26.41 full-time equivalent) in the Mobile Library Service, which means that 16.41 full-time equivalent staff will be put at risk as a result of this review. If the two Family Library Service staff are taken out of the review (see 6.5.2 above), there would be 31 staff (24.75 full-time equivalent) in the review which means that 14.75 full-time equivalent staff will be put at risk as a result of this review.

- 6.6.2 To reduce the risk of compulsory redundancies, existing staff have been invited to express an interest in voluntary redundancy and voluntary redeployment to a role in a static library. Compulsory redundancy will be treated as a last resort and redeployment support across the County Council will be provided to any members of staff who are potentially at risk after selection.
- 6.6.3 The mobile drivers in the new Mobile Library Service will be part of the library staff team at their base library. Training for the mobile drivers will be built into the new rotas right from the start, something that has not been possible to do effectively before.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Currently, the Mobile Library Service costs £960,000 per year to run, plus the costs of the stock. It is estimated that these proposals will result in savings of approximately £550,000-£600,000. With implementation due to commence on 4 July 2011, savings for 2011/12 are estimated to be approximately £325,000-£375,000, subject to the one-off costs that will arise from redundancies and pension costs.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 That the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation approves the final proposals for the Mobile Library Service, as set out in Appendix 1 and 6.1 to 6.6 above. This will result in providing a service to 365 stops around Hampshire, mainly on a four-week schedule with a target of at least 10 customers per 20-40 minute stop and 50 customers at longer stops of 2-3 hours. The new Service also will increase the number of volunteers in the Home Library Service, but will cease visits to Care Homes and to sheltered accommodation within two miles of a static library. A total of eight vehicles will be required and 10 full time equivalent staff. The new Mobile Library Service will start on 4 July 2011 and will be reviewed after 12 months.

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:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Restructure of the Library Service Phase 2 – Review of the Mobile Library Service	<u>Reference</u> 2139	<u>Date</u> 11 October 2010
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>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.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 8.2 An Equalities and Impact Assessment has been completed to evaluate the impact of the reorganisation and restructure on staff and on existing customers. The Mobile Library Service customers tend to be older, and are mainly women with higher levels of disability than the Hampshire population and therefore will potentially be adversely impacted by the proposals. Actions have been put in place in the review, such as working with Town and Parish Councils and increasing the number of volunteers in the Home Library Service to provide a service for those unable to get to the new stops.

9 Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 9.1 N/A

10 Climate Change:

- 10.1.1 How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Reducing the size of the vehicle fleet and making their routes more efficient will contribute towards reducing the County Council's Carbon Dioxide emissions.

- 10.1.2 How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?