

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Culture and Recreation
Date:	11 October 2010
Title:	Restructure of the Library Service, Phase 2 – Review of the Mobile Library Service
Reference:	2139
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to seek the approval of the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation for a wide ranging consultation about the future shape of the Mobile Library Service within current known financial constraints, including the need to make 8% savings in 2011/12. The consultation will include customers, mobile library staff, District, Town and Parish Councils and the Managers of nursing and residential homes. Following the first round of consultation the Library and Information Service will draw up actual proposals for the Mobile Library Service for 2011/12 onwards, for consultation before a final report is made to the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation in early 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. This includes visits to nursing and residential homes and visits to those who are housebound. In addition, the School Library Service has three vehicles which visit schools during the term time. This review focuses on the Mobile Library Service.
- 2.2. The Mobile Library Service has been operating in Hampshire for over 40 years and it is likely, in that time, that it has never had a comprehensive review and it certainly has not been reviewed since in its entirety since 1997. At the same time, demand for the service has decreased significantly over the last 10 years, whilst costs have increased. The Service, in its current format, is neither efficient nor sustainable and some difficult decisions will need to be made about the scale of the future Mobile Library Service in 2011/12 and beyond.

3. Mobile Vehicles

- 3.1. All of the mobile vehicles are on 10-year leases which have been arranged via Hampshire Transport Management. The 10-year leases have been arranged over a period of time and therefore the expiry dates for the vehicles are spread over the next five years, as show below:

Number of vehicles	Expiry date of 10-year leasing agreement:
7	On or before end of March 2011
2	27 April 2012
3	26 May 2015
4	27 April 2016
3	26 April 2017

- 3.2. There are significant financial penalties for returning vehicles before the end of their 10 year leases ranging from £12,000 per vehicle for those due back in 2011 to over £90,000 per vehicle for those due back in 2017.

4. Use of the Mobile Library Service

- 4.1. The usage of the Mobile Service has declined in recent years with visits going down from 266,000 in 2004/05 to 204,000 in 2009/10 and book issues going down from 888,000 in 2004/05 to 543,000 in 2009/10. These represent declines of 23% and 39% respectively and are similar to figures from other Library Authorities.
- 4.2. The causes of these reductions include:
- an increasing number of people in work and therefore unable to visit a mobile library during normal day-time hours;
 - an increase in vehicle ownership enabling people to travel to static libraries;
 - a decrease in the price of books with the result that more people buy books on-line or in shops and supermarkets;
 - the mobile library vehicle not being in the area at a time most convenient to potential customers.
- 4.3. These figures also need to be seen in the context that the marketing and promotion of the Library and Information Service has concentrated on Discovery Centres, static libraries, events and e-books, rather than on the Mobile Library Service. Most recently this has been due to the impending review of the Service.

5. Priorities of the Mobile Public Library Service

5.1. In September 2009 the Executive Member for Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs agreed a framework for the future provision of library services in Hampshire.¹ Amongst other things, this report set out the priorities for the Mobile Library Service which are to reach:-

- Isolated rural communities – where there is very limited/no public transport and the residents do not have good access to their own transport because of child commitments, age, infirmity, affordability etc ²
- Priority areas of urban deprivation
- Pre-school and children's centres
- Residential and nursing homes
- Sheltered accommodation located where public transport links are poor
- Individuals who are housebound

5.2. The Mobile Library Service is itself divided into four sections which serve different Hampshire communities. These are:-

- 1) Mobile Public Library Service
- 2) Community Library Service
- 3) Home Library Service
- 4) Family Library Service

6. Mobile Public Library Service

6.1. This is the largest part of the Mobile Library Service and consists of 11 vehicles which mainly visit Hampshire's rural areas with some visits to urban areas as well. Two of the vehicles have satellite links which enable customers to access the internet from the vehicle and the Library Service staff to instantly update the library computer system. The staff on the other vehicles can only update the computer system at the end of each day at their static library base. Some of the vehicles are double staffed, but most are single staffed. The schedules for the vehicles varies with six vehicles being off the road one day a week for cleaning/stock rotation whilst five are off the road one day a fortnight for cleaning/stock rotation.

6.2. During this autumn all the mobile public library stops will be assessed against the priorities listed in 5.1 above. As part of the review the Library and Information Service will undertake a public consultation exercise with

¹ <I:\Recreation and Heritage\Shared\Committee Reports\R & H Decision Days\2009\0909 10 September 2009\900 EM CCRA Outline Prop for Improved Library Services - Report.doc>

² This is defined as being in excess of two miles from a static library. If there are good public transport links (i.e. regular buses during the day time) mobile stops will be further away from a static library.

existing mobile customers, District, Town and Parish Councils and others to seek their views. The Service needs to provide the most effective mobile service for Hampshire's communities, whilst, at the same time, making cost reductions. This means that:

- 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 Service would aim to stop at times that coincide with an existing local activity such as coffee mornings, lunch clubs or after school sessions.
- Stops should be a minimum of 20 minutes. (Currently some stops are only 5-10 minutes).
- Visits may be made on a three or four week schedule, rather than fortnightly.
- For customers unable to reach the future mobile stops due to mobility issues, the Home Library Service would seek to deliver books and audio books direct to their homes with trained volunteers.
- The mobile vehicles will be manned by one member of staff.

6.3. The consultation will be used to amplify the statistics the Library and Information Service has compiled on a number of customers per stop and will help to shape the final plans including routes, stop timings and so on, within budgetary constraints.

6.4. There are obvious staffing implications in these proposals and the mobile library staff and the Unions are being consulted at the same time.

7. Community Library Service

7.1. The Community Library Service mainly visits nursing and residential homes; some of the homes are run by the County Council, but most are privately run.

7.2. The service is currently provided by four vehicles and all are double staffed. They mainly visit 120 nursing and residential homes offering a combination of a limited number of individual visits to the mobile vehicle, room visits and delivery/collection of a selection of books for use by residents. These visits occur on a monthly or six monthly cycle.

7.3. Benchmarking with other Library Services indicates that Hampshire is the only library service to undertake room visits. Whilst the room visits are greatly appreciated by the residents in the homes, the visits are very time consuming and the library staff can only stay with each customer for a limited time. One option under consideration is to continue the room visits using volunteers. This could mean that there would be no specific visit by a

mobile vehicle to nursing and residential homes. The Library and Information Service will consult with the Managers of the residential and nursing homes about the future of the service and, where practicable, with the customers themselves.

- 7.4. The review of the service to the nursing and residential homes will also include the effectiveness of deposit collections (whereby a box of books are delivered to each home two/three times a year to go into their lounges). The review will also consider whether the homes should be charged for the service in the future, something that some other Library Authorities have done or whether to discontinue deposit collections altogether.

8. Home Library Service

- 8.1. This service is provided by both Library and Information Service staff and volunteers. The staff drive three vehicles with a mixture of single and double staffing which mainly visit sheltered accommodation, some residential and nursing homes and individual visits to housebound residents who are in their own homes.
- 8.2. The Home Library Service volunteers deliver books etc to the housebound, often choosing the books themselves from the nearest static library. In the New Forest the Library and Information Service has an arrangement with the local WRVS to deliver books at the same time as meals and there may well be scope to explore this arrangement more widely across Hampshire.
- 8.3. At the moment the Home Library Service is very mixed across the county with different areas offering different levels of home service, some using volunteers whilst others have found it difficult to find volunteers to support this service.
- 8.4. An in-depth review of the existing library service is currently underway and its findings and proposals for improvement will be incorporated into this proposal for the future Mobile Service. One option is to continue the service with volunteers undertaking visits to the housebound and not using Library and Information Service staff. If this were to happen the transfer would have to be managed very carefully and would probably need to be phased in over a period of time.

9. Family Library Service

- 9.1. This service is provided by one vehicle, based in Leigh Park, which goes out to playgroups, children's centres and so on. The vehicle is fitted out with children's books and resources and it operates during term time and the school summer holidays, visiting low literacy areas in the Havant, Fareham and Gosport areas.

10. Provision of a Mobile Service to Other Library Authorities

- 10.1. The Library and Information Service already has a Service Level Agreement with Portsmouth City Council's Library Service to provide a Mobile Public Library service to the north Portsmouth area. There may be scope to extend this type of arrangement to other nearby Library Authorities and discussions are already underway with one other authority to see if this is possible.

11. Provision of a Mobile Service for Other County Council Services

- 11.1. Discussions have been had with other County Council services about using Mobile Library Service to reach Hampshire residents in the more remote areas of the county. Whilst other services have expressed an interest in doing this, none are ready to commit to the concept at the moment. This review of the Mobile Library Service does not preclude working with the services in the future.

12. Summary

- 12.1. Hampshire's Mobile Library Service is a much loved and highly valued service, but, with a significant decline in usage and the need to make budget savings, a fundamental review is required. Before any decisions are made, a wide-ranging public consultation exercise will be undertaken to seek the views of existing customers, Mobile Library Service staff, District, Town and Parish Councils and the Managers of residential and nursing homes.
- 12.2. The Library and Information Service is very aware that the Mobile Library Service and Home Library Service, in particular, provides a service to some of the most vulnerable people in Hampshire and any changes in the way the service was delivered would need to be managed very carefully.
- 12.3. There is scope to work more closely with volunteers and there are obvious links with the Coalition government's proposals for the 'Big Society' whereby local communities are encouraged to get more involved in the delivery of services in their local area.

13. Recommendation(s)

- 13.1. It is recommended that the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation approves the proposals set out in the report to consult mobile library customers, the staff, Town and Parish Councils and others on the future of the Mobile Library Service, recognising that the cost of running the service needs to be cut significantly.

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):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Outline Proposal for Improved Library Services	<u>Reference</u> 900 EM	<u>Date</u> 10 Sept 2009
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

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. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. A full assessment will be done when the revised proposals are being considered.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. N/A

3. Climate Change:

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