

Supplementary Information

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (LIFELONG LEARNING): 16 MARCH 2015

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 9 MARCH 2015

C2680 REVIEW OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (AS) (SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – LIFELONG LEARNING) –

Before presenting his report, the Cabinet Member for Adult Services tabled a replacement appendix D to the report that contained amendments to Library closing and opening times, along with a letter that he had received from Councillor J. James. He confirmed that other letters and emails in support of the Libraries had been received by Cabinet Members and Councillors.

He also confirmed that the Council had received a 2000+ signature petition from Unison that was delivered to the Council earlier in the day. One of the headlines of the petition stated;

“To say no to volunteer run libraries – The Council has £40 Million in Reserves which should be used to safeguard the libraries at this present time until alternatives have been thoroughly researched”

In response to this headline the Cabinet Member for Adult Services commented that the majority of the Council’s reserves were earmarked for other projects. He further explained that other Councils had overturned their decision to close their libraries, but in his opinion this would only be a short term solution.

He stated that the Council was facing 24.7 million pounds in savings over the next 3 years, therefore, there was no alternative but to make necessary cuts to services. He further commented that austerity measures had affected all Councils and Library services across the country.

Finally, he explained, that the administration did not want to close libraries but would like to work closely with all communities in all five areas identified in the

proposals to try and find ways of working together to develop Community Led Libraries so they would not have to close but would be managed by the relevant communities.

At the meeting the Cabinet Member for Regeneration commented that it was very challenging to protect services in these times of austerity, however the proposals set out in the report would support communities to develop Expressions of Interest and Business cases to run their own Community Led Library.

At the meeting the Cabinet Member for Visible and Leisure Services commented that, he came on the Council to deliver not cut services however, he further commented that his portfolio had been affected due to cutbacks of funding from Westminster to Welsh Government then to Local Councils which would result in a £400 million loss across Wales next year.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools commented that he had attended the drop in session and public meeting in Rhose and he explained at each session that the Council had to make savings due to cuts and that this put the Council in an impossible situation, however he was hopeful that by working with local communities it would be possible to keep the libraries open as Community Led Libraries.

At the meeting the Cabinet Member for Housing, Building Maintenance and Community Safety commented that the recommendations outlined in the report presented the best chance to keep the libraries open. The recommendations had been thought through carefully and presented the opportunity for local communities to work with the Council in keeping the libraries open.

Finally, in closing the Leader commented that it was not a good time to be in Local Government, but in these difficult times the status quo was not an option. The Council had to look at providing services in a more effective way and had to be open and honest about the amount of money that was available to be spent on services.

He further explained that the Council had consulted with communities and that through this report, the Council sought Expressions of Interest in working with the Council to save the libraries by becoming Community Led Libraries and that these Expressions of Interest were to be sent to the Director of Learning and Skills by 18 May, 2015.

He also explained that the Council was willing to provide appropriate and proportionate support to help those organisations that came forward to discuss their proposals. He also commented that Community Led Libraries could access funds that were not available to the Council.

In closing the Leader commented that this was not a decision that was taken lightly and had been in review since September 2013 and that he hoped that every library could remain operational.

Cabinet considered the outcome of consultation on proposals arising from the Library Strategy.

Substantial savings to the Council's Budget were necessary in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18. The latest projections estimated that these would equate to a reduction of approximately £24.7 million in total over the next three years. Failure to deliver the required savings was not an option for the Council. It was against a backdrop requiring savings that the review of library services in the Vale was undertaken. If fully implemented it was anticipated that the Library Strategy would deliver savings in the region of £578k over the two year period 2015/16 to 2016/17. A breakdown of the estimated net savings was attached at Appendix E to the report.

At the Cabinet meeting of 11 August, 2014 eleven of fourteen recommendations arising from a review of library services were approved. It was agreed to consult on three further, and more significant, proposed changes to library services:

- The development of community led libraries in St Athan, Dinas Powys, Sully, Wenvoe and Rhoose.
- Reduced library opening hours in Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major.
- Relocating library services in St Athan.

The consultation which focussed on these three proposed changes began on 13 October, 2014 and closed on 31 December, 2014. To ensure that stakeholders had access to all of the information required to make informed comments on the strategy a comprehensive consultation document was produced, and was attached at Appendix A to the report. The document set out the findings of the library review, the rationale for the proposed changes, and also offered information on how the Council believed these could be implemented. In addition the full strategy was made available, along with performance and usage data for each library in the Vale, and a report

produced by the Arts Council for England highlighted successful alternative delivery models for library services. The consultation document also included three separate questionnaires; one for each proposal, and was made available to Vale residents and library users on-line via the Council's website and in paper form at each of the Vale's libraries.

During the consultation period a series of drop-in sessions were hosted at each of the Vale's libraries. These sessions were designed to help promote the consultation and offer residents the opportunity to discuss the strategy and consultation process with senior officers from the Learning and Skills Directorate.

A full analysis of the consultation results was attached at Appendix B to the report.

Responses to part 1 of the consultation; the introduction of community led libraries, demonstrated that the views of residents varied greatly across the Vale which suggested that the viability of community libraries would also vary between communities. The results suggested that community led facilities would be viable in Dinas Powys, St Athan and Wenvoe. However, the data gathered suggested that such a facility would not garner significant support in Sully and clearly indicated that the establishment of a community library in Rhoose would not be welcomed.

Given that the status quo was not an option and the alternative for the libraries at Dinas Powys, Rhoose, Wenvoe, St Athan and Sully was closure, it was advised that all five communities be offered the opportunity to make a successful transition to a community led library. To progress the implementation of this proposal, the following steps were recommended:

- Seek formal Expressions of Interest which were to be submitted by 18 May, 2015.
- In the event an Expression of Interest was not received for any one of the libraries, the library in question would close.
- Upon receipt of one or more Expressions of Interest, the community group concerned would be asked to submit a business case for running the library by 12 July, 2015.
- In the event a business case was not received for a particular library, the library in question would close.
- An evaluation of the submitted business cases was reported to Cabinet in early autumn 2015. In the event where a business case was considered unviable, the library in question would close.

The timetable for the establishment of each community library where a viable business case was developed would be clarified as part of the evaluation of the business case. Whilst it was likely that the development of community libraries would continue over a period of time the preferred timetable would be to launch the libraries in the spring of 2016. A range of support would be provided or commissioned by the Council for any community group requesting such support, such as:

- Advice and guidance on becoming a constituted organisation.
- Recruitment (including DBS checks) and training of volunteers.
- On-going provision and rotation of book stock.
- Transfer of all fixtures and fittings including ICT equipment.
- On-going provision of peripatetic professional librarian support.

The second part of the consultation focused on proposed changes to the library opening hours. The consultation document included the following statement: *The Vale of Glamorgan is seeking to reduce the cost of running Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth Libraries by at least 40.5 hours a week. This will significantly reduce the cost of running each library and so create a sustainable service for the future.* Respondents were asked to select one of four potential options and were also offered the opportunity for residents to suggest any other ways library opening hours could be reduced. Analysis of the consultation responses showed a clear preference for reduced opening hours at all libraries with varied opening and closing times to allow for at least one late evening a week.

The schedule of opening hours for each of the town libraries, was attached at Appendix D to the report, had been proposed in response to the views expressed during the consultation exercise. The proposals showed an overall reduction of 41 hours achieved by adjusting the opening and closing times each day whilst maintaining one late evening at each library. In order to meet the savings target for 2015/16 it was proposed that the revised opening hours were implemented from 1 June, 2015.

Responses to the third part of the consultation about the relocation of St Athan Library were inconclusive. Whilst a number of respondents made suggestions about alternative locations there was no consensus of opinion. It was proposed that future consideration of the location of the library in St Athan be tied in with discussions with any groups expressing an interest in running a community led library in the area.

A number of suggestions to enhance the service and the use of library buildings were put forward during the consultation some of which were

already being progressed such as the establishment of 'friends of' groups to support the libraries at Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major. Other common suggestions included the introduction of a coffee shop, leasing or sharing library buildings with other organisations and facilitating community use of libraries outside of opening hours. These suggestions would be explored further and a report brought to a future Cabinet meeting to progress any further developments.

This was a matter for Executive decision

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the analysis of responses to the recent consultation on three proposals put forward in the Library Strategy, attached at Appendix B to the report, be noted and regard be given to the Equality Impact Assessments attached at Appendix C to the report.
- (2) T H A T the reconfiguration of opening hours as set out in the revised tabled Appendix D, for the libraries at Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major be approved and implemented with effect from 1 June, 2015.
- (3) T H A T the proposal to seek Expressions of Interest from groups interested in developing a community led library in Dinas Powys, Rhoose, St Athan, Wenvoe or Sully with a deadline for submission of 18 May, 2015 be endorsed. Cabinet and Officers would be prepared to meet with any group to discuss any proposals that they intend to submit.
- (4) T H A T in relation to recommendation 3 above, should it be requested, appropriate and proportionate support be given to assist those groups or individuals in helping them develop their Expression of Interest for submission by 18 May, 2015. Expressions of Interest are to be sent to the Director of Learning and Skills.
- (5) T H A T in the event an Expression of Interest is not received for any one of the libraries listed in Recommendation 3 above, delegated authority be granted to the Director of Learning and Skills in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Services to take all action necessary to close the relevant library or libraries.

- (6) T H A T if one or more Expressions of Interest to run a community library or libraries as listed in recommendation 3 above, is received by 18 May, 2015, delegated authority be granted to the Director of Learning and Skills in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Services to consider whether or not the groups or individuals expressing such an interest be requested to submit a business case for the running of the library or libraries by 12 July, 2015.
- (7) T H A T in relation to recommendation 6 above, should it be requested, appropriate and proportionate support be given to assist those groups or individuals in helping them develop their robust business cases for submission by 12 July, 2015.
- (8) T H A T it be agreed that, provided one or more Expressions of Interest to run a community library in St Athan was received by 18 May, 2015 and subject to recommendation 6 & 7 above, it be agreed, if necessary, to have discussions with any party expressing an interest in establishing a community library in the St Athan area and on its location.
- (9) T H A T subject to the outcome of Recommendation 6, 7 and 8 above, a further report on the evaluation of any submitted business cases be reported to Cabinet in the Autumn of 2015.
- (10) T H A T in line with the recommendations (1-9) above, the Director of Learning and Skills, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adult Services, be given delegated authority to develop and implement a phased restructure of the library service to support implementation of the recommendations, subject to consultation with staff and the relevant trade unions.
- (11) T H A T the report be referred to the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) for consideration.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To note the responses to the consultation and the Equality Impact Assessments prior to deciding next steps.

- (2) To enable a reduction in overall opening hours resulting in a more efficient and sustainable service for the future.
- (3) To assess the interest and intent of groups in the development of community led libraries.
- (4) To ensure each community group has access to a range of advice, guidance and support when developing its Expression of Interest.
- (5) To provide clarity over the future of the library in question and to ensure that financial savings targets are met.
- (6) To ensure that group plans are viable before progressing to the next stage in the development of community led libraries.
- (7) To ensure each community group has access to a range of advice, guidance and support when developing its business case.
- (8) To provide clarity over the future of the library in question and to ensure that financial savings targets are met.
- (9) To afford Cabinet the opportunity to consider submitted plans.
- (10) To ensure that the proposals are progressing in and where necessary in accordance with the Council's avoiding redundancy policy.
- (11) To ensure the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) is consulted and comments on the recommendations contained in this report.

Opening hours

The following proposed changes to opening hours at the town libraries have been framed to reflect the consultation responses received (refer to the consultation report, Appendix A, for detail).

A reduction of 41 opening hours a week is proposed at 4 libraries, namely Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth. This will reduce the current 218 opening hours a week for main libraries in the Vale to 177 hours and is achieved by later opening and earlier closing most days of the week. There is still however provision of one different late night at each library until 7pm. The late night keeps to the same days of the week as previously on the draft proposals but there will be value in reconsidering which is the best night for each location.

Analysis of library use has shown that library customers are least likely to visit at the start and end of the day but it was felt necessary to keep libraries open at least one day a week until 7pm to give access to people who work during the day.

The new opening hour proposals enable the library service to provide a service more closely matched to needs of users and at the same time help the service deliver savings. The following proposals are made for revised opening hours.

Barry

Hours will reduce by 12 hours to 48 hours per week from the original 60 hours opening. This is achieved by opening one hour later at 9.30am and closing at 5.30pm on most days, apart from the late night when they close at 7pm and Saturdays when they close at 4pm.

| | New Hours | Hours open | Current |
|-----------|-------------|------------|----------|
| Monday | 9.30 – 7.00 | 9.5 | 8.30 - 8 |
| Tuesday | 9.30 – 5.30 | 8 | 8.30 – 6 |
| Wednesday | 9.30 – 5.30 | 8 | 8.30 - 6 |
| Thursday | 9.30 – 5.30 | 8 | 8.30 - 8 |
| Friday | 9.30 – 5.30 | 8 | 8.30 - 6 |
| Saturday | 9.30 - 4 | 6.5 | 9 – 5.30 |

Cowbridge

Opening hours will reduce by 9.5 hours to 43 hours per week from the original 52.5 hours opening. This is achieved by opening half an hour later at 10am and closing at 5pm on most days, apart from the late night when they close at 7pm and Saturdays when they close at 4pm.

| | Proposed | Hours open | Current |
|-----------|----------|------------|----------|
| Monday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Tuesday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Wednesday | 10 – 7 | 9 | 9.30 - 8 |
| Thursday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Friday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Saturday | 10 - 4 | 6.5 | 9 - 5 |

Llantwit Major

Opening hours match those at Cowbridge and will reduce by 9.5 hours to 43 hours per week from the original 52.5 hours opening. This is achieved by opening half an hour later at 10am and closing at 5pm on most days, apart from the late night when they close at 7pm and Saturdays when they close at 4pm.

| | Proposed | Hours open | Current |
|-----------|------------------------|------------|----------|
| Monday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Tuesday | 10 – 7 | 9 | 9.30 - 7 |
| Wednesday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Thursday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 7 |
| Friday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Saturday | 9.30 10 - 4 | 6.5 | 9 - 5 |

Penarth Library

The new opening hours at Penarth match the same pattern as at Cowbridge and Llantwit Major. Opening hours will reduce by 10 hours to 43 hours per week from the original 53 hours opening. This is achieved by opening half an hour later at 10am and closing at 5pm on most days, apart from the late night when they close at 7pm and Saturdays when they close at 4pm.

| | Proposed | Hours open | Current |
|-----------|------------------------|------------|----------|
| Monday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Tuesday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Wednesday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Thursday | 10 – 7 | 9 | 9.30 - 8 |
| Friday | 10 – 5 | 7 | 9.30 - 6 |
| Saturday | 9.30 10 - 4 | 6.5 | 9 - 5 |

Dear Cabinet Members,

Rhose Library

Rhose Ward has a population of over 7,000, making it one of the largest communities in the Vale with only the Towns of Barry, Penarth and Llantwit Major having a greater population. Rhose has grown steadily over the past thirty years but over that period the Library has continued to be identified as a small rural Library, but this description has not kept pace with growth and demand. As an example the opening hours and staff have not increased to meet the obvious additional need.

It would be misleading, therefore, to think that Rhose is a small rural village and that the Library is little used such as the other libraries considered in your Library Strategy. The reality is that Rhose Library is the most used of those Libraries being considered for downgrading from professional to volunteer run.

Since the installation of computers for public use the number of older people and children using the Library has increased dramatically. Rhws School support the Library and pupils gain access between the two buildings without going outside to the road or pavement. Rhws School have objected to the proposed downgrading of the Library from professional to volunteer run.

The number of children, in line with the population, is set to substantially increase. There are 87 houses currently under construction at Trem Echni, and in addition the land to the north of the railway line has a further 700 houses allocated. Of the 700, 350 have been granted permission, and an application for a further 350 is coming before the Planning Committee on Thursday 12th March.

I maintain that the Vale a Council should be considering expanding the services, times of opening and staffing of Rhose Library to cope with this increased demand. The use of volunteers to augment the professional service would increase capacity at little additional cost.

I appreciate that budget constraints are behind this proposed action, but I reiterate that it is unfair to treat all "rural" libraries as though they are the same. Clearly Rhose is one of the most used of these libraries, and the current services provided and future potential will be severely diminished if it is run by volunteers who would have to focus a significant amount of their time on fundraising to cover the costs rather than concentrate on meeting the needs of the fastest growing community in the Vale.

It will be difficult for volunteers to provide a Library service to meet the standards laid down by the Welsh Government and indeed the Vale Council, and volunteers are unlikely to hold suitable qualifications or be appropriately experienced.

On behalf of the people of Rhose and Rhose Ward including Llancarfan, Penmark, Porthkerry, Nurston, Fonmon, East Aberthaw, Llancadle, Llantrithyd, Walterston, Moulton, Llanbethery, Llanvithyn, Pennon, Pancross, Treguff and Tre Aubrey, I invite you to reconsider the matter and recognise that Rhose Library is an exception for the reasons outlined above.

Regards,

Councillor Jeffrey James
Rhose Ward.