

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	22nd January 2016
LOCATION:	Council Chamber, Penmorfa
TITLE:	Library Service Re-design
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To consult on the options for library service re-design
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	To discuss Library re-design options following the public consultation.

BACKGROUND:

Ongoing financial pressure across the public sector means that Ceredigion County Council needs to make financial savings of £25 million over the next three years. This equates to 19% of net expenditure.

For this to be achieved, fundamental changes are required across all services, and the Council is considering increasing its charges for services, reducing service levels where possible, and re-designing the delivery of its services to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The work in reviewing the Ceredigion library service has highlighted some options that will enable the Council to build a flexible service that will be better placed to cater for the needs of the people of the county that is fit for the modern day.

The following options were presented to Cabinet on the 10th of November 2015 in order to identify a preferred option and to proceed with public and staff consultation.

Option 1.1 – Closure of Llandysul library and reduction of the mobile library fleet by two vehicles (one large and one small vehicle).

Reduce the number of static libraries to four through the closure of Llandysul. Reducing the mobile fleet by two vans, one large and one small, that will reduce the frequency of visits but maintain an acceptable level of service. The large van will continue to visit the key towns and villages but the frequency of visits would be reduced. The small van would prioritise its visits, first to the vulnerable and housebound customer and then other customers

where it is difficult to visit either a large mobile or static library. The mobile service will still meet the Welsh Government target of one visit per month.

A new large mobile has been procured through a grant fund that has a large selection of lending material and ICT facilities to enable internet access and card payment for Council services.

Option 1.2 - Closure of Llandysul library, the reduction of the mobile library fleet by one vehicle and the relocation of Cardigan library

Reduce the number of static libraries to four through the closure of Llandysul. Reducing the mobile fleet by one large vans, that will reduce the frequency of visits but maintain an acceptable level of service. A new large mobile has been procured through a grant fund that has a large selection of lending material and ICT facilities to enable internet access and card payment for Council services. The new large van will visit key towns and villages but the frequency of visits would be reduced. The small vans would continue to deliver a service to the vulnerable and housebound customer and other customers where it is difficult to visit either the large mobile or static library. The mobile service will still meet the Welsh Government target of one visit per month.

Option 2 – Closure of Llandysul and one further static library

Reduce the number of static libraries by two through the closure of Llandysul and either Cardigan, Lampeter or Aberaeron. The Mobile library service would be re-designed to provide a service for the towns where static libraries have been closed but the frequency of visits across the county would be reduced.

Option 3 – Closure all static libraries, bar Aberystwyth

Reduce the number of static libraries to one, Aberystwyth only and re-design the mobile library service to provide a service across the County but the frequency of visits to all Towns and Villages would be reduced.

At the Cabinet meeting, it was agreed that Option 1.1 and 1.2 would go out for Public consultation.

Library Service Public Consultation

The survey asked respondents to choose one of two options but only 132 respondents actually did so. However, 382 made comments, from which it was clear that the vast majority were opposed to both options provided, as can be seen from Table 1 below.

Table 1: Library service options and comments

Option 1: The closure of Llandysul library, reduction of the mobile library fleet by two vehicles and the relocation of Cardigan library to an alternative location in Cardigan Town.	42
Option 2: The closure of Llandysul library, reduction of the mobile library fleet by one vehicle and the relocation of Cardigan library to an alternative location in Cardigan Town.	90
Neither	319
Not relevant	1
Total	452
No response	24
Total number of questionnaires	476

There were many reasons given for being unhappy with the choices on offer, with some criticism over the nature of the consultation itself:

Several respondents were opposed on principle to a reduction in access to books and the possible adverse effects on literacy:

Close to half of the comments mentioned the mobile library service and its value, particularly to the elderly but also to families living in rural areas. Several respondents said that they had been using the vans for thirty years or more and were most alarmed at the prospect of cuts. Only half a dozen were willing to see a reduction in service, though one respondent would be happy to see the service disappear entirely.

Sixty-four comments stated that Llandysul library should be kept open and only two suggested that it should be closed.

The full consultation report will be reported to Cabinet on the 2nd February 2016.

Library Service Re-design

In a previous Scrutiny meeting held on the 26th November 2015, the committee members were not in favour of closing Llandysul library and asked officers to look at other option that would not include the closure of Llandysul Library.

The service has a target to achieve a minimum of £140k saving and to achieve this level it would need to reduce both the static and mobile service and reduction in staffing across all service areas.

The consultation shows that the majority were not in favour of any reduction in service, but this is not an option when the Authority needs to achieve a reduction in the budget of £25m over the next three years.

Reducing the Mobile service to three vans is achievable with the Large Van calling at all Towns and villages across the whole County, but at a reduced frequency. The two

smaller vans will be able to meet the needs of all vulnerable and customers that wish to continue with the mobile service, again with a reduced frequency of delivery

To achieve a reduction in the static mobile service, this is only achievable by closing one library and as outlined in previous reports, the recommendation is to close Llandysul. With the assistance of the Local Member, a meeting has been held to discuss the possibility of the library being run by volunteers on the same model as New Quay library. These discussion are still ongoing and information is being prepared to give the community full cost of running the service.

Consultation with Staff is currently ongoing and two vacant posts will be removed from the structure, one in Aberystwyth Library and one in School library service. Further reduction in staffing will be made in the Bibliographic service through automation of catalogue management and less stock to manage.

Next Step

A report will prepared for Cabinet to make a final decision on the options that were consulted upon.

Conclusion

Taking into account the views of the members and the public consultation, the majority would not reduce the library service from its current delivery model, but to deliver the service within the future reduced budget, there is a need to reduce the static library by one, the mobile service by a minimum of one and further reduction in staffing.

Appendices:	None
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