

North Somerset Council

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REPORT TO THE: COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE ORGANISATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 7 NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF LIBRARIES AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES (COMMUNITY ACCESS REVIEW)

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: MANDY BISHOP, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the panel receives and comments on the progress being made with regards to the delivery of the agreed outcomes of the Community Access Review.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides an update on activities to deliver the agreed outcomes of the Community Access Review (CAR). It covers the period March to October 2017.

2. POLICY

The Corporate Plan sets out the vision for North Somerset as: *a great place to live where people communities and businesses flourish*, and for the organisation to provide: *modern, efficient services and a strong voice for North Somerset*.

The review is part of the Council's transformation programme and cuts across all four themes of the programme with a particular emphasis on 'Delivering Together' and 'One Council'.

Corporate Strategies and Policies

Key internal strategic documents and will ensure these are considered as the project progresses. These documents include:

- The Medium Term Financial Plan
- The Customer Access Strategy
- The Corporate Asset Management Strategy (and Asset Management Plan)
- The Digital Access Strategy

3. DETAILS

This report provides an update on activities to deliver the outcomes agreed as part of the Community Access Review (CAR).

Staffing Structures

Following formal consultation with all library and children's centre staff and Unison, new staffing structures were implemented from 1 July 2017.

Changes to staffing structures were implemented in response to:

- The changing ways customers access services
- Demand for services
- Reduction in resources
- A desire for greater co-location of services and
- The introduction of customer self-service in six localities, opening up access to buildings and services

The changes to staffing structures resulted in:

- A reduction in the number of management and supervision posts across the two services
- The creation of some generic front line posts and supervision arrangements
- The creation of service specific roles, for example, apprenticeships and outreach positions
- Greater use of shared resourcing across the two services
- Sharing of good practice

Self-Service Arrangements

The original intention was to introduce self-service arrangements in seven localities. However, following discussion with staff and partners it was decided to go for a different arrangement in the newly created Library/Children's Centre hub in Pill. This decision was taken with the support of the local community.

Self-service will enable us to significantly increase opening hours and services. Good progress is being made in planning the implementation. Site visits have been undertaken with the contractor and colleagues in Property and Asset Management. The first site, Portishead library, is due to go live before the end of November. All six sites will be operational by the end of March 2018.

It was originally envisaged that self-service would be installed by 1 July 2017. Joint procurement of the solution with neighbouring local authorities resulted in a short delay in implementation. Joint procurement of the solution enabled the council to ensure that it secured best value.

Property Changes

The property changes to support co-location of services in Pill, Yatton and Worle were undertaken over the summer of 2017. The three sites are open and fully operational. Local communities have seen significant improvements in service provision and feedback has been very positive. Anecdotal evidence provided by staff appears to indicate that the number of service users has increased as a direct result of co-locating services.

Yatton Parish Council made the decision not to renew their lease at Yatton and it will be necessary for the council to find a new tenant.

Some minor property works were undertaken to open up access between the library and children's centre at the Healthy Living Centre. This will enable us to make greater use of our leasehold space. A library access point has been created at the Old Mixon Family Centre, opening up access to the local community. This approach is very much in keeping with good practice to develop children's centres in to family centres. A minor review of mobile library stops in south ward was undertaken at the same time.

Service transfer

Congresbury library service transferred to the parish council in July 2017. A local group of active volunteers supporting the delivery of services. There have been a few teething issues with IT solutions, that aside, the transfer has been successful.

Next Steps (November 2017 – March 2018)

- Implementation of self-service arrangements at the six localities (Worle, Yatton, Portishead, Clevedon, Long Ashton and Winscombe)
- Advertise and secure a new tenant at Yatton
- Vacated children's centres at Yatton/Pill – identify early years provider to take over the buildings and facilities
- Further consolidation of library/children's centre budgets and integration of staff teams
- On-going evaluation of services and property changes with staff groups and customers
- Sale of the vacated Worle library
- Develop options for Clevedon library – early discussions have commenced with key community partners

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Phase 1 of this review has delivered revenue savings of £500,000. £50,000 of savings have been cashed in 2016/17. The profile of the remaining savings (Ref: CC5) is as follows:

- 2017/18 £340,000
- 2018/19 £110,000 (full year impact of staff savings in 17/18).

At the Executive meeting held on 6 December 2016 it was agreed to invest £820,000 of capital in to buildings and facilities, financed through capital receipts.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are formal project governance arrangements in place. A risk log has been produced and reputational, legal and financial risk are closely monitored, managed and mitigation actions agreed.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The council produced detailed service data to help inform the consultation and engagement process. This information was published online and available to the public. Equality considerations continue to be at the centre of our on-going service re-design. We will continue to engage communities, staff and equality groups as we develop our services.

7. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

There are statutory requirements in relation to both library and children's centre services. For example the Public Library and Museums Act 1964 places a duty on library authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service which broadly speaking means a service free of charge for people who live, work or study in their area to borrow or refer to books, printed material and pictures in line with their needs and requirements.

Similarly, the Childcare Act 2006 (reinforced in the 2009 Act) requires local authorities to play an important strategic role in the provision of childcare in their area and places a duty on authorities to provide or commission children's centres.

8. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council is faces with a significant financial challenge over the next few years. The Community Access Review is one of several key transformational projects which together support the MTFP and ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

The Council is committed to the delivery of Children's Centre and Library services. The alternative to a comprehensive redesign of our front facing services is to rationalise or stop some of our local provision, to support the Council delivery of a balance budget, which is clearly not the preferred approach. In order to prevent service closures, a review of our property, staffing structures and service offer is essential to maintain provision.

AUTHOR

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reports to the Executive:

8 December 2015 - <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc27043.htm>

21 June 2016 - <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc27427.pdf>

Phase 1 – Consultation and Engagement papers

6 December 2016 - <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc27794.pdf>

Reports to the Panel:

1 November 2016 - <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc27669.pdf>

March 2017 - <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc27963.pdf>