

BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTHAMPTON LIBRARY SERVICE
DATE: 13 AUGUST 2015
RECIPIENT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Leisure will take a report to Cabinet on 18th August 2015, which outlines the results of the consultation relating to the future transformation of the Southampton Library Service and a proposal for the way forward. The papers will be published on the 10th August 2015.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

1. On the 18th November 2014 Cabinet considered a report which set out a proposed Future Focus for the Library Service and a preferred option (Option D) for the provision of libraries in the city. Option D involved:
 - City Council managed services to be operated from Bitterne Library, Central Library, Portswood Library, Woolston Library, Shirley Library and Lordshill Library.
 - The Schools Library Service would continue substantially unchanged.
 - The Virtual online Library Service would continue and opportunities would be explored to improve this overtime as outlined in the Future Focus.
 - The remaining libraries (Burgess Road, Cobbett Road, Thornhill, Millbrook and Weston) to be available for community led initiatives or for disposal where owned by the City Council.
 - This service would not include the provision of a Mobile Library Service but the Council would seek to provide deposit collections located where required around the city.
 - Designated staff within the Library Service would have a role to recruit, develop and manage volunteer programmes and partnership working to enhance the Library Service reach and impact around the city in line with the Future Focus.
 - The housebound service would continue.

2. Cabinet approved public consultation to seek views on the preferred Option D, including but not limited to:
 - The Future Focus for the Library Service and the priorities contained within.
 - The decision to continue to provide a Library Service from six City Council managed libraries plus the online virtual library and the School's Library Service.
 - The proposal to offer library buildings to community groups to develop independent community libraries prior to the consideration of disposing of the

BRIEFING PAPER

properties.

- The City Council ceasing to use the properties in which Thornhill and Millbrook Libraries are located.
- Bringing the temporary provision in Weston to an end and to seek to create the opportunity for the community to develop an independent library provision within a new unit being provided in the area
- The removal of the Mobile Library Service.

Consultees were also encouraged to suggest any alternatives or submit expressions of interest.

3. The consultation also sought to identify the impact on users of the preferred option so that the draft Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIAs) could be amended in the light of the consultation feedback to more accurately reflect the impact of the proposed changes and identify potential opportunities to mitigate this impact where possible.
4. The consultation was open to all and people were invited to feed back through the following routes:
 - A questionnaire which was available online via the Council's dedicated web page.
 - The same questionnaire was also available in paper format in all libraries, Gateway and the Civic Centre and could be sent freepost to Opinion Research Services(ORS) or posted in secure ballot boxes which were located at each library.
 - A children's on line survey designed specifically for children of primary school age which was available at the Council's dedicated web page.
 - The same survey was also available in paper format at all libraries and could be sent freepost to ORS or posted in secure ballot boxes in the libraries.
 - A young person's online survey designed specifically for young people of secondary school age which was available on the Council's dedicated web page
 - The same survey was also available in paper format at all libraries and could be sent freepost to ORS or posted in a secure ballot box in libraries.
 - Open written submissions – people had the opportunity to provide their views by writing directly to the Council or to ORS. There was also a dedicated email address that was available to receive emails as part of the consultation.
5. The consultation was promoted through a number of routes including the following :
 - Extensive local media coverage.
 - 40 e- alerts were sent to 60,000 subscribers to the Council's email marketing service (Stay Connected).
 - Emails to over 200 organisations that use the library service.
 - Posters in all the libraries.
 - Book marks given out in libraries with details of the dedicated web page.
 - Emails distributed to all head teachers in the city.
 - Emails to all organisations on the anti-poverty network.

BRIEFING PAPER

- Visits or meetings with organisations where requested to clarify the purpose and process of consultation or to gather feedback.
 - A drop in programme where the Head of Service and the lead officer for the project visited all libraries twice for two hours during the consultation process promoting the consultation and answering any questions that people had on the process.
 - The Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts signposted users to the consultation and Facebook posts were used to encourage participation.
 - Screen savers promoting the consultation were also used on the libraries peoples network computers.
 - Changes were made to the Council's web site to promote the consultation and provide easy access to the dedicated web page.
6. There were a total of 7,706 responses to the consultation, which can be broken down as follows:
- 6,441 responses to the main questionnaire
 - 976 responses to the children and young people's surveys
 - 289 written submissions (open responses not on questionnaires.)
7. The 18th August Cabinet report will provide detailed feedback on the consultation, and in the light of this set out a proposal for the way forward. These papers will be published on the 10th August 2015.

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

8. The resource, policy, financial and legal implications will be outlined in the 18th August Cabinet report.

OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:

9. Four options were outlined in detail in the Cabinet report considered on 18 November 2014, three of these options (A, B and C) were considered and rejected at that time by Members. Members approved Option D as the preferred option on which to conduct the public consultation exercise.
10. The consultation also invited views on any alternative options or expressions of interest. The details of this will be included within the 18th August 2015 Cabinet report.

Appendices/Supporting Information:

Further Information Available From:

Name: Tina Dyer-Slade
Tel: 02380 833597
E-mail: Tina.dyer-slade@southampton.gov.uk