

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 40

Brighton & Hove City
Council

Subject: Future of the Mobile Library Service
Date of Meeting: 15 November 2012
Report of: *Nigel Manvell, Acting Director of Finance*
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Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Following the decision taken at this Committee on 20 September 2012, the Mobile Library Service is due to operate until the end of March 2013.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of how the one-off funding shortfall of £17,000 for the Mobile Library for this year will be met, and to set out the options that could be explored to retain the service on an ongoing basis.
- 1.3 The Committee is being asked to express its views as to the preferred option(s) to be considered as part of the process for setting the budget for 2013 -14 and 2014 -15 over the coming months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee consider the options set out in this report and if the preferred option(s) entail additional resources being required and/or for a replacement vehicle to be purchased it makes recommendations through the budget process accordingly.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

- 3.1 As part of required library service savings options for 2012-13 it was proposed to phase out the Mobile Library Service over three years from April 2012, saving £73,000 p.a. The actual running costs are £84,000 p.a.
- 3.2 The reasons for the proposal were that:
 - There is an excellent network of 14 libraries (12 community libraries and two central libraries) across the city
 - 98% of all residents are within one mile of a library

- 71% (611) of registered mobile library borrowers already use one of the static libraries
 - Only 253 registered borrowers are using the Mobile Library only
 - The Mobile Library is relatively more expensive to run compared to the static libraries. Mobile Library cost per visit is £3.99, static libraries cost per visit is £1.77 (updated to 2011-12 figures)
 - The services and facilities in the community libraries are more comprehensive than those provided on the Mobile Library (See appendix 1)
 - The Mobile Library has not been effective in reaching as many elderly, housebound or vulnerable people as we had hoped following the 2009 targeted promotion.
- 3.3 At Budget Council on 23 February 2012 the following amendment was passed regarding the mobile library:
- £0.025m to help fund the annual running costs of the Mobile Library Service as a contribution towards securing its future as a combined mobile library and community advice outreach service.
 - To work with the voluntary sector and seek contributions from partner agencies to fully fund the project.
 - It is also proposed to amend the 2012/13 capital investment programme by allocating £0.120m from the Local Transport Plan (LPT) grant to purchase a new mobile library subject to the identification of the full running costs as set out above.
- 3.4 The results of the consultation with the community and voluntary sector and other public sector organisations can be seen in section 4.
- 3.5 Following the discussion of the Mobile Library report on 20 September 2012, this committee decided that the mobile library service should continue until the end of March 2013, and requested that a report come back to the next meeting of the Committee on 15 November setting out how the funding shortfall of £17,000 may be met in the current year and detailing options to be explored in seeking to retain the service.
- 3.6 It has not been possible to find the shortfall of £17,000 for the current year within the Libraries budget and this will need to be met from the General Fund Risk provision. This will be one-off funding for this year only and would need to be included in a future Targeted Budget Management Report for reporting to Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.7 It has not been possible to identify partnership revenue funding for continued operation of the Mobile Library. Any shortfall in the revenue funding for the continued operation of the Mobile, as identified in the options below would need to be taken into account in the current budget process.
- 3.8 The options for the future that can be explored in order to retain the Mobile Library Service, together with options for additional or alternative provision are presented in the table below:

Option No.	Details	Costs	Sources of Funding	Risks / Opportunities
1	Operate the Mobile on current timetable	£84,000 for 2013-14 Reducing to £74,000 in 2014-15	£37,000 Library budget £30,000 from reversal of commitment to 2013-14 savings £17,000 unknown	No external sources of revenue identified in recent research. Would leave gap of £47,000 in savings proposals for 2013-14
2	Operate the Mobile on a reduced timetable of 4 days per week (reduced from 6 days). Would reduce from 24 to 15 stops removing 9 of the least used. Reduction of 11% of usage and move 2 stops (14% of usage) to other days.	£59,000 for 2013-14 Reducing to £49,000 in 2014-15	£37,000 library budget £22,000 from reduction of savings proposal for 2013-14	No external sources of revenue identified in recent research. Would leave gap of £22,000 in savings proposals for 2013-14 Limited impact on service with reduction of usage estimated at 11%, affecting an estimated 331 borrowers. However, 211 of these borrowers also use another Mobile Library stop, so only 120 individual borrowers would lose their Mobile Library access. (Note that some of those borrowers will also use a static library.)

3	Operate the Mobile on a reduced timetable of 3 days per week. Would reduce from 24 to 11 stops removing 13 of the least used. Also moving some stops to different days. Reduction of 20% of usage.	£47,000 for 2013-14 Reducing to £37,000 in 2014-15	£37,000 library budget for mobile £10,000 from postponement of savings proposal for 2012-14	Service would be within current budget from 2014-15 There would be an estimated 20% reduction in usage, affecting an estimated 547 borrowers. However, 387 of these borrowers also use another Mobile Library stop, so only 160 individual borrowers would lose their Mobile Library access. (Note that some of those borrowers will also use a static library.)
4	Operate Mobile on single staffing	£55,000 for 2013-14 Reducing to £45,000 from 2014-15	£37,000 library budget £18,000 from reduction of savings proposal for 2013-14	No external sources of revenue identified in recent research. Would leave gap of £18,000 in savings proposals for 2013-14 Limited impact on service Raises health and safety issues of lone working Would be opposed by staff and unions

5	Offer Mobile to a community organisation/group via community asset transfer, so they can run it themselves. A suitable community group has not yet been identified. Council would provide books and IT and maintain the vehicle. Community organisation would need to provide staffing, council would provide training.	£37,000 (Maximum figure)	£37,000 library budget	Risk that a community volunteer group would not have the skills and resources to run the service consistently. The estimated running costs are based on current 6 day a week timetable. A reduced timetable would cost less to support.
6	Operate a reduced Mobile Library service 3 days a week <u>and</u> develop the Home Delivery service	£77,000 for 2013-14 Reducing to £67,000 from 2014-15	£37,000 Library budget £30,000 from reversal of commitment to 2013-14 savings £10,000 unknown for 2013-14	No external sources of revenue identified in recent research. Would leave gap of £40,000 in savings proposals for 2013-14 See also risks of option 3 above.

7	Replace Mobile with Home Delivery service to deliver a more targeted service for those unable to get to a static library or use the Mobile Library. Home Delivery Library Officer would help housebound people select books using online catalogue and co-ordinate the regular delivery of the chosen books by volunteers. (See appendix 2 for more details)	£30,000	£30,000 library budget	<p>Would develop a targeted service to those unable to get to a static library or get onto the Mobile Library.</p> <p>Would remove Mobile Library service affecting an estimated 864 registered borrowers. However, 611 of these borrowers also use another Library, so only 253 individual borrowers would need to be found alternative library access.</p>
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3.9 Options 1-6 can be run

(a) With the old vehicle but as it has been in operation for 8 years there is a risk that it may require expensive repairs or develop problems that make it uneconomical to fix; or

(b) With a new vehicle using the capital expenditure identified - subject to satisfaction of any condition(s). The current budget position is that the condition requiring identification of revenue funding cannot be satisfied.

Option 7 is the option proposed in the report to the last committee, which if agreed is within current budget parameters and would release £120,000 of LTP funding.

3.10 **Current Home Delivery / Housebound Library Service:**

Many housebound people get their library books friends or family, so are hidden in the loans of other borrowers, but they are missing out on the benefits of Housebound membership which includes longer loans and no overdue charges. Currently, 530 library users are registered as housebound, however only a handful (6) are currently actively using the service. We are seeking to extend this service to offer a volunteer recruited by the library service where no family or neighbour is available. We have recently recruited 20 library housebound service volunteers. The Library Service is also working in partnership with the Neighbourhood Care Scheme to deliver books to some housebound people in the Patcham area, with the intention of extending this to other areas. Apart from providing the books and paying some volunteers' expenses, there is currently no council funding put into the provision of housebound library services.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A letter from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism was sent to the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) seeking potential community and voluntary sector partnership, involvement or funding opportunities to enable the continuation of the Mobile Library Service on 25 January 2012. There has been no interest shown by the CVSF to this proposal and they have recently clarified their position, clearly indicating this was too challenging a proposition in the current climate.
- 4.2 A range of other partnership and potential funding opportunities have been explored. Although there are organisations interested in working with the Libraries to deliver services and develop positive initiatives by collaborative working, there have been no specific revenue funds identified. These are summarised below.
 - 4.2.1 The Police are interested in using the mobile to disseminate public safety information, but are not able to contribute any funding to the running of the vehicle on a sustained basis.
 - 4.2.2 NHS Sussex are interested in further developing distribution of health information and promoting healthy living initiative, but are not able to contribute any funding to the running of the vehicle on a sustained basis.
 - 4.2.3 Initial discussion with Adult Social Care has centred around changes in delivery of day care services and the potential to work with them around prevention and taking appropriate activities and information to isolated communities. Discussions have also considered helping with the access point process, whereby people are initially 'assessed/filtered' to target services appropriately and save time. There is potential for positive joint working, though not necessarily centred on the Mobile Library. Whilst some one-off project funding for the right future agreed joint initiative might be possible, there is not likely to be sustained revenue funding for running the Mobile Library Service from this source.
 - 4.2.4 Some discussion has taken place around potential one off projects involving an individual school and possible use of Pupil Premium. This is at an early stage needs further discussion and exploration in the new academic year. Again, this discussion may lead to greater collaboration between the school and the Library Service, but not necessarily focus on the Mobile Library and certainly the school will not have enough dedicated revenue funding to run the vehicle.
- 4.3 Potential shared vehicle use has also been considered and initially discussed in relation to a joint Play Bus and Mobile Library. Discussions with the Children & Families team have indicated that they do not see this as an appropriate option for them at this time.
- 4.4 Research into the national picture has also been done, looking at a number of partnership templates and if any of these has resulted in mobile libraries achieving sustained revenue funding. Whilst there are examples of good collaborative working similar to partnership initiatives above, there are no existing models of these contributing sustained revenue funding.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

The current year budget provision is £67,000 and assuming the mobile library continues until 31st March 2013, the forecast outturn is £84,000; a projected overspend of £17,000. This overspend can be funded from the General Fund risk provision on a one-off basis and would need to be included in the next Targeted Budget Management Report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

As included in last year's budget report, the indicative savings proposals for 2013/14 currently include a further budget reduction of £30,000, therefore the revenue funding currently identified for 2013/14 and beyond is £37,000 p.a.

The options detailed at 3.8 have been costed to include staffing, estimated running costs and equipment. Any shortfall in revenue funding for the preferred option for 2013/14 would need to be addressed in the current budget cycle and future funding approved by Budget Council in due course.

The £120,000 capital funding identified for a new mobile library this year is subject to certain conditions as detailed elsewhere in the report. Options 1 to 6 could include the use of this funding if these conditions could be met. Option 7 would release these capital funds for use elsewhere.

Should the preferred option include the purchase of the new mobile library vehicle and the conditions are deemed as having been met, it will be necessary to seek approval from Policy & Resources Committee in accordance with the Financial Regulations in respect of the Capital Programme. If the conditions currently attached to the capital funding cannot be met, then the capital expenditure is not authorised and the capital resources would then become available for the Council to commit in accordance with the budget process.

Financial Regulations require that value for money is obtained for both capital and revenue resources and should be taken into account when considering the options. The Council's external auditor is also required to give an opinion on the Council's arrangements for ensuring value for money. It should be noted that some of the options include reduced number of days of service provision which would need to be considered in evaluating usage of the asset.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michelle Herrington Date: 2 November 2012

5.2 Legal Implications:

5.2.1 There is not a source of government funding specifically earmarked for keeping the mobile library operational and there is no overriding legal requirement that the Council must have a mobile library.

- 5.2.2 As explained at the last committee meeting (see the minutes on the agenda for this meeting) any ongoing service provision which exceeds the budget will need to be agreed by Budget Council.
- 5.2.3 The February Budget Council meeting considered various savings and expenditure proposals, including a provision of £25,000 to help fund annual running costs of the mobile library and a £120,000 capital investment from the LTP in 2013/4 to acquire a new vehicle. This was however subject to additional contributions coming from partner agencies or there being some other way clearly identified to cover the running costs of the service. In the absence of such funding or a change to the budget position the capital programme funding for a new mobile library lapses.
- 5.2.4 As explained in the previous committee report, no additional partnership funding has been identified and hence the proposal for targeted services, option 7, which would be within budget and would not trigger a requirement for ratification by Policy & Resources Committee or Full Council. In the event of option 7 being agreed the decision about what happens to the £120,000 released capital investment would be taken by Budget Council next year, on the basis that as the condition regarding the potential allocation for the mobile library was not able to be satisfied, that sum becomes available to commit elsewhere.
- 5.2.5 If the committee decides that it does not want the targeted services, but would rather continue with the mobile library service, it needs to recognise that there is currently a limited revenue budget available as well as a need for a new vehicle. It is clear from the options table that committing to a continued service may require additional revenue budget resources to be identified and approved to cover the running costs. If the additional revenue resources required were to be allocated in their entirety, the condition for committing the LTP capital expenditure would not be required and the item in the capital programme for a new vehicle could then be retained. However, before committing the money, the procurement itself, i.e. the purchase of the new vehicle, would need approval by Policy & Resources, as is normal for all capital schemes.

Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce Date: 10.10.12

5.3 Equalities Implications:

The Mobile Library Service provides access to library resources in 24 locations around the city, and potentially provides a service to those who cannot get to a static library. Alternative provision can be delivered to the 253 people who only use the Mobile Library.

The development of a Home Delivery Service would target anyone who cannot use a library due to being housebound, disabled having mobility difficulties, health issues or caring responsibilities. Providing help to the housebound and those currently reliant solely on the mobile library to get online and access services via the internet would help combat digital and social exclusion.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

A new Mobile Library vehicle would be more energy efficient than the old vehicle.

The provision of a Home Delivery Service as an alternative to the Mobile Library vehicle will save on energy costs and reduce the service's carbon footprint.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

None

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

There is a risk that continuing to run the old vehicle would result in interruptions to service or costly breakdowns with uncertainty as to how long the vehicle would be able to continue.

There is a risk of reputational damage to the council as a result of public campaigning if the Mobile Library is not retained. This risk would be mitigated in some of the options by retaining a reduced service and in Option 7 by replacing the service with a more personalised, targeted service for those who find it difficult to use a community or central library. There is an opportunity to develop more effectively the Library Home Delivery Service across the city.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The development of a Home Delivery Service would support the corporate plan priorities in three areas: tackling inequality (see 5.3 above), creating a more sustainable city (see 5.4 above), and engaging people who live and work within the city, by developing the use of volunteers in the delivery of the Home Delivery Service.

5.8 Public Health and Wellbeing Implications:

The development of a Home Delivery Service would target anyone who cannot use a library due to being housebound, disabled having mobility difficulties, health issues or caring responsibilities. This would continue in partnership with the Neighbourhood Care Scheme sharing resources, volunteers and good practice thus increasing access to a wide range of services to a range of potentially isolated and vulnerable people.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 See table in section 3.8

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To enable the committee to express its views on the range of options regarding the future of the Mobile Library.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Comparison for Mobile Library with Community Libraries
2. Home Delivery Service
3. Comparison of Different Targeted Service Models

Documents in Members' Rooms

Background Documents

1. Mobile Library Report to Economic Development and Culture Committee
20 September 2012

Comparison of Mobile Library with Community Libraries

	Community Libraries	Mobile Library Service
	12 community libraries across the city, with 98% of population within one mile of a library. This includes new libraries at Coldean, Patcham and Whitehawk with a new Woodingdean Library scheduled to be completed in 2013	Vehicle is due for replacement after 8 years of operation, six days a week all year round (except week closed at Christmas)
Hours open	Community Libraries offer 281 hours a week open to the public. Between 19 and 28 hours per week each library	Visits most of the 24 locations for between half an hour to two hours a fortnight. Total opening hours 20 hrs per week.
Cost per visit	£2.46 average cost per visit	£3.99 cost per visit
Number of books	Total stock of 137,000 volumes. Average of over 12,000 items per library	5,000 items on rotation, with only 2,500 on the vehicle at any one time
Reference materials	1,260 volumes across all community libraries. 105 average number per community library	22 volumes
Access	Disabled access to all buildings. All libraries served by regular bus routes.	Parking the vehicle can be difficult and requires a flat, safe location. Difficult access for disabled or infirm people using platform lift
Public computers	At least two computers for free public use with Coldean, Patcham and Whitehawk having more plus additional separate ICT suites	No computers for public access
Space for events and activities	Extensive range of regular events, activities and community use, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework clubs • Baby Boogie and other children's activities • IT and other community based training courses • Advice surgeries from community partners • Comfortable local community space to spend time in 	None on the vehicle.

Enhanced Home Delivery Service

- 1.1 The alternative or addition to the Mobile Library service would be to employ a Home Delivery Library Officer to deliver books and other resources to people in their own homes. This service would be tailored to meet people's individual needs, and would enable people to get access to the full catalogue of library resources in the city, not just those on the Mobile Library.
- 1.2 The Home Delivery Library Officer would show people how to make their library selections using the web catalogue either on their own computer at home, or taking with them a laptop with internet access. Books would be delivered by the Home Delivery Library Officer or volunteer. An added benefit of this approach is that it will also create the opportunity for housebound people to be given help using the internet to access other information or services, or simply just to provide coaching in the use of the internet, and so help to combat digital exclusion.
- 1.3 A successful model for the delivery of Home Library Services is through individual home delivery visits utilising a car or small van with the service delivered with a combination of paid staff and volunteers working in close partnership with the voluntary and community sector. These services offer a range of services including books and audio visual materials, reservation service, information and support. This standard model is used successfully in a number of library authorities including those in East and West Sussex and Kent.
- 1.4 A more recent innovation has been successfully piloted in Birmingham and Devon. Using grant funding, they tested the effectiveness of using Home Library Services to provide supported internet access and ICT coaching to housebound people. This pilot demonstrated that the majority of the participants found getting online in this way to be a transformational experience.
- 1.5 Reducing isolation and improving inclusion would be a key aim of Brighton & Hove's Home Delivery Library Service, both in terms of digital inclusion by adapting and delivering a Council Connect service to people in their own homes and in the wider sense by sharing good practice, resources, information and access to library and a wide range of other services via a partnership with the Neighbourhood Care Scheme.

Comparison of Different Targeted Service Models

Comparison table, showing how the Home Delivery Service and other forms of alternative library service delivery that can be provided to Mobile Library users, compares with the current Mobile Library:

	Proposed Home Delivery Service	Other alternative provision for Mobile Library Users	Mobile Library Service
Stock available	504,000 stock items (i.e. stock in all libraries)	Equal Access Service: 13,500 stock items exclusively for people in residential homes	2,500 stock items on vehicle at any one time. 5,000 items total in Mobile Library stock
Tailored service	Yes. Personal service delivered by staff or volunteer. Help with selecting items to borrow.	Equal Access Service provides free collections of books on long loan to people in residential homes	No. Stock not on Mobile Library only available through chargeable reservation service
Accessible	Yes as stock delivered to people in their own homes	Yes as stock delivered to people in their residential home	Access via a platform lift - some difficulty for disabled or infirm
Digital inclusion	Yes, as staff or volunteer will help people access services online, using resident's own computer, or laptop brought by the staff member or volunteer	Only if residential home has internet access and residential home staff member willing to use library service online	No public access computers available
Services to children and young people	Home Delivery Service available to housebound people of any age	Very wide ranging services to children and young people in libraries and through outreach services (see appendix 2)	Limited access to resources on the Mobile Library. Offer to support schools and pre-schools not taken up in practice.
Services to children or adults with special needs	Able to deliver appropriate resources for housebound disabled people	Targeted resources and special events provided for children and adults with special needs in libraries and as outreach services	Limited ability to provide targeted services