

**COUNCIL SEMINAR**  
**24th May, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Yasseen (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Cowles, Elliot, Jones, Khan, Sansome, Bird, Allen, Cooksey, Cusworth, Fenwick-Green, Marles, Sheppard, Short, Walsh and Williams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Councillor Maggi Clark, Hague, Hoddinott, Jepson, Pitchley, Price, Reeder, Roche, Julie Turner, Watson, Andrews and Ireland.

**LIBRARY STRATEGY AND CONSULTATION - UPDATE.**

Councillor Yasseen, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services, welcomed Members to the Seminar and introduced Elenore Fisher, Customer and Cultural Services Manager, and Zoe Oxley, Manager, to the seminar to provide an update on the Library Strategy and consultation position.

Councillor Yasseen explained that, currently, 90% of Rotherham's population did not use their libraries. Councillor Yasseen thought that they were fantastic resources, hubs and homes for community groups and a place of exchange. Consultation would be taking place across the Borough until mid-June, 2016.

Elenore provided some background information to the Members present: -

- The provision of Library Services was statutory in the 1944 Act where it was set out that a 'comprehensive and efficient' service needed to be provided for all who wished to access it;
- There were local and national conversations about what this meant in the twenty-first century.
  
- The Library Strategy was considering an assessment of local need, making proposals and conducting Equality Impact Assessments;
- The Library Strategy was incorporating/encouraging '**buzz not shush!**' to create a service that creates a sense of anticipation, customers who desire to return and inspire reading and an enjoyment of reading;
- Library buildings were to be seen as community hubs where access and help with ICT could be sought;

Savings proposals were considered and the following were being consulted upon: -

- Withdrawal of the Mobile Library: -
  - Currently used by 300-400 people, 150-160 of which only used this provision;
  - Promotion of the local book drop service could mitigate the loss of the mobile library;

- Book Link took books to people in their own homes, residential care homes etc;
- Move of Maltby Library to the Maltby Joint Service Centre;
- Working with volunteers to enhance services, to support paid staff to concentrate on service development and promotion activities;
  
- Removal of face-to-face cashier services at Riverside House and promotion of cashier paypoints;
  
- Online Benefit Claims System: -
  - Visible presence of Officers in libraries asking service users if they needed help to use the IT system;
  - Remove drop-in system and encourage use of appointments.

The saving proposals would achieve a budget saving of £474k over three years. Consultation on the proposals would run between 17<sup>th</sup> March – 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2016. Consultation relating to Maltby's proposals would run until 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.

- Consultation would be available on-line;
- Via the inbox: - [libraryreview@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:libraryreview@rotherham.gov.uk);
- Paper forms via libraries;
- Drop-in sessions;
- High-footfall areas would be targeted to try to solve the mystery of why only 10% of Rotherham's population used the library services;
- Youth Cabinet would be consulted;
- Town and Parish Councils would be consulted;
- All Schools would be consulted.

Following consultation a 'Core Offer' would be created and a Member decision would be sought.

Councillor Cooksey asked how user friendly libraries were these days? What areas does the mobile service cover – children, older people etc? Have the local press been involved, e.g. – articles about reading?

Elenore Fisher – buildings should always be user friendly. Asset Management Review of 17 locations/buildings taking place to ensure they are fit for purpose. Consultation started at same time as Purdah and consequently press releases would be released now the election period had ended. People most concerned about the potential for closing – the Service had retained best of 20 years ago, and built on it.

Councillor Eliot asked whether the online library would be expanded?

Elenore said yes – available 24/7, 365 days a year and the longer-term aim was to create an e-book service that was the equivalent of a small library.

## REPORT FOR INFORMATION - 24/05/16

Councillor Bird – asked about online benefit claims and how people who could not access or who did not have the skills to access would do this. Would they be left out?

Elenore – all libraries have computers that are available for people to use. Tablets also being used. Most common service request was introduction to ICT.

Zoe explained that floor walkers would have the remit of identifying and helping people who were making specific claims.

Councillor Cusworth – asked whether the Booklink Service was done online? People do not always have access to the internet at home.

Elenore – met with Interim Strategic Director to ensure the Services were working closely together. Workers visiting homes take their ICT with them.

Councillor Cusworth asked what would other people not accessing services do?

Elenore agreed to look into the specific situation raised. Keen to place collections where people go to. The Library Services was as much about reading as it was physical resources.

Councillor Allen referred to the drop-in sessions and asked whether local Councillors could attend to learn about issues.

Elenore – yes.

Councillor Allen asked about the 150 users of the mobile service who do not use other services. Will these be supported to use other methods?

Elenore – yes, many had completed consultation and any changes that were approved would start an ongoing conversation for these service users to support them to use other methods.

Councillor McNeely asked for all Elected Members to be aware of where the drop-in sessions are so that consideration could be given to Members doing surgeries at that time.

Councillor Walsh – asked about libraries as a community hub and focus. He thought that this was a good idea, but a lot of communication revolved around social media. Can Officers create an online community library?

Elenore – yes, this should be developed as an aspirational idea.

## REPORT FOR INFORMATION - 24/05/16

Councillor Atkin – remembered Wath Library from 1970s as a community hub and important community resource. He referred to library honesty/trust schemes and asked who would log the books in/out? BT were decommissioning a lot of telephone boxes – can these be used as mini community libraries?

Elenore – yes, I have seen those schemes, they were not a library but did disseminate books. Interesting challenge as they did not tend to be issued. A cover page asking readers to pass on was an idea to implement the scheme and get more people using and reading.

Councillor Jones – can libraries incorporate other services. Invite local schools? Reading with an author, get children involved. Do we keep data on what people check out in each area – to predict the types of books people are interested in?

Elenore – profile information about customers is used. The profile changes throughout their lives – peaks and troughs depending on their life events. Does vary from place to place. Schools do go into libraries for class visits – depending on size of the room.

Councillor Yasseen thanked Elenore and Zoe for their informative presentation and asked her Elected Member colleagues to join in the consultation and help to represent as much as possible what their local communities needed and wanted from their Library service.

Agreed: - That the information shared be noted.