

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee

27 August 2014

Update on the Implementation of the Libraries and Cultural Venues Review

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report updates the Committee on progress with implementing the recommendations of the Libraries and Cultural Venues Review agreed by the Lifelong Learning Committee on 6 November 2013.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 As part of the Council's wider approach to continuous improvement through service transformation, a review of the Library and Information Service (LIS) and Council-operated cultural venues was undertaken in 2012/13. The review purpose was to remodel the LIS and other cultural venues directly operated by the Council in response to changing customer needs and to ensure Best Value including through targeted savings of £281,000 agreed by full Council in February 2011 (Report No 11/56 refers). The recommendations of the review were considered and agreed by the Lifelong Learning Committee on 6 November 2013 (Report No 13/524 refers).

1.2 The review recommendations aimed to:

- protect frontline services in all localities across Perth and Kinross, by maintaining local libraries in all localities and year-round cultural provision in Perth city centre;
- balance the diverse and changing needs of all customers, who access these universal services in many different ways;
- respond to the needs of those who do not currently use services;
- enhance and further invest in key services including online services for which there is increasing customer appetite and the Mobile Libraries which are very important for people in rural locations or who cannot easily access their local library for other reasons; and
- deliver the required savings agreed by the Council in February 2011.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE

2.1 Lifelong Learning Committee agreed all seven of the review recommendations in November 2013, which were fully implemented by May 2014. Progress against each of these is summarised below.

2.2 Prior to implementation, 12 public meetings were held in 8 libraries to explain the planned changes to customers and address wherever possible any concerns which customers had. Letters were also issued to all active borrowers and the changes were also communicated in a number of other ways including the Council website and social media.

2.2.1 Services will continue to be developed on a site by site basis, and in response to identified local community priorities.

This recommendation was about ensuring that opportunities to improve services are acted on where possible within available resources, including developing specific local services in response to local aspirations and needs. Some examples of new initiatives completed or under development since the Review recommendations were agreed by Committee include:

- New “Collections in Communities” displays have been established in the Community Campus Libraries at Kinross, Crieff and Aberfeldy. These show local interest items and stories from the Museum collections and a programme of learning activities linked to these is being rolled out from September 2014.
- At the AK Bell Library, the 1st floor has been refurbished to create new Local and Family History and Reference and Information sections with state of the art resources to support a continuing demand for research and ancestry facilities.
- Loch Leven Library now has the Council’s Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system installed. This system, also used by the Council’s Customer Service Centre enables staff to respond to a wide range of Council enquiries and will be rolled out to all libraries by December 2015.
- Work to improve and refresh the layout and décor of Coupar Angus Library will be completed in late autumn 2014. This completes a programme of improvement across all libraries although all buildings continue to be reviewed regularly.
- New displays at Alyth Museum opened to the public in July 2014, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland. Visitor numbers since May show a 15% increase on the previous year.

2.2.2 Implement a new staffing structure for the Libraries and Information Services to support new opening hour’s arrangements.

This recommendation was about ensuring the staff structure reflected the stronger focus on locality-based services and also addressed the need to develop clearer paths for professional development and career progression for professional library staff, or those entering the profession. Service delivery is now managed across three localities:

- Perth & Kinross WEST which includes Strathearn, Comrie, Auchterarder, Pitlochry and Breadalbane;
- P&K EAST which includes Kinross, Blairgowrie, Coupar Angus and Alyth; and
- P&K CENTRAL which includes AK Bell, North Inch and Scone.

The new structure was implemented by April 2014. No compulsory redundancies resulted.

2.2.3 Implement a revised opening hours schedule across all libraries.

New opening hours were implemented across all libraries from 5 April 2014. These were designed to meet the times which suit a wide range of customers as effectively as possible, whilst also achieving required savings.

Detailed monitoring of footfall and library usage will continue to be undertaken and reported to Committee through the Education and Children Services Business Management and Improvement Plan (BMIP). As the review report considered by Committee on 6 November 2013 explained, overall use of libraries in Perth and Kinross rose in the years immediately following the opening of the new Community Campus Libraries (i.e. from 2008/09) but had subsequently begun to level off, reflecting UK trends in library use.

Data for the first quarter of 2014/15 shows:

- A decline in overall footfall in libraries. There were 1,071 visits per 1,000 population (compared to 1,360 visits per 1000 population for the first quarter of 2013/14).
- A decline in active borrowers (individuals taking out at least one item in a 12 month period) has decreased to 13,360 borrowers in the first quarter compared to 15,277 in 2013/14.
- A significant increase in online visits with 59,522 compared to 24,766 for the same period in 2013-2014. Use of online services continues to grow, with 11,956 downloads of eBooks, 4,485 of eAudiobooks and 15,562 of eMagazines since services launched in October 2012, and over 3,000 downloads from the new Freegal music service between February-June 2014. This reflects changing user demands and our response to these.

It is too early to draw long-term conclusions from this data, but the following factors should be taken into account:

- The data does not yet take into account the new Mobile Library service which launches in October 2014 and will reach significantly more locations including residential care homes, sheltered housing and rural schools
- Whilst closure on Saturday afternoons and Mondays will mean a loss in passing visitors (for example day visitors to Perth city who may visit the AK Bell), footfall and overall usage may increase again as customers get used to the new opening hours.

- As outlined in 2.2.1, a range of initiatives to develop and improve services and maintain/grow customer numbers to meet changing need.
- Big Listen 2 attracted over 8,500 responses the majority of which were from library customers (Report No 14/222 refers) demonstrating continued high levels of engagement with the service.

2.2.4 Refocus Mobile Library Services including the introduction of Wi-Fi on all Mobile Libraries.

This recommendation was about remodelling the Mobile Libraries by basing them in localities, reducing the amount of journey time between Perth city centre and wider areas of Perth and Kinross. It was also considered important to reach more people and communities in remote/rural areas as well as people who would otherwise find it difficult to access services such as those in residential care homes.

Three new smaller and 'fleeter of foot' Mobile Libraries have been purchased and will be operational from September/October 2014. All three will have Wi-Fi. New services to more residential care homes, sheltered housing and rural schemes will be introduced.

Wi-Fi has already been installed on the existing Mobile 1 which is the largest and newest vehicle in the fleet. Staff report good coverage which can extend to local halls when the Mobile is parked next to these. This allows customers to access the on-line Library catalogue close to their home with a wider choice of reading resources. It also allows IT learning sessions to be delivered in localities rather than just in Council buildings and plans to pilot this in a number of areas are under development.

Because of procurement efficiencies and staffing restructure increasing the fleet from three to four vehicles has been cost neutral for the service.

The new timetables and expanded Mobile Library service will be fully operational by October 2014. Staff from the service will be working with existing customers over the coming months to alert them to changes in timetables and routes.

2.2.5 Relocate current Library services from West Mill Street to AK Bell and North Inch Libraries.

This recommendation was about making best use of library resources and Council buildings in Perth city centre, where the review found evidence that many customers were using more than one of the three city centre libraries and there was some duplication of provision.

Accessible services (large print books, audio books and other resources) based at the West Mill Street Library services transferred to AK Bell and North Inch Libraries on Friday 4 April 2014. The building is now available for alternative use, and the possibility of it accommodating the OWLS (One-Stop Woman's Learning Services) project is being progressed.

Services transferred to the AK Bell Library include the provision of one-to-one IT support offered by volunteer IT tutors and the Knit and Natter Group. The Books on Wheels service is now largely coordinated from North Inch Community Library.

There was initially some expression of interest in taking on the running of the Library on a voluntary basis from the Friends of West Mill Street, and an officer from the Community Capacity Building Team worked with the group to explore options for this. However, the group has chosen not to progress this further.

2.2.6 A new IT and Digital Participation Strategy be developed for the service, supported by a bid for capital funds to enable investment in future infrastructure improvements.

This recommendation was about ensuring services continue to develop and respond to changing customer need and appetite for on-line services, as well as ensuring that investment in library systems continues to ensure services are fit for 21st century customer needs.

An internal Working Group has been established to oversee this recommendation, but key developments to date include:

- A new free music download Service, FREEGAL, was launched at the end of February 2014 with 3,124 downloads recorded to end June 2014.
- A new Digital Librarian post has been created (as part of the new staff structure) focusing on further developing on-line services In 2013/14 the service saw a 62% increase in web hits and use of online resources. Evidence from the first quarter of 2014/15 suggests this trend is continuing with a 140% increase in web hits shown against the first quarter of the previous year.
- The current People's Network computers are being replaced and upgraded to Windows 7 which will increase accessibility for customers. In addition, a greater mix of hardware including laptops, tablets and desktop PCs are being provided to give customers greater flexibility in how they use the library space which will better support the different needs of customers
- An award of £2,000 from the Scottish Libraries Council is supporting the roll-out of free Wi-Fi across all Libraries by the end of April 2015 and free Wi-Fi is now available at Perth Museum and Art Gallery.
- Soprano, a new software package has been introduced enabling staff to work away from their desks to check the catalogue, reserve and check in and out items with customers. Soprano also has the functionality to make reading suggestions to customers. This allows staff to work more flexibly and support customers more easily on the "floor".

2.2.7 Opening hours at Perth Museum and Art Gallery (PMAG), Alyth Museum, AK Bell Library and the Fergusson Gallery reduce by one day per week, with closure on a Monday but Sunday opening for PMAG and the Fergusson Gallery.

This recommendation was about ensuring opening hours reflected patterns of customer use based on analysis carried out for the review, which showed low attendance at cultural venues on Mondays but likely demand for Sunday opening.

Changes to all opening hours were fully implemented by 1 April 2014 with the exception of Alyth Museum (which changed on 1 May in line with its normal seasonal opening). There were no impacts on permanent or fixed term staff from the changes in opening hours

Changes to AK Bell opening hours were implemented on Saturday 5 April 2014.

Data for the first quarter 2014/15 show:

- 19,447 visits compared to 28,527 visits in the same quarter the previous year

Whilst it is too early to draw conclusions from this data, the following should be taken into account:

- This quarter is the first for which the service has been closed on the Easter and May bank holidays.
- There has been an unprecedented number of major city centre events in the last 2-3 years including this year's Commonwealth Games celebrations. Further analysis will be completed to identify how and where this may be pulling visitors and potential visitors away from visiting museums, and how this can be addressed (for example through new marketing approaches).
- Refurbishment work at Alyth Museum is not yet fully complete and there has been some disruption to the service this quarter as a result.

Recent improvements have transformed Perth Museum and Art Gallery and feedback and comments from visitors shows this has been very positively received. The service is attracting exhibitions of national and international importance demonstrated by our inclusion as a key venue in the GENERATION programme which celebrates 25 years of contemporary art in Scotland as part of the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme. A major new display telling the story of Perth and Kinross through museum collections is being commissioned with opening to the public planned for spring 2015.

2.2.8 **The current provision for schools be reviewed to focus on professional advice and guidance, with removal of the topic box service and a reduction in classroom based storytelling and Rhymetime activities**

This recommendation was about withdrawing a particular service which was no longer in line with Curriculum for Excellence teaching practice, and where the review found evidence of duplication with other providers. This was communicated in advance to all Campus Leaders and Headteachers explaining the changes. The Topic box service came to an end in April 2014 and a successful sale of the topic boxes and bags took place in May.

LIS continues to provide a varied programme for children and young people with a mix of regular activities and one-off events. LIS hosted the flagship event for Bookbug Week in May, a national event to launch the Bookbug Week Programme which was exceptionally well attended with 948 adults and children coming along on the day. A Family Fun Day in AK Bell with a Circus theme saw 920 adults and children participate in activities together. The Summer Reading Challenge, which encourages children to read over the summer holidays, has Secondary pupils acting as volunteers to support younger readers over the length of the programme. Recently Strathearn Community Library supported the schools Commonwealth Games with an Active Stories programme for Primary 1 – 3 pupils.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 As indicated earlier, 18,000 letters with details of the changes were sent to households with an active library borrower resident. **12** public meetings (including two each at West Mill St and Loch Leven) to inform customers of changes and to identify any genuine barriers to accessing services have been held across the authority area with **154** individuals attending.
- 3.2 Feedback from customers to date has indicates that whilst there has been disappointment at the reduction in opening hours, it is generally accepted that the range, level and quality of service provision remains. It is planned to undertake more formal engagement with customers through the use of questionnaires and comments books on the changes and their views on the new arrangements in October 2014. Feedback from customers will be used to make changes and improvements to the service where appropriate.
- 3.3 Additional discussions took place in February 2014 and beyond with some community representatives in Kinross where there is some interest in developing a volunteer-led service on a Monday. Community representatives are currently investigating the level of interest in such a service (both using and running it) and the Council's Community Capacity Building teams are providing support.
- 3.4 Opposition to the relocation of services from West Mill Street Library included a petition submitted to 2 High Street in March 2014. A formal complaint in relation to the process of the review was made in relation to the treatment of equalities issues with regard to the closure of the Library. Subsequent

correspondence from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission recognised that “*whilst the individual establishment [West Mill Street Library] is being closed, the Council’s commitment to providing services to older and disabled people has not been weakened, but that the means of providing the service has been altered.*”

3.5 We have also agreed to review procedures to ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are available to Councillors and the public for consideration alongside relevant Committee reports. The Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken for the Libraries and Cultural Venues Review can be accessed at www.pkc.gov.uk/EqIA .

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The implementation of the recommendations of the Libraries and Cultural Venues Review have delivered key improvements to services whilst achieving the required saving of £281,000. The recommendations have also ensured that available resources are used more flexibly to meet changing and very diverse customer needs for these key universal services.

4.2 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the progress made to date in implementing the recommendations of the Libraries and Cultural Venues Review; and
- (ii) Agree that future progress and development of services will continue to be reported to Committee through the Education and Children’s Services Business Management and Improvement Plan.

Author

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Approved

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Council Text Phone Number 01738 442573

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	No
Workforce	No
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	No
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	No
Strategic Environmental Assessment	No
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	No
Legal and Governance	No
Risk	No
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	No
Communication	
Communications Plan	No

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This report supports the achievement of the following Community Plan Strategic Objectives:

- Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

1.2 The Perth and Kinross Community Plan 2013-2023 and Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Plan 2013/2018 set out five strategic objectives:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No (ii), (iv) and (v)

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Change and Improvement

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 Implementation of the recommendations of the Libraries and Cultural Venues Review has fully realised the targeted savings of £281,000.

Workforce

2.2 There are no workforce implications as a result of this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no Asset Management Issues as a result of this report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

Proposals have been considered under the Act and no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

Sustainability

- 3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.

This section should reflect the steps that have been taken to assess the proposals.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 There are no legal or governance issues.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 Head of Service, Cultural and Community Services
Head of Service, Early Years and Primary
Head of Service, Secondary
Head of Service, Children and Families
Service Manager, Communities
Service Manager, Sport and Active Recreation
Service Manager (Contracts & Financial Management)

External

- 4.2 N/A

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

