

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CUSTOMER SERVICES, SPORT & LEISURE
CABINET MEMBER**

MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the future operation of the mobile library service using one vehicle, visiting most places once every three weeks.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- For many years the council has run its mobile library service with two vehicles, visiting most places every two weeks
 - Over the last year staff have explored options for the future delivery of the mobile service
 - Several factors mean that running the service with two vehicles is not viable for the future
 - Staff drew up two options to deliver the service with one vehicle, and consulted users on these options
 - Customers were clearly in favour of keeping mobile visits to all current locations
 - To achieve this the mobile will need to visit places every three weeks, rather than every two weeks
 - The new service model will offer better value for money

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The council has run a mobile library service with two vehicles since 1999. We serve around 850 customers in 62 mainly rural communities. Most places receive a visit every two weeks. Broughton and Burton upon Stather have always received a weekly service. We replaced one of the mobiles at the end of 2011. The new vehicle also offers access to the Internet.
- 2.2 Several issues meant that it was timely to review the mobile library service. In 2011, the Cabinet Member approved the development of proposals for the future delivery of the service.

2.3 The key issues that impact on the future of the mobile library service are:

- In October 2011 North East Lincolnshire withdrew the mobile service we provided on their behalf, which has led to the loss of £24,500 in income
- A new static library opened in Broughton in September 2012
- The current financial climate means we need to develop services that offer the best possible value for money
- The second mobile is now very old, and needs frequent repair
- Take up of the mobile service has declined, with library issues dropping from c. 76,500 to c. 43,500 since 2005

2.4 In light of these issues, investing in a second new vehicle would not offer good value for money in future.

2.5 We have looked at two ways to run the service with one vehicle:

- Visit fewer places every two weeks
- Visit all current locations every three weeks

Burton upon Stather has the highest number of mobile users. In both options, Burton upon Stather would still receive a weekly service.

2.6 In July 2012 we asked our mobile customers for their views on these options. Most people told us they would prefer the mobile to visit all places every three weeks.

2.7 Staff have drawn up draft new routes on this basis.

2.8 We have written to parish councils about the proposed changes. Again, those who have replied have agreed to the new service model.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Option 1 – to deliver the mobile library service with one vehicle, visiting places every three weeks, and Burton upon Stather every week.

3.2 Option 2 – to deliver the mobile library service with one vehicle, visiting fewer places every two weeks, and Burton upon Stather every week.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Option 1 is suggested as the best option available. The key factors supporting this are:

- The proposal supports the council's priorities for Excellence in Customer Service and Providing Value for Taxpayers' Money
- All current mobile library users will continue to receive the service
- The new vehicle will offer a more reliable service for customers

- All mobile library users will benefit from access to the Internet on the new vehicle
- Running the service with one vehicle will allow the council to make savings and offer better value for money
- Mobile library users can already borrow up to 50 at a time for a period of 6 weeks, but this could be amended to reflect the longer time between visits, if there is customer demand to do so.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 Financial

Each mobile costs around £65,000 a year to run. In October 2011 we lost £24,500 income from North East Lincolnshire. Using just one vehicle means there will be a net saving for the council in line with the councils current approved budget.

5.2 Staffing

Running the service with one vehicle will require fewer staff. We have talked to staff about the possible changes to the service. Once a new service model is in place, we will review staffing needs and consult staff, in line with normal council policy and procedures.

5.3 Property

None.

5.4 Information Technology

All customers will be able to access the Internet on the new vehicle.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 Public libraries are a statutory service. The council has a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.

6.2 The proposed changes will still provide a library service to 62 rural villages. All current mobile users can continue to access the service. Older people and children are the main users of the service.

6.3 Running the service with one mobile will reduce carbon emissions.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 In July 2012 we asked mobile library users about the options to deliver the service with one vehicle. 280 people responded to the survey. Of

these, 80% said they would prefer the mobile to visit all current locations every three weeks.

- 7.2 In November 2012 we wrote to parish councils and other stakeholders about the proposed changes. All those who replied have approved the new service model. We have received some requests for extra or minor changes to mobile stops. We will look at these and where feasible include them in any final mobile library routes.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the changes to the delivery of the mobile library service based upon the use of one vehicle, visiting places every three weeks, and Burton upon Stather every week.
- 8.2 That service staff draw up final mobile library routes on this basis and implement the changes with effect from Monday, 4 March 2013.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None