NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

SPORT, LEISURE AND CULTURE CABINET MEMBER

GOXHILL LIBRARY

11.   OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1   To determine that Goxhill Library should become a community-run library from 1 April 2011.

1.2   The key points in this report are:

➢ A review of North Lincolnshire's library network recommended that the smaller branch libraries be considered for alternative service delivery models that offer better value for money and sustainability;

➢ Goxhill Library has been reviewed in that context, including consultation with the parish council and with service users;

➢ This has shown a clear local preference for the static library to be retained rather than be replaced by a mobile service;

➢ Taking those views into account, Goxhill Parish Council has agreed in principle to take over from North Lincolnshire Council the day to day running of the library at its current site, thereby transforming the library into the community-run model; and

➢ This report now proposes that a service level agreement be developed between the two councils to put the new model in place from 1 April 2011.

2.   BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1   North Lincolnshire's library network consists of one specialist central library, fourteen branch libraries and two mobile libraries.   All of these are currently council-managed and council-staffed.   During 2009, the council reviewed the network.   The purpose of the review was to explore the consistency of service level provision across communities as well as issues of future sustainability. The review assessed the network's fitness for the future in terms of policy drivers for change, new technology, performance and value for money.

2.2   Arising from the review, a new blueprint for the network was approved by the Cabinet Member for Sport, Leisure and Culture in March this year.   This now provides a clear framework for determining the type and level of provision appropriate and sustainable for North Lincolnshire different communities.   In the case of the smaller branch libraries, the new blueprint requires that consideration be given to more sustainable delivery models that might include shared sites, self-service, the use of volunteers, mobile provision, or more direct community ownership of the day to day running of the library.

2.3 The council refers to the last of these alternatives as the community-run model. This model may involve several of the other elements and may take several different forms. The defining factor in the community-run model, however, is that the local community – or some body on behalf of the local community – takes responsibility for all or most of the day to day running of the library facility. This could, for example, include determining opening hours, deciding on the range of library materials to be available, providing the library premises, and ensuring that the library is adequately staffed. This may involve volunteers.

2.4 There are already a number of examples of the community-run model in place elsewhere in the country. Libraries set up in line with the model continue to be part of the public library network, and customers continue to enjoy access to the same quality of materials and services. The library authority ensures that this takes place through stock provision, systems maintenance, training, and other forms of advice and support. The community-run model in turn offers local people the opportunity to determine opening hours and other activities that might also be made available at the library.

2.5 Goxhill is one of the first communities to be considered in terms of alternative library service options. It currently has a small, stand-alone, single-staffed library, managed by the council and open ten hours a week. Almost half of the users are aged 12 or less. The library is located in the parish rooms that are owned by Goxhill Parish Council, and to whom the council pays rent.

2.6 A consultation exercise has been carried out with service users to ascertain their views and preferences and there has been direct engagement with Goxhill Parish Council. The parish council has actively participated in the review and is committed to supporting the best possible outcome for the community. The parish council is firmly of the view that the library at its current site is very much at the heart of the Goxhill community. It has now agreed to work in partnership with North Lincolnshire Council with a view to assuming the day to day running of Goxhill Library, as a community-run library, from 1 April next year. This would need a long-term service level agreement between the two councils to clarify respective roles and regularise the new arrangements. This outcome is supported by the service user consultation results.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 Option 1 is to determine that Goxhill Library should become a community-run library. Option 2 is to maintain Goxhill Library's current status as a council-managed library. Option 3 is to meet the library needs of Goxhill through mobile provision. Option 4 is to cease library provision in Goxhill.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 Option 1 is the proposed option. The factors supporting this option are as follows:

➢ it reflects the approved blueprint for the smaller branch libraries;
➢ it allows for the continuation of a facility that is clearly viewed locally as being at the heart of the Goxhill community;
➢ it is a positive response to the main message coming out of the recent consultations;

> ➢ the council's future commitment to the library will represent improved value for money for North Lincolnshire council tax payers;
> ➢ Goxhill Parish Council has confirmed that it wishes to be an active partner in ensuring that the new model is viable; and
> ➢ that in turn provides more local scope to enhance library access and potentially bring other community activities onto the library site.

4.2   In contrast, the option of North Lincolnshire Council continuing to manage the day to day running of Goxhill Library is not financially sustainable.   Nor is it consistent with the approved blueprint for the library network. Secondly, the recent consultation has yielded a low level of support for the mobile library option.   Given that the community-run and mobile options would have similar financial implications, and given that the community-run option is viable, the mobile option for Goxhill should be discounted.   Finally, the option of closing the library and not putting in a mobile service would compromise the council's statutory duty for library provision.

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

5.1   Financial

The annual cost to North Lincolnshire Council providing the day to day running of Goxhill Library is around £9,000.   The financial implications of introducing community-run libraries are built into the council's budget framework.   Service-wide budget provision is in place for the council to support the community-run library on matters such as stock provision, systems maintenance and training.

5.2   Staffing

If the community-run model is put in place, council staff currently based at the library will be redeployed elsewhere in the service.

5.3   Property

North Lincolnshire Council does not own the Goxhill Library building.

5.4   Information Technology

Installing self-service facilities would be a key element of the community-run library.   Library staff would work with Information Technology Services to ensure the effective and secure installation of these facilities.

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

6.1   Statutory

The council's statutory duty for library provision has been considered throughout the review and the development of this proposal.

6.2   Environmental

There are no implications.   The library will operate at its current site.

6.3   Diversity

An integrated impact assessment has been carried out on the community-run library model.   A community-run library would continue to offer library access to the local community, with opening hours determined locally.   Customers would continue to have access to a wide range of library stock and materials.

7.   **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1   The service user consultation took place in July and August.   People were asked for their views on the community-run and mobile options and on the importance of the library.   Around 250 forms were sent out to active library members, covering around 180 different households.   A total of 87 people responded to the survey.   Eighty-six per cent responded that the library is very important to their local community.   Sixty-three percent said they like or don't mind the idea of a community-run library.   Twenty-six per cent said that they would like or would not mind a mobile library service.   Twenty-eight adults expressed some interest in volunteering to help run the library.

7.2   In addition to Goxhill Parish Council's involvement, the council has received a petition organised by Goxhill Women's Institute and signed by 122 people. The petition was to retain the library in its current form with a paid member of staff.   This was considered at a petition panel.   Reassurance was given on the community-run option, with a commitment to further involvement in shaping the service to be provided.   Staff members, trade unions and Ferry Ward members have been briefed.   Trade unions received a report at a joint consultative committee meeting and have expressed no concerns.

8.   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1   That the cabinet member approves the setting up of Goxhill Library on the community-run model;

8.2   approves the development of a long-term service level agreement with Goxhill Parish Council to clarify and regularise the new arrangements; and

8.3   authorises council officers to prepare for Goxhill Parish Council to take over the day to day operation of the library on 1 April 2011.

SERVICE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY PLANNING AND RESOURCES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Library Network Review
Service user consultation