

## NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

### CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES CABINET MEMBER

#### HAXEY LIBRARY

#### 11. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To determine that Haxey Library should continue to be managed and staffed by the council.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- A decision was taken earlier this year to establish Haxey Library as a council-managed facility operating with local volunteers;
  - This followed a review of Haxey Library that explored potential for alternative service delivery models, to ensure sustainability and improve value for money;
  - A recent fall in the numbers of potential volunteers indicates that it may not be sufficient to sustain the volunteer operated model long-term;
  - This therefore now raises a serious concern about the viability of installing self-service facilities at Haxey Library; and
  - In light of these issues, this report now proposes retaining the current service model for Haxey Library for the foreseeable future.

#### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Earlier this year a decision was taken to develop and implement a new service delivery model for Haxey Library. The decision followed a review of Haxey Library, which in turn arose from a broader review of the library network that explored consistency of service level provision across communities as well as issues of future sustainability. From the review a blueprint for the network was developed. The blueprint allows consideration to be given to more sustainable delivery models for smaller libraries. Alternative models 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. The review of Haxey Library took place within this context.
- 2.2 A consultation exercise was carried out with service users to ascertain their views and preferences. The Parish Council also actively participated in the review and is committed to ensuring the best possible outcome for the community. The consultation exercise showed that the local community clearly values the current library service and believes it is very much at the heart of the Haxey community.

- 2.3 Many current service users indicated they would prefer to retain the existing service delivery model, and the council also received a petition signed by 93 people to this effect. Fifty-six per cent of current service users however said that they would like or would not mind a community-run library, and some people indicated that they may be willing to volunteer to help run the library. There were relatively low levels of support for a mobile service.
- 2.4 Following the consultation a new service delivery model was proposed for Haxey Library. This would retain the library as a community facility while seeking to improve long-term financial sustainability. Under the new model, the council would continue to manage the library and co-ordinate volunteers to operate the library on a day-to-day basis. The model would also involve installing a self-service kiosk to minimise volunteer duties. The model would be reviewed regularly to ensure continued viability and value for money.
- 2.5 Preliminary work to start implementing the volunteer operated library at Haxey has shown that the initial number of potential volunteers has fallen. There is now some concern that the numbers will not be sufficient to maintain the current level of opening hours. This could impact on the longer-term viability of this model and its capacity to improve value for money.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Option 1 is to implement the decision taken in March 2011 to establish a volunteer operated library at Haxey as planned. Option 2 is to defer the implementation of the decision pending further consultation and recruitment of more volunteers. Option 3 is not to implement the original decision and continue with the existing service model and seek to engage volunteers' services to expand the service provision in the future.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 In light of reduced numbers of potential volunteers, there is now a risk that the volunteer operated service model may not be able to sustain the existing ten opening hours per week. Consultation with service users and Haxey Parish Council indicated that it might be difficult to engage and retain higher numbers of volunteers. The volunteer operated model may therefore not be viable for the long term. In that case, installing a self-service kiosk will not be cost-effective or offer long-term value for money. The consultation process demonstrated that other alternative service models, such as mobile provision, would not be acceptable to the local community.
- 4.2 Option 3 is therefore the proposed option. The factors supporting this option are:
- it allows for the continuation of a facility that is clearly viewed locally as being at the heart of the Haxey community;
  - it will ensure that the current library opening hours can be maintained;
  - it eliminates the risk of establishing an alternative service model that may not be sustainable long-term; and

- the self-service kiosk designated for Haxey can be released and utilised elsewhere in the library network to achieve greater value for money for North Lincolnshire council tax payers.

4.3 A decision to adopt Option 3 would retain Haxey Library as part of the council's wider network of library facilities. As such it would continue to be reviewed on a regular basis in terms of value for money and performance.

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

### 5.1 Financial

The annual cost to North Lincolnshire Council of providing the day to day running of Haxey Library is around £12,000. The implementation of a volunteer operated service model would have realised savings of around £8,000. These savings are built into the council's budget framework. The required savings in 2011/12 will be met by realigning vacant hours in the professional library staffing establishment to meet the shortfall. From 2012/13 the library service will seek to achieve these savings by utilising the self-service kiosk more effectively elsewhere in the library network where it can yield greater value for money.

### 5.2 Staffing

The library will continue to operate with its existing staffing establishment.

### 5.3 Property

North Lincolnshire Council does not own the Haxey Library building.

### 5.4 Information Technology

There are no IT implications in continuing with the current service model.

## 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

The current council-managed and staffed library will continue to offer local people the same level of access to library services.

## 7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 The service user consultation took place in July and August 2010. People were asked for their views on the community-run and mobile options and on the importance of the library. Around 270 forms were sent out to active

library members, covering around 210 different households. A total of 128 people responded to the survey. Eighty-one per cent responded that the library is very important to their local community. While many current service users indicated they would prefer to retain the existing service, fifty-six percent said they like or don't mind the idea of a community-run library. Forty-three per cent said that they would like or would not mind a mobile library service.

- 7.2 In addition to Haxey Parish Council's involvement, the council received a petition signed by 93 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 council's commitment to ensuring quality library services in Haxey.
- 7.3 Trade unions received oral reports at joint consultative committee meetings during the review of Haxey Library. Staff members and trade unions have been briefed on the latest proposals.

## 8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member for Corporate & Community Services approves the continuation of the existing service delivery arrangements for Haxey Library;
- 8.2 That these arrangements remain in place for a minimum of five years subject to any further commissioned reviews of library provision.

### DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES

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### **Background Papers used in the preparation of this report**

Library Network Review  
Service user consultation