

## **NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES CABINET MEMBER**

#### **MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE**

## **1 OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

1.1 To outline options for the future delivery of mobile library services.

1.2 The key points in this report are:

- The library service operates two mobile library vehicles which visit 63 communities in North Lincolnshire
- Provision includes two days service each week at Broughton
- The service provides one day of service per week to North East Lincolnshire; this will cease from October 2011 with a consequent loss of income
- The two existing vehicles are 12 years old and increasingly in need of repair and maintenance
- One replacement vehicle is due for delivery by the end of the year, and will include internet access
- Take up of the mobile library service has been declining over several years, and there is limited capacity for mobiles to diversify their existing service offer
- Reductions in government grants mean that the council has to reduce its spend over four years, and must therefore consider its spending priorities
- It is timely to review future mobile library provision in the context of the issues above, to explore alternative models of delivery and ensure value for money
- A review of the mobile service would include determining and applying criteria to determine levels of service provision
- There are a number of potential options which could be explored; an initial assessment of service and cost implications of these are set out in Appendix 1

## **2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 North Lincolnshire Council operates a network of 1 central library, 14 branch libraries and two mobile libraries. The two mobile libraries operate 21 routes over a fortnight period and provide 51.5 service hours per week to 63

predominantly rural communities in North Lincolnshire. Most communities receive fortnightly visits. Broughton has a two-day weekly service and Burton on Stather a one-day weekly service.

- 2.2 The mobile library service also currently provides one day of service per week to North East Lincolnshire. North East Lincolnshire is withdrawing this service from 31 October 2011. This will result in a loss of £24,500 income per year for the service.
- 2.3 The two existing mobile vehicles have been in service since 1999. They are experiencing increasing downtime for necessary repairs and maintenance. One replacement vehicle is currently being built and is scheduled for completion by the end of December. The new vehicle will have Internet access via satellite, which will offer an enhanced service for mobile library users. It is anticipated that the new mobile will incur higher costs than the current vehicles.
- 2.4 Nationally traditional use of libraries has declined over the few years, and this trend is reflected in North Lincolnshire. While some static libraries have been able to diversify the existing service offer through co-location or IT services, mobile libraries have more limited capacity to achieve this. Mobile library service issues have declined from 76,500 to 46,800 over the last six years.
- 2.5 Over the last few years technological innovations have allowed the library service to develop new kinds of services. Library customers are now able to access a range of services online, and self-service facilities can enable new service delivery models to be set up such as community-run libraries. These developments offer opportunities to consider different models of provision for some of the communities served by the mobile, such as Broughton.
- 2.6 Central government introduced its national deficit programme last year. Reductions in government grant will require the council to reduce its expenditure by £25 million over four years. The council therefore has a duty to consider the types and levels of service that council taxpayers should now be asked to support. It is vital that the library service reviews its services on an ongoing basis to develop solutions that best meet community and customer needs and ensure the best possible value for money.
- 2.7 In light of these issues it is timely for the library service to review mobile library provision in terms of:
  - opportunities for alternative service delivery models
  - number of communities visited
  - length of service time per community
  - frequency of service
  - number of vehicles and staff required to deliver the future service
- 2.8 A review would incorporate a criteria-based approach to determine viability and levels of mobile provision for communities. Criteria would include:
  - size of population
  - levels of take up
  - deprivation in terms of barriers to accessing services

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

- 3.1 Option 1 - is to continue with a two-vehicle mobile library service providing around the same levels of service as now.
- 3.2 Option 2 - is to use the new vehicle to provide service to identified viable communities, and continue to use an existing vehicle to provide two days service to Broughton per week.
- 3.3 Option 3 - is to use the new vehicle to provide service to identified viable communities and transfer Broughton to community-run static provision.
- 3.4 Option 4 - is to use the new vehicle alone to provide service to identified viable communities including Broughton.

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

- 4.1 Option 1 would allow the service to maintain current levels of mobile library provision. However the second mobile would need replacing as well. This option would significantly add to service running costs, and in light of declining take up, this would represent reduced value for money.
- 4.2 Option 2 would reduce levels of provision for some communities, but would allow continued mobile service to Broughton as either an interim short-term solution or on a more permanent basis. Longer term though a second replacement vehicle could still be needed. This would increase costs running costs, and if take up declines further would not improve value for money.
- 4.3 Option 3 would reduce levels of provision for some communities, but offer an innovative solution for alternative service delivery at Broughton. Using one vehicle alone offers greater capacity to improve value for money.
- 4.4 Option 4 would significantly reduce levels of provision across communities including larger communities such as Broughton, while it is unlikely to offer much more capacity for improved value for money than Option 3.
- 4.5 There are many possible permutations of these options depending on how criteria would be applied. Service staff have undertaken an initial assessment of the four options above in terms of impact on levels of provision and cost. These are set out in Appendix 1.

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

#### **5.1 Financial**

The options above will impact on service running costs to varying degrees. Initial estimates are set out in Appendix 1

#### **5.2 Staffing**

Most of the options above would impact on staffing levels to some degree. Service managers will consider and develop the most appropriate way to review staffing levels and consult staff on any specific proposals.

### 5.3 Property

Option 3 includes transferring Broughton static provision. This could be a community venue or offer potential to improve utilisation of an existing council building through co-location.

### 5.4 Information Technology

The new vehicle will include public internet access. Option 2 could result in a two-tier service offer.

## 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 will be considered in developing potential changes to mobile library provision.

### 6.2 Environmental

Operating one vehicle that is more environmentally efficient will reduce carbon emissions.

### 6.3 Diversity

Service staff will undertake an integrated impact assessment for any proposed changes to mobile library provision.

## 7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 Consulting with communities, customers, staff and trade unions will be integral to developing and implementing specific proposals for future mobile library service provision.

## 8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the options for future mobile library provision set out above, and

8.2 Receives a further report on these issues following development of and consultation on specific proposals for changes to the mobile library service.

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Pittwood House  
Ashby Road  
SCUNTHORPE  
North Lincolnshire  
DN16 1AB

Author: Helen Rowe

Date: 06 September 2011

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

## APPENDIX 1 - MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE – Potential Options

Current mobile library service provision			
<i>No of vehicles</i>	2	<i>Staffing</i>	Mix of single /double
<i>No of NL communities served</i>	63	<i>Est driver hours required per week</i>	90
<i>Average weekly NL service hours</i>	51.5	<i>Est assistant hours per week</i>	60
<i>Annual NL service hours</i>	2,678		
<i>NL frequency of routes</i>	2 weekly; 62 fortnightly		
<i>Average weekly NEL service hrs</i>	7.1	<i>Est service cost 2010/11</i>	£148,000
<i>Est max service time capacity</i>	30 hrs per vehicle per wk	<i>Est income from NEL 2010/11</i>	£24,500
<i>Est travel time</i>	15 hrs per vehicle per wk	<i>Net est service cost 2010/11</i>	£123,500

**Note:** Costs of leasing new replacement vehicles estimated to increase by c. £7K; cost of leasing IT per vehicle estimated at £3K

Option		No of routes	Frequency	Est No comms able to serve	Est diff v current cost – mix staffing	Est diff v current cost – single staffing
1	Replace both mobile libraries with new vehicles	21	As now	63+	+ £44,500	+ £12,500
2	New vehicle and retain 1 existing vehicle for 2 days a wk to maintain Broughton provision	15	2 wkly	40-45	£0	- £15,000
3	New vehicle only with Broughton as community-run static	10	2 wkly	30-35	- £42,500	- £52,500
		15	3 wkly	50+		
4	New vehicle only including mobile provision to Broughton	10	2 wkly	25-30	- £42,500	- £52,500
		15	3 wkly	45-50		