Report of the Director of
Corporate & Community Services

Decision to be taken after
4 October 2011

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES CABINET MEMBER

REVIEW OF LIBRARY OPENING HOURS

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

1.1 To outline options for changes to opening hours at the four largest libraries in North Lincolnshire – Central, Brigg, Barton and Ashby.

1.2 The key points in this report are:

➢ There are currently 387.5 opening hours per week across the library network

➢ Service improvements and modernisation have enabled an increase in static library opening hours over the last six years and improved value for money

➢ Reductions in government grants means that the council has to reduce its spend over four years, and must therefore consider its spending priorities

➢ Traditional use of libraries has been declining for some time, but there are increasing levels of virtual use of libraries.

➢ To ensure continued value for money, the library service therefore needs to continue to review opening hours in terms of service take up and the impact of its modernisation programme

➢ The first phase of this review is to consider opening hours at the four largest libraries, in light of take up and the introduction of self-service facilities in 2010

➢ An initial set of potential changes to opening hours has been drawn up, which would remove some hours at quieter times, while maximising potential for self-service access to library services

➢ These changes would see a net reduction of four hours across the main library facilities.

2. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 North Lincolnshire Council operates a network of 1 central library, 14 branch libraries and two mobile libraries. These libraries are currently open to the public for a total of 387.5 hours per week. There are 336 open hours across static libraries and 51.5 mobile library hours per week.

2.2 Over the last six years the library service has modernised and rationalised its static library provision through a series of transformational developments. These include refurbishment or relocation of Central, Barton, Ashby, Crowle and Winterton libraries, with increased co-location with other services and some generic working. Self-service facilities have been introduced in six libraries, and one library has transferred to a community-run delivery model.

During this period there has also been a significant increase in capacity to develop and deliver 24/7 library services online.

2.3 These improvements have allowed the library service to increase opening hours and reduce costs to improve value for money for local council taxpayers. Static library opening hours have risen from 299 in 2005 to 336 in 2011. Over the same period the net library cost per visit has reduced from £5.80 to £3.70.

2.4 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 responsibility to consider the types and levels of service that council taxpayers should now be asked to support. In this context it is vital that the library service regularly reviews the impact of its modernisation programme. This includes looking at opening hours in relation to take up and capacity for innovative approaches to maximising access to library services.

2.5 Service staff have started to look at opening hours across the library network. The first phase of this work is to review opening hours at the four largest libraries in the network – Central, Brigg, Barton, Ashby. These libraries have now been operating with self-service facilities for over 15 months. It is therefore timely to look at service take up and patterns of use at these libraries in that context. As these are the largest libraries, they also offer the greatest capacity to achieve improved value for money through economies of scale.

2.6 Nationally take up of traditional library services has declined over the last two decades, and overall this trend has been reflected in North Lincolnshire. The service has seen a rise in library issues in the last few years, but the trend varies across libraries. Customers are also increasingly accessing the service online from home to renew and reserve library materials.

2.7 In terms of the four main libraries, self-service has not altered the overall trend in take up of service. All four libraries have increased opening hours to varying degrees over the last six years. However, an analysis of library transactions now indicates that there are quieter times at some libraries where maintaining current opening times does not represent continuing value for money. There are also opportunities at Barton, and Ashby to look at offering a minimum level of unstaffed access to self-service facilities at times when other services in these buildings are open.

2.8 In light of this analysis, service staff have drawn up an initial set of revised opening hours for these libraries. These do not include Brigg where future opening hours will be determined as part of the relocation of the library to The Angel. There is scope to reduce staffed opening hours at Central, Barton and Ashby. The impact of any reductions could be offset at Barton and Ashby by providing access to self-service facilities when other services in the buildings are open. These revised opening hours would mean an overall net reduction of four hours. Details of these revisions are set out in Appendix 1.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 Option 1 is to develop and consult on the proposed changes to opening hours at the four main libraries as set out in Appendix 1. Option 2 is to

develop alternative opening hours proposals for these libraries for further consideration.   Option 3 is to continue with the current level and pattern of opening hours at these libraries.

4.   **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1   Option 1 would allow the library service to respond effectively to changes in patterns of use and make use of self-service facilities in order to minimise the impact of reduced access levels and offer better value for money.

4.2   Option 2 would offer opportunities to make alternative changes to opening hours at these libraries, but would still need to achieve similar capacity for improved value for money.

4.3   Option 3 would maintain levels of library provision, but limit capacity to improve value for money by rationalising access to library services.

4.4   None of these options would prohibit further changes to opening hours at these libraries.   Opening hours across all libraries are subject to ongoing review to ensure they continue to meet local needs and offer value for money.

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

5.1   Financial

The proposed opening hours set out in Appendix 1 have the capacity to reduce service running costs.   It is estimated that these changes would release around £16,000 in savings per annum.

5.2   Staffing

Lower staffing levels would be required to maintain the reduced opening hours set out in Appendix 1.   As any changes are implemented, service managers will consider and develop the most appropriate way to review staffing levels and consult staff on the proposals.

5.3   Property

There are no property implications.

5.4   Information Technology

There are no IT implications.

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 in developing potential changes to library opening hours.

6.2   Environmental

        There are no implications.

6.3   Diversity

        Service staff will undertake an integrated impact assessment for any proposed changes to library opening hours.

7.   **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1   Service managers talk to staff on an ongoing basis about levels of take up across the existing opening hours. These views have been taken into account in developing options for future opening hours.

7.2   Consultation with customers, staff and unions will be integral to developing and implementing any future changes or reduce library opening hours.

8.   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1   That the Cabinet Member notes the options for developing changes to library opening hours set out above, and

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

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

LIBRARY OPENING HOURS REVIEW - APPENDIX 1

Potential Changes to opening hours at Central, Barton, Ashby and Brigg libraries

CENTRAL LIBRARY								
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Total	Change
Current	9 - 7	9 - 5	9 - 7	9 - 5	9 - 5	4 – 4.30	51.5	
Revised	9 - 5	9 - 4	9 - 7	9 - 4	9 - 5	9 - 4	47	-4.5

ASHBY LIBRARY								
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Total	Change
Current	9 - 5	9 - 6	9 - 4.30	9 – 4.30	9 - 4	9 - 12	42	
Revised	9 - 5	9 - 4	9 - 2	9 - 4	9 - 4	9.30 -12	36.5	- 5.5

Access via self-service would be available in evenings when Ashby Link open for adult learning courses – but this would not be year round, so not possible to set as permanent access hours

BARTON LIBRARY								
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Total	Change
Current	9.30 - 7	9.30 - 5	Closed	9.30 - 5	9.30 - 5	9 - 1	36	
Revised	9 - 6	9 - 5	9 - 2	9 -5	9 - 5	9 – 1	42	+ 6

Access 9-10 each weekday morning and 9-2 on Wednesdays would be unstaffed – but other services in the building are open and able to offer minimum level of support. Overall represents a reduction of 3 staffed opening hours and 9 additional unstaffed access hours.

BRIGG LIBRARY								
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Total	Change
Current	9 - 5	9 - 6	9 - 4.30	9 – 4.30	9 - 4	9 - 12	42	

Suggest no changes to current hours for the short term. Revised opening hours to be considered as part of relocation to The Angel in 2012 – but would aim to be at least the same as now

Overall Changes		
Change to staffed open hours	Additional unstaffed access hours	Net change to access hours
- 13	+ 9	- 4

Estimated potential savings from associated reduced staffing levels = £16,000

The changes outlined above are suggested in light of:
 Analysis of library transactions
 Take up of People's network
 Information from staff at library sites