



SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 September 2011

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

ACTION

Councillor Smith declared an interest as a member of the Safer & Stronger Strategic Board.

Councillor Reeve declared an interest as a member of Ramsey Library Community Group.

Councillor van de Ven declared an interest as a volunteer at Melbourn Library Access Point (LAP).

23. MINUTES: 7 JULY 2011

The minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. There were the following matters arising:

- It was confirmed that the Safer & Stronger Strategic Board had been replaced by an Interim Board, which would next meet on 24 October 2011. The Interim Board membership consisted of members from the District Councils, County Council, the Probation Service, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the PCT. The Interim Board would be in existence until the Police & Crime Commissioner was appointed.
The Chairman asked the Service Director: Community Engagement, Mike Davey, to update the County Council's website with details of the Interim Board. MD
- The Committee noted the recent Governmental announcement that Police & Crime Commissioner appointments would be delayed until November 2012.
- **With reference to Minute 16: Community Safety Peer Review, it was agreed that Communication Officer, Matthew Hall would outline to the Committee by email how his post contributed to the Localism Agenda and the outcomes he was supporting.** MH

24. OVERVIEW: 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY SERVICES

The Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Councillor Mac McGuire (standing in for the Cabinet Member for Learning, Councillor Harty), accompanied by the Acting Executive Director, Community & Adult Services, Pat Harding and the Corporate Policy & Partnerships Officer, Joanna Little attended the meeting to update Members on the Council's Vision for 21st Century Library Services.

The Acting Executive Director introduced the item and invited Members' comments on the overall Vision and the objectives of the programme. These comments would be incorporated in the report to Cabinet on 27 September 2011. The original proposals for a Libraries, Learning & Culture trust, which had been subject to consultation, had changed, subsequent to a change in Government policy, which removed the financial benefits of the arrangement. The elements in development were the review of library services and how this would link with community services more generally. The Council would provide different levels of library provision according to community need and wanted to recapture community interest in libraries. The Administration was working in collaboration with other public sector providers towards a sustainable model.

The Deputy Leader added that the current vision had arisen from the public consultation and demonstrated that the Council was listening to communities. The report illustrated the importance of working together with other agencies to create one-stop shop type facilities, according to local demand.

The Chairman invited the Committee to put forward positive and constructive ideas to add to the Library Vision in their new Overview role, and the following comments were made in response:

- One Member suggested that volunteers, particularly in the 18-25 age group, be given incentives to volunteer, such as training and skill development, to improve their employability.
- Another Member emphasised the potential benefit of training being provided for volunteers in areas of deprivation.
- One Member asked that the Vision recognise the value and comfort communities derived from libraries as institutions and acknowledge their place in the social landscape. Libraries promoted a sense of community wellbeing, which should not be sacrificed in the pressure to achieve savings.
- The Deputy Leader queried whether the value attached to libraries was related to library buildings or the library service itself. A community hub model might create savings, promote partnership working and support the locality in a new way.
- The Member replied that the library service and its buildings were probably conflated in people's minds and observed that the present Vision resembled a set of proposals based on a consumerist 'supermarket model.' People had social as well as consumer needs, which needed to be addressed. He cautioned that the Administration could face resistance unless it tackled people's fears.
- One Member stated that the public needed to know not only the direction of travel, but the timelines of when certain decisions would be made. If parish councils wanted to make financial contributions to keep their local library open, they needed to know in the next two –

three months.

- The Acting Executive Director replied that the report was a Vision Statement and that the detail of timelines would not be available for 27 September Cabinet. She recognised the timescales that parish councils were working to and noted that the community responses to the 13 libraries under review had all been different.
- The same Member asked that the Vision include exemplars of local successes, and asked that libraries' facilities contracts were reviewed in order to examine how costs could be reduced.
- The Acting Executive Director responded that exemplars would be given, as well as examples of where plans had not worked, to provide learning; using appropriate buildings for community hubs was vital. Facility management contracts would be reviewed, particularly where the cost of building maintenance was disproportionate to the cost of the service provided.
- The Corporate Policy & Partnerships Officer added that the 13 libraries under review were a priority for transformation. The Vision had been informed by successes elsewhere and she was in contact with relevant national officer groups.
- One Member warned of the creation of a vision based too much on aspiration, because of the danger of disappointment. She queried what the statistical success of e-books had been in Cambridgeshire. The Central Library served a large number of people and there remained a human as well as a virtual element to libraries. The Chairman commented that the e-books sector was experiencing rapid growth throughout the country. The Corporate Policy and Partnerships Officer responded that e-books were a relatively recent addition to Cambridgeshire Library Service, but an area that was likely to expand.
The Acting Executive Director agreed to provide statistical data on the use of e-books in Cambridgeshire's libraries subsequent to the meeting. PH
- With reference to paragraph 3.1, one Member asked that the Administration find out what people actually valued in their libraries, which might include their social value. She asked for clarification regarding to what extent the Vision was a money saving exercise and whether it was 'on track' to achieve the savings specified in the Integrated Plan 2011/12. The Acting Executive Director replied that savings were on track, would be made against fixed costs, and might be accrued to the Council as a whole rather than just the Library Service.
- One Member believed that the report was an inspirational document based on clear principles, which he had seen work at Ramsey Library. However, he queried whether the Council was truly committed to community hubs being at the heart of communities or whether this was rhetoric designed to cover essential budget management. If the Council truly believed in the community hub model he queried whether

it would be willing to consider radical possibilities such as not charging community groups for hiring rooms, and not squeezing other agencies hard for payment to be involved.

- The same Member queried the role of the professional librarian versus the trained lay person. He conjectured that perhaps customer service managers were more appropriate for community hubs than professional librarians.
- The same Member recommended that Community and Youth Inspectors comments on the Vision be invited, as they might be able to highlight customer service issues that had been overlooked. The Acting Executive Director replied that they would certainly consider this suggestion. An aspect of the Vision was to widen and increase community use of libraries.
- The Acting Executive Director stated that with regard to Ramsey Library there had been financial pressure to make the books balance. Staff that worked in libraries were already working in a customer service role, most were not qualified librarians, and the right model would facilitate a lay person to do the job.
- The Deputy Leader replied that the Vision was not just about providing a library service, the buildings needed to be available outside library opening hours as community facilities.
- One Member asked how community hubs would benefit local businesses. The Deputy Leader gave the example of how local business might get involved by providing a free ATM in an area.
- The same Member suggested that incentives be provided for struggling businesses to be involved in community hubs. The Acting Executive Director replied that the Postmaster at Bar Hill Library did not pay the full market rent, thus allowing the post office service to continue at the hub. How businesses might be encouraged would need to be considered on a case by case basis.
- One Member commented that although he recognised the benefit of co-locating services, he viewed libraries as a public service rather than a quasi-retail experience. He asked that libraries be valued as a public rather than a retail space, and the Vision include an explicit commitment to preserve the public spaces provided by libraries. A post office with a few library shelves was not the same as a library space in which people could read or children could play safely.
- The Deputy Leader replied that a post office with a Library Access Point from which books could be ordered, could preserve a village shop under threat of closure. However where a public space could be maintained – a commitment to preserve it would be given.
- One Member recommended flexibility in approach and asked how Members would be involved in the next steps. The Deputy Leader replied that the updated report and plan would be considered by Cabinet on 27 September and would be considered further by Cabinet

and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at various decision points.

- With reference to paragraph 3.7 one Member asked how the library stock a community wanted or needed would be assessed. He asked what level of professional support and asset management the County Council would provide to volunteers. The report presented one vision for libraries, but multiple visions were required in order to adapt to a changing world. He queried how the Vision presented differed from the status quo and suggested that perhaps a more radical version was needed for the 21st century.
- The Deputy Leader replied that it was important that the Vision was achievable, dynamic and evolving. What actually materialised was often dictated by other factors, including financial imperatives. The Vision had emerged following the consultation process, however if Members had additional ideas the Administration was listening.
- The Acting Executive Director responded that there could be as many visions as there were libraries, since work would be tailored to local need. The Council would not be abdicating its responsibilities with regard to managing the Library Service and volunteers would have access to paid staff. Volunteers were already used in the Library Service and benefitted from a support package.
- One Member asked that IT provision was integrated in community hubs. The Corporate Policy & Partnerships Officer replied that work was ongoing with the Head of IT, Noelle Godfrey on the IT Strategy.
- One member asked that local government management speak, such as *community-centric differentiated retail model of library provision (paragraph 3.1)*, be exorcised from the report to Cabinet, due to its lack of transparency.
- The first sentence in paragraph 3.7 would be corrected to: *The stock and services available in the compact/access locations would be co-designed with communities.*
- Objectives 4.3 and 4.4 entitled *Services shaped by the community* and *A truly local approach to public service provision* would be amalgamated into one encompassing objective.
- One Member asked that adult education be recognised as an important component of the Library Vision.
- Another Member asked that the report to Cabinet set out how the Council proposed to manage the changes facing staff in terms of new ways of working and reduction in staff numbers. The Acting Executive Director agreed that the impact on staff would be covered. The SPINE project was covering back office working and partnering with Suffolk County Council and staff had been consulted on this as well as restructuring. The details of the SPINE project would be available before Christmas 2011.

- The Head of Libraries, Archives & Information, Christine May, informed the meeting that library staff were receiving step by step updates at regular staff forums.

Community Impact Assessment

As part of this agenda item Members also received the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) conducted as part of the consultation on restructuring the Library Services. It was clarified that the CIA was based on consultations held this year and last with staff and members of the public. There would be a separate CIA in future, rolled out for each area. The following comments were made in response:

- With reference to page 11, one Member asked whether the age groups of library users were taken from a random sample of users or reflected the demographic of library users as a whole. **The Acting Executive Director replied that she would forward an answer subsequent to the meeting.** PH
- **With reference to page 9, one Member stated that Affect on Employees be corrected to Effect on Employees.** JL
- **The following sentence on page 5: *It will mean that some library buildings will close*, would be changed to *It will mean that some library buildings may close*.** JL
- One Member recognised the work of Councillor Sir Peter Brown, Councillor Harty and the Head of Libraries, Archives & Information, Christine May on the Library Review and felt that their work should receive credit.
- One Member asked whether there had been adequate consultation with children on the Library Service Review, and was directed to page 12, which included the 2007 Children’s Library Users Survey.

The Committee’s Overview recommendations could be summarised as follows:

- Volunteering should be encouraged and recognised by training, skill development and reward in order to improve the employability of participants.
- Adult education should form an integral component of the Library Service Vision.
- The report to Cabinet on 27 September should include information on the effect on library employees in terms of adapting to new ways of working and reduced staffing numbers.
- Parish and town councils should be engaged with early in order that there were no barriers to their participation.

- The concept of community hubs being at the heart of the community should be central to local plans.
- Community and Youth Inspectors' contribution should be invited.
- Incentives should be provided for businesses to be involved in community hubs.
- The location of community hubs in or near town centres should be considered in order to benefit and revive town centres and local businesses.
- The integration of IT systems between partners should be considered at the earliest opportunity.
- The intangible value of library buildings as historic public spaces should be acknowledged.
- The social value of libraries should be recognised.
- The Vision should remain flexible, in a rapidly changing environment.
- The Administration should extend their horizons to consider unusual and varied models referring to exemplars, where helpful.

It was agreed that the report to Cabinet would incorporate the above points made by the Committee. The Chairman thanked the Officers and Member for their attendance.

JL

25. CABINET AGENDA PLAN

The Committee noted the Cabinet Agenda Plan.

26. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny & Improvement Officer informed the Committee that a member of Cambridgeshire Constabulary would attend in December to discuss Operation Redesign. Members expressed an interest in scrutinising the Constabulary's use of its Control and Communication Centre at the same meeting.

The Chairman commented that he had received a suggestion from a member of the public that the Committee consider the Constabulary's use of restorative justice. **The Constabulary's report on the subject would be circulated to the Committee.**

RB

The Service Director: Community Engagement, Mike Davey offered to provide a briefing on the appointment of Police & Crime Commissioners at the December meeting.

MD/RB

There would also be an update on Integrated Offender Management at the December meeting.

The Committee welcomed Scrutiny Liaison Support, Hannah Barrett, who would provide a link with the Community Engagement Directorate.

Domestic Abuse Review Update

Councillor Hoy updated the Committee on progress with the Member Led Review on Domestic Abuse. She stated that she had learned that domestic violence was prevalent across all ages, classes and ethnic boundaries. All the Serious Case Reviews the County Council had considered in the recent past contained a domestic abuse element within them. In addition 75% of looked after children had come from a background of domestic abuse. The cost to agencies was profound with workers only able to intervene at a late stage. The County Council's 2.5FTE staff capacity, which covered this area were overstretched.

It was agreed that the interim report would be circulated to the Committee for comment and presented to 27 September Cabinet, recommending that funding be earmarked in the Integrated Plan towards tackling domestic abuse. **RB/SH**

A number of Members stated that they would be meeting with staff from New Directions, a local agency working in this field, and would report back to the next meeting.

The Service Director: Community Engagement also recommended that Members receive a briefing from the Domestic Abuse Partnership Manager, Simon Kerss. **SK**

Rapporteur Updates

Committee Rapporteurs brought the following updates:

- The Chairman and Localism Rapporteur reported that he would be reading the Localism Bill and meeting with Service Director: Community Engagement next week.
- **Councillor Reynolds, Libraries Rapporteur reported that he had received two briefings from the Head of Libraries, Archives & Information and he would circulate his briefing notes to the Committee.** **JR**
- **The Service Director: Community Engagement stated that he would be contacting the Members that had volunteered for the Localism projects at the last meeting.** **MD**
- The Head of Service, Adult Learning & Skills, Lynsi Hayward-Smith had asked for comments on her service's self assessment before it was considered by Cabinet. **Councillors Reeve and West volunteered to provide this through a Task and Finish Group.** **PR, RW**

The Committee were reminded that the purpose of the Rapporteurs' role was for Members to extend their knowledge in a particular area and provide a form of outreach for the Committee.

Member Led Review Group – Integrated Plan

The February meeting would consider the Integrated Plan.

27. CALLED-IN DECISIONS – there were none.

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 14 December at 14.30h

Members of the Committee present:

Councillors: S Hoy, L Kadic(part of the meeting), P Reeve, J Reynolds, M Smith, S Tierney(Chairman), S van de Ven (substitute), T Sadiq, K Wilkins, R West, S Whitebread

Also in attendance: *Councillor M McGuire, Christine May*

Apologies: *Councillors: B Brooks-Gordon, D Harty S King, A Pellew*

Time: 14.30-16.25

Place: *Shire Hall, Cambridge*