

## Libraries

### Initial Service and Community Impact Assessment

#### Purpose of Assessment

This document is intended to be an initial assessment of the impact of proposed changes to Library Services, as part of the Council's 2011/12 - 2013/14 budget proposals on Oxfordshire's communities and those groups protected by equalities legislation.

This assessment will be amended as proposals are further developed and feedback is received from formal consultation on the proposed changes. A final version will be prepared during 2011. This will be made publicly available and will be used by the Council's Cabinet to assist them in taking final decisions about the future of services. The budget proposals more generally have also been subject to an overarching cross-council impact assessment (available [here](#)) that provides further context and identifies possible cumulative impacts of the budget proposals and the mitigation that is planned.

#### Proposal

To restructure the library service and create a sustainable network for the future. To achieve this, we propose to:

Provide access to quality books, information and knowledge

Run efficient and effective library 'hubs' in convenient locations across the county

Provide excellent customer service and open at times that make sense to our communities

Bring our services to people and communities in rural and isolated areas

Work together with community groups, volunteers and partnership organizations to develop innovative ways to further enhance our services

This will involve ceasing to fund some of our libraries whilst providing communities an opportunity to run libraries.

#### Context

The Council's budget constraints mean that the library service is required to achieve savings of £2m over the next four years.

Our approach is to achieve this budget reduction whilst sustaining a high quality and accessible library service. The current provision of libraries in Oxfordshire reflects historic circumstances rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. In planning for the future the following principles have been taken into account:

- Library provision should be focused on centres of population and evenly spread geographically
- provision should reflect regular shopping and travel patterns
- provision should reflect existing patterns of demand/use
- Library services should reflect the needs of different cultures and languages and socio-economic need.

We intend to amend our current opening hours to reflect how customers are likely to use library facilities in the future, this includes extending the opening hours of central library. We also propose to modernise our buildings and will seek investment in town libraries, work with commercial partners over ideas such as coffee shops and to work with communities with innovative ideas for delivering library services.

In addition we propose to bring our library services to people and communities by: extending our loan services to include eBooks and eAudio downloads; work with partners to develop Library Links in communities; and, review our use of mobile services.

#### **Libraries to be retained**

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Oxford Central | 12. Faringdon       |
| 2. Abingdon       | 13. Carterton       |
| 3. Banbury        | 14. Wallingford     |
| 4. Witney         | 15. Chipping Norton |
| 5. Bicester       | 16. Burford         |
| 6. Didcot         | 17. Eynsham         |
| 7. Cowley         | 18. Goring          |
| 8. Henley         | 19. Hook Norton     |
| 9. Wantage        |                     |
| 10. Thame         | 20. Watlington      |
| 11. Kidlington    | 21. Wheatley        |
|                   | 22. Woodstock       |
|                   | 23. Wychwood        |

#### **Funding to be withdrawn from**

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Summertown     | 13. Chinnor        |
| 2. Headington     | 14. Berinsfield    |
| 3. Botley         | 15. Sonning Common |
| 4. Littlemore     | 16. Benson         |
| 5. Old Marston    | 17. Deddington     |
| 6. Blackbird Leys | 18. Kennington     |
| 7. Grove          | 19. Charlbury      |
| 8. Neithrop       | 20. Bampton        |
| 9. Woodcote       |                    |
| 10. Adderbury     |                    |
| 11. North Leigh   |                    |
| 12. Stonesfield   |                    |

#### **What else did you consider and reject?**

A number of alternative proposals have been explored:

1) Leave the services as is:

Continuing the service as it is would have required the Council to have transferred substantial cuts to other services. Furthermore, the current service was already subject to a modernisation review (being undertaken jointly with Kent County Council) as it was acknowledged that changes were required to make the service sustainable, relevant and fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

2) Reduce opening hours and stock at all libraries

Making savings by significantly reducing opening hours and stock at all of our libraries would greatly diminish the quality of library services and would lead to rapidly declining use.

A number of options have been considered ranging from 40% to 19% reductions in revenue expenditure. This proposal has been adopted because it

- Provides very good geographical coverage
- Maintains current levels of access and stock provision in retained libraries
- Retains 82% of current visits and 79.5% of current issues.
- Provides good access for rural communities.
- Retains mobile libraries to provide targeted universal services eg. to older people; to rural communities
- Provides the community an opportunity to further enhance our library provision by running community libraries

### **What consultation/research evidence have you used to inform this proposal?**

We've had regard to data about usage and analysis of library locations relative to population distribution. We've also considered comprehensive data on needs and access which supports the proposals in terms of access and geographic spread.

Consultation undertaken in the Community Libraries project has informed the development of this model. A full consultation on this proposal will be undertaken in 2011.

### **How developed is the proposal?**

These proposals have been developed at a high level. .

### **Impact of the proposal on service users and their local communities**

We have undertaken an assessment of the impact of this proposal and consider that the main groups affected are children and adults who are less mobile for whatever reason.

Rural communities: The council is proposing to cease funding to 12 libraries in rural areas. This is likely to mean that individuals will have to travel further to access library provision. There is a greater risk for people who do not have their own transport.

Older people: 46% of current library users are over 55 and 13% are over 75.. The local library is often a social venue as well as a resource for books and information. There is a risk that the loss of rural and suburban libraries could contribute towards a greater isolation for older people.

Disabilities: 17% of current service users stated they had a disability (compared to 18% of the population); this varies, rising as high as 31% in Blackbird Leys. The loss of local libraries could diminish access for people with disabilities who may be more dependent on the alternative format stock available in libraries and are less able to travel a long distance.

**Mitigation:**

- Libraries will continue in towns that attract local shoppers from their local area
- eBooks and eAudio will enable anytime access to books for those with internet access
- Extension of home library services provided by volunteers, targeted at older people unable to leave their homes
- Mobile libraries will continue to provide access to library services in rural areas (and will be reviewed to ensure customer needs are better met)
- 'Big Society' one off funding will be available to support eligible community initiative libraries.

**For further development**

- The Council may need to consider how to provide alternatives to the local library's role as a social venue.
- Further analysis of local travel and access needs is required.

Deprivation: Library services often provide a range of vital resources for people aiming to develop literacy, skills or find jobs on-line; further distances may result in higher costs for individuals. A number of libraries likely to close are areas of deprivation but library facilities will be retained nearby.

Ethnicity: The ethnic diversity of Oxfordshire library users is similar to the resident population of Oxfordshire. Central and Cowley libraries are amongst the most popular libraries for new members from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background and both are being retained. However funding is likely to cease from Old Marston and Headington.

Computer facilities are often important to migrant populations. Libraries with good computer facilities will be retained, although funding will cease to some smaller rural libraries.

Mitigation:

- The decision to retain a high quality of stock is important for ensuring that libraries remain relevant and accessible for people speaking limited English.
- Cowley library is being retained in an important area of deprivation.
- Mobile libraries and home library services will support suburban and rural areas, although details will be explored as more data is available.

Gender: 36%/64% of men to women use library services. There is a risk that the reduction of rural libraries may be more likely to impact on individuals with dependents - who are more likely to be women.

Children and young adults: Children and young adults in rural areas are likely to find it less easy to access library facilities without transport.

Mitigation:

It is proposed that we:

- extend opening hours in the Central Library
- work with local community groups to deliver community library initiatives

Children have access to books through schools and the Bookstart programme.

Gender Reassignment: No impact anticipated

Religion and Belief: No impact anticipated.

Sexual Orientation: No impact anticipated

Marriage and Civil Partnerships: No impact anticipated

**Impact on providers (local SMEs and voluntary, community & faith sector)**

The proposed reduction of the number of libraries funded by OCC could reduce community rooms/meeting places although in most communities alternatives are available.

**What actions will be taken to mitigate this risk?**

A full consultation will be undertaken following which ideas for mitigation will be reviewed.

**Impact of the proposal on other council services**

The closure of libraries in shared OCC premises (eg. Blackbird Leys) may have implications for other OCC services, such as Adult Learning that occupy the same building. The closure of libraries on shared school sites (Littlemore, Woodcote and Sonning Common) will have implications for the respective schools involved.

**What actions will be taken to mitigate this risk?**

These potential knock effects will be assessed as part of the consultation process.

**Impact of the proposal on staff**

There will be significant impacts on staff as the majority of library expenditure (and therefore savings) is on staff salaries. Numbers of staff at all levels will be reduced. As the majority of library staff are female it is inevitable that this will also be reflected in the proportion of redundancies.

**What actions will be taken to mitigate this risk?**

Existing staff will be redeployed where vacancies exist in order to minimise redundancies.

**Capital implications of proposed change**

Where OCC closes libraries the community will have the opportunity to create a community run facility as long as it is sustainable and financial viable. Alternatively redundant buildings will be sold and the capital receipt used for investment in other much needed projects.