By:	Mike Hill, Cabinet Member, Customer & Communities
	Amanda Honey, Corporate Director, Customer & Communities
To:	Communities Cabinet Committee
Date:	19 September 2012
Subject:	Future Library Services - Update
Classification:	Unrestricted.

Summary : This report updates members of Communities Cabinet Committee on the latest developments in the Future Library Services transformation programme with case studies to demonstrate progress and sets the wider ambition for the transformation of these vital community services despite challenging financial pressures.

Recommendation: Members of Communities Cabinet Committee are asked to note and comment on this report.

1.   Background

1.1   Library services help people in essential ways that support the achievement of the Bold Steps objectives. Our priorities are to support literacy, a critical life skill, by fostering and supporting the love of reading from the earliest age. We help people to find information and support their learning, helping them to be engaged and active citizens throughout their lives. We support people in increasing their digital literacy skills, both supporting them as individuals and helping the rest of the public sector deliver savings and improved services through channel shift. Libraries bring people together: online, in our libraries and in other places where we take our services. We help people share their experiences and knowledge and strengthen community ties.

1.2   The 'Public Libraries & Museums Act' (1964) sets out the statutory duty for Kent County Council to "provide a comprehensive and efficient library service", set in the context of local need.

1.3   Discussions began in 2011 to agree an approach which would allow KCC to meet these obligations by developing creative solutions to transform and modernise local libraries so that they continued to deliver their essential and much valued services. With 99 libraries throughout Kent's communities it will be important to develop bespoke service solutions for each place as there is not a 'one size fits all' solution. It is essential that these solutions represent 'best value' and help to deliver 'Medium Term Financial Plan' savings to ensure our services continue to be sustainable for the long term benefit of local communities.

1.4   Wherever possible, KCC is committed to exploring solutions that protect customer services – for example using creative procurement and asset solutions that provide better services for less cost. It is important that whilst we continue to deliver good

value for money for Kent's taxpayers – we also continue to improve the quality of services so as to deliver better long term outcomes for local people.

1.5 In progressing the Future Library Services transformation programme a variety of options could emerge, for example:

- Moving the library into a partner's premises, sharing premises costs with that partner and commissioning them to deliver front of house services for us. In small communities, such an approach might make a community facility like a village hall, more sustainable as we could bring income and footfall with our services.

- In a similar way, a partner might move into our premises, which would enable cost sharing and the chance to explore joined up customer service.

- Some communities might want to take over library service delivery through a volunteering model, supported by us.

1.6 The "Future Library Services" approach was agreed at the Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2011. (See Background Document A).

2. Future Library Services transformation programme

2.1 This approach has now evolved into the Future Library Services transformation programme, which will ensure that library services are fit for the future, responsive to local needs and priorities, and sustainable despite an extremely challenging financial environment.

2.2 We are exploring the potential to develop innovative and efficient delivery models which can be shaped and influenced in partnership with local members, partners and communities. Locality Boards and other local forums are playing an important role in helping to shape the way forward in each District. The Locality Board Vice Chairs are key to driving forward the local engagement and discussions in communities.

2.3 Library staff are encouraging local groups (e.g. Parish Councils) and individuals to come forward with ideas and suggestions and to join local discussions and conversations about their local library services.

2.4 This is also being encouraged through our website (www.kent.gov.uk/libraries) which features regularly updated information about library services including statistics, running costs, and examples of different potential library models in other authorities. People visiting the web pages are encouraged to join the conversation about their library through a dedicated email box, by phone or letter.

2.5 We are dedicating a considerable amount of staff time and expertise to this programme in order to build and develop local relationships which encourage new ideas and suggestions to emerge. As the ideas develop and we begin the planning and implementation stage we will need to design and implement effective consultation and procurement processes to ensure we deliver what local people want whilst providing good value for money. Local discussions and plans will progress at different speeds.

2.6 The early discussions cited later in this paper are among a range of potential options being explored - no formal decisions have yet been made. Given the statutory

obligation for KCC, formal decisions about the future of libraries must be made by the County Council. However, these decisions will only be made following detailed negotiations, and in full consultation with local people, elected members and the Locality Boards.

2.7   It is expected that some new models will be operating by the Spring of 2013 and over the following 2 years of the programme we will build on these and expand the range of types of service models. The overall target is to develop and implement new local delivery solutions that will allow us to reduce our annual spending by £1m from 1st April 2014.

3.   Summary of progress

3.1   Local Engagement

3.1.1 Our discussions with Locality Boards have developed to varying extents, as local arrangements are still evolving and maturing. In many places we have already initiated some very useful discussions with local KCC and district members, parish councils and community groups.

3.1.2. We have seen a real willingness among most local people and groups to explore new delivery models. Some Locality Boards have yet to meet which has slowed progress in these areas. Where the KCC Vice Chairs have been actively engaged in driving local engagement supported by the wider community of local members and other agencies, real progress has been made. A task and finish or sub-group model adopted in most districts has also been effective in setting and maintaining the pace of local discussions. Locality Board Vice Chairs met on 19th July and reaffirmed their commitment to drive progress on Future Library Services in their area.

3.1.3. Stakeholders have largely been very positive, they appreciate being involved and engaged at an early stage with a genuine opportunity to shape service proposals. This initial enthusiasm has not yet translated into concrete proposals which will take time to develop over the three year programme. Much of the early interest has been in smaller libraries from parish councils and some district councils – building on established collaboration models (e.g. Sandgate Parish Council are already involved in helping run their local Library and Marden Local History Group already deliver local history services from a rented space in their library). Whilst negotiations are still in early stages, there is already potential for innovative new solutions coming forward from local community interest companies and social enterprises.

3.1.4   Inevitably some potential partners have been less enthusiastic but we hope as early proposals are implemented we will be able to show the benefits to all parties from well designed projects.

3.1.5   The service is learning from national best practice. Local discussions in Kent are at an early stage with a non-prescriptive, localist approach being taken, focused on listening to the views of communities.

3.1.6   Any new service delivery model for libraries needs to take account of the 'core' aspects of the service which KCC has to manage strategically to meet our statutory

obligations; achieve economies of scale; and/or ensure services are designed and delivered with the benefit of appropriate professional expertise and knowledge. Examples include:

- Kent History & Library Centre;
- birth and death registration services;
- online services;
- service management;
- a centralised book stock, catalogue and reservation service; and
- IT systems including self service technology.

3.1.7   The aspects of the service which will be locally negotiated include opening hours, staffing, shared spaces and premises running costs. There will be different bespoke solutions for each of the local community libraries, although they will be covered by a core set of principles.

3.1.8   There is scope for volunteer led models to be developed through partner organisations. A partner commissioned by KCC to run library services in an individual community might choose to work with volunteers to manage and operate the Library. This volunteer activity would be separate and distinct from Time2Give, the existing Library volunteering programme. This programme is managed by Community Service Volunteers (CSV) for KCC Libraries, Registration and Archives. Time2Give volunteers get involved in a wide range of activities which add value to the core library service. For example, delivering books to home bound customers, including carers; helping customers with computer problems or internet queries; running or supporting activities like Baby Rhyme Time for parents and very young children.

3.2   **Examples of emerging ideas from local conversations:**

Charing - discussions are underway with the Parish Council and local members. These include ideas about the potential for partner/commercial use of space in the library and developing land to the side and rear of the library for partner/commercial use. There is also interest in exploring the potential to develop community involvement in running library services.

Hive House (Northfleet) - A Community Interest Company is keen to explore options which could grow from the company renting space in the library for their own operation.

Bearsted and Staplehurst - Several opportunities are emerging in both communities and all or some of these could be combined to produce an innovative solution. Discussions are underway with both Parish Councils. There is also interest from local residents to work with KCC to develop ideas for delivering library services and make creative use of the buildings and grounds.

Lyminge - There is a developing partnership with the Parish Council who are keen to explore the potential for their Clerk to use the Library office as a base. Ideas are also emerging about how volunteers could support library service delivery; a possible tourism partnership; and potential ways to generate income for the library.

> **Sandgate** - The Library has operated in partnership with the Parish Council since 2006 and running costs are shared between the two councils. The Parish Clerk uses the library as the Parish office and delivers library customer services. The Parish Council use the library space for meetings and events. The Parish Council are keen to review the existing Service Level Agreement and expand their role. They have already set up public access Wi-Fi. Discussions are underway and options being explored include the Parish Council developing some volunteer roles to support their delivery of library services, Parish Council funding some additional opening hours, and income generating opportunities.
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> **Stanhope** - Moat Housing are co-located with Stanhope Library and they operate the library outside of the core library hours when their staff are already on duty. A Self Service kiosk assists this partnership. Discussions are underway with the Parish Council to explore ways to develop and widen this partnership.

3.3   Property Solutions

3.3.1   Our library buildings are essential assets within our communities. Where possible through the Future Library Services programme we are seeking to make better use of public space, and improve the range of services we can offer to local communities through asset collaboration. This could mean creative new property solutions such as a parish council co-locating within a small library. This could help to make savings for partners through shared running costs. Some co-location projects will require capital investment to improve the condition or facilities available in the building, in order for partners (e.g. Social Enterprises) to be willing to take over responsibility for the running and maintenance of properties.

3.3.2   Asset collaboration can also lead to larger shared spaces projects and potentially a 'shared front desk' with other districts and partners (e.g. Citizen Advice Bureau, Housing Associations). For example we are exploring the potential of town centre regeneration projects which could integrate services, including housing, retail, and other public or voluntary sector activity, into a single space. This could provide more significant long term financial gains Successful examples of this model have been set up in Ashford district with the Gateways in Ashford and Tenterden. The Gateways bring together a wide range of council and other services, for example, housing advice, registration of births and deaths, debt advice, job seeking and career advice, tourist information. In the case of Tenterden the Post Office is also housed in the Gateway.

3.3.3   As community discussions develop, the service will continue to work with Property & Infrastructure Support to investigate all creative property solutions which support new models of service delivery.

3.3.4   Potential asset collaboration solutions

Whitstable - Asset collaboration potential is being explored with Canterbury City Council (CCC) with potential to redevelop on the library site. Options include re-provision of library space with a residential development and space for other services, including CCC services.

Dartford - Opportunities to develop use of the library building are being explored with Dartford Borough Council (DBC) and other partners. This includes reconfiguring the space to improve access from the High Street and "knocking through" to create stronger links between the library and the museum, increasing opportunities for joint events and activities. There is further potential to re-configure other internal spaces and to accommodate new partners. For example CAB have expressed an interest in renting space.

Sittingbourne - Solutions for the Library will emerge from the town centre regeneration project - "The Spirit of Sittingbourne" - working with Swale Borough Council and other partners. This is a scheme developing over 5 or more years, and new, innovative options for co-location of public, voluntary & community and private sector (e.g. retail) services at the heart of the town. Different service delivery options will be explored throughout the planning process.

4.   Next Steps

4.1   Locality Board and other local discussions will continue to shape an outline of potential options to progress in each district, captured in local action plans.

4.2   Regular updates on progress across the programme, and preview of any related future Key Decisions will be brought to Communities Cabinet Committee.

4.3   First 'Future Library Services' arrangements to be implemented from Spring 2013.

4.4   Review of progress on this approach in Spring 2013, as part of the preparations for a 'Make, Buy, Sell' review in Summer 2013.

5.   Financial Implications

5.1   In the last few years there have been significant efficiency and policy savings in Library Services. Libraries have already delivered £2.3m in efficiency savings (staff restructuring and IT procurement) and throughout 2011-14 a further £2m in efficiency savings is being delivered through more efficient working (including self service technology).

5.2   The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has identified a further £1m revenue savings target for Future Libraries Services - £500k in 2014/15 and £500k in 2015/16. It is the larger shared space, asset collaboration schemes that are most likely to deliver the biggest savings. Early local negotiations with the small local collaborations indicate that there are likely to be small scale efficiencies, mostly through sharing running costs. Corporate Landlord (Property & Infrastructure

Support) and the Libraries, Registration and Archives Service are working together to plan, and allocate to MTFP targets, savings delivered through this programme.

5.3   Over the last six years, there has been a significant capital investment in the library service from KCC and other agencies eg. Heritage Lottery Fund. KCC will need to make further capital investment in some local libraries to ensure they present an attractive opportunity for co-location, and provide a sustainable opportunity for small organisations who may take on responsibilities for running and/or maintenance costs (e.g. modernisation and redesign of building space may be required).

5.4   Any new models of service delivery will have to consider the financial implications of staff terms and conditions. Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment regulations) or TUPE will apply to any paid staff who transfer into any potential providers who take on the running of libraries. The costs and potential pension implications need to be taken into account when considering these options.

6.   Legal Implications

6.1   Any new arrangements for Future Library Services must ensure we continue to meet our statutory legal requirements (e.g. 'Public Libraries & Museums Act' (1964)), retaining our legal accountability even if through the 'Localism Act' (2011) agenda different service providers are involved in delivery.

6.2   Any engagement or consultation activity for these transformation programmes is being undertaken with advice from Communications & Community Engagement, to ensure we comply with the 'Statutory Duty of Best Value' (2011). The Equalities team will also help to ensure that any transformation activity fulfils our statutory requirements under the Equalities Act (2010), including the development of Equalities Impact Assessment Screening.

6.3   Legal Services and Procurement are fully involved in advising on appropriate commissioning arrangements. A fair and transparent approach will be developed so as to mitigate any risks or legal or market challenge.

6.4   By ensuring there is an open process for community groups to get involved with running their local library service, the programme effectively presents a similar opportunity to the "Right to Challenge". To respond to our statutory requirements the 'Community Right to Challenge' (secondary legislation - 2012), expressions of interest windows for libraries have been initially set for 2013/14, and the timing and approach will be considered by the Future Library Services Steering Group.

7.   Risk and Business Continuity Management

7.1   Key risks associated with libraries transformation include:

- KCC retains the statutory responsibility for providing library services even if they are delivered by others. We would therefore need to monitor performance and standards. All contracts or service level agreements would need to allow KCC to take back the delivery function if agreed minimum standards were not met.

- Nationally, there has been a great deal of scrutiny of any changes to library services, with a number of high profile legal challenges. Any move to new

delivery models will require a robust evidence base and full consultation. There is a risk of Judicial Review if this is not done.

- In the current MTFP there is a commitment to make a saving of £1m against Future Libraries. However elected members have also committed not to close any libraries without the consent of local people. If we are unable to get agreement from partners to make changes to services that will deliver the necessary savings, this will create a financial pressure for KCC with savings needing to be found elsewhere to cover.

- Small-scale local collaboration options may not realise significant savings towards the £1m target - larger asset collaboration schemes will take a longer time to realise, dependent as they often are on the plans of partners. This may well put pressure on the timescale to deliver the £1m in savings.

- KCC will need to undertake due diligence to ensure that we mitigate the risk of financial viability of new providers – for example ensuring that a small-scale social enterprise is in a sustainable financial position to deliver the service.

- KCC must be sure to promote the use of existing community assets – in high value areas and town centres, there may be potential to explore disposal of existing sites to fund new library and youth services on alternative sites, or combining mixed developments (e.g. residential and community facilities).

- Local momentum and progress could slow down if engagement and involvement is not robust at local level. A robust consultation and communications plan and local member involvement through the Locality Boards should help to mitigate this risk.

8.   Conclusion

8.1   The Head of Libraries, Registration and Archives and her senior managers are pro-actively driving the Future Library Service Transformation agenda, supported and steered by a Steering Group headed by the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities. Colleagues from many other parts of KCC are engaged and supporting this critical programme, for example the Property and Infrastructure Group, Corporate Communications Team, and Legal and Democratic Services.

8.2   KCC Locality Board Vice Chairs are heavily involved leading and supporting local conversations, and where the engagement of other local members has been secured real progress is being made   The FLS programme will continue to evolve rapidly over the coming months.

8.3   The wider transformation potential of the Future Library Services programme supports the three overarching ambitions in 'Bold Steps for Kent', as well as the priority to develop more seamless and integrated public services within local communities (Priority 11).

8.4   By working with local communities to design services that meet their specific needs, the library service will:
- Help improve literacy levels and foster the love of reading, supporting the disadvantaged to gains skills and helping the economy grow.

- Help people access information and improve their digital skills which will help support channel shift across the public sector and beyond and also create active citizens who are well informed and skilled to take control of their lives.
- Bring communities together to share experiences and knowledge and create stronger ties.

8.5   The transformation of library services can be seen in the broader context of the 'Customer Services Strategy' – seeking to enhance the customer experience, and create a more integrated 'offer' of access between customer services such as Children's Centres, Gateways and the Contact Centre. Asset collaboration, and working with partners who may want to take on a 'front of house' role within libraries, could provide efficiency savings. It will also create a more holistic customer experience, focused on the needs of the local community, and not on silos created by organisational boundaries or separate community access points for services.

8.6   In some communities the co-location of services in one building could provide significant property revenue savings or capital receipts. However, it will be necessary to ensure that any co-location proposals benefit the service users and the wider community.

8.7   It is important that the transformation programme continues to progress actively in order to achieve savings targets, whilst not losing sight of the wider potential connections and our ambition for more integrated public services.

9.   **Recommendations**

9.1   Cabinet Committee Members are asked to note and comment on this report.

Background Documents
A.   Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report 18 November 2011 "Delivering Sustainable Libraries"
https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/leisure-and
culture/libraries/FLS/Information%20pack/POSC%20Report%20Delivering%20Sust ainable%20Libraries%20November%202011.doc

B.   Future Library Services Web Pages
http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/libraries/future_library_services.aspx

Contact Details
Cath Anley, Head of Libraries, Registration and Archives
cath.anley@kent.gov.uk
01622 696496