

To Mr. Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Communities
By: Des Crilley, Director of Libraries, Youth, Culture and Sport
Subject: **DYMCHURCH LIBRARY – replacement of service**
Classification: Unrestricted
File Ref:

Summary:

This reports sets out proposals to replace Dymchurch Library with alternative library service provision to meet the needs of the local community.

1. Background:

Levels of use of Dymchurch Library have been decreasing over the last few years, fewer people are using the library and the number books and other items being borrowed has declined as follows:

Year	No. items borrowed
2001/02	8086
2002/03	6823
2003/04	5821
2004/05	5320
2005/06	5781
2006/07	5500 (estimate)

The library is in a totally inadequate building, which cannot easily, or cost effectively, be adapted to allow full disabled access. There is no mains water supply and therefore no toilet or washing facilities for staff or customers.

The building is rented from the Parish Council who in turn lease from the Environment Agency.

2. Policy Context

In April 2004 Cabinet endorsed the “**Library and Archive Strategy: 2004 to 2014**” this document set out the vision for Libraries and Archives and set out the broad strategy to deliver the transformed service, which commits us to:

“Provide a network of welcoming and attractive libraries which are centres for local communities, open at convenient times.”

These were key priorities for the members of the public we consulted in developing the mission and core objectives

We will provide a network of facilities that:

- are welcoming and vibrant community spaces;

- enable all our customers, current or potential, to access the full range of services, whether directly or remotely;
- are tailor made to meet the needs of the local community

The 2006/07 Business Plan for Libraries and Archives includes a target to:

Review and develop further the work already undertaken to implement a 10 year Infrastructure Plan

- Plans agreed for reviewing services in at least 16 communities

3. Process

Following full analysis of usage trends, extensive public and key stakeholder consultation was undertaken.

- From 26th June 2006, a survey was sent individually to all regular users of the library, and copies of the survey were made available to the wider community in the Post Office, doctor's surgery, bookshop and the library.
- A drop in discussion with local library managers was widely publicised and held on 7th July and residents were given the opportunity to look at the mobile library so that they could judge whether or not they would be happy with this as alternative library provision.
- Both the survey and the drop in session were publicised through local posters and a press release was issued, resulting in coverage in the local newspapers, the Folkestone Herald and Kentish Express.
- The closing date for completion of the survey was 17th July 2006.

There were 49 returns from the survey. This represents 1% of the local population and 11% of registered borrowers:

- 11 of the 49 respondents are already using other libraries and 1 uses the mobile library.
- 26 respondents would use a mobile library if it stopped in the village.
- 8 respondents would use the public access computers if they were relocated to somewhere else in the village. 34 respondents would not use the computers.

15 people attended the Drop-In discussion.

The Parish Council and the local KCC Member have been involved in discussion from an early stage. Discussions have covered the building problems and the low levels of use and both understand the current position.

4. Resource Implications

There are no resource implications resulting from the closure of Dymchurch Library. Any savings on premises costs will be reinvested in alternative service provision.

The impact on staff is minimal as individuals who currently work at Dymchurch are part of a pool of staff who work at libraries throughout Shepway District. If Dymchurch Library does close they will be re-deployed at other libraries in the District. - no member of staff will be made redundant as a result of the proposed closure.

The books and other resources will be reallocated to nearby libraries.

5. Recommendation

- Terminate the tenancy agreement and close down the service offered from the existing library building — 2 month notice required.
- Improve local mobile library provision and promote widely to the local community. The Mobile Library is fully accessible to wheelchair users and carries approximately 2,500 books and other items of stock. The stock is exchanged regularly.
- Promote the Home Library Delivery Service to local people for whom this is the most appropriate alternative library service. This will offer customers an enhanced personal service - with books and other library items being delivered by a volunteer to the customers in their home
- Plan and implement an innovative and exciting programme of events and activities promoting reading designed to meet local needs. Make use of local venues, in partnership with schools and other community groups, for example to host Baby Bounce and Rhyme Time Sessions.
- Continue to seek an alternative local community venue to host the public access computers.
- Raise public awareness of the alternative ways to access library services, focussing on the better quality of service available at the nearest libraries at New Romney and Hythe, and our wide range of remotely accessible services available through the Internet.

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Background Document:

1. Library and Archive Strategy 2004-2014