

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

Summary:

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

1. Background:

Levels of use of Whitfield 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	Total Issues
2001/02	7605
2002/03	5822
2003/04	5637
2004/05	5495
2005/06	4708
2006/07	Projected 4404

The Library is in the Village Hall and the service rents this space from The Village Hall Committee and this arrangement would be terminated as per the lease agreement if the library were to close.

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.

- A survey was sent individually to all regular users of the library, and copies were made available to the wider community in local venues.
- A Drop in discussion with local library managers was widely publicised and held on 15th 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 publicized through local posters and a press release was issued, resulting in coverage in local paper
- The closing date for completion of the survey was 24 July 2006

There were 43 returns from the survey. This represents 1% of the catchment population, 11% of the registered borrowers

- 22 of the 43 would use a mobile library service
- 8 would make use of computers in a community venue, 34 would not use them, 17 have access to a computer at home

8 attended the Drop-in discussion.

The service is no longer meeting the needs of the local community and does not provide value for money. KCC needs to ensure that Council Tax money is spent effectively and efficiently.

The local KCC Member has been involved in discussion from an early stage. Discussions have focused on the low levels of use and the process for consultation.

4. Resource Implications

There are no resource implications resulting from the closure of Whitfield 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 Whitfield are part of a pool of staff who work at libraries throughout Dover District. If Whitfield 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.
- Provide a new mobile library service 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 library in Dover, 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