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To: Communities Cabinet Committee

Date: 14 March 2013

Subject: **Proposed changes to library service delivery at Sandgate and Sherwood Libraries - Decision Nos: 13/00017 & 13/00018**

Classification: Unrestricted.

Summary: This report provides details about the proposed delegation of responsibility for the day-to-day running of library services at Sandgate and Sherwood Libraries.

Recommendation: Members of the Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations on the Cabinet Member decision to delegate the responsibility of the day-to-day running of library services at:

- Sandgate Library to Sandgate Parish Council
- Sherwood Library to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

1. Background

- 1.1. Local conversations about service transformation are producing ideas for new library service models. Three projects have been implemented at Hive House in Northfleet, Borough Green and Otford. These are already delivering small savings but have involved no changes to public services.
- 1.2. We have made significant progress in developing new library service delivery models in a further 23 communities. Consultation has taken place about Sandgate (Folkestone) and Sherwood (Tunbridge Wells) libraries and conversations with the remaining 21 communities are progressing well.
- 1.3. We encouraged local people to give us their views on our proposals through a consultation process running from 23 January to 6 March 2013. We distributed survey forms to customers at both libraries and advertised drop-in days when local people could find out more information about the proposed changes. Local engagement by KCC staff has been undertaken to ensure as many people as possible in the communities had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. An online survey was also offered to encourage wide feedback on the proposals.
- 1.4. Local members and Locality Boards have been involved from the start of discussions in developing proposals and driving local engagement. We have kept them involved and briefed as the proposals have developed at a detailed level.

2. The new service delivery model for Sandgate Library

- 2.1. Sandgate is a small library with 389 active borrowers who borrowed 5,436 items in 2011/12. We already share the premises and some costs with Sandgate Parish Council and the Parish Clerk delivers our services during the majority of the opening hours.
- 2.2. Following conversations with the Parish Council we have secured, in principle, their agreement to widen their existing role in library service delivery to take over the day-to-day running of library services from Sandgate Library. This will be subject to the Parish Council achieving 'eligible' council status. An eligible parish council is one that meets all the criteria as defined under the Localism Act 2011 and allows them to take on extra responsibilities such as day to day running of library services.
- 2.3. KCC will maintain the statutory responsibility for the service.
- 2.4. The majority of people who have engaged with the consultation support this proposal. (See Appendix 1).

3. Proposal for the new service model for Sherwood Library

- 3.1. Sherwood is a very small library with 427 active borrowers who borrowed 5,606 items in 2011/12. The library is part of the TN2 Community Centre which is already run by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and volunteers.
- 3.2. It is proposed that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council takes over the day-to-day running of the library using local volunteers to deliver library services. This will allow us to make some small savings and potentially increase the library's opening hours.
- 3.3. KCC will maintain the statutory responsibility for the service.
- 3.4. The majority of people who have engaged with the consultation support this proposal. (See Appendix 1).

4. Potential Risks

- 4.1. That the partner organisations do not recruit sufficient volunteers and the library does not open for the required number of hours - we will be working with both partners to support their recruitment processes and library performance, opening hours and closure periods will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 4.2. That the standard of service deteriorates because the Training for Parish Council and volunteers is insufficient - a comprehensive training programme will be put in place prior to the start of the new arrangements and the agreement between Kent County Council and partner organisations will make sure the respective roles and responsibilities are clear.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. Public consultation ends on Wednesday 6 March 2013. The analysis of feedback contained in this report is up to date as at 4 March 2013.
- 5.2. Any additional feedback which might be received by close of business on 6 March 2013 will be considered and Cabinet Committee Members will be briefed on any substantial matters arising at the Cabinet Committee meeting on 14 March 2013.
- 5.3. We will seek Cabinet Member Decisions to implement the proposed changes. Once these decisions have been made, agreements will be finalised and signed with Sandgate Parish Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council with the aim that the new service models will come into effect from Summer 2013.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1. Members of the Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations relating to the proposed Cabinet Member decisions to delegate the responsibility of the day-to-day running of the library services at:
 - Sandgate Library to Sandgate Parish Council
 - Sherwood Library to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Background Documents

- Previous report to Customer & Communities Cabinet Committee 19/09/12
- Future library services weblink
- www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/libraries/future_library_services.aspx
- Public consultation leaflet

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Appendix 1 – Consultation responses to date

Sandgate Library

As of the 4th March 2013 we had received a total of 52 responses, 50 of these were in favour of the proposal and 2 were against.

Selected sample of comments received:

“It is a great friendly service at present, so any improvement on this can only be a good thing”.

“Perhaps consider having teenagers 14/15 years to do work experience”.

“Think it is a great proposal, would be good if library could be open more than at present and to be a focus for the Sandgate community”.

“Yes. Have provided a very good environment and service. I only wish they were open all day instead of just mornings”.

“Anything that ensures the continuation of the library service is welcome. My only reservation is that these other activities may take over and squeeze out the core service - the library”.

“We hope the service can be maintained at it's present level or better. The Sandgate library is a very valuable resource for the community”.

“It would be unthinkable to imagine Sandgate without a library”.

“Need to identify suitable volunteers”.

“As Chair of the local Amenity Society, The Sandgate Society, we enjoy a good relationship with the staff of the Library (and the Parish Clerk), and occasionally mount exhibitions from our extensive Archive, on matters/people of local interest. The Library has an information board about the Society, too. We would welcome both these things continuing.....Roger Joyce, Chair 2012/13”

Sherwood Library

As of the 4 March 2013 we had received a total of 94 responses, 89 of these were in favour of the proposal and 5 were against.

Selected sample of comments received:

“What an exciting opportunity for the community. I also feel it is a very good incentive for youths for Duke of Edinburgh”

“Good for the community and also the area”

"I think this would be a very good idea, and if there is enough volunteers the library would be open more days in the week and for more hours as well, giving people more chance to use the library. I think the TN2 staff will manage this very well as they do with all they do".

"Please can you ensure volunteers are fully trained otherwise the quality of service at TN2 will fall"

"Good for the area, good for school children to walk down and enjoy reading books"

"If this is the only way to keep it open, but would need to keep it monitored as Sherwood library is underused, I feel that recruiting volunteers would be a problem. There also needs to be a cultural change by the users of TN2 towards the library. I am not sure it would be appropriate for volunteers to cope with certain behavioural difficulties. I would prefer a reduction in opening hours as a cost cutting exercise. I have concerns re a loss of professionalism and confidentiality plus a real understanding of the world of books could be at risk"

"No. I believe there remains a specialist role that supports potential borrowers that the tn2 are unable to provide".

"But how many people will lose their jobs as a result? What will opening times be? What training will volunteers and staff get?"