

From: **Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Mike Austerberry, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate**

To: **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee**

Subject: **Planned consultation on the structural options to deliver Kent County Council's Libraries, Registration and Archive Services**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This report summarises the steps taken so far in the review of Libraries, Registration and Archives as part of phase one of the Facing the Challenge Transformation Programme. It outlines the options that have been considered including benefits and advantages and the outline plan to consult with the public, staff, unions and elected members and all other stakeholders about all the options including our preferred option.

Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposal to complete further stakeholder engagement, and subsequent to this, initiate consultation on the future delivery of Libraries, Registration and Archive services including our preferred option which is to establish a charitable trust.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Libraries, Registration and Archives Service (LRA) was selected as one of the phase one reviews of the Facing the Challenge Transformation Programme. Since last September, the Transformation Team, supported by service managers and other experts, have reviewed a wide range of options for the future delivery model for this Service. This report provides an update on progress to date and seeks endorsement for the proposed next steps.

2. Kent County Council's Policy Framework

2.1 Each of the options evaluated as part of this review was aligned with the council's objectives set out in the **Facing the Challenge Transformation Programme**. This whole council transformation programme sets an ambitious vision for transformation of the way KCC operates and delivers services. The programme has a strong emphasis on:

- Shaping KCC around the needs and values of residents and service users.
- Successfully managing demand and reducing dependence on services.
- Supporting the organisation to become a commissioning authority, with a clear understanding of the outcomes, using a range of in-house and external providers across all sectors, with no ideological preference around who delivers services.

- 2.2 The current mission of the Libraries, Registration and Archives Service has been set under four headings which are designed to support the KCC priorities, and to meet the statutory obligations related to these services. The LRA objectives are:
- To help people improve their literacy and foster a lifelong love of reading.
 - To help people find information, develop their skills to use online channels and become more active citizens.
 - To help people register key points in their lives and the lives of their families.
 - To help people come together to form strong community ties.

See Appendix 1 for more detail.

3. The Review Findings

- 3.1 KCC Library, Registration and Archive service benefits hundreds of thousands of residents in Kent each year and we want to make sure these benefits continue to be realised. To do this we need to put residents more at the heart of the service, so that services can be adapted to best meet local needs.
- 3.2 The objective of this review is to identify the best delivery model that would enable KCC:
- To meet its statutory obligations and beyond in relation to all LRA Services.
 - To ensure the key role libraries, registration and archives services play in local communities continues to be safeguarded (see 2.2 above), with local communities being meaningfully engaged with any future delivery vehicle leading in turn, to innovation, creative solutions and increased efficiencies.
 - To adopt the most sustainable option for KCC that will deliver a customer focused service provided in an efficient, lean and cost effective manner whilst contributing to the delivery of the required savings as part of the Facing the Challenge Transformation Programme.
- 3.3 The options considered included:
- To retain services in-house and accelerate the existing transformation programme.
 - To outsource service delivery.
 - To enter into a partnership or joint venture with a private or public sector partner.
 - To establish a stand alone Kent Trust and commission that Trust to deliver library, registration and archive services.
- 3.4 The evidence collected and analysed suggests that the option to set up a stand alone Kent Trust and commission that Trust to deliver LRA services on behalf of KCC, is the one that could deliver the greatest range of benefits to our customers, local communities and KCC. Those benefits include:
- The Trust model would offer some operational freedoms and flexibilities to the management of the service and allow the service to grow the business.
 - The trust would be able to respond more rapidly to market forces and changes to legislation.

- Trust provides flexibility in terms of grant funding and identifying other sources of income which can be reinvested into the service.
 - The establishment of a Kent Trust would promote and encourage community involvement in service design and delivery, in part through the Board of Trustees who would be selected from local people.
 - The charitable nature of the Trust would align with KCC's commitment to maintain and improve these critical community services.
 - The creation of a Charitable Trust as the vehicle to deliver the services would enable business rates relief, which would deliver savings year on year.
 - The transfer to a Trust model would enable KCC to continue to fund a wide range of LRA services, including non-statutory but popular provision, into the future.
 - Any parts of the service not eligible for charitable status could sit within a non-charitable trading arm of the Trust.
- 3.5 Through the commissioning arrangements and ongoing contract monitoring KCC would specify the service it wished the Trust to deliver, and continue to set service priorities and desired outcomes. KCC will retain accountability for its statutory obligations.
- 3.6 Delivery of libraries through a Trust model has been tried and tested by other councils and has delivered significant benefits. There are also examples of archives services delivered by Charitable Trusts. Learning from visits to other local authorities (e.g. Suffolk and York) has informed this proposal.
- 3.7 The Facing the Challenge: Phase 1 Service Review and Market Engagement Outturn Report – report to KCC Annual Meeting 15th May 2014 stated: “The preferred option on the Libraries, Registration and Archives review is to establish a Kent Trust to operate the service”. Members then endorsed “the preferred options to be taken forward to Full Business Case for the Phase 1 reviews, as set out in section 3 of the report”, and “noted the next steps, in particular the route for approval of Full Business Case and any Key Decision approvals, as set out in section 6 of the report”. Section 6 of the report clearly stated that a Full Business Case now needed to be developed, and “that Cabinet Committee’s pre-scrutiny role will allow Members to test, debate and discuss the full business case ahead of any formal decision being taken to implement a new service delivery model.”
- 3.8 On 17th July 2014, an all-party transformation briefing was given to the County Council, at which Paul Carter updated Members further on progress.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 There are still some key discussions to complete with stakeholders to confirm the exact model and structure of the preferred option of the Charitable trust.
- 4.2 Subject to this work the next stage would be to seek views on our proposals. A full public consultation will take place, details of which will be announced when we are in a position to commence this work. During this period we will seek feedback from all stakeholders including staff, unions, the public, partners and elected members. We will ask for their views on:

- Our proposed mission statement for LRA services now and for the future (see appendix 1)
 - Our preferred option for the delivery of the services by a Charitable Trust.
- 4.3 The aim of the consultation will be to ensure that everybody who wants to can see our proposals and is able to feed back their views. For this reason the consultation period will include:
- Press briefings to promote the proposal and ways that local people can engage.
 - Information and feedback forms, online and printed and available from every LRA service point.
 - A “Road Show” in each district – we will publicise a one day event in each district where staff will be available, with an information display, at an easily accessible location, to explain our proposals to local people and collect their feedback. Local KCC members will be personally invited to these events.
 - Meetings for staff, unions and volunteers to explain the proposals and seek their feedback.
 - Approaches to all other stakeholders including district and parish councils and other partners, to explain our proposals, raise awareness of the consultation and seek feedback.
- 4.4 Following completion of the consultation period it is expected the following will take place:
- A report outlining the business case, consultation feedback and next steps proposed will be presented to the Cross party Transformation Board, and to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.
 - Assuming the recommendations require it, a formal member decision will follow to enable implementation of any agreed proposals.
- 4.5 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on the proposal and the consultation programme, to ensure that all stakeholders are enabled and encouraged to contribute, and that the future delivery model continues to provide services for all.
- 4.6 A Health & Safety Impact statement will also be developed in partnership with Union colleagues and the KCC H&S team. The statement will also consider the support available to staff through the change process.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 One of the core purposes for the Facing the Challenge Transformation Programme is to help KCC meet the challenges posed by very significant reductions in the funding available to it to deliver services. The preferred option that this report outlines could deliver a significant saving to KCC, by maximising income generating opportunities and the ability to access additional grant funding not currently possible to KCC; and through claiming the business rate relief on an extensive estate of property across the County.

5.2 The Trust would be tasked with delivering services that meet KCC's specification in the most efficient way, so that further savings could be expected once the new delivery model were fully implemented and the Trust were able to review the freedoms and flexibilities it would enjoy e.g. in the procurement of support services. These cost reductions would be in addition to the delivery of significant efficiency savings already offered by the service and due for delivery by end of March 2015.

5.3 It is envisaged that should these proposals be implemented following consultation, property assets, as well as other assets would be leased to the Trust (e.g. mobile libraries). Detailed conversations continue with colleagues from Property and Infrastructure Support to ensure that any proposals protect KCC's interests and offer good value to the public purse.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Following detailed analysis and research it is proposed that establishing a Charitable Trust and commissioning that Trust to deliver library, registration and archive service, is the best option for the future. This will enable KCC to continue to provide a wide range of popular services that local people value; meet its statutory obligations; and do both in the most efficient way possible. Such a Charitable Trust will also encourage local people to become even more involved in future service design and delivery fulfilling KCC's ambitions expressed in Facing the Challenge, and the objectives for the Kent Libraries, Registration and Archives Service.

7. Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposal to complete further stakeholder engagement and subsequent to this initiate consultation on the options for the future delivery of Libraries, Registration and Archive services including our preferred option which is to establish a charitable trust.

8. Background documents

Facing the Challenge: Phase 1 Service Review and Market Engagement Outturn Report – report to KCC Annual Meeting 15th May 2014 (see <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/g5522/Public%20reports%20pack%2015th-May-2014%2010.00%20County%20Council.pdf?T=10>)

Minutes of the KCC Annual Meeting 15th May 2014 (see <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=113&Mid=5522>)

9. Contact details

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Libraries, Registration and Archives Service Mission Statement

Kent County Council has a statutory duty to provide most of our existing services, but this is not our primary driver and our services add positive value to people's lives in a variety of ways.

Our mission is to work with all the people of Kent to deliver library, registration and archive services that support local people throughout their lives. Our services are open to everyone, but also targeted to help those who most need our offer, and in so doing to support Kent County Council's ambitions and targets.

Through our services:

People improve their literacy and foster a lifelong love of reading

We encourage local people to enjoy a wide range of reading experiences which helps them improve their literacy, enjoy life more and improve their mental wellbeing.

Through work with children, adults of all ages, and key partners, we will continue to promote reading for study, information and pleasure through a range of events and activities. We will also continue to provide access to digital content (eBooks, eAudiobooks and web content) and "hard copy" books and periodicals, with services and content offered via the web and from our libraries.

- Case study – In 2014 we have launched an online game as part of the annual Summer Reading Challenge which encourages children to keep reading over the summer holidays.

People find information, develop their skills to use online channels and become more active citizens

We help people access timely, relevant and accurate information from a wide range of sources, for example: online, printed or original archive documents. With our help people improve their information literacy skills and are empowered and informed to become more active citizens.

Through work with children and adults of all ages, and key partners, we will continue to be a trusted source of information, progressively offering more content online. We will continue to help local people to develop digital literacy skills that are increasingly fundamental for day to day life. This also supports public sector cost savings through increased take-up of the digital offer from all public agencies.

- Case study – We are currently piloting a service to help home bound customers develop digital skills. Trained volunteers visit customers in their homes to help them learn how to use their own computer, or a tablet computer borrowed from us, to keep in touch and access online services.

People register key points in their lives and the lives of their families...

Our staff enable customers to register birth, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths; become UK citizens; and get copies of registration certificates.

Through our work with the General Register Office, the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, and other Registration Services; and a review of our own services; we will continue to improve the experience of our customers and make services more efficient.

- Case study – We are the only local authority to have fully integrated the delivery of birth and death registration, and library customer services. Delivered by one team of expert staff, this allows customers to register at many more locations across Kent. These locations are in central locations and are often familiar to customers. They are also open longer hours than was possible at Register Offices. By using staff time more efficiently we have been able to reduce overall costs while increasing the number of staff able to register. This means that we can cover peaks in demand (e.g. post Christmas) without longer waiting times for appointments.

People come together to form strong community ties...

Community is at the heart of all our work as we offer not just a space where people can meet but also give people the encouragement, skills and confidence to come together and improve their lives.

Through a range of activities, events and services, we will continue to encourage people to: celebrate the key events in their lives; understand their shared history; and develop community capacity to make a difference.

- Case study – We have taken a leading role in commemorating the anniversary of the outbreak of World War One in Kent. Examples include our significant contribution to events and an exhibition at Maidstone United Football Club to remember the coming together of opponents across the trenches to play football; and the creation of an online WW1 timeline to map out the events in Kent in this key period in our shared history.

We look forward to embracing the challenges ahead and continuing to support local people through whichever delivery vehicle is judged to offer best value; sustainability; and flexibility for our services for the future.