

Report title:

To present Cabinet with findings from recent informal consultation and other relevant details to enable a decision to be made on the future library service

Meeting	Cabinet
Date	10th September 2024
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Amanda Pinnock
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	Yes Yes
<p>Purpose of Report</p> <p>Report to follow the cabinet decision on 20/02/2024 which authorised the commencement of an informal engagement with community partners around the proposed Community Managed Libraries (CML) model and associated service review.</p> <p>This paper looks to provide insight into the feedback received, provide consideration of an alternative targeted delivery model, set out the requirements for non-statutory public consultation and agree next steps.</p>	
<p>Recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the revised targeted libraries delivery model, retaining some paid staffed hours across all 24 Kirklees library locations, following feedback from community engagement. This alongside a Libraires service management and staffing review will allow the required savings to be achieved 2. Endorse the consultation process on the option of targeted reduction in staffed hours and opening hours that will seek community and partner input through surveys and focus groups, as well as ensure the proposed model meets the legal requirements for a comprehensive and efficient service that meets the needs of the communities served 3. To note the Integrated Impact Assessment before making a decision to consult. 4. For the outcome of the public consultation process to return to cabinet for consideration prior to implementation 	
<p>Reasons for Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised model was developed after listening to the feasibility engagement feedback on a previously proposed community managed library model. Outcome indicated potential loss of volunteer capacity, community inclusion and resource impacts. • Public consultation ensures impartial community insight is captured and used to shape any future delivery. 	

- For cabinet to be sighted on the outcome of the public consultation and endorse the future delivery model prior to implementation

Resource Implication:

The decisions recommended in this report will enable the Libraries Service to deliver on the savings agreed at Cabinet in February 2024 in a way that continues to support the community.

Library service resources will be required to project manage the public consultation, evaluation and implementation.

Support will also be required from other corporate services such as:

- I.T – support to communities around Library and public access IT systems
- Legal support in ensuring we meet our statutory requirements and advising on any policy implications.
- Human Resources – support with service change
- Financial Services – support with budget management
- Communications – support with delivery of key messages to all stakeholders throughout the consultation and service change process.
- Data & Insight – support with a formal consultation process
- External resource to deliver and manage consultation process – enabling objectivity and impartiality

Date signed off by Executive Director & name

Richard Parry Executive Director for Adults and Health on **02/09/2024**.

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?

Kevin Mulvaney Service Director for Finance **02/09/2024**

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?

Samantha Lawton, Service Director Governance and Commissioning **02/09/2024**

Electoral wards affected: All Wards

Ward councillors consulted: No

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered Yes, no personal data has been included in the report.

1. Executive Summary

This report outlines the revised plans for a future libraries delivery model following a needs assessment and feedback from an informal engagement exercise. The plan to now retain all 24 libraries with some paid staff hours, aims to keep a comprehensive and efficient library service within budget limits, while responding to community needs, legal requirements, and Council priorities. The original plans for a community managed library model were approved by Cabinet

in February 2024 but have been revised based on the feedback from engagement with community partners.

The depth of feeling from community partners about the Community Managed library model has been listened to in this revised proposal. We heard clearly that volunteers value being part of a council network of libraries (statutory network), and that they think being part of this supports them to deliver effective and safe services, whilst maintaining beneficial support. Therefore, the revised delivery model is based on this feedback, and proposes to keep all the Kirklees Council libraries within the statutory network and reduce rather than remove all Kirklees Council staff. To do this will require a review of opening and staffed hours across all library locations to meet the savings target.

The revised proposed model will also consist of a Library service review to ensure all future staffing and management structures align to the proposed model. Additionally, the proposal will continue to provide support to those locations who do want to become a community managed library. This will only happen where feasible and where risks can be managed.

To ensure the proposed revised model meets the legal requirements for a comprehensive and efficient service, a period of public consultation will be carried out, involving surveys and focus groups. Cabinet is asked to endorse the revised delivery model, the public consultation, as along with the service review process it will deliver the agreed savings.

2. Information required to take a decision

Background

Modern libraries

Libraries are more than just places to read and borrow books. They are at the heart of our vision for Kirklees, as set out in Our Council Plan (www.kirklees.gov.uk/councilplan). We want Kirklees to be a district with a strong, sustainable economy and a great quality of life, with thriving towns and villages and inclusive communities.

Libraries have become places where communities come together and residents can learn new skills, join learning groups, enjoy songs and music with children, knit and natter, have a coffee, exercise, and pursue personal development.

Libraries are also essential for people to seek support and access public services. They are often closer to residents' homes than other public services and can provide more tailored and localised support.

Volunteers are very much at the heart of our libraries and provide a number of benefits. Volunteers provide extra support to library staff, gain new skills and personal development and contribute to inclusive communities.

Through all these activities and more, libraries support the shared outcomes we seek with our partners, from giving children the best start in life and helping people achieve their ambitions, to supporting people to be as well as possible for as long as possible with control over their lives. The service also works to continually embed the pillars of the inclusive communities framework as key to their engagement with communities.

Our library strategy

This revised draft strategy facilitates the delivery of the benefits set out above, as well as our aim to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service within budget limits. This will be

done by making sure people can access the right support at the right place and time, building community capacity, partnerships and providing community support.

Libraries follow basic requirements from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) on what counts as a 'comprehensive and efficient' service. To deliver a comprehensive and efficient service, we are required to provide:

1. reading through our book stock and circulation
2. access to information
3. digital inclusion
4. encouragement of the use of service

As set out above, libraries also play an essential role in our wider outcomes. To support these outcomes, we aim to provide the following through our Kirklees libraries:

- Safe and warm spaces, Libraries of Sanctuary
- School readiness and literacy development
- Access to culture and creativity (including makerspace offer)
- Community inclusion (integrated support, early intervention and prevention infrastructure, events, groups, etc.)
- Business support and skills development
- Wellbeing focussing on social connection

To support delivery of all the above, we are increasing our focus on identifying and securing external funding and grants. We will also continue to develop and support volunteering across all our libraries.

Original plans

The original plans were approved by Cabinet in February 2024. The plans were to merge customer service and library functions (learning from the successes and challenges of Huddersfield and Dewsbury), reduce management and frontline staff numbers to save costs, and to engage with community partners on the feasibility of setting up a number of community managed libraries with the removal of council staff from these libraries.

Community Managed Libraries, where communities have the capacity and interest, are great examples of local involvement in maintaining library services whilst also reducing Local Authority costs. They can adapt to local needs, access various income streams, and deliver positive community outcomes. However, they face challenges like building and staff management, sustainable funding, and volunteer coordination. The initial plan was to test the feasibility of this model in selected libraries, which were assessed as having the right foundational characteristics.

Engagement outcomes

Officers have carried out the agreed engagement with community partners, involving informal consultation with staff, volunteers, ward, parish and town councillors at eight libraries across Kirklees. This engagement has shown that communities feel strongly that it is not the right thing to remove council staff from all libraries. We have learnt that although volunteers contribute significant skills, time and commitment to libraries and take on many roles with and without support of council staff, they strongly value being part of a council network of libraries (statutory network). This brings significant benefits and reduces some key risks. For example, volunteers in general were uncomfortable with their capacity and ability to respond handling personal and sensitive information. Volunteers also expressed concerns that removal of paid council staff would present challenges for their abilities to responding effectively and safely to vulnerable

groups who use library services. Moreover, there was a strong view that many did not currently have enough volunteer capacity to deliver the community managed model safely and effectively. Volunteer capacity and sustainability was a common theme raised throughout the engagement that groups felt required the support of council paid staff.

A revised delivery model has been developed that reflects the feedback from the engagement so far.

Revised model

Integrating customer service and library functions

We will continue to integrate customer service and library functions across the district at 10 library locations, as this will support our ambition to enable people to get support closer to home in the right place at the right time. This has been completed at our Huddersfield and Dewsbury locations already. Implementation will continue across the remaining 8 locations.

Reducing rather than removing council staff

We will keep the Kirklees Council library service within the statutory network and reduce rather than remove Kirklees Council staff. Though we will continue to engage with community partners who wish to pursue a community managed library model, this will no longer be a requirement in the eight areas originally identified. However, we will support libraries if they wish to pursue the community managed library model and where this is agreed it is the right time to do so.

The proposal is to achieve the same identified saving of 912K in 2025/2026 through a targeted review of staffed hours across all locations alongside a review of the management structure. What hours, days and times paid staff hours will be retained across the 24 locations will be dependent on the outcome of the consultation (based on the draft needs assessment and IIA) and final needs assessment. A reduction in paid staff will not always result in a reduction in opening hours as some locations currently operate with higher staffing levels than others.

The targeted delivery model will consider the below principles:

- We will retain all 24 existing libraries within our statutory network, and this will support the legal requirement to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service.
- The service will be made up of 10 Library Hubs which will provide additional technology to support phone and digital access to wider council services and support increased place-based provision. These libraries will have opening hours with a paid staff presence of between an estimated 15 and 50 hours. Reductions in paid staff opening hours will not always result in a reduction of opening hours. There will be a geographical spread and will consider local need.
- Alongside our Library Hubs there will be 14 'Community Supported' libraries. We will work closely with communities to offer volunteer opportunities to work alongside and support paid staff in delivering the service day to day, as many of our locations do already. They will have opening hours with a paid staff presence of between an estimated 5 and 15 hours and will reflect local need.
- The service will ensure learning gained throughout the process of implementation of the new model, as well as from other library services nationally, continues to be considered. Where it is appropriate and feasible to transfer that learning, we will do so

i.e. other library sites integrating technology once we have implemented this across the identified 10 hubs and supporting volunteer development strategies in libraries with no / low numbers.

Consultation on the revised delivery model

A period of public consultation is required to make sure any future delivery meets the legal requirements for a comprehensive and efficient service that meets the needs of the communities served. The consultation aims to be objective and impartial, and its duration is reflective on the scale of change required. This will therefore take place over a minimum of 8 weeks.

The consultation will seek community and partner feedback on the revised targeted delivery model for delivering the library service, for example what days and times people would most like to access the service, which locations do they prefer to access.

We will seek input through surveys (online and paper-based) and focus groups with communities and partners. The consultation will consider the specific roles of stakeholders and the varied and critical roles they have in our libraries

Following the consultation, we will evaluate the results and update our needs assessment and integrated impact assessment based on the results.

Final decision and implementation

The decision around the final proposal sits with Cabinet. However, we will continue consultation with the Department for Culture, Media & Sport who will consider the proposal prior to it being submitted to Cabinet.

The outcome of the consultation will inform the future library delivery model and be presented back to cabinet for agreement prior to any implementation.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

Libraries are at the heart of our vision for Kirklees, as set out in Our Council Plan (www.kirklees.gov.uk/councilplan). We want Kirklees to be a district with a strong, sustainable economy and a great quality of life, with thriving towns and villages and inclusive communities. Libraries have become places where communities come together and residents can learn new skills, join learning groups, enjoy songs and music with children, knit and natter, have a coffee, exercise, and pursue personal development.

Libraries are also essential for people to seek support and access public services. They are often closer to residents' homes than central customer service centres and can provide more tailored and localised support.

In support of these outcomes, we aim to provide the following through our revised draft libraries strategy:

- Safe and warm spaces, Libraries of Sanctuary
- School readiness and literacy development
- Access to culture and creativity (including makerspace offer)
- Community inclusion (integrated support, early intervention and prevention infrastructure, events, groups, etc.)

- Business support and skills development
- Wellbeing focussing on loneliness and isolation

Through all these activities and more, libraries support the shared outcomes set out the Council Plan, from giving children the best start in life and helping people achieve their ambitions, to supporting people to be as well as possible for as long as possible with control over their lives.

3.2 Financial Implications

The decisions recommended in this report will enable the Libraries Service to deliver on the savings agreed at Cabinet in February 2024 of 912K, in a way that matches community feedback and need. If individual libraries do wish to explore a community managed library model, and this is deemed feasible, this could support delivery in the future.

The decision will have positive implications for people living or working in Kirklees considering cost-of-living issues, as the library service will continue to provide free access to information, education, culture, and leisure opportunities for all residents, regardless of their age, background, or income level. The library service also supports the economic and social wellbeing of the community, by offering skills development, employability support, digital inclusion, health and wellbeing promotion, social prescribing, community engagement, and social cohesion activities.

3.3 Legal Implications

Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 imposes a statutory duty on library authorities to "provide a comprehensive and efficient library service" to everyone who lives, works, or attends full time education in the library area. The duty is contained in Section 7(1) which provides as follows: -

"(1) It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof ...

Provided that although a library authority shall have power to make facilities for the borrowing of books and other materials available to any person it shall not by virtue of this subsection be under a duty to make such facilities available to persons other than those whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full time education within that area".

Section 7(2) provides further statutory instruction as to the factors which a library authority must take into account in order to fulfil its duty under Section 7(1):

"(2) In fulfilling its duty under the preceding subsection, a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability:

(a) of securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and

(b) of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and

(c) of securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such and any other authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full co-operation between the persons engaged in carrying out those functions".

The expression "library service" is not defined nor are the concepts "comprehensive" and "efficient". Library facilities are referred to but not defined but they are clearly not the same as library premises which are defined (in Section 8(7)).

The availability of resources is highly relevant to the question of what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service and the section 7 duty cannot in law be separated from the savings the Council is required to make to balance its budget.

Section 9(1) confers a power on a library authority to contribute towards the expenses of "any other person" providing "library facilities for the public" and Section 20 empowers local authorities to generate revenue by allowing library premises to be used for holding meetings, performances, and the like in return for payment.

The DCMS is the regulator of the statutory public library service charged with superintending and promoting the improvement of the service and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of their library functions.

When exercising its functions under the 1964 Act, the Council must act reasonably in public law terms with regard to its fiduciary duties to taxpayers.

The Council has a Best Value duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to secure continuous improvement in the way functions are carried out having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness supported by the DLUCh Revised Best Value Statutory Guidance (March 2015). On 1 July 2023 the Government began consulting on draft revised supplementary guidance and issued revised statutory guidance "Best Value standards and intervention : a statutory guide for best value authorities (8 May 2024) this replaces the 2015 guidance .

There is an obligation to consult library users, non- library users and others on the proposed changes to the library service so the council acts fairly.

The principles of a fair consultation require:

- Consultation must be carried out at a formative stage.
- The council must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to enable intelligent responses.
- Adequate time must be given for feedback.
- The product of consultation is conscientiously taken into account before any final decision is made.

The council will comply with its Contract Procedure Rules when procuring a consultant to carry out the consultation exercise.

3.4 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

- **Risk**

The council currently has a logged risk on the corporate risk registers, around ad hoc library closures due to the number of held vacancies impacting on staffing levels. These vacancies are being held to mitigate the impact or any potential redundancies due to the service change process. Following the consultation, approval of a new library model and subsequent library service change process, this risk will be mitigated through ensuring the staffing levels and delivery model are adequate to manage the future delivery of the service

- **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**

Before deciding, Members must have regard to the Integrated Impact assessment in relation to the proposals. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need; (a) eliminate discrimination; harassment; victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; and (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it . Section 149(7) of the 2010 Act set out the protected characteristics which are age, disability, gender reassignment: pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

An initial Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out for the updated targeted proposal. This will continue to be developed and updated following public consultation and any subsequent implementation.

The assessments highlight some positive and negative impacts of the proposed changes, however overall, the impacts remain neutral

The full IIA can be found on the Council's website here:

<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/delivering-services/integrated-impact-assessments>

There will be HR (Human Resources) implications from these changes and staff and trade unions will be consulted in accordance with the usual procedures.

4 Consultation

While not legally mandated for every library service change, public consultation is strongly encouraged by various legal principles and best practice guidelines.

Local authorities risk legal challenges if they fail to consider public opinion on significant changes. Public consultation plays a crucial role in ensuring library services remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. Therefore, it is proposed the Kirklees Library Service run a public consultation, for a minimum of 8 weeks on the future library provision for Kirklees.

We need to establish, what the public would like Kirklees Library Service to continue to deliver within the proposed budget constraints, and how they feel they could support and contribute to the delivery of the service. Along with insight on what days and times they would most like to utilise our services.

The consultation should include quantitative and qualitative research approaches, with the aim of ensuring a representative sample of library users and non-users are captured. The process

should also apply the pillars of the Inclusive communities framework ensuring belief, belonging and care can be reflected in responses.

We believe this should include the following elements:

- Self-completion paper/online surveys made available to all residents in Kirklees.
- Face to face surveys
- Targeted focus groups to include stakeholders such as:
 - Library Service Users
 - Friends of groups
 - Staff
 - Library building owners
 - Volunteers
 - Community partners
 - Ward Councillors

DCMS best practice requires us to undertake an independent and objective consultation. The consultation cost will be identified via a procurement process. An independent consultation will ensure we keep central the voices of residents being heard.

As part of the process the overview and scrutiny committee will be briefed on the Revised proposed targeted Library model and seek the views and comments of the committee ahead of decision making at cabinet

5 Engagement

Community engagement to explore the feasibility of developing a community managed library (CML) model commenced in March 2024 following the permission to proceed granted by cabinet on 20th February 2024.

This engagement was underpinned by a set of initial principles derived from Kirklees wide partnership strategies (Policies and strategies | Kirklees Council) and Kirklees Council Access Strategy 2021-26 (kirklees.gov.uk) alongside the inclusive communities framework approaches

- The belief that communities are best placed to lead, shape, and deliver support in communities.
- The council role is more effective as an enabler than as a sole delivery function.
- That communities can find their own solutions with increased access to support and information at local level.

As part of the engagement, 208 people from the range of stakeholders detailed above, attended face to face meetings with the service and subsequent follow up meetings had an attendance of 66 people. See Appendix 1 for details

As part of the meetings held, we:

- Provided detailed information on the proposal around community managed libraires
- Listened to feedback and concerns
- Collated key themes
- Evaluated feedback

Outcome of the engagement

This engagement demonstrated the unique differences and strengths in our communities and the current services abilities to meet these varying needs, whilst highlighting a number of collective themes and concerns.

Themes identified were, communities wish:

- To remain part of the Kirklees Council library service (on statutory network).
- To reduce Kirklees paid staffing rather than remove fully.

Concerns raised were over:

- Aging Volunteers
- Lack of Volunteer capacity to deliver the proposed community managed library model.
- Risk of losing Volunteers
- Risk of locations becoming less inclusive
- Lack of volunteer skills around staff management, safeguarding and GDPR.

The community also demonstrated their depth of feeling around the proposed community managed library model, with the submission of 2 petitions opposing the models implementation.

These were:

- Keep Kirkheaton Library Staffed – submitted on the 07/06/2024 with 703 valid signatures
- Keep Kirklees Libraries Staffed: Say no to management changes – submitted 19/05/2024 with 3120 valid signatures

There was a collective recognition, from the participants taking part in the engagement, of the council's current financial position, with some feeling that they had already made previous steps to support the council financial pressures through supporting the library. It was felt a more equitable approach to reducing costs could be developed to support to retain the current network of 24 libraries across Kirklees and retain a broader reach into our communities, maintaining vital support to those who need it the most.

The Feedback obtained from informal engagement has informed:

- An updated draft Needs Assessment
- A revised draft Libraries Strategy
- An alternative option for consideration in response to feedback received

6 Options

6.1 Options Considered

We had identified 8 libraries that are considered able to broadly meet the foundational characteristics for a successful transition to a community managed library.

The proposed model which was engaged on is set out below:

8-community managed libraries would have sat outside our statutory provision of 16 libraries with paid staffing removed but would have still had access to a package of support, including book stock, IT equipment and infrastructure, plus some management support from the statutory network. This model would have supported us to move to a more strengths-based approach drawing on the knowledge, skills and resources which already exist within our communities.

This was proposed to provide the community the freedom to shape their own offer of support, expand on existing provision and respond to community needs.

However, following the community engagement feedback, we have listened to this and revised the proposed model accordingly whilst balancing the need to achieve financial savings.

6.2 Reasons for recommended Option

Following the engagement with key stakeholders on the feasibility of the community managed libraries model, the feedback was overwhelmingly that this was not an option they wished to pursue. This was due to a number of key factors including community capacity and a strong view that they would be best supported by paid staff and to remain part of the Kirklees Library network (statutory network).

It was also identified there could be an increased risk in the loss of provision over the longer term due to the fluctuation in numbers of volunteers and the increasing age of the existing volunteer cohort in some libraries.

As a result, the revised model was developed, which focused on a targeted reduction in staffed hours and opening hours. This is set out above in section 2 *Reducing rather than removing council staff*

This revised model looks to retain the current network of 24 Kirklees libraries all within the current statutory network. Mitigating the risks and concerns raised throughout the engagement and is being recommended for the following reasons:

- Supports to maintain the current place-based footprint.
- Facilitates a community led approach alongside paid staff.
- Maintains a connected library service across all 24 library locations.
- Maintains access and support to IT infrastructure and equipment.
- Maintains access to new books via the book fund and to the book stock across the entire network.
- Maintains management support to facilitate the new strategy.
- Provides service level saving.
- Reduces risks Supports the development of community managed libraries where communities express an interest in developing them.

7 Next steps and timelines

Subject to Cabinet approval, next steps would be as follows:

1. Commence public consultation on the revised delivery model set out in this report
September – December 2024
2. Evaluation of consultation
3. Update needs assessment based on consultation
4. Final proposal produced, informed by consultation
5. Proposal considered by DCMS
6. If supported by DCMS, proposal considered by Cabinet in early 2025
7. If endorsed by Cabinet, implementation of the proposal-April 2025

8 Contact officer

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9 Background Papers and History of Decisions

Cabinet Report – 20th February 2024 : [CABINET REPORT - Strength Based Integrated Community Library and customer service functions assets.pdf \(kirklees.gov.uk\)](#)

10 Appendices

Appendix 1 - - Engagement to explore the feasibility of transition into community managed libraries

11 Service Director responsible

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