Community Library Partnerships: Supplementary consultation information

What are 'Community Library Partnerships'?

The Library Services area proposals and questionnaire refer to 'Community Library Partnerships'. This term describes a partnership between the County Council and one or more community bodies which would run and maintain library services from either the existing library building or from an alternative venue in the community.

The County Council would prefer to maintain library buildings through Community Library Partnerships, rather than deliver library services through outreach and / or mobile library solutions, but only if these partnerships can be developed in a way which is financially sustainable.

What would Somerset County Council provide to support a Community Library Partnership?

If communities choose to work in partnership with us in order to keep a library building open in their area, we propose to make a long term commitment to help them to do so – including financial contributions in some areas. The County Council will support any community wanting to take on their library with training and ongoing technical support, the provision of book stock (including a regular supply of new books) and ICT equipment such as computers, printers and scanners.

Community Library Partnerships would continue to be an integral part of the Somerset Libraries network, and customers would continue to have access to the full range of library services, including membership of the LibrariesWest Consortium which will enable customers to reserve items from other libraries that are members of the consortium and to use the inter-library loans service.

We are proposing that an annual financial contribution of £5,000 (over and above the standard ongoing technical support and provision of book stock and ICT) would be made to support Community Library Partnerships in Castle Cary, Somerton, Shepton Mallet, Street, Cheddar, Martock, Crewkerne, Ilminster, Wellington, Dulverton, Porlock, Watchet and Nether Stowey. This additional financial contribution is not proposed for the communities of Bruton, Milborne Port, Sunningdale, South Petherton, Priorswood, Bishops Lydeard, North Petherton and Highbridge; this is because there is either less need in these communities, and / or because there is easier access to alternative library buildings.

What would communities provide to support a Community Library Partnership?

We have an open mind as to how a community could support its library – every situation will be unique, as every community is unique. It could mean a community taking on buildings and staff, volunteers working in the library, or financial support – for example through a parish precept – towards the cost of the library.

We recognise that some of our proposals present difficult choices for communities and want to stress there is no expectation that communities should step forward. This is entirely their choice. Where communities are unable to provide sufficient support to keep a building open, alternative library services will be provided by the Council such as outreach and / or mobile library services.

Services that would be provided through a Community Library Partnership:

We have set out some information here describing what a Community Library Partnership would provide, as a minimum, for customers in a community.

The information is provided as a guide only and is the minimum level of service that we consider is required.   However, we hope that most Community Library Partnerships would go above and beyond this minimum level of service, and in doing so, support the vision of a thriving and dynamic, modern library service.

- <u>A library building, open to the public for a minimum of 10 hours per week (including some time on a Saturday)</u> **–** this could be the existing library building, or an alternative location in the community, or space in a shared building.

- <u>Access to book stock, including regular updates to book stock</u> **–** the standard and range of book stock and other lending material would be maintained, with the County Council funding new stock and circulating stock as it does now. The current LibrariesWest system would be used, enabling customers to reserve items from across the LibrariesWest network, and to use the inter-library loans service.

- <u>Access to public computers and wifi, printing and scanning</u> **–** the County Council would remain responsible for providing and maintaining public computer access in community libraries and provide access to the library wifi network.

- <u>Support from trained volunteers or skilled library staff</u> **–** community libraries could be operated by volunteers, or paid staff, or a mix of paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers and staff would be given training and support by the County Council.

- <u>Specific services for children</u> **–** community libraries would operate the Summer Reading Challenge and support the Bookstart programme.

Examples of Community Library Partnerships:

In Somerset, the County Council works in partnership with Porlock Parish Council to operate the library in Porlock. The County Council provides book stock, training and technical support, ICT equipment and a financial contribution towards business rates and the running costs of the building. Porlock Parish Council is responsible for most

of the building costs and the library is operated on a day-to-day basis by volunteers. A good range of library services are offered – access to a range of book stock and the wider LibrariesWest catalogue, as well as public network computer access and a range of regular events and activities. The Library is open for 17.5 hours per week over 5 days, and usage is high relative to the size of the community.

Elsewhere, there are over 500 community libraries operating in the UK; many have been going for a number of years. We have provided some examples of operating community libraries here, for illustrative purposes – the examples come from a number of different local authorities, who support their libraries in different ways. Population figures are for the built up area around the library, and are taken from the 2011 census.

Grappenhall, Cheshire. (pop. 9,377, open for 14 hours per week over 4 days):
- Case Study - http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Community-Libraries-10-Case-Studies.pdf
- Website - https://www.grappenhall.org.uk/

Stalbridge, Dorset (pop. 2,396 - open for 20 hours per week over 6 days):
- Case Study - https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/community-library-stalbridge-dorset
- Website - https://www.stalbridgelibrary.org/

Harbury, Warwickshire (pop. 2,148 – open for 42 hours per week over 6 days):
- Case Study - https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/community-library-harbury-warwickshire
- Website - http://www.harburyvillagelibrary.org.uk/

Lechlade, Gloucestershire (pop. 2,507 – open 22 hours per week over 6 days):
- Case Study - https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/community-library-lechlade-gloucestershire
- Website - http://www.lechladelibrary.co.uk/

Market Deeping, Lincs. (pop. 13,574 – open 24 hours per week over 4 days):
- Case Study - https://communitylibrariesnetwork.wordpress.com/2017/11/29/guest-blog-deeping-community-library/
- Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/deepingscommunitylibrary/