

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

Author:	Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills and Board Director Resources
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

---

## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress towards achieving a sustainable future for Lydiard House and Park, while reducing the annual cost to the Council taxpayer by at least £450,000.
- 1.2 The report also responds to the medium-term financial context set out in the report to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 (Cabinet Minute 45(3), 2015/16 refers), which authorised further work in a range of areas that would help ensure a financially sustainable position by 2020.
- 1.3 In addition, the report proposes the transfer of Richard Jefferies Museum to the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust and the Railway Cottage to the New Mechanics Institution Preservation Trust Limited.
- 1.4 This report responds specifically to Cabinet's request to develop a draft service strategy for libraries that would achieve a reduction in the budget for that service of at least £1.5m by 2020, in the context of a review of community-based assets and services across the Borough.
- 1.5 The proposals within the report contribute towards the Council's Vision for Swindon, and particularly: Priority Two: Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places; Priority Three: Ensure clean and safe streets and improve public spaces and local culture; and Priority Four: Help people to help themselves while always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults.

## **2. Recommendations**

### Cabinet is recommended:

- 2.1 To note the key findings from the Expressions of Interest received for the future operation of Lydiard House and Park, as set out in paragraphs 3.10 to 3.12.
- 2.2 To agree to offer to potential bidders a "reverse premium" of £0.85m as a contribution to current backlog maintenance needs, recognising that this was a key factor for parties who responded to the Council's request for expressions of interest.

## **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- 2.3 To authorise The Board Director, Service Delivery in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, the Board Director, Resources and the Head of Property Assets to request the submission of formal tenders from organisations that will help secure the overall objective of finding an acceptable, sustainable future for Lydiard House and Park within the Council's ownership while reducing the annual cost to the Council Tax Payer by at least £450,000, within the clear parameters set out under paragraph 3.18.
- 2.4 To agree that interested parties be requested to develop and submit their formal bid proposals for Lydiard House and Park by early May, as part of the delay requested by Council's resolution of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016, and that a further report be brought to Cabinet in June 2016 to recommend a future model for the site's on-going operation to Council.
- 2.5 To authorise the Board Director, Service Delivery, to commence a consultation with users to understand any specific concerns around how they could be affected by future changes, based on the principles that successful bids for Lydiard House and Park will need to meet, so that the consultation response can inform Cabinet Members as part of their decision-making in June 2016.
- 2.6 To seek the views of users, local residents and stakeholders on the introduction of car parking charges at Lydiard Park and the Council's other country parks that, once implemented, would raise at least £400,000 across all facilities in a full year, that would inform the assessment of proposals to secure their sustainable future within the Council's ownership.
- 2.7 Recognising the extension to the bidding process and the pressing need to reduce the subsidy for Lydiard, subject to reflecting the findings of the consultation referred to in the report and necessary statutory approvals being granted, approve the introduction of car parking charges for trial periods between June to September at the Council's country parks in the short term reducing the Council's subsidy of Lydiard and enabling future partners to understand the scale of the contribution that income from this source can play in future plans for Lydiard.
- 2.8 To note the key findings of the Libraries Needs Assessment attached as Appendix 1 to this report and confirm the Council's proposed definition of need set out in paragraph 3.38, which reflects the focus and ambition of the Vision for Swindon and the key priorities that underpin this.
- 2.9 Within the context of its intention to achieve a reduction in the Libraries budget of at least £1.5m by 2020 and its agreed proposed definition of need, to approve note the emerging model for the delivery of Libraries and Community Services attached as Appendix 2 as the basis for engagement.

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- 2.10 To authorise the Board Director, Service Delivery, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills and the Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering to use the Emerging Model outlined in Appendix 2 as the basis to initiate engagement with Ward Members, users, residents, community groups, and other stakeholders in defining a Libraries strategy.
- 2.11 To agree that a further report be brought to Cabinet in June 2016 setting out a proposed Libraries and Community Services strategy for adoption by Cabinet and Council.
- 2.12 As part of this engagement process, continue to work with Ward Members, community groups and other stakeholders in the six pilot areas set out in paragraph 3.53 and 3.54, and in other areas where interest emerges, in order to develop and, where possible, implement new models of delivery for library and community services that can both test and inform the development of the strategy and – alongside other service changes - help achieve savings of at least £300,000 in Libraries and community services in these areas in 2016/17, noting that one-off resources are likely to be required to pump prime the service changes and cashflow the effect of savings not being achieved from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016;
- 2.13 To authorise the Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills to agree the terms of the transfers of the Richard Jefferies Museum to the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust and the Railway Cottage to the New Mechanics Institution Preservation Trust Limited and to endorse the principles of the terms of the transfers as set out in paragraph 3.60 covering the proposed Lease; Object Loans and Monitoring Agreements.
- 2.14 To authorise the Director of Law and Democratic Services to enter into all necessary legal documentation to enable the transfers detailed in paragraph 2.13 to be effected, on such detailed terms and conditions as are necessary in order to protect the Council's interests.

## **3. Detail**

### Lydiard House and Park

- 3.1 In 2013 the Council commenced a programme of activity aimed at removing over time the subsidy for its Leisure and Cultural assets through working with alternative operators to enhance the sustainability of the provision, exploring and identifying further commercial and / or charitable opportunities. Following the transfer of Leisure and Golf facilities, attention has now turned to Cultural assets, with the main current focus being on Lydiard House and Park.

## **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- 3.2 The overarching objective of the review of Cultural assets is to ensure they are well positioned to enjoy a sustainable future. Inevitably, this will need to involve removing the need for Council subsidy for the facilities, given the scale of demands on our resources from demand led services, particularly to support the most vulnerable. Despite the Council having invested time and resource in enhancing the offer at Lydiard House and Park in recent years, the actual subsidy of the house, park, catering and other on-site operations was £458,000 (in 2014/15). If the overall subsidy for cultural assets including the Steam museum is to be removed, it will instead be necessary to generate value from Lydiard and the Council's other country parks.
- 3.3 In order to inform its consideration of potential future options to find a sustainable offer, the Council appointed a specialist external organisation (Bilfinger GVA) last Autumn to identify the range of market interest in Lydiard House and Park, within the clear remit that it must remain in Council ownership and public access is retained. This recognises that developing a different offer that will encourage people to visit, stay longer and make use of income generating activities will be key to replacing the current subsidy.

### Soft market testing – seeking expressions of interest

- 3.4 To understand the potential offer from the market for enhancing and developing Lydiard House and Park, the council instructed Bilfinger GVA to commence a soft market testing process and seek expressions of interest from parties who believe they can play a positive role in securing the Council's overarching objectives for the house and park. The expression of interest process commenced in late October 2015 and asked parties to come forward with their proposals for what they felt would be a sustainable offer for any or all parts of the house and park.
- 3.5 The process was informed by local Councillors, who contributed to the development of some key principles that any potentially interested parties would need to be able to comply with. In essence, any proposals would need to complement the site's cultural heritage, while maintaining public access to the site.
- 3.6 During the expression of interest window, the Council continued to seek the views of staff, users, residents and key stakeholders into the future options for the house and park. To gather user feedback on what visitors most value about the site the council held two public engagement sessions in the park during November and sought views and feedback from a range of users. Councillor Perkins, the Cabinet Member responsible for Lydiard, and officers met with the Friends of Lydiard and a special meeting of the Swindon Heritage Board was arranged. The future of Lydiard House and Park has also featured prominently in West Swindon Locality meetings.

## **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- 3.7 This engagement has provided an opportunity to update users and key stakeholders on the broad range of services and facilities available at Lydiard and to explain the context of this work and the financial pressures facing the Council. The Council has developed a leaflet with 7 key facts to outline these messages and has used this to support regular Member and officer attendance at a wide range of public events to increase public awareness of the context and key facts about the project.
- 3.8 Engagement with users highlighted that there was a high level of passion and pride for Lydiard, but with surprisingly few visitors being aware of or regularly accessing the offer of the house, museum and walled garden or the existing hotel and conference centre. Another key theme, which has emerged through the engagement has been an acknowledgement that the site needs to generate additional income to remain sustainable and a general acceptance of the introduction of car parking charges as part of this.
- 3.9 Initial feedback from users at the on-site engagement sessions indicated that a car parking fee at Lydiard of around £2 - £3 per day may be acceptable as long as different arrangements such as season tickets are available for more regular users. Financial modelling shows that with charges at this level income could be significant at around £275,000 from this source in a full year, with further income of around £125,000 from slightly lower charges at other country parks, most notably Coate Water, subject to the operational model adopted. In light of this, the Council will be consulting more widely on car parking fee levels for Lydiard and its other country parks during February. This will allow the council and potential future partners to understand the scale of the contribution that income from this source can play in future plans for Lydiard.
- 3.10 A total of 9 expressions of interest were received by Bilfinger GVA when the soft market testing window closed in December. Interest was expressed from a variety of organisations, some focusing on specific parts of the site and others on the house and park as a whole, with some simply outlining their interest in being involved rather than submitting detailed plans.
- 3.11 All the interested parties were invited to meet with a range of officers from across the council, with the Cabinet Members for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills and Corporate, Customer and Digital Services to discuss their proposals in more detail. These discussion sessions took place during January 2016 and whilst not all parties were able to attend the sessions, a common set of themes and questions were raised to enable the Council team to assess the likely market appetite to enhance the offer and Lydiard House and Park.
- 3.12 Parties interested in specific parts of the site outlined that they would initially expect to discuss a variety of lease terms and lengths, depending on the nature of their proposal. Parties interested in a whole site offer highlighted that the level of possible backlog maintenance required for the house and park would be a key
-



# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

issue for them to understand and inform their business modelling. The Council has assessed the level of backlog maintenance required at Lydiard House and Park through recent conditions surveys. This has been assessed at £0.85m. In order to stimulate the market and reassure organisations that have expressed an interest, the offer of a reverse premium of capital funds by the Council would demonstrate commitment to ensuring the on-going protection and enhancement of a key heritage asset and would encourage some commitment of capital finding from partners to enhance their offer and operations on site.

- 3.13 The Council had originally intended to invite formal bids for the future operation of Lydiard House and Park in January, with a decision being made on the way forward in April. Following calls from a number of sources for more time to be available to develop the widest possible wide range of bids, on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016, Council approved a motion put forward by Cllr Perkins, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Lydiard, to review the timescale. Following this resolution, it is now proposed that the formal bidding process is commenced in February and that the bid submission period will be extended into May, representing a period of more than three month from the date of the Council meeting. Bids will then be evaluated with a view to Cabinet making a recommendation at its June 2016 meeting that will be subject to ratification by Full Council. It is therefore very unlikely that a new operator will take responsibility for the site before the autumn.
- 3.14 This extension to the timescale originally envisaged means that any new operator will be unable to benefit from the higher number of visitors over the Summer period in 2016, The Council's pressing financial challenge, however, remains. In order to mitigate some of the potential subsidy reduction, it is proposed that between June and September car parking charges are introduced at the Council's country parks, reflecting feedback from the engagement and following the fulfilment of any statutory consultation processes. As well as realising income in the short-term to reduce the Council's subsidy for the site, this will help ensure that the practical implications associated with the implementation of car parking charges can be fully understood and addressed. The Council will continue to receive the benefits of income from car parking charges in future years, either directly or through its current subsidy being covered by another operator.

## Conclusions and proposed way forward

- 3.15 Cabinet has several options to consider in its approach if it chooses to go to market to secure medium/long term partners to enhance the offer at Lydiard.

These options include:

- 3.15.1 The transfer of the facilities to a third party on a long-term lease would mean the third party taking over the operation of the facilities on a day-

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

today basis along with on-going revenue and capital investment risk. The benefit of this arrangement is that the freehold of the site remains in the Council's ownership and some control can be exercised through standard lease clauses, for example proposals in the future to assign the benefit of the lease to another operator or to alter the use of the premises. This option also provides an operator with the ability to develop a coherent offer, which complements and enhances the site as a whole. The council would have the ability to set out key principles that any offer would need to address but could not set out a specification for services, for example setting opening or closing times or setting price levels.

- 3.15.2 The operation of the facilities on behalf of the Council under a management contract. Under this arrangement the facilities remain within Council ownership and the Council is likely to have to retain the on-going liability for structural repairs and capital investment. A reduction in revenue subsidy may be achieved but may be at a smaller level than through a lease arrangement as the Council would need to retain a specialist client team to manage the contract, re-procure the contract once the contract expires and manage and fund the repairs, maintenance and capital investment programme. The benefit of this approach is that Cabinet can retain significant influence over the way in which the facilities are operated through the contract arrangements.
- 3.16 The Council is not seeking to determine the precise future operational arrangements for the house and park through asking for responses to a service specification. Whilst retaining some control over the operations of a site may feel beneficial, the Council would retain the majority of the on-going revenue and backlog maintenance liabilities and risk. This would both stifle the opportunity for innovative approaches to be developed and ensure that the Council retained a higher level of responsibility for the site than its financial position can support.
- 3.17 While no specific type of operator is being ruled out at this stage, a key factor in determining the most suitable future partner will be the specific proposals they submit to achieve the key objective of securing a sustainable future for Lydiard that protects its unique characteristics.
- 3.18 It is therefore proposed that a successful bid should:
  - 3.18.1 Secure a sustainable future for Lydiard House and Park within the Council's ownership that does not rely on an on-going Council subsidy;
  - 3.18.2 Safeguard the historical importance of the Lydiard House Museum and its collections and the Walled Garden and ensure they remain accessible to the general public;

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- 3.18.3 Protect the historic landscape and structures within the Park, which were restored as part of the £5.1m Heritage Lottery Fund Project, and reflect the long-term plans for Lydiard Park submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2005;
- 3.18.4 Allow the continuation of public access to the park and grounds; and
- 3.18.5 Address the on-going maintenance and repair of the House and Park.
- 3.19 Should Cabinet agree to these objectives they will form the basis of the Council's evaluation criteria for bids and bidders will need to demonstrate how their proposal complies with them as well as detailing their experience and track record in operating similar facilities and plans to further enhance the offer.
- 3.20 It is proposed that the approach to market would seek a partner who would support and enhance the sustainability of the whole site, but to welcome bids from parties interested in specific parts of the offer, and provide the opportunity to link in with bidders for other packages, to explore ways for the parties to work together in the future.
- 3.21 As with the Leisure change programme, engagement with users and stakeholder groups will continue through the bidding process to understand any specific concerns around how they could be affected by future changes in order that these points can be put to bidders for their consideration.
- 3.22 Cabinet and Council will determine at the end of the bid evaluation process whether any further formal consultation is required before a final decision is made on any specific proposal.

## Libraries and Community Based Services

- 3.23 In 2010, the Council recognised that a number of drivers were pushing councils to work more closely with local communities and this was a key theme in the Stronger Together strategic approach adopted by Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011. At the same time, the Localism Act 2011 brought a greater focus to local decision-making and the role of parish councils. The "Going Local" theme detailed in the December 2015 Cabinet papers reaffirms the Council's intention to work alongside communities to understand and prioritise needs, create capacity and broker local solutions.
- 3.24 Since 2011, the on-going financial constraints placed on the Council and the requirement to reduce its on-going operating costs has put increased pressure on place-based front-line services. The decision in 2014 to remove the Council's subsidy of recreation and golf centres brought sustainability and protection for these important services. Decisions now need to be made to ensure sustainable operating models are in place for community-based services, including libraries.



# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- 3.25 Recognising the increasing proportion of Council expenditure having to be directed to support vulnerable people, the forecast level of budget available to fund these services is expected to be substantially less than that invested today by 2020. In December 2015, Cabinet confirmed its view that, in order to secure a sustainable future within the Council's overall resources, expenditure on Libraries would need to reduce by around £1.5m from its current level of £2.6m over that period. While such a reduction is dramatic, it is felt to be a realistic basis on which to plan for a future service, as part of an overall approach to community-based services. The Council needs to consider how to balance its statutory duties to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service" across the borough within this significantly reduced financial envelope, given that there is no specific definition or standard specified in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.
- 3.26 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport published guidance on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015 on Libraries as a statutory service. In examples of decisions made in other areas it is clear that a comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library but that the service is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, and there is a clear link with the availability of council resources in determining what constitutes an efficient service.
- 3.27 To understand how to best respond to its statutory duties within a significantly reduced financial envelope, and consider how Library Services can best contribute to the Vision for Swindon, Swindon Borough Council has completed an assessment of need – profiling the current use of libraries in Swindon and defining the needs of the communities of the Borough.

## Needs Assessment

- 3.28 In order to inform the development of a draft Libraries and Community Services Strategy for Swindon, a detailed needs assessment has been undertaken that explores usage and reach of all current library facilities. This is attached as Appendix 1. This shows that Swindon's expenditure on Libraries is above average for its comparator authorities and the level of provision is one of the highest among our comparator authorities.
- 3.29 Through mapping the current "catchment areas" of 70% of the current usage of each of the libraries, it is apparent that there is a geographical overlap, particularly in areas to the north of the town centre. This indicates that while some users only use a single facility, others have the ability to access services in different ways and different locations.
- 3.30 In terms of services provided, Swindon Libraries have always endeavoured to deliver a service that provides opportunities and access for learning, enjoyment
-

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

and discovery by actively working with the community and other service providers. However, Libraries have been subject to a succession of budget reductions over the years and staffing, operational and development budgets are now stretched very thinly. Opening hours in Libraries have been protected, through reductions in staffing levels and stock fund.

- 3.31 Given the future funding position, it is necessary to propose a future for the Library service that is a more radical change, and puts the emphasis on providing a sustainable and quality service with access to a wide range of services in alternative ways. Without this, and without change to the size and nature of the Library network, Swindon would witness an increasing number of unplanned Library closures and staffing resources are spread too thinly, and delivery of quality in services for literacy, health and wellbeing, information and digital services will become unsustainable as professional capacity is stretched across a large network,
- 3.32 It is important to recognise that the services Libraries provide in 2015/16 go well beyond simple book lending. The Society of Chief Librarians describes five broad areas of service which are typically provided through public libraries:
- 3.32.1 Reading
  - 3.32.2 Information
  - 3.32.3 Digital
  - 3.32.4 Health
  - 3.32.5 Learning
- 3.33 Libraries are used across the borough by different communities with different profiles and different needs. It will be important to identify the impact of any new proposals for the library service on these and those groups with protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010.
- 3.34 Space within Libraries is also used to facilitate a range of formal and informal group meetings and other community activities, as well as training and skills development.
- 3.35 The needs assessment also highlights that communities across Swindon have different profiles and different needs, and there are some small areas in the borough, which have very high levels of deprivation. This is particularly apparent in some areas in relation to education, skills and training domains.

## Libraries and their relationship to Community-based assets

- 3.36 In addition to these considerations, Library buildings are part of a network of over 70 community-based assets that provide a range of services and activities across

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

the Borough, many of which are community led. This includes 15 Libraries, 28 Community centres, 8 Youth Centres, 4 Children's Locality Centres and community hire facilities such as scout and guide huts. Services or support are also accessed from facilities owned or operated by other groups or partners including Police, Health, town and parish councils and special interest groups such as charities. With a range of community groups involved in operating all but two of the community centres, the vast majority of the costs of these services relates to the staffing and premises costs of local libraries.

- 3.37 The Council's 2008-2010 Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan identified a key theme of partnership, co-location and shared services which recognises that 26 of the 28 community centres in the Borough have already been leased to groups and volunteers who are running local assets and services. The next step in this journey as part of the Going Local approach would be to refine this model and build on its success to reinforce and promote community resilience by developing a transformed community-based services and assets model. This will involve reviewing the purpose of the services operated within them to develop co-location opportunities by working with communities and local organisations to ensure local access to services is sustainable and in line with local demand.

## Developing a new Library and Community Services Strategy – next steps

- 3.38 The Vision for Swindon to 2030 has a clear focus on Swindon's economic growth. It is clear that local services will need to play a particular role in responding to need by helping to raise the skills and therefore employment opportunities of local people, in order that they are best able to benefit from a strengthening local economy, and the library service is key to this.
- 3.39 Within this context, and the statutory and financial context of the council, an emerging model of Libraries and Community-based Services has been developed as a basis for discussion and engagement with stakeholders. This is one way in which the service could be redesigned to meet the Vision, respond to need, deliver a quality and sustainable service, within the financial envelope for the service by 2020.
- 3.40 As a starting point for that engagement, work to date has identified an emerging model for community-based services and assets, developed around co-locating services and working with communities and local organisations to enable access to them. The report proposes using Library provision as a catalyst to this development.
- 3.41 The emerging model set out in Appendix 2 proposed Draft Libraries and Community Services strategy sets out the Council's proposed one way that Libraries and Community Services could respond to delivering the Vision for Swindon within the future financial context it faces. This is a radically different model, and given the context, any alternatives to the way services are currently

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

designed need to be similarly radical. However, there may be other ways the service could be redesigned to meet the Vision within the financial envelope for the service set by Cabinet in December 2015 and reaffirmed in this paper.

- 3.42 Cabinet is therefore asked to endorse Appendix 2 as a starting point for engagement with users of local services, residents, community groups and other stakeholders during February, March, April and May. Information will also be gathered during this period to understand better the users of IT provision in libraries, and the users of groups and other community activities.
- 3.43 During the engagement and information gathering process it is intended to explore, through the current pilot areas and other areas where interest emerges, how strategy new delivery model can be implemented in different parts of the Borough as well as developing detailed proposals for a service focused on improving economic opportunities based on the Central Library. In particular, groups with protected characteristics and other key user groups of the library service, as well as non-users will be engaged with to understand any potential impacts of this emerging model and to look at ways the impact could be mitigated or alternative ways to offer provision within the financial context.
- 3.44 The results of this engagement will inform the development of new strategy for Library and Community Services that will be brought back to Cabinet in June 2016 for approval, ahead of formal consultation and approval for adoption in autumn 2016

## Pilot areas and current year savings and service changes

- 3.45 In parallel with the work to develop a longer-term strategy for the service, and in order to test and inform in practical ways the strategy's development, the Council has identified a number of areas to discuss and consider new approaches to local community-based assets and services. The purpose of the community-based assets pilot projects is to start conversations with local stakeholders and to explore possibilities and potential future operating models for developing sustainable library and community-based services provision in those areas.
- 3.46 Initial engagement has commenced with Ward Members and local organisations in six "pilot" areas in Liden, Penhill, Highworth, Moredon, Toothill and Wroughton around the range of assets in those areas.
- 3.47 The pilot areas were identified for a range of reasons including;
- condition of existing assets,
  - range of types of library and community services offer in place – standalone or co-located services,

## **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

- Other projects already underway which could be built upon for to enhance discussions – e.g. if another co-location project was already being proposed or suggested,
  - Other external factors which might affect the use of assets,
  - Existing strong communities or partnerships in place, high levels of community activity and participation indicating a strong likelihood of engagement in discussions, and
  - Ensuring a range of different communities or stakeholders were reflected across the borough to test different approaches to conversations
- 3.48 The aim of conversations in the pilot areas is to achieve a common understanding of the Council's financial position and to identify the current library and community-based assets and services in the local area. The next stage will be starting to look at developing a reshaped library and community-based assets and services provision, developing proposals to re-shape services and the buildings through which they are delivered, including exploring co-location solutions around the range of assets in those areas.
- 3.49 The initial high-level engagement in the pilots projects has helped the Council to consider its approach to the strategy and has shown that the development of a solution in each area needs to be sensitive to local needs and strengths, and that different areas need to be able to develop different solutions based upon what those communities need.
- 3.50 The conversations have also demonstrated that the development and publication of the Needs Assessment is vital to helping partners and communities to understand more detail about how current services are used. An overarching vision of library and community-based services in the future is also needed – and clarity what role the Council is able to play in the future – and so communities and partners will be able to understand how they can respond to this. This early engagement has also helped the Council to understand the information Ward Members and community groups would wish to access to help progress discussions and to shape what a proposed solution could look like in each area.
- 3.51 The pilots of have also begun to demonstrate there is strong local support and passion for library services in local areas and that both library and other community services can benefit from co-location see Appendix 3 for the Liden Case study.
- 3.52 Potential future models are emerging in some of the pilot areas but have not yet reached the stage of firm proposals. Subject to this, it is proposed to continue engagement with Ward Members, community groups and other stakeholders in the six pilot areas and in other areas where interest emerges, in order to develop
-



# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

and, where possible, and with Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills' approval, implement new models of delivery for library and community services. This would enable the Council to both test and inform the further development of the strategy and help achieve savings towards the financial position envisaged by 2020.

- 3.53 Given the overarching financial context, and the intended medium-term budget reduction of around £1.5m, it will be necessary to target savings of at least £300,000 in Libraries and community services in 2016/17. The work in the pilot areas may identify ways of achieving those in year, and in addition the Library Service are working up other measures. These will inevitably include reductions in operating hours and staffing levels across the current libraries network, that will need to be consulted on in their own right ahead of in-year implementation decisions. Other measures in relation to stock management and collaboration with other Library authorities may also contribute to the necessary in-year savings. It should be noted that one-off resources are likely to be required to pump prime the service changes and cashflow the effect of savings not being achieved from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016;
- 3.54 In addition to changes to the library service model, communities may identify community-based assets, which have reached the end of their life, or have no current or immediate future operational use by the Council. If this is the case, the Council will work with local ward members and with local communities to declare such assets surplus to operational requirements and realise a capital receipt through a disposal process. In accordance with the Council's agreed property Acquisition and Disposal Strategy, where a capital receipt is realised, this will normally be used to mitigate the Council's external debt position, although up to 50% may be used for replacement facilities where it can be demonstrated that this is required in order to facilitate the disposal.

## Richard Jefferies Museum and Railway Cottage

- 3.55 The Richard Jefferies Museum Trust (RJM Trust) was established as a charitable trust in 2011 with a clearly stated ambition to take over the operational management, improve the visitor experience and create a sustainable future for the Richard Jefferies Museum at Coate. The RJM Trust secured a £30K development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2013 and has been operating from the Museum under an interim tenancy agreement. The transfer of the Museum to trust status is identified in the adopted Swindon Heritage Strategy Action Plan as a priority project (Cabinet Minute 71, 2013/14 refers).
- 3.56 The future of the Railway Cottage was identified at an early stage in the Council's Leisure and Culture Change Programme with agreement reached that the market would be explored with the intention of transferring its operational management to a third party. The Mechanics Trust bid in an open marketing exercise for the property and was recommended by officers as the preferred operator. The

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

Mechanics Trust has proposals to secure Your Heritage funding in order to develop the visitor experience of the Cottage and open it as a cultural venue for Swindon.

- 3.57 The Museum and the Cottage both contain collections of paintings, objects and artefacts that are currently owned and managed by the Council as is all repair and maintenance of the buildings themselves.
- 3.58 It is proposed that leases for both the Museum and the Cottage to the RJM Trust and the Mechanics Trust are granted on up to a 7 and 10 year terms respectively with the Council retaining responsibility for repair and maintenance of each property for the duration of each lease. Both facilities are relatively small in scale and expected liabilities associated with them are not significant. The length of lease term proposed is in accordance with the requests from the RJM Trust and the Mechanics Trust. In addition, Object Loan and Monitoring Agreements relating to the management, conservation, security and insurance of collection items contained within each property will be granted and reviewed by the Council on a regular basis.
- 3.59 Ward members for Central Ward were involved in the marketing and assessment of bids for the Cottage and have advised that they are supportive of its transfer to The Mechanics Trust. Ward members for Chiseldon and Lawn have been consulted on the proposed transfer of the Museum and have confirmed they are fully supportive of its transfer to the RJM Trust.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 A range of options is set out in the body of the report, although it is felt that within the Council's overall financial constraints there are few other options realistically available.
- 4.2 Future options could include establishing one or more Charitable Trusts to operate the facilities outlined in this report, once a sustainable service offer is determined.

## **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Where there are financial implications these have been reflected in the body of the report and in the appendices.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 All legal and human rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention rights.

# Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services

Cabinet

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016

---

- 5.3 Swindon Borough Council has a duty as a Library Authority under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it (section 7), taking into account local needs and within available resources.

## *7 General duty of library authorities.*

- (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 persons 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.*

- (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.*

## All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 Where there are such implications these have been reflected in the body of the report.

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been produced as part of the process to seek partners for enhancing the offer at Lydiard House and Park. At this stage, as there are no proposals for enhancing the offer to be considered, the potential impact for specific groups of users or for staff cannot be considered but will be assessed in detail at the next stage as bids are assessed. The impact of proposed car parking charges on any groups will be assessed during the consultation and appropriate mitigation measures considered.
- 5.6 A DIA has been produced to assess the impact of the emerging model for library and community-based services. A number of potential impacts have been identified for individuals / groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. During the engagement and information gathering process, alongside general engagement sessions, specific targeted discussions will be offered to key groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 or their representative bodies to understand any potential adverse impacts and to consider what measures could be considered to mitigate these impacts. This will include engagement with schools, pre-schools and various groups or individuals with characteristics of an equality protected group including; Sexual orientation, Gender identity, Race / Nationality, Older people, Religion and Disability.
- 5.7 Potential mitigations could include increasing the reach and role of the home library service to provide enhanced services and support. Whilst development of local access points will not form part of the SBC statutory provision, they will likely form the best access point for local people to access community based services and activities in their local area, including a library service offer, and SBC will work hard with communities to develop these points of access. The Diversity Impact Assessment for the Library and Community-based Services Strategy will be considered as the strategy develops through the engagement process and any adverse impacts will be identified and mitigated where appropriate.
- 5.8 Whilst the emerging model for library and community-based services will form the basis for engagement and development of a strategy, and so the model of future of delivery is to be developed, a Diversity Impact Assessment relating to staff has been initiated and whilst it is too early to understand what any impacts could be, the DIA will be updated as the strategy develops.

## Risk Management

- 5.9 Any risks arising from the proposals contained within this report will be managed through their implementation taking into consideration feedback from the consultation exercise. Once service responsibility transfers from the Borough Council to other operators the Council will not directly control service standards.

# **Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Cultural Assets, Libraries and Community Services**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

---

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Libraries Needs Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - Emerging model for Libraries and Community Services
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Liden Case Study

## **9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**

This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for December 2015.