

# Inspire... Include... Inform...

## a strategy for change in County Durham libraries



**Durham County Council Cabinet Report (8.02.12)**

### **A SUMMARY**

**Consultation Phase 2**

**10 February - 4 May 2012**

The purpose of this document is to provide information to help enable library users, the general public, staff and partners to feed back their views as part of the consultation on *Inspire...Include...Inform... a strategy for change in County Durham libraries*. This information will help to inform the final version of the strategy.

Additional and more detailed information is available in the Council's Cabinet Report which can be accessed at [www.durham.gov.uk/libraryconsultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/libraryconsultation). You can read the full document at your library if you do not have a computer with internet access.

#### **A VISION FOR LIBRARIES**

**“Libraries in County Durham will provide books and access to information and services. They will work with their local communities to ensure they meet the needs of the people they serve. They will be welcoming, accessible, vibrant and safe places for all”** (Cabinet Report 8.02.12)

The Council needs to secure a service that can be delivered within the budget available and continue to meet the needs of the current users as well as attract new library users. Libraries need to be places for readers, learners and local people to visit and use. To achieve this, and make sure library services remain available locally, all public libraries in County Durham will remain open, though with reduced opening hours. However, the opening hours at Clayport library have already been reduced and no further reduction in opening hours are proposed.

#### **OUR AIMS FOR THE SERVICE IN THE FUTURE WILL BE**

- To inspire a community of reading and learning
- To create community library hubs, involving local people
- To be modern and responsive
- A well managed and efficient service

#### **THE NEED FOR LIBRARY SERVICES**

We have identified that the library service should meet the following needs:

- reading for pleasure;
- raising confidence, skills and aspirations through access to informal and formal learning facilities, for study, research, self improvement and knowledge;
- the development of individual literacy;
- local community and public service information; and
- a place to meet and participate in community life.

## **WHY CHANGE?**

In preparing the strategy for change, the Council has reviewed national policy and library developments across the country and has taken into account the changing patterns of use of libraries. Significant research has taken place, including considering the views of users, partners and the wider public and looking closely at how the library service can contribute to the Council's overall aims for the County.

Library services in County Durham have always been held in very high regard by their users. Surveys consistently highlight excellent satisfaction rates with the service and the quality of staff. However, despite investment, library use in County Durham is declining. For example active borrowers have reduced by 4% since 2007/8.

There is a need to modernise the service and at the same time make sure that any proposal for the future is affordable and sustainable.

Well publicised reductions in Government funding will lead to a reduction in Council spending of £123.5million by 2015. Savings of £1.457million have already been agreed for the library service in County Durham. Management and support cost reductions have already contributed towards this saving.

## **THE NATIONAL PICTURE**

The previous Government's policy "*The Modernisation Review of Public Libraries: A Policy Statement*" said that books, and the right to borrow them and browse free of charge, must remain at the heart of any library service. The policy also said that libraries must embrace digital technology and respond strongly to the national decline in the use of library services. It highlighted the need to consider the economic climate and the expectation for more customer-focussed services.

The current Government has also set out its views on its vision for public libraries. The importance of libraries in promoting reading and literacy as well as their role as a partner for other public services has been specifically highlighted. They consider that libraries have the potential to be at the heart of a revolution in public service delivery where residents are partners and, where appropriate, encouraged to run their own services.

## **THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN COUNTY DURHAM**

There are currently 39 County Durham libraries in town centres and local communities. Opening hours are varied and range from 21 hours per week to 55.5 hours per week. The service has over 750,000 books available for loan as well as enabling access to national and international book collections through its 'inter-library loan' scheme. Each year the service lends over 3 million books, handles over 980,000 enquiries and provides 210 public computers, all with free internet access. Every library has a wide range of activities that take place throughout the year. Web-based services such as Library Online are available for everyone to access.

The Mobile Library Service provides access to rural and more isolated settlements in County Durham. The County Council currently operates 5 mobile libraries which stop at 380 locations in 182 settlements across the county. This service is comparatively expensive to deliver and serves relatively few people (1,452 people - just over 1.5% of the total number of active borrowers of the library service) and has been declining in use over recent years. In a recent six month sample period it was found that of the 380 halts there were 53 where nobody used the service, and 124 which only had an average of one user.

Currently, halts are provided to settlements that are over 1 mile from library buildings, but the service does not call at individual dwellings, nor travel along certain types of road. The duration of halts is determined by the level of use. A survey in 2011 showed that 25% of those who are members of the mobile library service also use building-based libraries, with 52% stating that they owned a car.

Other services include 'Books on Wheels' for people with mobility problems, the Prison Library Service (fully funded separately by the Government) and a Bookbus which provides services to care homes and day care centres.

The total gross library service spend is £6,191,000 per annum. A detailed breakdown of costs is available in the Cabinet Report.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATION**

The Council is keen that everyone has the opportunity to comment on the proposal for the future of the library service in County Durham and actively encourages feedback. All comments and views will be fully considered to ensure that the opinions of the people of County Durham are properly taken into account before final decisions are taken. Consultation on Phase 1, completed during summer 2010, showed broad agreement with the proposed vision and principles for the future of County Durham libraries. These views have helped to shape the revised proposals and strategy document.

Phase 2 consultation on the detailed proposal takes place from 10 February to 4 May 2012. As with Phase 1, the results of Phase 2 consultation will be essential in helping to inform the final proposals.

## **PROPOSED CHANGES**

### **1**

#### **12 TOWN CENTRE LIBRARIES:**

It is proposed that all of the current town centre libraries (shown below) will remain open and 11 have their opening hours reduced to 36 hours per week (including Saturdays and one or two early evenings). Durham Clayport Library will continue to open 55.5 hours per week over six days. This will provide a comprehensive service to residents of County Durham who live in major settlements and will enable local people to have access to a wide variety of services in places that they use for other aspects of their daily lives. Exact opening times for each town centre library would be tailored to meet local needs. This will be in discussion with local communities, should the decision be taken to reduce opening hours.

Barnard Castle	Crook	Seaham
Bishop Auckland	Durham Clayport (no change)	Shildon
Chester-le-Street	Newton Aycliffe	Spennymoor
Consett	Peterlee	Stanley

### **2**

#### **27 COMMUNITY LIBRARIES:**

It is proposed that all of the current community libraries (shown below) will remain open and have their opening hours reduced to 20 hours per week. For some libraries this would be a small reduction. Libraries would continue to provide a variety of services to local communities and exact opening times for each community library would be tailored to meet local needs. This will be in discussion with local communities, should the decision be taken to reduce opening hours.

Annfield Plain  
Belmont  
Blackhall  
Bowburn  
Brandon  
Chilton  
Cornforth  
Coundon  
Easington Colliery

Esh Winning  
Ferryhill  
Horden  
Lanchester  
Langley Park  
Murton  
Newton Hall  
Pelton  
Sacriston

Sedgefield  
Shotton  
South Moor  
Thornley  
Trimdon  
Willington  
Wingate  
Wolsingham  
Woodhouse Close

### 3

#### **MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICES:**

It is proposed to reduce the number of mobile libraries from 5 to 1 (plus a back up vehicle) and to focus the new mobile library service on rural settlements. Mobile library services would be provided to communities on the following basis:

1. **Distance:** The mobile library would only call at settlements at least 4 miles from a library building.
2. **One halt per settlement:** This would ensure that a service is maintained for the maximum number of rural residents.
3. **Standardised halts:** Halts would be scheduled for 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour or 2 hours – depending upon the level of current use. This will be kept under review.
4. **A minimum of one visit every two weeks:** Some larger settlements would have 1 visit per week.
5. **Halts would be withdrawn if services are not used:** In order to ensure the service is efficient and meets needs, the level of use of all halts would be monitored.

The proposed number of settlements that the mobile library would visit would be reduced from 182 to 63. The 63 settlements that the library would visit would all meet the criteria above. Further consultation would take place in settlements where there is currently more than one halt to make sure that the library halt is in the best place to meet the needs of the community. Information on how the proposals affect individual settlements can be found in the Cabinet report available at: [www.durham.gov.uk/libraryconsultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/libraryconsultation).

#### **What happens next?**

Once the consultation period is complete, a further report will be discussed in detail with the Council's Cabinet of Elected Members in July 2012. This report will outline feedback from the consultation, set out recommendations and present the final library strategy with associated costs and timetable of change for Cabinet approval.

**We welcome your views on any aspect of this proposal. Please feed back using the LIBRARY CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE FORM.**

The Consultation Questionnaire is available from your local library or online at: [www.durham.gov.uk/libraryconsultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/libraryconsultation)

**Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.**

0191 370 8838  
[Altformat.awh@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Altformat.awh@durham.gov.uk)