

The Future of Sheffield Library Services

Background

1. At Full Council on 8th January 2014, it was agreed:

That this Council requests that the report to be prepared on the outcome of the library review consultation, together with the views expressed via the 12 petitions submitted to this meeting in relation to libraries and, as outlined during this debate on the library review, be submitted to the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for comment prior to the consideration of the proposals by the Cabinet.

2. At its meeting on 9th October 2013, the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee considered a joint report of the Head of Community Services and Acting Head of Libraries, Archives and Information, on the future of Sheffield's Library Service. It was resolved that this Committee:-
 - (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and responses to the questions raised;

 - (b) welcomes the review into the future of Sheffield's Library Service and is confident that the approach taken in terms of the review, particularly the range of models formulated following the initial period of consultation and the detailed Needs Assessment undertaken, would result in the Council being able to provide an efficient and comprehensive Library Service; and

 - (c) requests:-
 - (i) the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, working with Council officers, to continue to look at the different models and [ensure that] planned consultation is undertaken, which is as thorough as possible, in respect of the proposed models;

 - (ii) that the Acting Head of Libraries, Archives and Information reports to a future Committee meeting on the results of the next phase of the consultation process; and

 - (iii) that its thanks and appreciation be conveyed to the Cabinet Member and all Council officers involved in the review for the excellent work undertaken in very difficult circumstances.

3. The Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, at its meeting on 18th February 2014, considered a report of the Executive Director, Communities, which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 19th February 2014, regarding 'The Future of Sheffield Library Services'.

Scrutiny recommendation to Cabinet

4. At the special meeting on Tuesday, 18th February, 2014, Committee Members heard from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, Council officers and received several questions from members of the public. The Committee received one new petition and considered further comments from four of the 12 lead petitioners who had submitted their petitions to the Council meeting on 8th January, 2014. There were approximately 50 members of the public in attendance.

Questions from the public covered a range of themes including:

- Consultation and the process
- Library buildings
- The role of volunteers
- Evidence on which to make the decision
- Review and contingency plans
- The legality of the proposals

The Committee considered the report, the petitions and public questions and structured their discussion around the following four topics:-

- The legality of the proposals
- The consultation process
- The Needs Assessment
- The proposed model

After discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet:-

RESOLVED: That this Committee:-

- a) notes:
 - i. the contents of the report now submitted;
 - ii. the petition now submitted;
 - iii. the additional comments raised by the lead petitioners in terms of the petitions submitted to the Council meeting on 8th January 2014; and
 - iv. the responses provided to the questions raised;
- b) thanks the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion and officers for the responses given to the questions raised and furthermore thanks all the questioners and petitioners for their contributions;
- c) is satisfied that the proposals contained in the Cabinet report can be put forward to the Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 19th February 2014; and
- d) requests that the Executive Director, Communities, submits a report on the progress made in implementing the proposals set out in the Cabinet report, to this Committee in 12 months' time.

(NOTE: Prior to the passing of the above resolution, an alternative resolution was proposed, which was not carried).

5. **Recommendation**

The Cabinet is requested to note the resolution of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

Matthew Borland

Policy and Improvement Officer, Policy, Performance and Communications.

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