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Summary of the Group’s Findings and Recommendations

The scrutiny review of Cumbria’s library service has taken place in 2 parts. Firstly, in 2011 a small task group of members considered the public consultation as part of the first phase of the library service’s internal review. Specifically this looked at how stakeholders and the wider public were engaged in this process, how the consultation was set out and the proposed ideas for modernising the library service. The task group produced a final report and a set of recommendations, which were considered by Cabinet in September 2011.

The second part of this scrutiny review work focuses on how the library service might be shaped in future. This work will inform phase 2 of the library service’s internal review, which will involve a public consultation later in the year, on ideas for developing Cumbria’s library service.

Readers are asked to note the distinction between the scrutiny review work and the internal review which is being undertaken by the library service itself.

The scrutiny task group’s work has taken the views of the Council’s Local Committee members, senior officers in Adult and Local Services and Children’s Services. Through the course of the review work, the importance of modern technology in sustaining and developing a valued, public facing service like libraries emerged. To this end, the task group invited two senior officers from Edinburgh City Council to share their knowledge and experience in leading the way on the digital agenda.

The Task Group’s recommendations are outlined below.

**Recommendation 1**

The Task Group recommends that the Adult and Local Services directorate ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are provided for each of the 6 Local Committee areas in relation to library services.

**Recommendation 2**

The Task Group recommends that Cumbria embraces new technologies, as exemplified by Edinburgh City Council, to offer greater access to the library service, specifically through:

(i) using social media to communicate with, and take feedback from, the public on the library service (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube etc.);
(ii) library service examine the benefit and cost implications of producing a library app for customers to use on their smart phones;
(iii) look at how the libraries service can create a virtual library on line to complement its physical offer;
(iv) a reinvigorated on line service that should include providing downloadable e-books and audio books.
Recommendation 3

(i) In undertaking work to shape the future library service for Cumbria, there needs to be due consideration of the Council’s asset management plan - and other key policies – in order to consider how libraries can be co-located with other public services, to increase value for money and access to services for Cumbria’s communities.

(ii) As part of the Council’s Better Places for Work initiative, the opportunity to co-locate library services within newly built offices should be considered at the planning stage, to help create efficiencies and effectiveness in running and delivering this public facing service.

Recommendation 4

The County Council should accept Edinburgh City Council’s invitation to speak at its Edge Conference in February 2013 and should endeavour to represent Cumbria at this annual conference going forward.

Recommendation 5

As part of the Phase 2 consultation of the library service the task group recommend that the following groups are included in that process:

- Children and Young People’s Voluntary Sector Network Group;
- Cumbria’s Youth Councils;
- Action for Children.

Recommendation 6

In recognising the importance of supporting and developing reception age learning, part of the internal library review should be to consider how initiatives to enhance family literacy and numeracy skills can be placed at the forefront of a reinvigorated library service for Cumbria.
1. **Background and Context**

1.1 The Council Revenue Budget for 2011-12 identified £10.9m for Libraries and Culture, out of a total gross budget of £810m. This is a comparatively small area of service compared with the likes of Children’s Services and Adult and Local Services. However, the primary purpose of the internal library service review is not to save monies, but to address the continuing decline in customer numbers in libraries across the county. This is a national phenomenon and is partly to do with the different ways in which people are now accessing entertainment that they used to procure from libraries, including for example CDs (with downloads now more popular), DVDs and also books themselves (with the advent of the increasingly popular e-books).

1.2 When the coalition government came to power in 2010, as part of its modernisation review of libraries it proposed to allow local authorities the freedom to spend their funds in order to provide their individual library services in their own areas. It is from this starting point that Cumbria’s Adult and Local Services began an internal review of the library service in 2011 which featured an extensive public consultation as part of the phase 1 work. The scrutiny review of phase 1 led to a recommendation that scrutiny should undertake further work, looking at phase 2 of the library service’s internal review. This report is the culmination of that work.

1.3 Whilst Cumbria’s Adult and Local Services directorate is amongst the highest spenders on library premises per 1000 population compared to other county councils, the county has the lowest population per library building of all county councils. At the same time, Cumbria’s libraries have more lending stock per 1000 population than any other county in England, according to 2009-10 figures.

1.4 Carlisle’s library was named by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as one of the top 20 busiest libraries in the country with a total of 441,790 items loaned in 2009-10. In 2010-11 Local Services supported more than 1200 people on computer learning sessions in libraries.

1.5 The library service has sought to engage the public and stakeholders in an initial consultation on their general views on the existing service and inviting ideas for how the service might improve. In 2011 the consultation document ‘Time for Change’ engaged library users, staff, parish councils, community groups, councillors and the general public in giving their views on the service and how it might be expanded, to encourage more people to use it.
2. **Links to Council and Community Priorities**

2.1 In reviewing Cumbria’s library services, there are a number of links to the Council Plan. The plan sets out our commitment to the customer and providing services in the most efficient way, taking an innovative approach to service delivery where possible. The Plan states that some services may be reconfigured to ensure that council services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way.

2.2 The Council Plan sets out a 3-year vision which includes *improving the chances in life of the most disadvantaged in Cumbria*. This is a key priority for the Council which will involve the targeting of resources specifically to realise this whilst being as effective and efficient as possible. The Council aims to prioritise its service delivery to target resources where they are most needed. However, a key overriding focus will be on customers and putting them at the heart of everything the Council does.

2.4 The Library Service has refreshed its Service Plan for 2012-13, with the following key aims:

- To seek positive and innovative outcomes which reflect best practice and which benefit customers and communities;
- To achieve the required budget savings in a way that minimises the impact on access to library services whilst reducing management and overhead costs;
- To seek to build long term sustainability into future library provision, meeting community needs and working with those communities to develop new services;
- To support staff and customers through these changes ensuring they are kept well informed and able to engage and fully participate in the process.

2.5 The Service Plan identifies ambitions linked to key County Council aims, which include:

- Increasing knowledge and skills through use of the library services, allowing more people to participate in learning opportunities;
- Enabling more people to access Council services through library service points;
- Providing a high quality of customer service delivery;
- Provision of localised library services;
- Extend and strengthen the delivery of library services through the appropriate use of volunteers.

The scrutiny task group’s review work considered how the service can develop going forward, with regard to these aims.
3. Role and Membership of the Task and Finish Group

3.1 The Task Group retained the same membership as undertook the scrutiny work in early 2011. This was to ensure continuity between the two separate pieces of review work, whilst retaining a connecting element in terms of knowledge of the service area and the consultation process. To this end, the same members were invited to participate in this review work, and they were:

- Joe Cowell (Task Group Chair);
- Trevor Allison;
- Sue Brown;
- Graham Roberts.

3.2 When the original task group undertook their 2011 scrutiny review it was planned that the second scrutiny review work would look at a firm set of proposals for the future library service. Plans have changed since then, and this is not now the focus of the 2012 scrutiny work. Instead, the scrutiny task group has examined the current service arrangements in Cumbria, the views of Local Committees in their task group work on the service in their areas and how Cumbria can take forward the digital agenda, and from this have come up with a set of findings and recommendations that should help to inform the second phase of the libraries review, prior to the start of the wider public consultation.

3.2 The Task Group met over a period of 5 meetings and one site visit, and conducted witness sessions with representatives from the County Council’s Local Committees and professionals from the Adult and Local Services along with Children’s Services, and Edinburgh City Council to get their views on what the new service might look like and what any change would mean for the service users.

3.3 This final report has been drawn up as a result of the Task Group’s investigations, and details of who they met with and the evidence gathered are shown below.
4. Witness Interviews

4.1 The Task Group met with a range of professionals and external witnesses, to examine the issues around Cumbria’s library services, including emerging priorities and ideas for what this might look like in future. The Group undertook the following meetings:

Tuesday 24 January 2012
- Bruce Bennison - County Manager, Library Service Review
- Jim Grisenthwaite - Assistant Director Local Services

Friday 2 March 2012
The task group met the following officer witnesses from the County Council, in the morning session:
- Joel Rasbash – Strategic Policy Advisor, Equality.
- Richard Parry – Corporate Director, Adults and Local Services.
- John Macilwraith – Assistant Director, Strategy and Commissioning, Children’s Services.
- Tony Chew – Finance Manager, Resources;
- Paul Turney – Group Finance Manager, Resources.

The task group then met the following County Councillor representatives from their respective Local Committees, who had been involved in the working group discussions on library services in their areas:
- Cllr Val Tarbitt – Carlisle Local Committee.
- Cllr Martin Stephenson – Eden Local Committee.
- Cllr Ray Guselli – Barrow Local Committee.
- Cllr Gerald Humes – Allerdale Local Committee.
- Cllr Eric Nicholson – Allerdale Local Committee.

Tuesday 6 March 2012
- Site visit to Broughton-in-Furness Library Links at Victory Hall.
- Task group members were by met Kay Metcalfe, Senior Librarian from the Barrow Library.

Friday 23 March 2012
- Bruce Bennison - County Manager, Library Service Review – for the task group to take stock of their findings to date.

Monday 18 June 2012
Jim Grisenthwaite – Assistant Director Local Services and Bruce Bennison - County Manager, Library Service Review; to consider issues arising from Local Committee working group activities.

Tuesday 26 June 2012

- Liz McGettigan, Head of Libraries.
- Jim Thompson, Development & Quality Manager – Information and Digital Services, Edinburgh Library and Information Services.

Details of the above sessions are outlined below.

Tuesday 24 January 2012

4.2 The Assistant Director for Local Services outlined the reasons behind the internal review activities for the library service, reflecting that this was in response to a national decline in footfall in libraries, rather than as an efficiency exercise. The key driver behind the work is the change in customer demand and a need to reinvigorate the library service and make it fit for purpose in the 21st century.

4.3 Following the library service’s ‘phase one’ public consultation, a report was compiled of the findings entitled ‘Public and Stakeholder Engagement Overview Report’. A key outcome was that there was not one specific solution arising from the consultation, so the library service then took the issue to all 6 Local Committees, to engage local members and consider what their views were on the service in their own areas.

4.4 Local Committees had put forward members to work on individual working groups dedicated to examining the current library services in their area and to work with senior officers to determine how that service might be shaped going forward. The outcomes of this work would inform the internal library review going forward and would provide members views ahead of the wider public consultation on the service.

4.5 The spread of library services in Cumbria is historical: 10 different library services were brought under the auspices of 1, when Cumbria County was created in 1974. This has meant that the current location of Cumbria’s libraries is a legacy of different approaches by different authorities and varying numbers of libraries in each district area. This situation adds to the need to modernise the service and plan how the service can be provided equitably across the communities of Cumbria. This is also an important consideration in engaging local members through Local Committee working groups.

4.6 With regard to creating a service that encompasses modern customer need and expectation, the task group identified, early in the scrutiny review, the importance of the use of modern technology and were interested to hear that e-books have emerged as more popular than paper books according to sales figures for the last year. People are continuing to read, but with an increasing preference for doing so via electronic media. Senior officers in the Council are undertaking discussions with professionals in
the library service to consider how this new area of need might be taken provided for in Cumbria’s future library service.

Friday 2 March 2012

4.7 The task group held a witness session with senior officers and with local committee members, as follows:

- Joel Rasbash – Strategic Policy Advisor, Equality;
- Richard Parry – Corporate Director, Adults and Local Services;
- John Macilwraith – Assistant Director, Strategy and Commissioning, Children’s Services;
- Tony Chew – Finance Manager, Resources;
- Cllr Val Tarbitt – Carlisle Local Committee;
- Cllr Martin Stephenson – Eden Local Committee;
- Cllr Ray Guselli – Barrow Local Committee;
- Cllr Gerald Humes – Allerdale Local Committee;
- Cllr Eric Nicholson – Allerdale Local Committee.

Joel Rasbash – Strategic Policy Advisor, Equality

4.9 The Strategic Policy Advisor set out, for the task group, the requirements on local authorities and the national picture with regard to case law on equalities.

4.10 The key requirement on local authorities under the Equality Act 2010 is that decisions made about service provision should be subject to equality analysis; it is vital that this occurs before decisions are made and, more over, that an authority can clearly demonstrate that an equalities analysis has been used to inform the decision-making process. Some authorities have been subject to judicial review, falling foul of the requirements of this fairly new legislation, so it is important that the County Council learns from the mistakes of other authorities.

4.11 The equality analysis is called an ‘Equalities Impact Assessment’ and is produced by the individual directorate responsible for any service change or reprovision. It is a key purpose of an EIA to highlight an early awareness, in the decision-making process, of any relevant equality issues. Most recently in the County Council EIAs were used to inform the budget cycle for 2012-13.

4.12 Two local authorities have had their plans for library services subjected to judicial review: Somerset and Gloucestershire. The judicial review was considered on the following 3 grounds:

- whether the authorities had failed to take into account equalities considerations when planning the new library services;
- failure to consult;
- failure to meet the public sector equality duty.
4.13 Section 149 of the Equalities Act places a duty on local authorities to prepare in regard to: discrimination, equality of opportunity or community relations. This duty could be used as grounds for judicial review. The findings of the judicial review did not find the councils had failed in their statutory requirement to provide a service, or in their public consultation process, but it did find in favour of the complainants in relation to public sector equality duty. This was because the judicial review found that the EIA had not taken place prior to the financial decision being made but took place after and focused on how to mitigate the decision. This means that case law now states that the EIA should be undertaken prior to a decision.

4.14 Where any proposed changes are forthcoming for a public service like libraries, it is important that an assessment incorporates each library in the area, so that the specific equalities issues in relation to each can be considered as part of this process. As a key part of the consulting on any proposed changes, it is important that where there is an awareness of a particular group, it is demonstrated that their involvement has been sought. This public consultation work can also be informed by the library data and existing analyses.

4.15 It is important that an authority can demonstrate that it has thought through the implications of any proposed service change and demonstrate that an alternative exists to address equality needs. For the Cumbria Library Service, a key aim of the internal review is to examine where changes are needed in localities, so for this reason, it would be appropriate to provide an EIA on an area by area basis, with specific reference to individual libraries. At the time of this task group meeting, Equality Impact Assessments had not been drafted for the 6 district areas.

Richard Parry – Corporate Director, Adult and Local Services

4.16 The Corporate Director was invited specifically to provide the task group with a broader understanding of how the library service was currently used by the key user groups of vulnerable adults and older people.

4.17 Over the last few years, the Adult and Local Services directorate has started to use the library service as a platform for delivering the broader community prevention element of care services. This has included a series of books, prescribed by experts on mental health issues, being placed in local libraries and this has led to other types of specialist books being provided in libraries. Work with the National Autistic Society led, last year, to the launch of an Autism collection being placed in Barrow and Carlisle libraries, with this being expanded to 6 key branch libraries and these being available for order throughout all libraries in the county. Work has been undertaken with MacMillan Cancer Services for the same purpose and in 2011 the National Dementia Week saw libraries in Cumbria used as a platform to raise awareness of this issue. The success of such work in reaching its intended audience is dependent upon Adult and Local Services understanding the demographics in Cumbria and which groups of people use libraries. A recent refurbishment at the Carlisle library of the area for visually impaired customers brought all the talking books materials together in an area with improved lighting and layout specifically for this group of service users.
4.18 The Corporate Director saw a benefit in ‘de-coupling’ the service delivery from the buildings, in which it is currently housed, because there are greater opportunities to tie in with other areas of service delivery in other directorates, including fire prevention through Safer and Stronger Communities and other aspects of services for adults.

4.19 The Corporate Director reflected that one of the key benefits of engaging the Local Committees in the future of library services was the local level knowledge of where services were housed. There were examples across Cumbria where services were well placed, and not well placed: in Carlisle the library’s location in The Lanes shopping centre meant that it captured a lot of local footfall, and is one of the busiest libraries in the country; meanwhile one of Copeland libraries is located in a school, which not only reduces the amount of general footfall but anecdotally serves to discourage footfall precisely because of its location.

4.20 The Corporate Director provided clarification on the timescales for the internal review process; the outcomes of work with Local Committees is expected to mean that a number of arising issues will need to be included in a public consultation exercise; it is expected that there will be between 6 and 9 months from the start of the public consultation process to the final decision by Cabinet on proposals for any service change. This will be a lengthy process and members have taken the opportunity, through Local Committees and through this scrutiny task group, to examine the existing service and put forward their views for improvement at a sufficiently early stage.

4.21 In concluding his contribution to the scrutiny review, the Corporate Director reflected that he is sensitive to the fact that this service area faces a number of dilemmas, with the national issue of decline in service use in its traditional sense. The library service shares the same phenomena of declining use as local churches and post offices and although these are not used as much, they are highly valued by the public.

John Macilwraith – Assistant Director Strategy & Commissioning, Children's Services

4.22 The Assistant Director provided an overview of how children’s services links with the library service. Across the county early years work is commissioned with 3 providers and delivered at Children’s Centres, which are community based and some have library links installed. Engaging young people with the library service at an early age means that, through schools, they can become service users throughout their lives.

4.23 There are challenges for Children’s Services particularly in terms of Early Years Foundation Stage, with Cumbria’s attainment currently below the national average, so family literacy is a key issue. There is an awareness that the promotion of good literacy, numeracy and communication skills is needed for Cumbrian families. The first official measurement of education achievement for any child is at the end of reception year in school, which informs the early years Foundation Stage profile results.

4.24 Recently, youth councils have been developed in each district Council area of the county and there is an opportunity here to engage these in the discussions on library services. As the Assistant Director link for the Barrow Local Committee, John
Macilwraith is well aware of the importance of engaging young people in discussions on library use in the Barrow area.

4.25 In trying to engage younger readers in public libraries, an initiative launched 6 years ago was designed to make reading books more interactive for readers, with ‘Story Sacks’. This encompasses a book and items supporting the story, in a sack. These are highly recommended by Early Years Practitioners but as they are expensive to buy making them available for loan in the library service ensures they can reach a wide audience. Story Sacks encourage speaking and listening skills as well as social interaction and learning through play. These are available in Cumbria at Children’s Centres, nurseries and other early years settings. In Cumbria, these are loaned for 3 weeks to families and are produced to a high standard, so that the items in the sack enhance the art of story-telling.

4.26 The national strategy for learning cites the importance of integrating numeracy into everyday activities, for example how many items one buys at a supermarket and libraries and schools have their roles to play in bringing learning into the environs of everyday life. Early Years and Children’s Centres are pivotal for Cumbria’s Children’s Services in ensuring that children are ready for school and it would perhaps be an opportunity to engage service users through Cumbria’s 28 centres as part of the library service’s internal review work. There may be an opportunity to involve the Children and Young People’s Voluntary Sector Network Group in the public consultation on the future direction of the library service, accessing the number of providers for Cumbria’s youth contracts. Another worthwhile consultee would be Action for Children.

4.27 In terms of bringing the library service into community settings through library links, children’s centres have high levels of footfall from children and families every week. There is a question of how young people using libraries for their GCSE work etc. are encouraged to be library users when they have left education. For this reason, youth Councils may have useful views on making the service more accessible to young people and youth providers will have views on how the library services could be developed.

4.28 The County Manager - Library Service Review told the task group there is a strong desire from within the library service to make much better use of available technologies. There is a children’s library link at the Morton Children’s Centre and this is currently the only one in Cumbria; there could be similar outlets at other children’s centres across the county. There is an opportunity, through bringing the library service to more community-based outlets, that the Community Librarians could undertake outreach work with young people in children’s centres.

4.29 The Assistant Director noted that it is worth having a discussion on possible pilot schemes in the county to link the library services with children’s services through community-based outlets.

Tony Chew – Finance Manager, Resources
Paul Turney – Group Finance Manager, Resources
4.30 The task group were provided with an overview of the financial background for the authority. On 16 February 2012, Full Council agreed the authority’s budget for 2012-13 and savings going forward for 13-14 and 14-15, which are £8.7m and £13.4m respectively. Within this picture, there are still unidentified savings. The task group noted that the identified savings are based on an assumption of a 3.4% council tax increase in each of the financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15. There are no significant budgetary issues on the horizon for library services for 2012-13.

4.31 It is expected that any potential efficiencies for the library service will emerge as a by-product from the internal review itself and, given the scale of the financial challenge the authority is facing, anything would be welcome in this regard. Whilst it is possible that capital receipts could be produced from any buildings being sold, this is not the primary approach of the internal library services review. The figures that have been produced have assisted in the Local Committee working group discussions, but this has been provided as a basis for those discussions, rather than the driving force behind them.

4.32 Whilst there are no identified financial pressures on the service for the forthcoming year, it is after that that there could be an impact and at this stage of the scrutiny review process, the task group were mindful that one outcome of this work could be recommending that this is an area that is monitored carefully going forward.

4.33 In terms of the current operational costs, the breakdown for Cumbria is 60% for staff and 15% for buildings, with other costs for the purchase of stock etc. The recent reduction of 6 mobile library vans to 3 has meant a small saving, but in taking the service out into the community through more outreach work (book drops etc.) there is a cost implication here that has not yet been taken into account.

4.34 In terms of future financial planning for the service, there are a number of options for both savings and reinvesting in areas of the service where development is needed, eg: IT provision. One such possibility for investment is the Modernisation Fund, so there are a number of mechanisms.

4.35 There is currently a mixture of arrangements across the county, with some buildings that house the service owned by the County Council, whilst others are leased. There is a recognition from senior officers in the library service that with some maintenance issues apparent in some buildings, this is not the best way of delivering the library service and is part of the overall reason for considering what the service could look like in future.

County Councillor Witnesses

4.36 The task group met the following County Councillors, to get a view of the library service at a locality level:

- Cllr Val Tarbitt - Carlisle Local Committee;
- Cllr Martin Stephenson - Eden Local Committee;
- Cllr Ray Guselli - Barrow Local Committee;
Cllr Gerald Humes - Allerdale Local Committee;  
Cllr Eric Nicholson - Allerdale Local Committee.

The Councillors had been asked to provide an overview of the current service issues in their area, any emerging views on how the service could be shaped in future and the tenor of discussions to date in their respective Local Committees. The task group noted that witnesses for Copeland and South Lakeland Local Committees were not available, however, the purpose of this session was to get a feel for the sort of issues and views that were apparent across the county.

4.37 The County Manager told the task group that senior officers from the library service had been to all 6 Local Committees and undertaken work with small task groups of members drawn from each of these. At this stage, the planned activity would culminate in a report summarising the findings and views of the Local Committees to be submitted to County Council’s Cabinet in June 2012*. This will be a pre-cursor to the wider public consultation activity scheduled for later in the year.

[* These plans subsequently changed, with the Local Committee’s work being used as part of the consultation process going forward.]

4.38 Cllr Guselli reflected that the users of the traditional library service tended to be older people, whilst young people have embraced all manner of emerging technologies and are more likely to be a generation of e-readers, rather than readers of traditional books. However, the use of e-books is not necessarily something that will come to dominate readers’ habits overall, but it is something that needs to be addressed.

4.39 There are examples of good practice, with the Roose library in Barrow held up as having become more than a library but a community hub. This holds ‘knit and natter’ sessions and has IT facilities for young people. The staff there are on first name terms with the clients and it presents more as a community centre that lends books, rather than a traditional library. In terms of how the public will receive the possibility of service change, Cllr Guselli felt that if information is provided properly then change can be accepted.

4.40 Cllr Tarbitt noted that there was both urban and rural communities in her ward and part of the work of the Carlisle Local Committee working group had involved visiting branch libraries in Brampton and Longtown and areas of Carlisle. There is a spread of libraries in the area and the working group examined how that group of libraries can be enhanced, and particularly where local communities could have library link facilities. A key part of the work also involved looking at the role of the community librarian.

4.41 The Carlisle working group had been on a tour of 4 community centres in their area, all of which were the hub of their respective local communities and were ideally placed to maximise footfall. The Co-op in Lazonby has a library link, which was amongst one of the first established some 6 years ago. Across the community centres visited, members noted that there were a number of different activities going on, including language lessons, physical activities and it was the variety of opportunity helped attract
people to use the facilities. This would be a key part of any enhancement of existing community centres.

4.42 Cllr Tarbitt noted that there was an issue with the opening hours at the libraries in Brampton and Longtown, with these closing at 5:00pm. This limited user groups to those people able to access service during the day. The Brampton library also closed over lunchtime, which meant on market day – the busiest day of the week – this service was not available, when it was possible that this would be a good opportunity to get users in.

4.43 Given the impact of the reduction, and eventual loss, of the mobile libraries, the use of book drops for home-bound readers provides a tremendous service. There is, however, a lot happening locally that could inform how existing service outlets are enhanced. There is a Penton exchange, for example, where a recent open day offered Indian massage, clothes exchange and soup lunches.

4.44 The Assistant Director took the opportunity to respond to points raised so far by the witnesses. In looking to reconfigure library services, the early part of the process is about conveying a positive message to the public and a key focus must be how to address the decline in service use. If the operation can be made more modern and efficient, then everyone will gain. This must be the focus of the next library service public consultation, otherwise the public perception will be that this has been initiated by a need to save funds, rather than the very real need to change the method of service delivery and expand access to the service.

4.45 A task group member asked whether library links were established where library services had been withdrawn. The Assistant Director responded that these were originally put where there were no existing libraries, Lazonby, Hallbankgate and Melmerby were amongst the first ones; rather than replacing fixed library services, these replaced the mobile library service. The Lazonby library link, as an example, does not receive a huge amount of use, but it is cost effective and is serviced once a week by a member of the library service staff. The library service initially offered to pay host organisations for the retail space to house the library link (eg: the Co-op) but there have been 2 cases in Penrith where the Co-op has not charged the authority, as the link provides a benefit to them in bringing people through the front door.

4.46 There was one area in the south of the county where the local library was closed due to anti-social behaviour and a reluctance by staff to work on their own. In withdrawing that service, a library link was installed in the local community centre but the staff there were not keen on having it. The access for users is not great, so the use of library services in that area has undergone significant decline.

4.47 Cllr Nicholson reflected on the findings to date by Allerdale’s working group. The members from Allerdale Local Committee had a mixed knowledge of the library service, with some knowing individual libraries in their area whilst others did not. Cllr Nicholson visited the Cockermouth library and was astounded to see just how many people were there using the service, to the extent that it was nearly over-subscribed. Getting out into local libraries changed his perception of the service, with many people
in his area using this main library, rather than smaller ones in outlying areas. Cllr Nicholson observed book collection activities at Cockermouth, with books being dropped off and collected to go out to outlying residents.

4.48 Cllr Nicholson was disappointed that Cockermouth library was not operating as it should, with no lift access above the ground floor since the 2009 floods. Also, the library seemed to be cramped and he felt that, in the long run, moving the service to a more appropriate building, where other services could be offered as part of a one-stop-shop approach, would be beneficial for all service users in the area. Whilst the best use was being made of the existing space, with facilities including computers on site for public use, there was an opportunity to improve where this service is delivered as part of the library service’s internal review.

4.49 Cllr Nicholson had also visited Workington library and noted that it was a good space and not too busy, but local members were keen on having a café put in to improve levels of use. There is a facility there for downloading books onto e-readers and this is a prime example of an opportunity for providing shared facilities.

4.50 Cllr Humes reflected on issues in the Allerdale area. His ambition is to enhance the vitality of local areas by retaining and improving existing library services. The Local Committee working group has specifically considered how to improve facilities at local libraries and has found different issues dependent on individual libraries. Whilst neither the footfall nor the building housing the library in Seaton is good, the Moor Close Library at Workington is reportedly used regularly. This has experienced an increase in use by under-19s within the last year, with local 6th form students using the library as part of their business studies work.

4.51 There is a need to examine the services that Allerdale has and how these might be improved, in terms of working with partners and co-locating with community outlets. There is a community centre at Moor Close in Workington, where it is hoped a crèche will be opening later this year and could be a co-location for library services. One key question is whether other authorities can provide funding for services, including parishes and precepts, with the proviso that value for money is a key consideration. The Cockermouth library is an ideal opportunity to find and implement a new solution to revitalise the service provision in that area. The opportunity to link with local planning should be pursued, with Local Committees and District Councils able to advise on issues such as properties in their area. Local knowledge is a central part of the process.

4.52 Cllr Stephenson provided a brief overview of the library service in the Eden area. There is a strong perception in Eden that the withdrawal of the mobile service will have a significant impact on this largely rural area. Whilst the work with the Local Committees can bring out various aspects of how this might be compensated for – eg: the installation of library links – rural isolation is a key issue in some parts of Eden and to an extent that is not the case in all areas of county. A related issue for rural areas is the extent to which the availability of IT connectivity, with Broadband availability and existing download speeds a critical issue for many rural areas.
4.53 Whilst acknowledging the relevant IT issues, Cllr Stephenson wanted to emphasise to the task group that, for the majority of older people who make-up a significant proportion of library service users, IT may not be their forte. There is a possibility, in examining more ways of engaging IT-literate service users in future, that the traditional user-base could be left behind somewhat. The service will, therefore, mean different things to different users. In discussing the service users, Cllr Stephenson has found that there is support for providing the service in different ways, including community libraries with stocks in local shops and schools. For those people who have access to faster download speeds, the website side of the service will be a good development, with the capabilities for downloading books. It is not only in relation to library services that the question of broadband availability, but other services provided by the County Council are impacted upon too. It is an issue that the authority needs to tackle for the future of its on-line service provision.

4.54 There are opportunities for co-locating services in more remote rural areas and in Eden, it is hoped that a link office will be opened in Appleby to co-locate with the existing library service. There are opportunities for collaborations between different public services and this should be explored going forward.

4.55 To conclude the witness session, the Assistant Director reflected on discussions and provided members with additional information on the current issues for the library service.

4.56 In terms of discussions going on, the Assistant Director noted that the idea of co-locating services is one being explored with District Council partners but at the moment there is an issue that the some of the existing library outlets are not fit for purpose as libraries, let alone as co-located service outlets. Given the ongoing budgetary pressures, anything that could contribute towards the County Council reducing both its liabilities and costs would be welcome. The Assistant Director suggested a vision of having 30-35 core buildings offering a vast range of services, with a network beyond this so that no one can claim to be without access to these services.

4.57 The Assistant Director provided an overview of the situation with the hiring of CDs and DVDs from libraries. This had at one time brought in a significant income for Cumbria’s library service, of around £1m a year. However, society has now moved on in the way that people can chose to access such material, with music downloads, on-line DVD delivery services (eg: LoveFilm.com) and now the option to download films on-line too. This meant a major reduction in the income for libraries with no equivalent money-making part of the service apparent.

4.58 Demand for this has not stopped completely and it has been expensive to provide initially, given that for a public library to buy a music CD would cost around £70 from a supplier. This is because suppliers for both CDs and DVDs are wise to the fact that many more people will access a single item than in ordinary retail sales circumstances, as well as acknowledging that libraries themselves make money on the item they buy from the supplier.
4.59 In order to make this part of the service cost effective, the Cumbria library service decided to limit the number of libraries from which CDs and DVDs could be hired, withdrawing this from smaller libraries and focusing it in larger libraries with greater footfall. It is still possible to order DVDs from the main stock at one of the smaller libraries. More recently, in taking a fresh look at the situation, the service has decided to bring a hire service back into smaller libraries for children’s DVDs only and introducing a general supply of DVDs in outlying areas where this is not in direct competition from a retail outlet providing the same service.

4.60 The link with local area planning should be considered as a way of informing alternative solutions for developing library services. The task group noted that one outcome of recent discussions was for members to run their surgeries in local libraries.

Monday 18 June 2012

4.61 The task group held a witness session with senior officers to reflect upon the outcomes of the Local Committees’ early involvement in the internal library service review, meeting the following officers:

- Jim Grisenthwaite – Assistant Director Local Services;
- Bruce Bennison - County Manager, Library Service Review.

The task group considered an update presentation from the Assistant Director that gave an overview of the outcomes of the library service activities with each of the 6 Local Committee.

4.62 The Assistant Director’s presentation covered:

- an overview of service provision across the county, in each of the 6 district areas;
- an overview of work undertaken with the 6 Local Committees;
- ongoing work to develop library services across the county.

4.63 Since the first phase of the internal library service review in 2011, the consultation process has evolved, with Local Committees far more involved than originally planned. The first phase took place from April to June 2011, with 4000 individual responses to the consultation received. These responses were analysed between July and August 2011, with a report back to Cabinet in September 2011; based on that feedback, Cabinet asked that work be undertaken with Local Committees on an area by area basis.

4.64 The Library Service began working with each Local Committee in November 2011 and finished in May 2012. The work assisted Local Committee members to look at issues in each of their own areas, providing them with an opportunity to take an overview of the current service and highlight any issues facing local communities in accessing the service.

4.65 Most of the Local Committees formed working groups that met during the winter and spring. The Assistant Director reflected that the input from local members, with their
local area knowledge, has been invaluable in this work. The library service currently has 48 static libraries, 3 mobile libraries and 6 library links (with another due to open in Dent in July). Through work with Local Committees there has emerged the strength of support for introducing new ways of delivering the service, to complement the existing network, which includes the introduction/expansion of the following:

- community librarian;
- ‘friends’ groups;
- book drops;
- library links.

4.66 ‘Friends’ groups have been up and running in Northamptonshire for a number of years now. These have proved so popular, that the library network would find it difficult to operate without these groups attached to 24 out of the 34 libraries in the county. These groups are entirely voluntary, operate outside normal opening hours, and each ‘friend’ has a subscription of around £7 per year. In return group members receive special privileges and constitute useful support groups for individual libraries. The only investment made in these groups by the local authority is in the production of a newsletter, issued by a local librarian. In Cumbria, there are plans to initiate friends groups at Moorclose, Seaton, Walney, Roose, Kirkby Lonsdale and Sedbergh, with early signs being that there is an appetite for groups in these communities.

4.67 In Cumbria, work is ongoing to develop new approaches to ensure that the library service is available to everyone, and this includes 3 ‘book drops’ currently up and running, with 3 at the planning stage. These rely on local communities themselves to organise these and are part of an overall approach which encompasses new ways of taking the service into the community, which will be promoted by library managers. The library service will look to target these new initiatives in specific communities, where their customer base can be ‘grown’ over time.

4.68 Elsewhere in the county, there are opportunities to co-locate library links with children’s centres and interest from community groups to put library links in other community based venues. Work is ongoing with community groups and parish councils to explore the demand for book drops and library links.

4.69 One of the approaches being adopted in static libraries is to provide self-service machines for customers, with staff freed up to undertake other duties; this is part of how the service can address the decline in use of libraries and be flexible and adaptable to changing customer need, whilst allowing staff costs to stay at existing levels.

4.70 Since the beginning of the library consultation activities in 2011, the approach to the development of this service has become a ‘bottom up’ rather than a ‘top down’ one. This means that, rather than the service creating a vision of what future library services will look like in Cumbria, the success and evolution of the consultation approach has opened up a dialogue with members and stakeholders to allow them to contribute towards the shaping of the service. It is planned to continue engagement with the
Local Committee members and this will be complementary to the wider public engagement activity that will be undertaken as part of the Phase 2 consultation.

4.71 Senior officers are working with colleagues in the neighbouring county of Lancashire to consider the impact of planned book drops in the Burton in Kendal area of the County. Discussions are ongoing on this issue.

Tuesday 26 June 2012

4.72 This witness session focused on on-line provision and how IT can be better employed in assisting customers to access the service across Cumbria. The task group met representatives from Edinburgh City Council, where the use of new technologies and online service capabilities represents very good practice:

- Liz McGettigan – Head of Libraries and Information Services;
- Jim Thompson - Development & Quality Manager – Information and Digital Services.

4.73 In this final session, the task group received the following presentations:

- How Edinburgh’s Library and Information Service delivers a new model for libraries across the city, based on a strategic approach borrowing from the retail sector;
- Presentation and discussion on Edinburgh’s on-line library service, its capabilities and current use.

4.74 For the presentation on Edinburgh’s on-line service the task group were joined by invited senior officers from the County Council:

- Bruce Bennison – County Manager, Library Service Review;
- Jim Grisenthwaite – Assistant Director Local Services;
- Angie Reid - Senior Manager Corporate Information, Organisational Development;
- Stephen Salmon – ICT Client Manager, Organisational Development.

A summary of the key points from each presentation, along with details of the task group and officers’ discussions are outlined below.

Liz McGettigan – Head of Libraries and Information Services

4.75 The Head of Libraries gave the task group an overview of how the service had developed over the few years, the challenges it continued to face and how, using the latest technologies the service has been reshaped to provide a more accessible service that is reaching a wider audience and increasing footfall in existing libraries.

4.76 The Head of Libraries took over the Edinburgh service 3½ years ago, inheriting a very traditional service. The service still has some building stock that needs to be brought up to standard, which is in progress, but have also built 2 new libraries [Drumbrae opened in January 2011 and Craigmillar will open September 2012] where other local services can be co-located and are used as ‘drop-in’ centres staff who are home-based
or externally mobile. There are 2 networks operated by the authority, one is a full corporate network and one a ‘VPN’ allowing wireless and remote connection to the corporate network. Staff are being decentralising into library hubs, with a wi-fi project ongoing to assist mobile working for anyone working in the council.

4.78 Edinburgh’s service has 27 libraries, plus Central Library, which has 6 departments, including providing small libraries in the local prison, hospitals, care and secure homes; it has 6 mobile libraries and also provides interpretation and translation services for the local NHS.

4.79 One of the first steps taken when the Head of Libraries took over was to explore promoting and marketing the service through social media, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and producing a blog. This was an approach taken from the Head of Libraries previous job, where producing a blog had been part of that role. As a result, Edinburgh’s library service was the first service in the authority to harness that new technology and also commissioned and produced a Library App for smartphones. An internal review of the service brought about a new structure, that would help deliver the vision for the new service. This meant appointing two quality managers, one for Information and Digital Services and one for Customer Services.

4.80 The Library budget started at £11m before approximately £1.8m was taken out as part of efficiency savings. Edinburgh were asked to make £92m worth of savings over a 3-year period. This forced the service to take a more holistic approach, looking at what the service delivered across a number of different platforms. There are 8 libraries with youth facilities, providing specific areas for young people to do things like produce their CVs; this is about promoting employability particularly for younger people where levels of unemployment are high. These facilities also provide diversionary activities, including mixing desks, to provide a safe environment to occupy them during their free time, with opportunities to undertake constructive activities.

4.81 Like Cumbria’s Library Service, Edinburgh has invested in self-service stations allowing customers in libraries to do their own checking out and checking in. There are self-service units in 14 locations now. This frees up existing staff to undertake other activities, taking away the need to dedicate staff to this part of the process. Other initiatives have included taking a joint approach to providing community hubs and work with their supply chain to create efficiencies where possible, including savings from self-service. With 250k reservations made each year, and 59% of these now done on line, so simple things can make a big difference to services. Each on line reservation represents around 5 minutes of staff time saved.

4.82 Edinburgh have taken a comprehensive approach to inclusion, with the following activities:

- hosting community hubs in libraries, recognising that libraries are at the centre of delivering to the community, and can garner interest and engagement from older people, young people and families; the emphasis on the information and knowledge aspect of the service is central to Edinburgh’s ethos;
 hosting family centres in libraries, encouraging families to take advantage of these as safe and cheap places to go; this has been done in partnership with other services;
embracing the equalities and diversity agenda there was a recent project on the holocaust, as well as ongoing work with the local prison (with its award winning library facility) and appointing reader champions;
3 years ago, the library service took over the agenda for people over 50, producing a dedicated magazine, with all information available electronically;
key player in the realisation of the Connected Capital programme in Edinburgh; £9m awarded (external funding) to promote the Broadband agenda and take-up across the city;
Edinburgh book festival, with guest authors promoting their books (eg: Alistair Darling);
Annual ‘Edge’ conference bringing other authorities and international speakers together, where the opportunity is taken to launch some new aspect of Edinburgh’s service (eg: the Virtual Library, Library App, Heritage Portal etc.).

Key to Edinburgh’s approach was to focus on what the public wanted, introducing the first community hub library building and making arrangements with publishers to get the rights for e-books. Another critical aspect of the service development is the recognition that as the internet continues to grow, this will become the first stop for people’s information. Edinburgh take the view that what they provide is much more than a traditional library service, with its access and information capabilities making people’s lives easier and introducing them to learning access and access to the virtual world.

4.82 For its physical libraries Edinburgh uses a service model that borrows from the retail sector, with small, medium and larger outlets, each operating at a different set of opening hours and what they are able to deliver, dependent on their size category. There is an income generation manager, with a retail strategy being adopted for selling items in libraries and on-line; this will require further development of infrastructure to help achieve this ambition. The Edge conference brings in some monies with two other annual seminars also generating income.

4.83 Edinburgh introduced night events, including ‘Edinburgh Reads’ with an average of 100-150 people turning up for such events; the number of attendees is down to the use of social media to advertise the events. There is also an online book group of around 50 to 60 members with a dedicated collection list and additional content.

4.84 The Head of Libraries was interested in finding out more about Cumbria’s retail model, with its in-house shop at Kendal library providing an attractive and competitive shopping opportunity for service users, selling book and literacy-related goods.

Jim Thompson, Development & Quality Manager – Information and Digital Services

4.85 The Development and Quality Manager provided the task group with a quick overview of key characteristics of Edinburgh: it has a population of 480k and rising, is a popular festival city and the first UNESCO City of Literature. Whilst a high percentage of the
city’s inhabitants are educated to degree level, there is a high level of youth unemployment. The city is in the process of becoming a ‘Super Connected City’ through access to external funding to improve access to, and take-up of, Broadband.

4.86 Integral to the new library service is Edinburgh’s Digital Strategy, which is not an alternate offer but part of the whole service approach. There are several key milestones in the Digital Strategy, achieved as follows:

- 2009 – use of available social media, which has proved to be an excellent source of customer feedback;
- 2010 – introducing the library portal, which has brought together all aspects of the service as one-stop-shop for library users;
- 2011 – first Library App launched, meaning the library service became fully transactional;
- 2012 – creating its own unique content for the on-line service, in terms of information held physically and moving this into on-line storage.

Perhaps the most significant effect of this has been one that could not be predicted, but by connecting with the public through social media, smart phones and on-line, this has brought greater use/footfall into the authority’s physical libraries. The authority uses social media to drive up service development, following user comments. Edinburgh have been a growth pattern over the last 3 years, with around 400k hits on the website to around 2.2m this year.

4.87 In reimagining its service, Edinburgh began by identifying key elements of the service it provided, looking at: audience, competitors, objectives, tactics and budget. There was no extra funding brought in to develop the service and this was done through making efficiencies elsewhere, putting a freeze on recruitment and making resources available on-line.

4.88 When the authority began communicating through social media, they began with Facebook, YouTube and Flickr (a photo sharing site) and introduced a ‘Tales of One City’ brand on these sites and the Wordpress Blog. Using these channels meant opening up new conversations, breaking down barriers and creating a growing confidence for the service in recognising the merit of its activities. These communication channels also mean that feedback from service users is more immediate, with comments both good and bad helping to inform service development and improve service quality. Most notably, Twitter is reportedly a great way to deal with complaints, because there is no room for waffle, and a response must be straight to the point.

4.89 The Library Portal is now 2 years old and about to be redesigned, as the authority sees it as starting to look a bit ‘dated’. The Portal web page incorporates top bar tabs for easy navigation, social media buttons and other databases (Capital Collection etc.) and the library app. Edinburgh wanted a unified search, but no one could provide that, so the Portal has separate book catalogue, pertinent organisations and image catalogue; however, having the facility to provide a unified search remains an ambition.
for the authority. The set-up allows the authority to provide appropriate links for various events, for example the Holocaust Memorial Day.

4.90 The Capital Collections exhibition website for Edinburgh’s images and museums, is currently being redesigned. This is a local history product bringing images, maps and text together. This holds a lot of the city’s fragile public images which have been digitised and uploaded. Where the authority requires further information on particular images it holds, these can be uploaded onto Flickr encouraging users to provide specific information. Your Edinburgh local organisations website: the public can search by theme, neighbourhood partnership or post code or can click on activities in their own area. From September 2012, this will be on a new platform, containing 30k records, which will also provide a network for community based information, with groups able to update this site, and soon they will be able to upload videos too.

4.91 The Library App for smart phones allows a customer to:

- use their phone as a library card, working with the RFID scanning technology for scanners and self-service units – checking out books without having to queue;
- reserve items on line or scan barcode on book in local supermarket or book store and check whether the local library has this in stock;
- built-in GPS allows customers to find the quickest route, on foot, by car or via public transport, to their nearest library outlet.

The App was developed through a meeting of minds between the authority and one of their suppliers. Together, they were able to develop a low cost App for the wider market, with virtually no work needed from the authority’s in-house IT provider. Since its launch, and subsequent success, other departments have followed suit and produced their own service-specific apps.

4.92 Interactive facilities on the Edinburgh website includes the Whose Town with its Life In A Box stories, which provide a starting point for the ‘Our Town Stories’ site. Out Town Stories site users can pick up a map and focus in on that specific area, identifying points of interest through electronic map pins, with historical and contemporary maps scanned in, allowing the overlay of one over another, giving the viewer a sense of how different areas of the city have changed over time.

4.93 There has been a 40% increase in attendance at events held by the library service since 2009-10, which is not down to luck, but a direct result of how the service has been shaped. Whilst increases observed over 1 or 2 performance measures could be coincidental, it cannot be said over 4 or 5 measures, as has been observed for this service.

Discussion

4.94 The task group, speakers and invited guests considered the information presented on the Edinburgh service and where there are opportunities for both Cumbria and Edinburgh to learn from each other.
4.95 A key challenge for local authorities is how to develop their services allowing greater access for the public, through on-line facilities etc., whilst being cognisant of the requirements placed on them by central government. However, authorities are externally facing organisations that need to communicate with their customers. Edinburgh’s set up means that whilst the web interface faces outside, the public accessing the site effectively come into a ‘halfway house’ which links with the authority’s internal system. Cumbria is currently looking at how it could host an external facing system, that would be in turn be hosted by a library systems supplier.

4.96 The changes in Edinburgh’s service have necessitated ensuring staff are sufficiently trained to work with new technologies and the overall effect has been very positive, with all staff adapting well. The cost per visit has fallen over the last 2 years, from £3.23 in 2009-10 to £1.89 in 2011-12. Meanwhile, the authority is on target to get physical visits back to 2m over the next 3 years, which has been attributed to the introduction of the extensive on line facilities. This part of the service has reinvigorated the public’s perception of the service as a whole and the success of the virtual library has allowed the authority to reinvest in its physical offer.

4.97 For the library service, their successes have been noted across the council and has put them on the agenda for initiatives like Super Connected City. Senior representatives of the service are now being invited to the table on a range of new projects: a by-product of the ongoing success is that the service has developed a wider relationship with the authority and its elected members.
5. **Findings and Recommendations**

5.1 The task group felt that, given the timescales for the library service’s review, taking an approach over a 2-year period with a consultation in 2 parts, this is an example of very good practice within the authority, and one that should be applied elsewhere across services where reconfiguration is needed. The way that the library service has consulted with people in their phase 1 work has also been good practice in terms of the groups of users and stakeholders with whom it has engaged, including Local Committee members, who are uniquely placed to understand the issues in their respective district areas.

5.2 However, members would like to make the point that there needs to be a balanced approach taken to any consultation activity, so that the engagement is meaningful and not just for the sake of it. Consultation fatigue should not be a by-product of such activity.

5.3 Youth Councils should be directly engaged in the library service’s forthcoming public consultation, as a specific group of consultees along with Children and Young People’s Voluntary Sector Network Group.

5.4 There is currently no feedback compiled on the use of Story Sacks in Cumbria, but this is something that has been picked up in light of the task group’s interest in these.

5.5 An issue picked up by the national media is the level of literacy and numeracy skills in adults, with arithmetic and language skills a focal point, and libraries, particularly engaging people at a very young age, have an important role to play in encouraging the acquisition of crucial skills that people carry through childhood and adulthood and can have an impact on their employability and successes in life.

5.6 The task group are particularly keen that the service is given the opportunity to invest funds in its IT provision and new technologies, in order to help ‘grow’ new generations of service users but also to ‘future proof’ the service. They are mindful that some of this could be brought in from ‘capital receipts’ where buildings currently housing the service that are not fit for purpose could be rationalised as part of the County Council’s overall Asset Management Strategy.

5.7 The task group are keen that the library service should be co-located with other services, to provide not only a more convenient arrangement for people in local areas across the county, but also the opportunity for the pooling of resources between services. However, the task group are not convinced that officers are linking up with each other to explore such cost effective approaches to service delivery. An example would be the need for those working to develop the Council’s long term approach to property, through the Asset Management Strategy, should be contributing to the second phase of the library service consultation, to help identify where co-location could be developed.
5.8 The task group wholly support the expansion of the library service’s technological capabilities, with a view to providing the sort of service that is available elsewhere in the country, here in Cumbria. Specifically, the capability to download e-books and audio books is an area of service expansion the task group would like to see. However, there perhaps needs to be some joined up thinking in relation to this area of service and the work that is ongoing to expand the availability of Broadband across Cumbria.

5.9 Where there are library links in Cumbria, the task group recognise that the locations have been selected mostly to address a lack of service provision in more outlying, particularly rural areas of the county. In keeping with smaller rural areas, there have been no reported security concerns around the library links outlets. However, the task group would support some system for quantifying the number of books loaned out from these centres and at least an annual stock-take to identify any stock losses, not accounted for through the checking out system.

5.10 Whilst the task group support the library links provision in bringing the library services to those communities that would otherwise not have ready access to this service, they recognise that location is critical in the success of these outlets. These need to be in the right places in order for them to function properly. These also provide an opportunity for co-locating other public services and the task group feel that this should be a key part of the authority’s asset management planning.

5.11 The task group think that, whilst library links provide a more accessible service than the mobile vans, these must be located in the right places, in order for them to function properly and reach the optimum number of people in their immediate area.

5.12 The task group would like to see the good practice from Edinburgh City Council embraced by Cumbria. Specifically, in its approach to engaging with the public through all available social media, which is free to access, allows a much more immediate flow of feedback on services whilst opening up a 2-way conversation between the Council as service provider and the public as service users. Meanwhile, the development of a service-specific app was ground breaking for any local authority, but this is precisely the sort of technology that Cumbria should be using. The benefit of this is not only creating a more accessible service but engaging with the public and, more likely, younger people, thus helping to foster interest in what the service has to offer and helping to ‘grow’ the next generation of service users. By bringing library services into the digital realm, authorities can establish its presence and demonstrate its relevance for the significant numbers of social media users. This serves not only as a communication channel, but a free forum for promoting the service.

**Recommendation 1**

The task group recommend that the Adult and Local Services directorate ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are provided for each of the 6 Local Committee areas in relation to library services.
Explanation: a key requirement under the Equality Act 2010 is that local authorities can clearly demonstrate that they have subjected any proposed service changes to equality analysis before any decision is reached. The Council’s Strategic Policy Advisor for Equality informed the task group that for a service like libraries, it is crucial that equality assessment incorporates each library in all areas, so that any specific issues pertaining to an individual library can be considered as part of the process. It is important that the Council protects itself from any potential judicial review by heeding this advice.

**Recommendation 2**

The Task Group recommends that Cumbria embraces new technologies, as exemplified by Edinburgh City Council, to offer greater access to the library service, specifically through:

(i) using social media to communicate and take feedback on the library service (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube);
(ii) library service examine the benefit and cost implications of producing a library app for customers to use on their smart phones;
(iii) look at how the libraries service can create a virtual library on line to complement its physical offer;
(iv) a reinvigorated on line service should include providing downloadable e-books and audio books.

Reasoning: The library service needs to ensure that it is ‘future proofed’ enabling it to remain relevant to the demands and expectations of a 21st century customer base. Embracing new technologies to communicate with a wider audience means Cumbria can open up an ongoing conversation with service users, while publicising its services, encouraging greater footfall into physical libraries and ‘growing’ the next generation of library users.

**Recommendation 3**

(i) In undertaking work to shape the future library service for Cumbria, there needs to be due consideration of the Council’s asset management plan – and other key policies – in order to consider how libraries can be co-located with other public services, to increase value for money and access to services for Cumbria’s communities.

(ii) As part of the Council’s Better Places for Work initiative, the opportunity to co-locate library services within newly built offices should be considered at the planning stage, to create efficiencies and effectiveness.

Reasoning: It is crucial that the library service’s internal review does not happen in isolation and that built into this is an awareness of the importance of finding efficiencies, creating services that are customer-focused. Part of this should be a consideration of where one-stop-shops can be created through the co-location of key local services.

Pursuing co-located services will not only provide improved services for users, but also the opportunity to pool resources for those services and organisations sharing premises and help increase footfall within the library service.
Recommendation 4

The County Council should accept Edinburgh City Council’s invitation to speak at its Edge Conference in February 2013 and should endeavour to represent Cumbria at this annual conference going forward.

Reasoning: In attending this event, Cumbria will succeed in raising its profile on the national stage and have a first hand opportunity to find out about innovative, cutting edge practice across the service whilst having a presence at this influential event whilst taking the opportunity to publicise its own successes.

It is planned that Cumbria’s senior officers from the library service will give a talk about the retail model in-house library shop, currently being trialled in Kendal library.

Recommendation 5

As part of the Phase 2 consultation of the library service the task group recommend that the following groups are included in that process:

- Children and Young People’s Voluntary Sector Network Group;
- Cumbria’s Youth Councils;
- Action for Children.

Reasoning: The task group support ensuring that young people and the appropriate representatives are afforded the opportunity to participating in the phase 2 consultation on library services.

Recommendation 6

In recognising the importance of supporting and developing reception age learning, part of the internal library review should be to consider how initiatives to enhance family literacy and numeracy skills can be placed at the forefront of a reinvigorated library service for Cumbria.

Reasoning: The co-location of library outlets with other family-focused and public facing services could assist to achieve this recommendation. There is a need to recognise the importance of capturing the imaginations of younger library users and their families, not only to ensure that they continue to use libraries throughout their lives, but as a way of helping to support the development of skills that afford individuals better chances in life.

The Task Group would like to thank everyone who supported and contributed to the review.

Report ends.