

Council – 9 January 2017

Library Petition Save Streetly Library

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report is in response to a petition opposing the possible closure of Streetly Library as part of budget proposals concerning the Library Service for 2017/18.

1.2 The petition, “Save Streetly Library”, was handed into the council on Thursday 1 December 2016 by local resident Stan Zetie. The petition contains c.1,800 signatures and is worded as follows:

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition Walsall Council to keep the branch library in Blackwood Road open so that it can continue to provide a valuable service to the local community.”

1.3 The Council’s petition scheme provides that:-

If a petition contains at least 1,500 signatures it will be debated at a meeting of the Council. This means that the issues raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting to which all Councillors can attend and speak. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. The petition organiser will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.

They may decide to take the action that the petition requests; not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to ask for further information. Where the issue is one where the Cabinet are required to make the final decision the Council will decide to make recommendations to the Cabinet. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this will be published on our website.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the content of the petition be noted and consideration be given to the contents before the finalisation of budget proposals for 2017/18.

3.0 Background Information

3.1. As part of the draft budget for 2017/18 there is a proposal to save £2.9m from the library service which, if approved, would mean the closure of up to fifteen libraries from the current network of sixteen static libraries.

3.2 Residents were consulted on three options, each to be within a budget of approximately £1m, these being:-

- a) To reduce the number of static library sites from sixteen down to one (Lichfield Street, Walsall), retain one Mobile Library Bus and the Home Delivery Service. The single library site would be redesigned and developed as a “Hub” in conjunction with an integrated Local History Centre and Leather Museum. The one Mobile Library Bus would be used to deliver a library service to areas of the borough with reduced access and greater need.
- b) To reduce the number of static library sites from sixteen to a maximum of five dependent on cost. The proposal should retain a Mobile Library Bus service and the Home Delivery Service. The libraries to be retained would be selected on consideration of viability.
- c) To suggest alternative proposals subject to a budget limit of £1m.

3.3 During the consultation period people could have their say via a range of methods; (figures are at the time of report writing):-

- a) Online via the council’s generic budget questionnaire (available 27 October to 31 December 2016 - 3 responses received) and / or via a more detailed online questionnaire specifically for libraries (available 27 October to 31 December 2016 - 182 responses received),
- b) 11,600 postal questionnaires were sent to households all over the borough. A random sample of addresses were selected ensuring every household had an equal chance of being sent a questionnaire. This approach meant that both library users and non users were engaged in the consultation process and given the opportunity to have their say. Larger print and alternative formats were available on request (1,228 responses received),
- c) 94 emails were received along with 17 letters,
- d) On-site, unannounced, face to face interviews with library users were completed at every static library, the Leather Museum and Local History Centre & Archive (just over 100 interviews were completed).

3.4 Consultation on the budget proposal for the Library Service closed on 31 December 2016. Feedback from the consultation will be reported back to Cabinet on 8th February 2017.

3.5 In previous years (2014/15 and 2015/16) work was undertaken with local community organisations to assess their interest in a partnership to provide community book exchange facilities in their local areas. It was confirmed to the Corporate & Public Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee of 24

November 2016 that this work would not commence until January 2017, once the public consultation had closed. On 14 December 2016 Cabinet noted this, together with feedback and recommendations from other Scrutiny Committees, to consider the feedback in preparation for final budget recommendations in February.

Background papers

On-line consultation information via www.walsall.gov.uk/haveyoursay

Including:-

Visitor data 2014/15


Visitor data 2015/16

High level budget information

Accessibility paper

Lichfield Street “hub” paper

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