

Report of Director Of City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: June 2012

Subject: Future of Cow Close Library

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Farnley and Wortley		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. In May 2011 Executive Board asked Leeds Library and Information Service to work with four communities to investigate the potential for community management of their libraries and to report to the May 2012 Executive Board as to whether ways forward could be found or whether closure was the only option. At three of the libraries, groups came forward and community management and asset transfer proposals were approved by Executive Board May 2012.
2. No group came forward in the Cow Close area to run the library and despite a campaign by ward councillors to 'use it or lose it', borrowing from the library has continued to decline. Executive Board asked for further consultation with the local ward members of Cow Close Library and for the outcome to return to June Executive Board.
3. The ward members all wish to retain library provision in the area however their view on how this is delivered differs. Two ward members wish to retain the service from the building. However one ward member is concerned that the data shows the building is not attracting the level of use it could. On that basis he feels that mobiles targeted to specific groups and areas could lead to greater use and support.
4. Interest has been expressed in using the building by an individual to run job skills sessions to help people back to work, and by a solicitor who wishes to run debt sessions. There has also been interest expressed by Armley Juniors to run services from there. One ward member feels that a decision should be made on

the library so that work can begin with the community groups to establish the potential of a community hub.

Recommendations

5. Executive Board is asked to agree to the replacement of the current library provision with increased, targeted mobiles, delegating the decisions on the future of the venue to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals for the future of library provision in the Cow Close area.

2 Background information

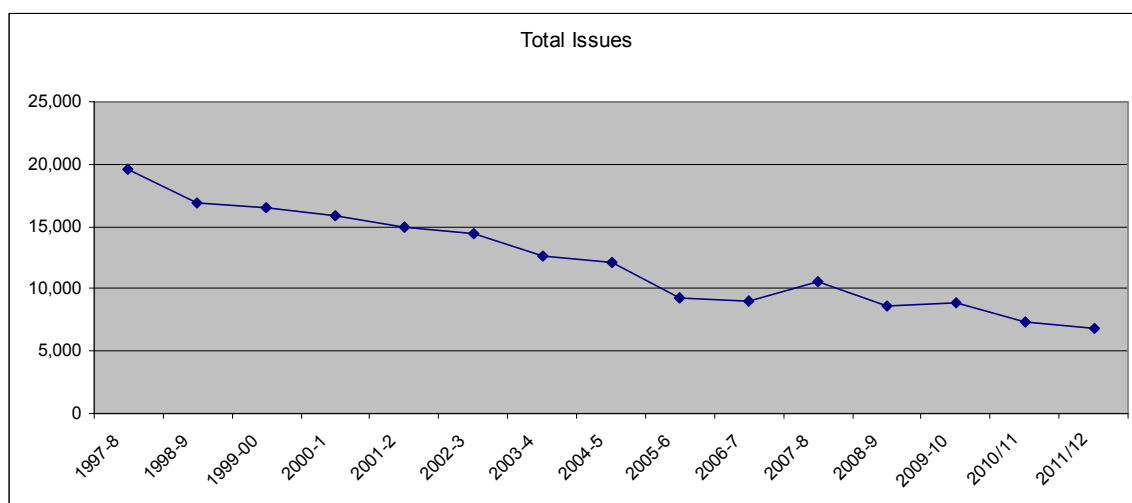
- 2.1 In May 2011 the Executive Board approved a major review of Leeds Library and Information Service. The recommendations included the proposal to delay, for a year, the closure of four libraries to investigate the potential of transferring it to any interested community group that came forward under the Community Asset Transfer Policy.

- 2.2 Cow Close Library was one of the four libraries. It is located in a parade of shops in the Farnley area. During the year Leeds Library and Information Service continued to provide support and outreach to Cow Close Library regularly exchanging stock, providing learning sessions, children's events and visiting local schools particularly promoting the Summer Reading Challenge. Unlike the other three locations no local group came forward to run the library although interest has been shown by the community in using the space for other community focused activity.

3 Main issues and proposals

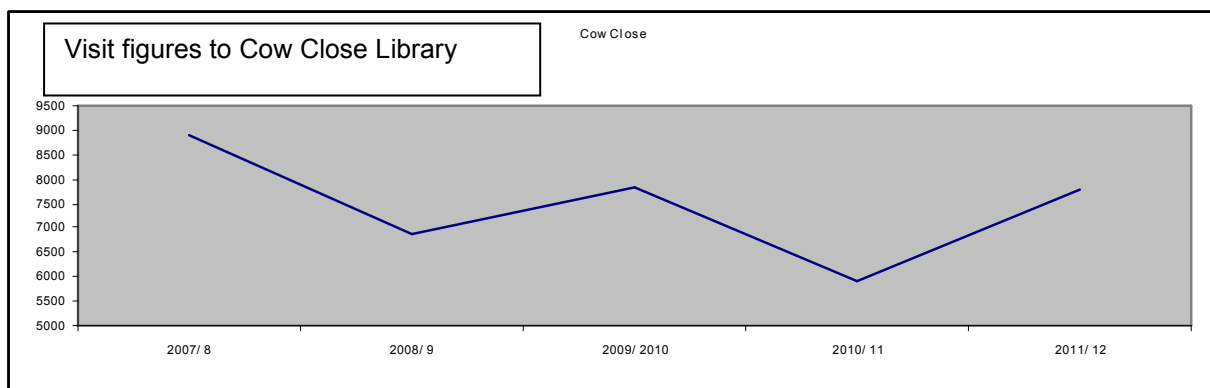
- 3.1 The use of Cow Close library continues to decline despite work by Leeds Library and Information Service and a 'use it or lose it' campaign by the local councillors which was introduced in 2011.

- 3.2 The number of books being borrowed from the library continues to fall from 7344 in 2010/11 to 6856 in 2011/2012, The library is open for 15 hours per week and is issuing less than 9 items per hour open. On average libraries issue 53 items per



hour open.

- 3.3 Of particular concern is the significant drop in children's fiction borrowing and despite a small increase in May 2012 the overall figures are very low. In other communities where the service have introduced the Children and Family mobile such declines have been reversed.
- 3.4 In the last year Cow Close library had 321 individuals using the library. Of those 144 also used at least one other library. The main ones used were Armley, Central, Pudsey, Bramley and the mobile libraries. The remaining 177 customers are made up of 88 children, 56 adults, 31 pensioners and 2 people with a disability.
- 3.5 Over the last few years there has been a gradual decline in visits which reflect the issue decline above. Visits have been somewhat erratic, a significant drop in 2010/11 was to some extent reversed in 2011/12 but was still below the 2009/10 figure.



- 3.6 While there is no mobile library in the immediate vicinity of the static site, a number of mobiles visit the community. The stock of a mobile library (1970) is broadly comparable to that of the static library building (1925). While the service hasn't found the best location for all the stops yet some of them are working extremely well with issues around 19 to 32 per hour. The service will continue to work with ward members to find the best stops to maximise this use.
- 3.7 During the year there has been no group or individual coming forward to run the library. However in the last few months interest has been shown in using the space for work to support the community.
- 3.8 The groups include an individual who is interested in supporting job seeking in the area; a solicitor who is interested in providing debt advice and Armley Juniors who have expressed an interest in offering an IT service which would provide targeted sessions and also would be available for local residents of the area at certain times. The local ward councillors also hold their surgeries in the building. Until a decision has been made on the future of the library these conversations are on hold at the request of the local members.

- 3.9 In response to another community in the city wishing to keep a static library provision, Leeds Libraries developed a self service unit (see Appendix 1) which provides community access to books which reflects community needs on an honour system. While early days, this, combined with new mobile stops is being used.
- 3.10 It could therefore be possible to combine these various initiatives into a one stop approach offering local people access on specified days to much needed skills training, self service library resources and surgeries.
- 3.11 Alternatively the library is housed in an old shop within a parade and it could easily be converted back into a shop and increase the local facilities.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation has taken place with local ward members. Two ward members are strongly of the view that their ward has very few direct council services and the library building is important to them. Constituents have told them how important a library service is to their lives and they want the service to continue.
- 4.1.2 One ward members meanwhile wishes library provision to be retained but differs in his view as to how this should be provided. Having reviewed the use data he feels that the building is not attracting the level of use it should and feels it should be replaced with targeted mobile provision which can go close to where the need is and move with that need as it changes. He also feels that this decision would then allow discussions to progress with the individuals and groups who have shown an interest to explore the potential of a sustainable future for the space.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Due regard had been given to equality and diversity and impact on cohesion and integration through Equality Impact Assessments as published in 2008 and 2011. In addition an Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been completed for Cow Close Library.
- 4.2.1 In consideration of Leeds City Council's statutory obligation as a library authority, to ensure the provision of a comprehensive and efficient library service, the Library Service should not completely withdraw its services from the areas affected.
- 4.2.2 In light of this, and to ensure an equitable service to all, the Library Service will:
- Promote the At Home Service and online services.
 - Continue to provide mobile library services in consultation with local community, including the older people and children's mobile service.
 - Inform all in the community who have used the library of new/alternative services.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The usage level means that provision via a static building falls outside of the Council's library strategy. The option of converting to a 'one stop community hub' concept or the option of restoring to a shop will conform with the council desire to support local communities and empower local people.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The anticipated savings of approximately £46,000 revenue and £20,000 minimum capital associated with the closure of Cow Close library were included in the budget savings for 2011/12 outlined in the Executive Board report of the 18th May 2011. Maintaining this library for a further 12 months has presented an unfunded budget pressure for the service. Closure of this site will alleviate this pressure for 2012/13 onwards.

4.4.2 There will be no effect on staffing. The staff working at these sites are doing so under temporary arrangements put in place for the 12 month review period. They will return to their substantive positions at their base site, alleviating the staffing pressures that these sites have been under.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report is eligible for call in.

4.5.2 The requirements of the 1964 Libraries and Museum Act, to provide a comprehensive and efficient service will not be affected by these transfers or closure as the library service still provides a high level of access as a result of changes implemented in May 2011. Services will continue to be provided to older people via the at home services, a wide range of services are available online including loan of ebooks and current mobile provision will remain.

5 Risk Management

5.1 A full risk assessment has been made and mitigating action taken to ensure a smooth transfer.

5.2 If the decision is to close, the integrity of the Council computer network will be protected by the removal of TALIS and other management systems. Phone and data lines will be handed over to Environment and Neighbourhoods, the building owners. Mobile library provision will replace the static library building. The stops for the mobile will be made in consultation with ward councillors and local people.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The views of the local ward councillors have been sought. While all wish to keep a library service to the community there is a difference of view of how this should be delivered. Two ward members wish to keep the provision from the building and one ward member sees benefits in mobile provision which can be targeted to tackle some of the worrying trends in the community such as lower literacy and also the aging population.

- 6.2 The library service agrees that library provision is vital to the community. The building however has low use and has a cost to bring up to standard. The officer view is that the current provision be removed and alternative uses for it be found. To ensure people can still access a library, mobile provision will be increased within the area. This would be targeted to respond to need, it could also be moved with communities to continually provide the best access.
- 6.3 Once the future of the library provision has been decided then the alternative uses of the building can be explored to decide the best, sustainable solution.

7 Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to agree to the replacement of the current library provision with increased, targeted mobiles, delegating the decisions on the future of the venue to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.

8.0 Background documents¹

8.1 Related documents

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Executive Board Report 18th May 2011 - Libraries and Information Service: Proposals for the Future

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.