

# Communities, Housing and Environment

16<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Is this the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

## KCC Mobile Library Consultation

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Communities, Housing and Environment
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	John Littlemore
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Yasmin Gordine
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Borough

### **This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:**

1. That the committee endorses the response to the KCC Mobile Library Consultation attached as appendix 1

### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

### **Timetable**

<b><i>Meeting</i></b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>
Communities, Housing and Environment	16 <sup>th</sup> February 2016

# KCC Mobile Library Consultation

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The following report includes Maidstone Borough Council's official response to KCC's Mobile Library consultation which ends on Friday 4 March, 2016.

KCC operate 99 library buildings and currently operates 11 mobile libraries and one additional vehicle for use when others are off the road for maintenance. Mobile libraries currently visit 651 locations across Kent.

KCC are looking into how they can make their Mobile Library service more efficient and provide a better service for residents across Kent. Over the next few years KCC are facing significant financial challenges and reviewing all services to see where they can achieve greater efficiencies. Libraries, Registration and Archives service are facing savings of £1.3million.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 KCC are look at redesigning the Mobile Library Service they currently offer as well as introducing additional services. They have provided a full list of mobile library stops for Maidstone which can be found within the Appendix. For the majority of users KCC believe that the proposed changes will ultimately result in a better service. However there will be a number of users who will no longer be able to visit the mobile library at their current locations.

KCC maintain this will not mean a loss of service as they will be providing alternative access to library services through;

“Home Library Service – will bring library materials directly to your door. A trained volunteer will visit your home and discuss your reading tastes and requirements or you can simply request specific titles. Books and other materials will then be chosen based on your preferences. A volunteer will then drop them off and collect them at a time that is convenient for you.”

“Touch a New World – will aim to get people online through the help of volunteers and if required a loan of an iPad for 10 weeks. Once the knowledge and education has been established around the internet and has become a permanent means to go online customers can then use their library card and pin to reserve items. Joining up with the Home Library Service items are then dropped off and collect from your home.”

The Mobile library service was used by around 5,400 people across Kent during 2014-15 and demand has declined with overall visits falling by 20% over the last three financial years (from 2012-13) and item issues falling by 23% over the same period.

The average numbers of visitors across all mobile stops were 2.5 in the period of October 2014 to September 2015. The busiest stop averaged 27 visitors over the same period. In the financial year 2014/15 the service cost £368,172 to run which was made up of staff salaries, maintenance costs and fuel.

- 2.2 The service changes KCC are proposing are predicted to still maintain and deliver 80% of current visits and 77% of the current book issues. The table below shows a summary of mobile stops that will remain in each district;

District	Number of Static Libraries	Current number of stops	Proposed number of stops
Ashford	6	92	50
Canterbury	5	86	42
Dartford	9	20	5
Dover	6	80	30
Gravesham	10	17	5
<b>Maidstone</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>43</b>
Sevenoaks	11	39	17
Shepway	8	58	30
Swale	7	55	23
Thanet	8	42	11
Tonbridge	9	47	15
Tunbridge Wells	9	30	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>283</b>

If the proposed changes were to be implemented KCC estimate that they would be able to deliver the service with 5 mobile libraries which is predicted to save a potential £150,000 per annum.

The redesigning of the routes will allow a number of proposed improvements and changes to the stops;

- Each stop would be on a new, fortnightly schedule
- Increasing the minimum stop time from 10 minutes to 30 minutes, improving the stop length for more than half of the stops
- Changing the days operated to Tuesday through to Saturday to mitigate the impact of Bank holiday Mondays on our current schedules and to increase opportunity for wider use.
- In addition, KCC expect the redesigning of the routes will result in better fuel efficiency and improve the environmental impact the Mobile Libraries have
- It will also deliver a cash saving for KCC

As can be seen from the table the impact on Maidstone will mean that 50% of the mobile library service will be stopped.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The council can decide not to respond to the consultation but to do so would miss the opportunity to represent our residents as some of the information given within the consultation and the proposed changes to Mobile Library stops may affect our rural communities. For example currently there are three mobile library stops around Boughton Monchelsea and KCC are proposing that these are all removed due to the lack of visitors that county recorded; between October 2014 and September 2015 were less than two visitors per session. This will now mean people within the area who wish to use library provisions will need to visit their static libraries which are located in Coxheath, Marden and Staplehurst. Although the distance is not extensive this has the potential to isolate residents who do not have access to a car.
- 3.2 The council can provide a response to include concerns around the lack of the provision within areas of deprivation, as well as isolated areas due to the new proposed routes and locations. Although the new proposed locations will not totally put any member of the community at a disadvantage, individual's ability to access this resource will be limited. The additional services that are on offer, like the home library service, will be a positive more as people will receive a more personalised and tailored service. This indeed does have the potential to reduce isolation and loneliness due to a visit from a volunteer. However concerns remain around the awareness of this service to communities and how well they will be publicised and explained.

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The preferred option is to respond to the consultation outlining concerns around the lack/reduced service within areas of deprivation and isolated areas of the borough. Although the documents circulated by KCC show their reasons for reducing the number of stops across Kent, in relation to Maidstone there are certain areas, particular North Downs ward that are more heavily affected by the new proposed changes. Feedback provided by the ward councillor brought to the council's attention that there is a lack of public transport within this area of the borough and with an aging population this could pose issues around their ability to access library provisions. Although KCC has outlined that public transport provisions and the increase in car ownership has increased within the last five years, this has not been universal and public transport is limited due to the regularity of services provided. This suggests that mobile library services in specified areas would be a benefit. In Addition are areas that are situated just outside of the town centre that are equally at a disadvantage. Places like Sandling who's residents wish to access the provision may also find it difficult to access the service should the proposed changes to the stops be implemented. On this occasion there is a static library situated within Maidstone town centre, public transport again is infrequent especially if the journey was specifically to drop off a book so that no late fee charges were incurred.

- 4.2 In addition members of the public that class themselves as disabled might find it difficult to access a static library and the mobile library might be the only way in which they can access the service. KCC has clearly outlined new provisions that are available which would reduce the affect the new proposed timetable for mobile libraries would have. However a home service might not be what members of the public would like, some people are not keen on people entering their home and might feel uneasy should a volunteer visit them at their property. In addition getting out and about locally might be the only form of social engagement they would have in a week.
- 4.3 Including the above feedback within the council's response to the consultation might impact on their proposed changes and some mobile stops are re-instated as a result. Without our feedback and input into the consultation we wouldn't be representing our borough and taking into consideration the impact the service cuts would have rurally.

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## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

5.1 When we received the notification of KCC's consultation around their proposed changes to the mobile library services all parish councils and ward councillors were emailed to inform them of this report and were given the opportunity for their responses to be included within this report. Unfortunately due to the committee deadlines the majority of the parishes were unable to respond to the council in time but they have confirmed that the parishes who wish to submit a response will do so, on their own merit through individual parish councils. Ward and Parish councillors' feedback was also welcomed and their responses are outlined below;

- Lack of public transport in remote areas can pose an issue for the elderly community being able to access library provisions.
- Although some stops may have only had 2 visitors this isn't a true representation as some residents are house bound and rely on neighbours and friends to collect and return books.
- A lot of elderly residents within the North Downs ward do not have access to vehicles and public transport is limited or doesn't run at all.
- Elderly community are not computer savvy and their for the additional provisions in place would not be suitable
- The locations of the mobile library stops are key as there was a scheduled stop in Teston which was suitable for the nursery group that operates out of the village hall. Going forward these needs to be taken on board and reflected in our report.

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## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Once a decision has been reached as to how to respond to the consultation it will then need to be submitted to KCC before Friday 4 March, 2016.
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## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across our borough	John Littlemore
<b>Risk Management</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Financial</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Staffing</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Legal</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Community Safety</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Procurement</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Asset Management</b>	Not Applicable	

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: MBC response to KCC
- Appendix II: KCC Consultation
- Appendix III: Mobile Library Stops across Maidstone

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## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Consultation Home Page

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraries/consultationHome>

Mobile Library stops broken down into district

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraries/viewContent?contentid=278099>

KCC Consultation document  
Mobile Library Stops in Maidstone