

MAIDSTONE LOCALITY BOARD
28 March 2012, 2.00-4.00pm
Report for Libraries – future service proposals
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1. Introduction

This report outlines the KCC libraries transformation and modernisation agenda and proposed work with Maidstone Locality Board.

KCC has a statutory duty to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service”, set in the context of local need.

The key drivers for change are:

- the desire to support a process of engagement with communities over the shape and local delivery of library services; and
- the need to secure affordable local solutions, tailor made to the needs of the community, which allow the provision of an excellent local library service in the community.

2. Proposed Approach

The Library Service will work directly with the Maidstone Locality Board, providing all the information that will enable the Board to make informed recommendations as to the future shape of library services across the borough. A table of library usage in Maidstone is appended to this report. Further information on the Libraries in Maidstone, including their costs, usage and other facts can be found at:

The criteria set out by KCC for the future library service are to:

- meet statutory obligations;
- shape services locally as local people want; and
- deliver savings.

No decisions have been taken about the future of any library in Maidstone, although initial recommendations will need to be agreed by the Locality Board by June 2012.

The Locality Board will be supported by the Library Service to identify and agree the local engagement approach with residents and community groups, including attending local meetings, promoting awareness etc. to identify ways to deliver the objectives of the transformation and modernisation agenda.

The proposal is to identify specific solutions for each community, rather than a “one size fits all” approach.

It is accepted that a wide range of options may emerge, for example, moving the library into a partner's premises or a partner moving into library premises. Both may enable cost sharing and the chance to explore joined up customer service. Some communities may want to take over library service delivery through a volunteering model, supported by KCC.

Planned efficiencies of £2m are being delivered between 2011 to 2014 through more efficient working including the installation of self service technology in many libraries. These efficiencies build on £2.3m efficiency savings already delivered through staff restructuring and the procurement of a new (and improved) library IT system.

A new approach to local service delivery will further reduce the existing costs associated with local library service delivery, for example:

- Costs associated with the purchase and circulation of books and other materials
- Premises costs
- IT costs
- Staff/management costs

Part of the identified savings will be used to fund the prospective partner taking over delivery of the service locally. In addition, KCC will retain the statutory responsibility for service delivery so there will continue to be an on-going relationship with providers.

KCC Libraries recognise that during the period of engagement with Locality Boards and through to implementation of agreed recommendations, significant member and officer capacity will be needed to achieve effective outcomes. Appropriate levels of officer support will be made available for the duration of the process.

3. Recommendations

The Maidstone Locality Board is asked to:

Consider and support the proposal from the KCC Libraries Service in relation to the transformation and modernisation agenda.

Consider the creation of a sub-group to progress community engagement, consider current service delivery and future service delivery options and make recommendations to the full Locality Board.