

Shared Service Joint Committee

Wednesday 8th June 2022

Report Title	Library Support Services - Change Request Variation Notice
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Executive Member	Cllr Adam Brown, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure, WNC Cllr Helen Howell, Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture & Tourism, NNC

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Approver	Officer Name	Date Officer Approved Report
North MO West MO	Adele Wylie Catherine Whitehead	4 May 2022
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Other Director/SME	Kerry Purnell Joanne Barrett	4 May 2022

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek Member approval for the recommendation to re-profile the hosted Library Support Service disaggregation timeline from 30th September 2022. This is to enable sufficient time to disaggregate the service in a safe and legal manner, whilst ensuring that there is minimum disruption to the service and customers.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The front-line library service and associated staff have been disaggregated and have been operating as separate North and West Northamptonshire services since April 2021.
- 2.2. This report specifically focuses on the Library Support Service which is currently hosted by West Northamptonshire Council. There are 15.7 FTE non-frontline posts that provide management, development and support to the front-facing disaggregated Library Service.
- 2.3. Disaggregation activity is underway to understand and analyse the service, risks and implications surrounding IT, information governance and statutory service requirements. A detailed Impact Assessment will be brought to Committee later this year.
- 2.4. The Impact Assessment will define the deliverable timescale and it is forecasted disaggregation will be completed by April 2023. Having said this, and due to the complexities of service delivery in terms of shared systems and assets, accurate timescales for completing disaggregation can only be determined once the Impact Assessment has been completed and approved. Therefore, it is for members to note disaggregation timescales and/or any required phasing will be recommended as part of the Impact Assessment presented to Shared Services Joint Committee report in due course.
- 2.5. The additional time sought by reprofiling disaggregation is required to undertake a thorough impact assessment to ensure we create a resilient and seamless service for our service users and ensure the required statutory library service offer is being delivered effectively.

3. Recommendations

That the Shared Services Joint Committee:

- 3.1. Approve the recommendation to reprofile the timeline of disaggregation resulting in the Library Support Service not disaggregating in September 2022 and;
- 3.2. Endorse the development of an Impact Assessment, the result of which will bring forward a further recommendation regarding a timeline revision for the disaggregation to the Committee in due course.

3.3. Reason for Recommendations –

- A wider review of how the support services are managed, will be considered as a whole rather than it being managed in silos.
- Consideration will be given to the impact on service users ensuring the customer experience is not negatively impacted.
- Consideration will be given to disaggregating the countywide book stock.
- Consideration will be given to the requirement for an additional warehouse / depot facility from which library deliveries are co-ordinated and back-office staff are based.
- Consideration will be given to how traded services will be operated.
- Consideration around disaggregation of the Library Management System databases of library borrowers and library stock.
- Consideration is given to renegotiation of the various SLA's and contracts

3.4. Alternative Options Considered – Disaggregate in line with Blueprint

- The impact on the customer experience would be a critical issue and could result in reputational damage to the councils should we continue with the timeline within the Blueprint.
- This timescale is not achievable to fully disaggregate the service.

4. Report Background

4.1 During 2018/19 the library service undertook extensive consultation and needs analysis which determined which libraries were to be maintained to deliver our statutory duty. The outcome of this was to retain 15 libraries across Northamptonshire to deliver our statutory service. The opportunity to run the remaining libraries was offered to local community groups, providing they could afford the cost of premises and staff.

4.2 The library service still provides the systems and stock to enable them to be part of the service. The frontline library service and staffing were disaggregated on 1st April 2021.

4.3 A report of the Transformation Task and Finish Group considered by North Northamptonshire Council Executive and West Northamptonshire Council Cabinet in June 2021 noted that “Libraries Support (included traded services): Library services have undergone significant change recently and disaggregation of service may be quite complicated so look to disaggregate this service later to lower change demand on these staff” (see background papers in section 8)

4.4 Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service (NLIS) provides management, co-ordination, and support services across Northamptonshire. This is currently hosted by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and delivers the statutory duty of running the public library service for WNC and North Northants Council (NNC).

4.5 There are 15.7 FTE staff providing support to all 34 libraries and traded services across the county. This includes one service manager, two strategic managers and various posts that maintain the IT systems and provide business support, professional services, coordination and support to the community managed libraries.

4.6 Service Functions

An outline of the service functions currently undertaken are:

- Strategic Leadership of the Library Service
- Provision, support, and maintenance of key systems including the Library Management System, self-service machines, public computers and tablets and public wi-fi.
- Provision of stock including managing suppliers, procurement, processing, delivery of all physical book stock.
- Provision and maintenance of all electronic resources delivered by third parties including e-book and e-audiobook platforms.
- Provision of the Business & IP Centre Northamptonshire.
- Provision of support to all Community Managed Libraries.
- Management and provision of the income-generating traded services including Strong Start, Wood Hill Prison Library, and the School's Library Service.

NLIS also provides a number of traded services which are full cost-recovery and generate a surplus income which supports the costs of the public library service.

4.7 Libraries have traditionally had to generate a significant portion of their costs which is achieved through income such as fines, fees, room hire and printing, and income generated from traded services.

4.8 Traded services include:

Learning Resources for Education (Schools Library Service) - This is a service that offers book stock, project collections and artefact collections to schools as part of a subscription-based service. It also provides consultation and advisory services to schools and school librarians. The service is not statutory but does provide a valuable service to around 80 local schools and academies and also generates income which goes back into the library service as part of its income generation strategy.

HMP Wood Hill Prison Library - The service is contracted by the Ministry of Justice to deliver a library service to the prisoners at Wood Hill Prison (Bucks). This includes employing and managing a library manager and an assistant to run the prison, the Library Management System (LMS) and provision of the book stock for the prison. This service brings in a surplus which goes back into the library service as part of its required income generation strategy.

The Strong Start Team (Public Health Grant Funded) - The Library service is commissioned to deliver Universal Children's Services across the county. This is grant funded by Public Health and delivers universal support services to families with children pre-birth to 5 years old. A strategic manager within libraries manages this commission and we get a management fee and other income for running this service.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. Resource

Currently the main warehouse is located at Booth Meadow House in Northampton. This is a busy facility with all deliveries coming into and out of this dept. All stock and resources are permanently housed here in addition to resources held by Learning Resources for Education and Bookstart resources as well as transient stock, equipment and furniture moving between libraries. Currently all support services are based at Booth Meadow House in a shared building with the School's Library Service. There will be a requirement for an additional warehouse / depot facility from which library deliveries are co-ordinated and back-office staff are based.

5.2. Statutory Requirements and Timelines

Each council has a statutory responsibility to deliver "A comprehensive and efficient library service" in accordance with the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. The DCMS exercises the superintendency role and will carry out Judicial Review if these duties are not being met.

5.3. Dependent Services

- Registration services are co-located in library buildings.
- All Community managed libraries are dependent on support from the central team, and this is delivered within an SLA (currently with WNC but this would need to transfer)
- The Business & IP Centre Northamptonshire is currently run countywide with staff from this team. This service operates within an MOU with the British Library.

5.4. Partner Agencies

There are currently Service Level Agreements in place with:

- Community Organisations running Community Managed Libraries
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the British Library
- Woodhill Prison/Ministry of Justice
- Public Health – Strong Start Team
- Customer Service Centre Team (Council – they handle calls for the library)
- Highways (Bus pass & Blue badges)
- Schools
- BookTrust

5.5. IT/Systems

The Library Management System (LMS) is required for running the service and this is currently managed by the hosted team. This system manages all data for customers, borrowing and circulation of the stock across the county. Following a successful procurement exercise, we will be moving to a new contract imminently. The contract includes a condition in the framework that the winning provider could disaggregate the system if and when necessary, however this will incur an additional cost. The contract is currently with WNC

and it may not be possible to split the contract until the first break clause in July 2024.

Electronic resources – the library pays third party providers for subscriptions which customers can use. Each of these subscriptions have different agreements and contracts in place and prices are either based on the population of the local authority or individual authority subscriptions. For the e-books there is a price for the platform, and another for the stock.

5.6. Customer Impact

The stock collection (both physical and digital) belongs to the county rather than individual libraries and therefore customers are able to access the entire collection available within the county. Customers are able to access any library across the county, take items from one to another and to request items from another library.

5.7. Choices

It could be agreed to continue with the current disaggregation timeframe, however it is for the Committee to note the significant risks to service delivery as noted in Section 7.4 below.

6. Next Steps

6.1. A report providing a detailed Impact Assessment and outlining options for disaggregation of the service will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

7.1.1. Additional resources will be required from the enabler services to support the disaggregation process. There are a number of large service areas disaggregating by September 2022, therefore additional capacity may be needed to deliver Library Support Service if the change request is not approved.

7.1.2. The financial implications are limited as the service is being delivered and all KPIs are being met within the current financial envelope.

7.1.3. Additional work will need to be done to identify additional costs where roles and resources need to be duplicated into both authorities.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. The service is currently operating in accordance with the Inter Authority Agreement that exists between North Northamptonshire Council and West

Northamptonshire Council. If the recommendation proposed within the report is agreed, then the Councils will approve any further amendments under the Inter Authority Agreement to ensure that adequate contract management and governance is in place between the authorities. A Schedule 2 & 3 service plan has been developed to set out performance and financial measurements for monitoring and review via the Shared Services Joint Committee. All accumulative quarterly performance is being reported as green.

- 7.2.2. As outlined within the report in section 5, additional work is required in relation to contractual matters and work will be undertaken to ensure that the disaggregation of the services will not compromise legal compliance. If members were minded not to reprofile disaggregation, then there is a significant risk that legal requirements would not be met as highlighted in 7.4.4 and 7.4.5 below.
- 7.2.3. The DCMS have the superintendency role over public libraries to ensure that they are meeting their statutory duty under the 1964 Act. Following the recent judicial review, the current head of service is required to meet regularly with DCMS representatives to discuss any significant changes to the service. Therefore, they will need to be consulted around full disaggregation.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. The delivery of Library Services is a key factor in the successful delivery of both the West Northamptonshire Corporate Plan and the North Northamptonshire Corporate Plan (including the Corporate Plan - Covid-19 Recovery Plan)
- 7.3.2. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 places the statutory duty for the council to provide “a comprehensive and efficient” library service.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. The Library Support Service are essential to delivering a seamless service to our customers. The impact assessment will enable sound strategic decisions to be made to maximise the benefits of disaggregation on customer experience in line with both WNC and NNC corporate strategies.
- 7.4.2. Delivery of Library services was impacted by COVID. The Impact Assessment work needs to reflect upon the changed demands and implications to the service and how such issues are best addressed through the disaggregation process.
- 7.4.3. The IT system would not be capable of being fully split until July 2024. Some splitting of the databases could take place prior, but this will be dependent on cost and provider availability to carry out the necessary work. To disaggregate the service without the database would make it impossible to deliver the statutory function. This would be further explored as part of the Impact Assessment. Hence sufficient time to undertake a through Impact Assessment is essential.

7.4.4. Disaggregation within the current timeline creates significant risk to the customer experience as there will be disruption to resources, services and functions until new staff, resources and systems are fully in place. There may not be sufficient time to put these in place within the current disaggregation timeline.

7.4.5. Similarly contracts for subscription resources are currently with WNC and these may become unavailable overnight to NNC customers if the terms change and there isn't sufficient time to renegotiate. There are also SLA's with dependent services and partner agencies as listed under 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.

7.4.6. Therefore, time is needed to ensure that the transfer is seamless for the customer or the council's risk reputational damage.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. This report does not meet the parameters required for public consultation.

7.6. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.6.1. None arising from this report.

7.7. Equality Implications

7.7.1. No negative impacts or implications arising directly from this report. However, DCMS Guidance on Libraries as a Statutory Service specifically notes that "In drawing up and delivering their library strategies and plans, councils should consider a number of legal obligations, including under the Equality Act 2010 including the Public Sector Equality Duty". An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the Disaggregation process.

7.8. Climate Impact

7.8.1. No negative impacts arising from this report.

7.9. Community Impact

7.9.1. If the disaggregation is rushed to complete by September 2021 then there is a possibility that the front-line Libraries services that has already been disaggregated may not get the required support due to the risks discussed earlier. This in turn could impinge the service provided to the Community.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.10.1. No negative impacts arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. **WNC Cabinet 8 June 2021**

8.2. **NNC Executive 21 June 2021**