LIBRARIES NI

Issue: Strategic Review Stage Two

From: Helen Osborn

Date: 17 September 2013

Objective: To provide an update on the implementation of the Stage Two Action Plan and to enable decisions to be taken in respect of each library.

Timescale: N/A

FOI implications: This note is considered to be fully disclosable.

Recommendation: For approval.

Detail

In 2010 Libraries NI embarked upon Stage Two of ‘Meeting the Demands for a Modern Public Library Service’, a strategic review of library provision outside Greater Belfast.

This involved evaluation of each library against a set of criteria, publication of a consultation document and a thorough consultation process including an equality impact assessment and a rural impact assessment.

In October 2011 the Board made decisions about the future of the ten libraries considered for closure in the consultation process and the clustering of services in Armagh City. A two year action plan for implementing these decisions was drawn up, culminating in final decisions to be taken by the Board in October 2013.

This report provides detailed information about each of the libraries to be reviewed in October 2013 so that the Board can be satisfied as to whether substantive progress has been made.

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1. Introduction

1.1 In 2010 Libraries NI embarked upon Stage Two of 'Meeting the Demands for a Modern Public Library Service', a strategic review of library provision outside Greater Belfast.

1.2 This involved evaluation of each library against a set of criteria, publication of a consultation document and a thorough consultation process including an equality impact assessment and a rural impact assessment.

1.3 In October 2011 the Board made decisions about the future of the ten libraries considered for closure in the consultation process and the clustering of services in Armagh City. A two year action plan for implementing these decisions was drawn up.

1.4 The decisions fell into four categories:

1.4.1 In three locations (Greystone, Kells and Connor and Richhill) the decision was to retain the library and to work with the local library action groups to increase the level of use, or, in the case of Greystone, to limit the level and rate of decline and to review the situation in October 2013.

1.4.2 In three locations (Gilford, Moneymore, Moy) the decision was to close the library and to work with local partners and the community to identify the best ways in which to deliver library services to that community.

1.4.3 In Armagh the Board determined that the principle of clustering services, so as to consolidate provision in a single viable location, should be adopted.

1.4.4 There were four locations (Carnlough, Draperstown, Fintona and Killyleagh) where there were problems with the library buildings and proposals had been submitted either for alternative premises or for improvements to the current building. These plans were at different stages of development. In these cases the Board's decision was that progress should be reviewed in October 2012 and if substantive progress had not been made, those libraries would close. The review of progress took place and in each case, a further review and decision in October 2013 was agreed.

1.5 This report provides detailed information about each of the seven libraries to be reviewed in October 2013 so that the Board can be satisfied as to whether substantive progress has been made. It also provides an update on all of the libraries in the action plan.

2. Carnlough Library

2.1 The Board’s Decision in October 2011

2.1.1 The Board considered three options and adopted option 3 i.e. retain the library subject to confirmation from the landlord (Larne Borough Council) of swift and decisive action within a specified timescale to carry out the necessary improvements to the building, as a minimum to meet legal requirements, including disabled access.
2.1.2 This was because of:

- the rural isolation of Carnlough
- the commitment received from Larne Borough Council that action had been taken to seek to extend and improve the building
- the commitment shown by the community to bringing about improvements to the library through the priority given to it in the Village Plan
- the commitment given by the community to work in partnership with Libraries NI to ensure sustainability.

2.1.3 The Board determined that targets for usage would be established, in consultation with the local community, to ensure sustainability and that progress in relation to these targets would be reviewed in October 2012, at which stage the library would close, if substantive progress had not been made in addressing deficiencies in the building and/or the targets for usage had not been met.

2.2 The Board’s Decision in 2012

2.2.1 In October 2012 the Board noted that Larne Borough Council had worked with Libraries NI to develop a scheme to modernise and enlarge the building, increasing the floor area from 107m² to 232m² and addressing deficiencies relating to disabled access, staff accommodation and energy efficiency. Also that there had been a very healthy increase in issues and substantial continuing support from the local community.

2.2.2 The Board decided that Carnlough Library should remain open, that Libraries NI should continue to support the Council in its attempts to access funding, that levels of use should be monitored and that the situation in respect of the building and levels of use should be reviewed in October 2013.

2.3 The Situation in September 2013

2.3.1 Funding has been sourced for implementing the planned improvements to the building. Officers from Larne Borough Council have indicated that they anticipate the project will be on site shortly for approximately six months. This will result in a reduced service for this period and there have been discussions with the local community about how this can be accommodated.

2.3.2 Usage statistics for all libraries in this report appear at Appendix One. Carnlough experienced a very healthy increase in issues in 2011/12 (71% increase on the previous year). While this very much higher level of use was not sustained in 2012/13 (a drop of 15.8% in loans and renewals), the level of use is still substantially above the target set for the library and the level of use prior to the Review. A similar pattern applies to visits which are also still higher than the 2010/11 figures. Overall, use of the library is higher than in 2009/10 when the strategic review began.
2.3.3 Meetings are held quarterly with the four Carnlough representatives. Core activities continue to be delivered. In addition:
  • a special story time and a Rhythm and Rhyme session were held to tie in with the Community Festival week in July 2013 and the library was used as one of the locations for a Treasure Hunt.
  • The library liaised with a local community group to hold an exhibition of old photographs to tie in with the ‘All Ireland Rowing Championships’ being held in Carnlough.

2.4 Recommendation

2.4.1 Given the progress anticipated in terms of the building and the increased levels of use of the library, it is recommended that Carnlough Library should remain open and monitoring of levels of use should continue in line with that applied to all libraries.

3. Draperstown

3.1 The Board’s Decision in October 2011

3.1.1 The Board considered three options and adopted option 3 i.e. retain the library pending further discussions with Workspace to assess the viability of their proposals regarding a partnership approach to provision, based in The Plantation Centre.

3.1.2 This was agreed given the track record of Workspace in developing successful community facilities and the already well-developed plans for integrated community provision in The Plantation Centre to provide a range of services.

3.1.3 The Board determined that realistic targets for usage would be established in consultation with the local community, to ensure the sustainability of Draperstown Library while the plans being developed by Workspace were assessed and that progress in relation to the targets would be reviewed in October 2012, at which stage, also it would be expected that substantive progress would have been made by Workspace in developing cost-effective alternative proposals. If, at October 2012, targets for library use had not been achieved and/or the Workspace plans were determined not to be viable, the library would close.

3.2 The Board’s Decision in 2012

3.2.1 The Board noted that very substantial progress had been made in terms of alternative premises and that Workspace had worked closely with Libraries NI to develop proposals for an alternative library space in the former Planation Centre, as part of a community facility including a youth centre and adult learning centre. The new library would be approximately twice the size of the current library with ample space for stock and computers for children and adults, circulation space, staff facilities and a wheelchair accessible public toilet. Workspace had planning permission and funding in place for the
library and had moved ahead with the project ‘at risk’ in order to avail of Rural Development Programme funding.

3.2.2 The viability of the proposal had been tested through the submission of a business case to DCAL which has been approved.

3.2.3 The Board noted that Draperstown’s issues increased by 16% in 2011/12 with a further increase in 2012/13. Also that there had been a number of meetings with the local community and additional events had taken place.

3.2.4 The Board agreed that Draperstown Library should remain open in the current premises until the alternative premises provided by Workspace are ready for occupation and that levels of use should continue to be reviewed.

3.3 The Situation in 2013

3.3.1 The Business Support Committee approved the business case for the new library in October 2012 and it opened in April 2013. It has been well received by the local community and the official opening took place on 11 September 2013.

3.4 Recommendation

3.4.1 It is recommended that the Board welcome the success to date of the new library and that levels of use should be monitored in line with that applied to all libraries.

4. Fintona

4.1 The Board’s Decision in 2011

4.1.1 The Board considered three options and adopted option 3 i.e. retain the library in the interim and continue to work in partnership with the Fintona Library Campaign Group to assess the viability of their proposals for an alternative approach to library provision in the village.

4.1.2 This was agreed in order to provide sufficient time for the Campaign Group to develop further their proposals and for an assessment to be carried out as to whether the proposed solution is achievable.

4.1.3 The Board determined that realistic targets for usage would be established, in consultation with the local community, to ensure the sustainability of Fintona Library while the plans being prepared by the Campaign Group were developed and assessed. It was further agreed that a substantive proposal must be produced by the Group by March 2012, identifying a suitable building with a funding stream in place. Progress in relation to the established usage targets would be reviewed in October 2012 and if they were not achieved and/or the Campaign Group’s plans were determined not to be viable, the library would be closed.
4.2 The Board’s Decision in 2012

4.2.1 The Building
The Board noted that Fintona Forum had submitted a progress report which indicated that they were negotiating the acquisition of a specific building and that they intended to bid for funding to develop it as a shared community service facility, the SPACE project. Whilst significant progress had been made, they had not, as yet, secured the building or funding and had not demonstrated its suitability for use as a library.

4.2.2 The Board also noted that the library support group in Fintona had constituted itself as FLEAT (Fintona Library Educational and Training Association) and had met several times with Libraries NI. They had ensured promotion of the library through schools and churches, had distributed leaflets and suggested a number of events.

4.2.3 This was a key factor in the increased levels of use which the Board welcomed.

4.2.4 In light of the above the Board decided that that, in the absence of a substantive proposal from Fintona Forum, a detailed review of all options for library provision in Fintona should be undertaken and this options appraisal should be used as a basis for discussion with all relevant stakeholders.

4.3 The Situation in September 2013

4.3.1 In June 2013 the Services Committee considered the options appraisal referred to above. The options included close the library, ‘do nothing’, a proposal that had been submitted by Fintona Forum and a number of options which involved remaining in the current building and improving it. Before considering the other options in detail, the Committee determined that the increased levels of use in Fintona Library suggested that it was now a sustainable library and ruled out the option of library closure.

4.3.2 The preferred option, endorsed by the Board in July 2013, was to remain in the current building and to carry out improvements.

4.3.3 Stakeholders, customers and the general public were made aware that this was the Board’s preferred option and reaction was invited. Customers’ main reaction was delight that closure was not the preferred option.

4.3.4 Three written responses were received.

• Omagh District Council ‘welcomed the efforts taken to ensure the retention of service provision at Fintona Library and are content with the Board’s preferred option to improve the current building’

• Barry McElduff, local MLA, commended the choice of preferred option

• FLEAT sent a detailed and positive response which included a commitment to work with Libraries NI to continue to increase levels of use and made specific suggestions about the improvements to the building. This appears at Appendix Two.
4.4 Recommendation

4.4.1 In light of the above, it is recommended that Fintona Library should remain open, that the Board should implement its preferred option of improving the current building, taking account of the suggestion made by FLEAT and that levels of use should be monitored in line with that applied to all libraries.

5. Killyleagh

5.1 The Board’s Decision in 2011

5.1.1 The Board considered three options and adopted option 3 i.e. retain the library on its current site in the interim, pending appraisal of the plans and costs for an alternative location and the proposals received from the Friends of the Library, Killyleagh (FOLK).

5.1.2 This was agreed in order to provide sufficient time for FOLK to develop further its proposals and for an assessment to be carried out as to whether the proposed solution was achievable, as well as to enable further discussions with the owner of the proposed alternative site.

5.1.3 The Board determined that realistic targets for usage would be established, in consultation with the Action Group to ensure the sustainability of Killyleagh Library while the plans being prepared by FOLK were developed and assessed. It was further agreed that a substantive proposal must be produced by FOLK by March 2012, with guarantees in relation to adequate funding in place to implement the agreed plans. Furthermore, if progress in relation to usage targets were not achieved by October 2012 and/or the FOLK plans were determined not to be viable, the library would be closed.

5.2 The Board’s Decision in 2012

5.2.1 The Board noted that the proposal received from FOLK had been progressed but that it had not proved possible to arrive at an affordable solution.

5.2.2 However, an alternative proposal had been put forward by Killyleagh Development Association to include library accommodation within a proposed redevelopment of the former British Legion building (Catherine Street) which they owned and were looking to develop as a community facility. Preliminary talks suggested this proposal could benefit Libraries NI and provide an affordable and viable alternative to the current premises. However, there was considerable work to be done to make this project a reality and it was anticipated that the property would not be ready for occupation until March/April 2014.

5.2.3 The Board also noted that, in parallel with this, some minor cosmetic maintenance had taken place in the existing library. Pressure was, however, mounting from the existing owners (SERC) to establish a formal lease and rent and Libraries NI was continuing to take legal advice as to how best to protect our interest.
5.2.4 Killyleagh continued to be as busy as or busier than the majority of libraries in the Stage Two Review Action Plan.

5.2.5 Taking all of this into consideration the Board decided that that Killyleagh Library should remain open to allow Killyleagh Development Association to take forward its proposals, that levels of use should be monitored and that the situation regarding progress with the alternative premises and levels of use should be reviewed in October 2013.

5.3 The Situation in September 2013

5.3.1 The proposal put forward by Killyleagh Development Association (KDA) continues to be developed and funding bids have been submitted.

5.3.2 The situation regarding SERC continues and is likely to be protracted.

5.3.3 In June 2012 the opening hours were reduced from 21 hours to 18 which is a contributory factor to the decrease in levels of use.

5.3.4 Libraries NI and Friends of the Library Killyleagh (FOLK) continue to work in partnership to increase participation and usage in Killyleagh Library. A quarterly events brochure is published to promote core library activities, Heritage, Culture, Learning and Information events together with specifically FOLK events.

5.4 Recommendation

5.4.1 It is recommended that Killyleagh Library should remain open to allow Killyleagh Development Association to take forward its proposals and that the situation should be reviewed in October 2014.

6. Greystone Library

6.1 The Board's Decision in 2011

6.1.1 The Board considered two options and adopted option 2 i.e. retain the library subject to review in October 2013 and reduce the opening hours to 30 hours per week with the engagement of users of the library as to the most appropriate pattern to meet local needs.

6.1.2 This was agreed on the basis that:
- usage had not declined to the extent expected with the opening of the new library in Antrim;
- there was strong cross community support for the library and it is seen as a shared space; and
- there was strong support from local schools who make good use of the library.

6.1.3 The Board determined that in conjunction with the Library Action Group, targets on usage were to be established to monitor sustainability in the long term.
6.2 The Situation in September 2013

6.2.1 Levels of Use
Statistics for all libraries in this report appear at Appendix One. Use of Greystone Library has declined substantially.

6.2.2 There are quarterly meetings with one representative from the Greystone Library Action Group. Core activities are on-going. In addition:
- a new junior reading group has been established;
- the Health in Mind ‘lightbox’ scheme is taking place in library; and
- a community led coffee morning is being organised once a quarter to encourage new members
- a Knit and Natter group has recently had its first very successful meeting
- a newspaper club is due to start in September 2013

6.3 Recommendation

6.3.1 It is recommended that the levels of use in Greystone and the Board’s reaction to this should be brought to the attention of all stakeholders including the local community and that progress should be reviewed in Oct 2014.

7. Kells and Connor

7.1 The Board’s Decision in 2011

7.1.1 The Board considered two options and adopted option 2 i.e. retain the library subject to review in October 2013.

7.1.2 This was agreed on the basis that:
- there had been an increase in usage since commencement of the consultation and usage continued to improve
- there was strong community support for the library
- the building was in good condition.

7.1.3 The Board determined that in conjunction with the Library Action Group, targets on usage were to be established to monitor sustainability in the long term.

7.2 The Situation in 2013

7.2.1 Statistics for all libraries in this report appear at Appendix One. Loans and visits rose in 2011/12 and have decreased since then but are still above those at the start of the Review process.

7.2.2 Meetings are held quarterly with two Kells and Connor representatives. Core activities continue to be delivered. In addition: a Library promotional campaign was run during the month of June 2013, ‘Join your library in June’. A leaflet drop was aided by the local community group and library staff. Special events were held each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. These included ebook demonstrations, Go On shopping on line, Health in Mind ‘really good health web sites’, and Family History web pages. These were
led by local branch and theme staff. The Library has worked to engage positively with the community including, for example, purchasing a lamp which switches on in early evening and remains on until midnight to add to the ‘safe streets’ ambience in the village.

7.3 Recommendation

7.3.1 Given the sustained levels of use of the library, it is recommended that Kells and Connor Library should remain open. Monitoring of the situation should continue in line with that applied to all libraries.

8. Richhill

8.1 The Board’s Decision in 2011

8.1.1 The Board considered two options and adopted option 2 i.e. retain the library subject to review in October 2013 on the basis that the building was relatively new and was adequate to deliver the vision for a small rural library.

8.1.2 The Board determined that targets were to be established in conjunction with the Library Action Group, to ensure that usage continues to improve and that the library is sustainable in the long term with a review undertaken in October 2013.

8.2 The Situation in September 2013

8.2.1 In recent months the reduction in opening hours from 28.5 to 18 has been a major contributory factor to a reduction in levels of use. However, Richhill remains one of the busiest of the libraries considered for closure in the Stage Two Review.

8.2.2 Following the recent appointment of a new Branch Library Manager steps have been taken to address this reduction in levels of use; the core activities are up and running and additional events have been organised:

- a volunteer is going through Access NI checks to assist with foreign language story times
- a leaflet has been produced and will be distributed locally with assistance with the local community group.

8.3 Recommendation

8.3.1 It is recommended that the library should remain open and that monitoring of levels of use should continue in line with that applied to all libraries.

9. Armagh

9.1 The Board’s Decision in 2011

9.1.1 The Board considered three options and agreed to the principle that services should be clustered to consolidate provision in a single viable location in Armagh and that discussions should take place with Armagh City and District
Council and with the SELB regarding a possible location. The Board also agreed that any other potential options should be explored with progress on finding a suitable site reviewed in March 2012.

9.1.2 This was agreed on the basis that:
- it would provide enhanced access to services;
- it was appropriate for heritage provision to remain in Armagh because of the historic nature of the city and the opportunity to contribute its cultural and heritage tourism offer and to work in partnership with other heritage institutions in the city; and
- it would offer the most cost effective option.

9.2 The Situation in September 2013

9.2.1 In May 2012 the Board gave approval for Libraries NI to enter into formal dialogue with Armagh City Council about their proposal to locate a public library facility on the site currently occupied by St Patrick’s Trian Centre. This offers the potential to locate Armagh City Library and the Irish and Local Studies Library on the same site.

9.2.2 Since then development work has continued with the Council Officers to the point where:
- accommodation needs for the library service have been identified and incorporated into their design proposals to a sufficient level where the Council can submit a Planning Application (this is currently lodged with DOE Planning)
- the LPS District Valuer has been employed and a proposed leasing structure agreed including annual costs (rent, service charges etc.)
- the Council has moved to develop designs sufficiently to allow a tender exercise to be undertaken and hopes to begin work in early 2014 with a view to completion 2015.

9.2.3 Whilst Libraries NI has been working closely with the Council officers and has positively engaged with them, it is on the very clear understanding that approval by the Board and by DCAL of a business case for the proposed approach will be required before Libraries NI could commit to the proposed partnership.

10. Gilford

10.1 The Board’s Decision

10.1.1 The Board considered three options and adopted option 3 i.e. to work in partnership with Banbridge District Council and the Community Development Group to develop and implement an innovative approach to the provision of library services that meets local needs, using the facilities will be available in the new Community Centre, and close the current library building with effect from March 2012.
10.2 Implementation of the Decision

10.2.1 Gilford Library closed on 21 April 2012 and alternative provision has been made in the new Gilford Community Centre, a council facility. A mobile library calls regularly with an average of 59 customer visits and 95 issues per month, and within the building there is a small book collection, newspapers and IT provision. Libraries have also sought to provide library activities in the centre which relate to the Centre’s customer base and activities.

10.2.2 Meetings have taken place with local councillors, Centre staff and Gilford Forum and Libraries NI has responded to suggestions and comments and undertaken promotional activity. For example:
- mobile location moved to top of car park on Friday mornings;
- A flyer was distributed locally (including one to all previous Gilford Library Members) in January 2013 advertising the services provided currently
- Ancestry workshop advertised but no interest to date
- Library had a stand and story time at a fun day in the Community Centre in April 2013
- A new Mother and Toddler group has been established in the centre and from Sept Rhythm and Rhyme sessions will be held on this day from September 2013
- A new Libraries NI sign has been erected in the Centre – July 2013

10.2.3 Other than Rhythm and Rhyme attendance at events is low. The storytime sessions stopped in July 2013 as no one attended in 10 months and on average two people attend the reading groups.

11. Moneymore

11.1 The Board’s Decision

11.1.1 The Board considered two options and adopted option 2 i.e. to close the library.

11.2 Implementation of the Decision

11.2.1 The library closed on 31 October 2011. Weekly mobile provision has been put in place but use is low with an average of 26 customer visits and 57 issues per month. The staff in Cookstown Library are aware that some users from Moneymore are now using Cookstown as their home branch.

12. Moy

12.1 The Board’s Decision in 2011

12.1.1 The Board considered two options and adopted option 2 i.e. to close the library.
12.2 Implementing the Decision

12.2.1 Moy Library closed on 31 March 2012. Staff relocated to Dungannon and Coalisland Libraries. Fortnightly mobile provision has been put in place. It was determined that no further outreach activities would take place in Moy at this stage as so many users are now using Dungannon Library. However, discussions will take place with the Council once it has considered its presence in Moy further. The adult reading group who met in Moy Library before its closure now meet in the local church hall. A member of the group source and order books for their monthly meetings through Dungannon Library.
# Appendix One

## Usage Statistics

### Issues

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### Renewals

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### PAT Sessions

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## Active Members

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## Visits

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</table>
23rd August 2013

Ms. Irene Knox 214 Tattymoyle Road,
Chief Executive, Trillick,
LibrariesNI Headquarters, Co. Tyrone
Lisburn City Library, BT78 3QA
23 Linenhall Stree, Tel. 0750 228 4612
Lisburn
BT28 1FJ

Dear Ms. Knox,

Re. Fintona Library

I am writing, on behalf of the Fintona Library Educational Awareness and Training Association (FLEAT), in response to your letter of 05 July. I have been in contact with your colleague, Helen Osborn since you informed us of the decision made by the Board of LibrariesNI to retain the Fintona Library.

FLEAT is delighted with the decision made by the Board. We wish to thank the Board for the time given to consider our case over the past two years. We also wish to record our thanks to your regional management team of Helen Osborn and Stephen Bleakley and our local librarians for their help and support.

You referred in your letter to the proposal made with our colleagues in the Fintona Forum for a community hub building, which we hoped LibrariesNI would consider using in a tenanted relationship. We do however understand the decision of the Board not to consider this option further. We note the intention to carry out repairs to the roof of Fintona library to ensure it remains wind and water tight and to carry out some limited internal decorative repairs, We would ask however that consideration be given to an upgrade to the front façade of the building, in particular to the window area and the external decoration. Would it be possible to replace the ground floor windows? This work would help improve the external appearance, making the building more attractive and welcoming to users. Fintona Community Forum itself has carried out extensive decorative work to derelict buildings in the town over the past year and many of the other owners of business premises have themselves invested money in the improvement of their shop facades.

FLEAT is committed to continuing to engage with LibrariesNI to try and develop library services further in the area. WE have informed our local community of the decision made in July and informed them we would be responding formally to the decision. We continue to encourage active use and participation in the library service locally. We look forward to continue our joint working with LibrariesNI.

The Forum intends to continue with their plans for a community hub building and we will keep LibrariesNI informed of progress in this area. If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely,

Kieran Cranny
Chairperson, FLEAT