

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2011 at 2.00 pm at County Hall, Northallerton.

#### **PRESENT:-**

County Councillors: John Batt, John Fox, Tony Hall (Chairman), Bill Hout, Margaret Hulme, Brian Marshall, John McCartney, Heather Moorhouse, John Savage, Melva Steckles, Helen Swiers, Herbert Tindall.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: Alex Bird and Bridget Hardy.

Also in attendance: Executive Portfolio Holder County Councillor Chris Metcalfe and County Councillors John Blackburn and John Clark.

Officers: Julie Blaisdale (Assistant Director Library & Community Services), Ray Busby (Corporate Development Officer, Chief Executives Group), Carole Dunn and Josie O'Dowd (Legal & Democratic Services), Debbie Hogg (Assistant Director (Resources), Adult & Community Services), Derek Law (Corporate Director, Adult & Community Services).

Apologies were received from County Councillor Pat Marsburg.

Chairman County Councillor Tony Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular new Members to the Committee County Councillors John McCartney and Heather Moorhouse.

There were approximately 20 members of the public present.

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#### **COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK**

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#### **89. MINUTES**

##### **RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2011, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **90. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS**

The Chairman agreed that these would be taken at item 3 to which they all related.

#### **91. FUTURE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN NORTH YORKSHIRE**

##### **CONSIDERED –**

The report of the Corporate Director – Adult and Community Services.

The Chairman explained the running order for this main item on the agenda which would commence with an introduction from the Executive Member and then be followed by the Directorate presentation of proposals. Members of the Committee would then be invited to make any opening comments about the generality of proposals, and then public questions and statements would be taken, followed by a wider debate amongst the Committee.

County Councillor Chris Metcalfe, the Executive Member thanked the Committee for the extra time afforded to consider the results of the consultation and to devise the proposals arising. He commented that the consultation had been a very genuine exercise which had prompted tremendous public participation. He recorded thanks to all who had contributed.

Derek Law, Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services explained the budgetary situation and the need for the library service to take its share of the cuts. He described the substantial savings which had been achieved to date and noted that the future proposals for the Library Service had changed substantially in light of the results of consultation. He felt that the revised proposals tabled demonstrated a sustainable and innovative approach. He advocated that a strategic approach be taken as this was clearly preferable to either 'salami slicing' or a 'slash and burn' approach. The desire for fairness, as manifested in the results of the consultation, had been taken on board and therefore the proposed changes now impacted upon more libraries, sharing the pain.

Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director Libraries and Community Services stated that the County Council recognised that time was needed to work through community based solutions, hence the extra £350,000 which had been put back in to the budget for the current year along with £300,000 from the Book Fund. She noted that some savings must be achieved in the present year hence the changes to the current configuration of the mobile fleet, and some costs would be incurred as a result of decommissioning. She noted that costs had consistently been taken out of back office functions and that new technology was used wherever possible to reduce staffing costs. By 2014 £5m per annum would be left in the budget to run the service. It was important that sustainable arrangements were in place to ensure that services could be delivered within this envelope. Julie Blaisdale stated that without doubt the service was highly valued, however the need to generate savings would not go away, hence it was proposed that a further report would be brought in October. This would enable more time to work with communities to develop further solutions. The situation provided a significant challenge for the service which was both highly regarded and high performing, it was essential that innovative solutions were found. She confirmed that simply allowing the status quo to prevail was not an option. There was a need to move forward to ensure that the service was less vulnerable in future. The imperative to save £2m had forced change and the desire was for communities to work with the County Council to work on driving costs down together. For example considering the co-location of different services – this was already working in some areas, enabling staff and premises costs to be shared. She noted that detailed discussions were on going with community groups across the County at Parish and Town Council level and she was optimistic that these discussions would bear fruit. She noted that the role of local members was vital in helping to forge these agreements and to look at sustainable business plans. Those areas of the Library Service which represented least value for money had come under particularly close scrutiny - in this instance the mobile library service. Costs were going up inexorably year on year, whilst usage of the service was declining. The report tabled explained that mobile library usage was under 4% of the Library Service use as a whole. The cost of this service was over £80 per user, and of these users over 50% also used static libraries whose usage was increasing. Where it was proposed to withdraw this service, discussions had been on going with the Parishes and villages to identify alternative solutions. In some instances the super mobile could be better deployed in the most rural areas to create "an event" linking in with other local activities and staying on site for longer. The active participation of villages was clearly key and the example of the George and Dragon Pub in Hudswell was cited as a positive example, a community pub which was also providing a library facility. Julie Blaisdale stressed that a one size of solution did not fit all, solutions needed to be tailored to individual circumstances. She spoke of the home library service which targeted home users picking up those who couldn't get out to either a mobile or a static library. This aspect of service enabled reduction of duplication of service provision. Appendix 4 of the report set out options regarding the super mobile and the outcomes here were yet to be resolved. She stressed that the super mobile service would not replicate the mobile library service, it would have a different emphasis and very much relied on working jointly with communities to develop ancillary events to ensure the best outcomes.

Speaking of the impact of the budget cuts Julie Blaisdale noted that the £300,000 reduction in the Book Fund was a temporary reduction, as it was very important to maintain regularly updated stock. Regarding the follow up report to the Executive in October, this would look at the community agreements which had been reached - covering assistance in kind and so on. It was noted that the use of volunteers may help extend what would otherwise be reduced hours. Speaking of legal responsibilities the 1964 Act was mentioned which required the delivery of a competent and efficient service, and it was stressed that working with partners would assist in meeting this obligation. It was proposed to use professional staff alongside volunteers to ensure that the high standards previously achieved would prevail. The use of Service Level Agreements would be important here. Regarding future options for service delivery, it was noted that following the analysis of the results of consultation there was no longer a desire to pursue Option 1, the preference was now for Option 2 which was very much based upon community solutions. Each of the categories used to describe libraries was outlined. Category 1 serving the largest areas of population; where opening hours would be reduced particularly Sundays. Category 2 related mainly to market towns where it was hoped to invest in static facilities and retain them wherever possible. Category 3 was described as those libraries which were close to a Category 1 library. One of those on the list was in an unsuitable location and it was hoped to find an alternative. Community based solutions were sought in all these cases. Category 4 was those libraries where community arrangements existed already and this list was expected to expand over time. Regarding finance and risk, the future of the service was clearly dependent upon making the required savings. Julie Blaisdale noted the experiences in other Local Authorities who had worked through changes and had not consulted properly. She noted that the County Council had tried to avoid this situation. The Equality Impact Assessment produced had certainly not shied away from difficult issues. In addition to extensive public consultation, the Directorate had worked hard with staff to keep them briefed. There had clearly been a tough message for some, particularly where jobs were at risk, however, as much information as possible had been shared. After the Executive meeting on 14 June when outcomes were known, further road shows would be staged for staff ,and UNISON were involved with this.

Summing up the reasons for the recommendations the following factors were noted:-

- Firstly budget and the need to make savings;
- Secondly finding the best sustainable solution for the long term;
- And finally noting the time spent on consultation and the results of that.

The Chairman County Councillor Tony Hall then opened up discussions to the Committee for their initial reactions.

Members made the following general comments:

- It was accepted that savings needed to be made, however if 20% of people used the mobile service there was a preference to see at least six of the ten mobiles retained. There was some disappointment that there were not more facts and figures available particularly regarding staff redundancies, savings in buildings, costs, etc. There was also concern that the level of community motivation might wane over time.
- It was noted that the more rural the location of the mobile service the better used it was, the elderly particularly relying on this service. Regarding the alternative proposals based upon use of the super mobile in locations such as Castleton and Danby, visits would need to fit in with the community bus timetable to ensure that people could access it.

- The revised proposals were welcomed and felt to represent a big step forward in comparison to the original proposals. Assurance was sought that looked after children who were supported via libraries would continue to benefit from the service. Regarding the home library service it was noted that this facility was highly valued by our most vulnerable service users and its future must be ensured. Regarding the Category three libraries it was positively noted that more staff had been allocated to support the development of community solutions.
- It was noted that where mobile services were being reduced the importance of communication became all the more acute. Also the need for a vehicle that was fit for purpose was noted.
- The question of internet access in Category three libraries was raised, requesting that the requirement should be fulfilled.
- The underlying optimism in the report regarding volunteers was noted but the question was raised whether volunteers were available in all the places that they were needed. The emphasis on community ownership was welcomed, however it was noted that this didn't develop over night and it was in fact a far bigger issue than just libraries.

In response to these opening comments Julie Blaisdale commented as follows.

- Fact sheets had been provided relating to every library and mobile service, and these were all published on the website.
- Regarding the suggestion to retain of six mobiles, Debbie Hogg, Assistant Director Resources, Adult and Community Services, stated that costs of around £350,000 per annum would be incurred, therefore creating a significant shortfall in in-year savings, which would consequently need to be found elsewhere if this were pursued.
- Julie Blaisdale confirmed that professional library staff would continue to work with looked after children in association with CYPS.
- Regarding the home library service, this relied upon an excellent band of volunteers and hopefully there were further opportunities to capitalise upon this.
- Regarding working with Category 3 libraries communities needed to understand what they were taking on when community solutions were proposed. It was noted that in over half of the locations discussions were well under way. Significant levels of support were being offered by colleagues in Legal Services, amongst others, helping community groups to understand exactly what they were getting into.
- Regarding volunteers it was noted that even where volunteering was not common people had come forward which was very encouraging.

Moving on to public questions, the Chairman County Councillor Tony Hall took each notified question or statement in turn starting with that forwarded by County Councillor Brian Simpson who wasn't able to be present, but whose statement had been circulated and is shown below:

*I would like to make the following comments about the options regarding Libraries and in particular Eastfield Library. I feel when it comes to Eastfield Library the report is short sighted. I do not believe the future development of Eastfield itself and the surrounding area has been properly taken into account. Over the next few years approx 5000 new homes are to be built in and around Eastfield, it is recognised that Eastfield will be a hub for what will effectively be a new town. On that basis alone Eastfield Library should be classified as a*

core Library. Eastfield also has high levels of deprivation which also need to be more prevalent in the report.

*At a meeting held in Eastfield with community stakeholders and NYCC representatives we looked at options around the community becoming involved with the running of Eastfield Library. The outcome of that meeting was clear, we are not opposed to the use of volunteers, we are not totally opposed to the community playing a greater role in the Library and the services it offers. We did stipulate that a reasonable level of professional staff MUST be maintained in the Library itself. I believe that the community of Eastfield would be able to work in partnership with NYCC to operate its Library services, partnership to me is the key word. We need a commitment from NYCC to maintain that reasonable level of staff in the Library to ensure any volunteers are properly supported.*

*I believe that this can be done, the existing core Libraries should be taking more of a hit during this need to make savings, this would assist the branch Libraries in terms of staffing, it would assist partnerships between NYCC and communities such as Eastfield to ensure the Library service is not only maintained but also improved, giving communities a greater sense of ownership and pride over their Libraries.*

*Can you please circulate this e mail or have it read out at the meeting please.*

*Kind regards*

*Brian*

*County Councillor Brian Simpson  
Eastfield & Osgodby Division*

Responding Julie Blaisdale noted that the current proposals represented an improvement for Eastfield. The location obviously had proximity to Scarborough Library with high levels of deprivation in the area. As a result of this Eastfield had a big partnership offer and it was hoped to develop this.

Ann Richards spoke regarding Bilton Library, in the absence of Emily Diamand, whose statement was circulated and is shown below:

*In the report on the future delivery of library services, Bilton Library has been placed in category 3, the category providing the lowest level of support, and threatening the future operation of our library. However, using the Library Service's own criteria, we believe Bilton Library should be at least in category 2, and we ask the committee to move Bilton Library out of category 3. Our reasons are:*

- The stated reason for Bilton Library being in category 3 is that it is 'within five or so miles' of a main library. However this appears to have been applied arbitrarily, given that there are libraries in category 2 that are also within five miles of a main library.*
- Bilton Library serves a far larger population than suggested in the Library Service's figures, including the adjoining Woodfield ward, in which a recent survey found that 44% of the population had no qualifications.*
- Bilton Library has one of the highest rates of use by children of any in North Yorkshire: 44% of users are under 16, compared to only 24% for Harrogate Library. Bilton Library clearly plays an important educational role in an area of special need.*
- Bilton Library is the most efficient library in North Yorkshire, providing its service at a mere £10.15 per user, compared to the average of £18.47 for the category 1 libraries. The Library Service would do well to learn from Bilton Library, rather than penalising it.*

*We ask the Committee to move Bilton Library into category 2, and also to send the Library Service recommendations to the next full council meeting for discussion.*

Ann Richards noted the desire to see Bilton Library moved from a Category three to two feeling that the application of the distance criteria had been some what arbitrary. She noted the bad traffic encountered when travelling to Harrogate and the level of depravation in the area noting that 44% of the population had no qualifications according to Harrogate Borough Council figures. She stated that many homes had no suitable space for homework to be undertaken hence reliance on the library. Three primary schools near to the library were regular users and story time and holiday activities were particularly well attended. The existence of the library helped mitigate the social isolation of the elderly and it was also a very efficient library costing £10.15 per user. It was accepted that the library needed to take its share of the services and that the community should provide volunteers but it was stressed that the support of the County Council was needed hence the desire to move from Category three to two. Concluding it was noted that good guidance was sought to build the business case and seek a change from Category three to two.

Responding Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director – Libraries and Community Services reiterated that the local authority had to take an over arching view of all libraries. The question had to be asked where the stand alone libraries could be afforded given the proximity of the main library in Harrogate it was hard ~~not~~ to accept ~~in~~ this case. She acknowledged the level of use by children and also the impact of the halo effect when Harrogate library relocated. Usage figures were monitored before and after and usage certainly went up during that time. Staff were also redeployed from Harrogate therefore the unit costs were brought down.

Hazel Chatwin spoke in her own right and on behalf of County Councillor Shelagh Marshall in her absence. Hazel Chatwin statement had been circulated and is shown below:

*I have seen the proposals for Embsay Library and I am concerned there will be no IT facilities provided only books as described in Catorgory ( sic ) 3. I have been told people are waiting 6 months for IT Services in Skipton. Why is it not possible to provide services at Embsay? I am Chairman of the Village Hall where the Library is situated and we will provide free access and parking to extend the Skipton facilities as well as benefit our own resources. I would appreciate a three minutes slot at the Meeting on the 8th June to discuss the above.*

County Councillor Shelagh Marshall's statements had been circulated and are shown below:

*In my response to the first consultation on the future of the Library Services I responded, making constructive comments which could be applied to all libraries in North Yorkshire. I am pleased to see that several of the issues I raised have been addressed, but very disappointed that addressing them has not included Gargrave and Embsay libraries.*

*Regarding these new proposals I am commenting on Gargrave and Embsay only and would like to ask the Committee to put a request to the Executive regarding these two.*

*In my original comments I stated that I felt there would be too high a financial risk for volunteer run libraries to be responsible for the IT facilities in our libraries.*

*You have stated clearly that for Category 2 libraries, there will be support for accommodation, bookstock; IT facilities and broadband connectivity as well as an element of professional staffing based in the library albeit at a reduced rate.*

*There has been huge support from the communities of Gargrave and Embsay, for the continuance of the Library using volunteers. A public meeting in Gargrave saw 101 villagers attending with 35 people, saying they would volunteer. A strong Library Support committee was set up.*

*In Embsay a library awareness day was held and was very well attended, there were requests for the library to be open on Saturday morning with a cyber cafe in the Village Hall, a considerable number of volunteers came forward when a questionnaire was put through the 850 letterboxes in the villages of Embsay and Eastby.*

*At the Craven Area Committee, The Head of the Library Services and Corporate Director of ACS both stressed that where there was support from the communities, the County Council was very keen to work in partnership with those communities.*

*With this level of community support from Gargrave and Embsay, I would ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the following:*

*“That when the final decision on the future of the library services is taken by the Executive, that the Library Services are asked to convene a meeting with representatives of Gargrave and Embsay library support groups with staff from Skipton Library to consider and look at ways each can support the others particularly including: Home Library Delivery Services, sharing the number of volunteer hours and full support by NYCC for the continuance of IT facilities and broadband connectivity.”*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Shelagh Marshall*

*I would like to comment and ask a couple of questions about the proposed use of the Super Mobile Library in Upper Wharfedale.*

*I am supportive of Option 2 – Appendix 4 states that it will have fortnightly visits of two hours. From my telephone conversations I understand that this would be each at Buckden and Kettlewell and on a Wednesday afternoon. There are Yorkshire Dales National Park car parks in both villages. (Kettlewell is 6.5 miles from Grassington the nearest static library.*

*Question: Will the Library services consult with the communities of Buckden and Kettlewell before the final decisions about day, time and venue are confirmed?*

*In the original response from the community of Kettlewell it was stated that school children get off the bus at Kettlewell and go into the mobile library to do some homework.*

*Question: Para. 2.37 Confirmation requested that the home delivery service be available for the residents of Deepdale, Oughtershaw and Beckermonds if requested? These hamlets being some miles from Buckden.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Shelagh Marshall*

*Hazel Chatwin reiterated the need for further discussion regarding the category 3 classification. A better mutual understanding of what communities wanted and what could be delivered was needed. It was accepted that IT usage figures were presently low and that early discussions were needed to clarify the reality of the situation.*

*Alan Simpson then spoke in the absence of Mike Palin, whose statement had been circulated and is shown below:*

*The report describing the post-consultation proposals for delivering a Library Service to North Yorkshire has placed Gargrave Library as a Category 3 library and slated it for closure unless the Community can largely provide for it, with only minimal support from*

*NYCC – far less support than would have been forthcoming from the original delivery proposal.*

*The Cat 3 status is presumably derived from its proximity to Skipton (Cat 1) where it just creeps in to the arbitrarily set 5 miles and not because this successful and well used facility is located in unsuitable premises.*

*The Cat 3 allocation ignores the fact that Gargrave faces away from Skipton in that it lies at the southern extreme of its catchment area which, to give it its full title, is Gargrave and Malhamdale. Malham is some 12 miles from Skipton and it, and the intervening villages, are likely to be inaccessible to the retained super-mobile library, given that the rest of the mobile service is to be scrapped. This would qualify Gargrave's catchment area as 'rural and deprived' in service terms.*

*It follows then that Gargrave Library in every sense, but one, ought to be designated a Category 2 Library; the one being the need to use arbitrary and unevenly applied pretexts, of which there are examples to be found in the report, to find savings in order to reach the required level of cuts.*

*We therefore urge the Scrutiny Committee to strongly recommend to the Executive that Gargrave Library should be re-allocated to Category 2. Then the work of its Library Support Group to achieve a sustainable Library in continuing partnership with NYCC, first established in 2004 with a donation from the village of £32,000, can continue on a fair and realistic basis.*

He explained that when Gargrave library had been relaunched following significant fund raising by local residents it was seen as a flag ship partnership between the County Council and the community. Whilst the current financial constraints were noted there was a desire to maintain the partnership and to retain the facility under the local authority umbrella. Finally there was a reiteration of the request to reclassify the library as a Category two instead of a Category three to reflect its importance to the local community.

Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director – Libraries and Community Services explained that Gargrave library was 4.4 miles from Skipton and that most users lived within one kilometre of Gargrave. Usage was not high in comparison to other libraries, however she recognised that there was still a very important partnership between the community and the County Council who did want the future of the library to be secured. She explained that Grassington had been in a similar position before and now had a role of serving as community hub where the library and village hall had been combined. She confirmed that there was no desire to remove the capital estate but there was a need for volunteer support to run the facility. She was committed to finding a positive way forward and confirmed that more meetings would follow.

County Councillor Roberts of Craven District Council then spoke on behalf of Mrs L Close whose statement had been circulated (but was not present) and is shown below, and himself in respect of Upper Wharfedale.

*We are very concerned with the proposals as they stand and we strongly oppose option 1, as our whole parish would be denied a service that it currently enjoys. Residents of all ages' use the existing system and the service is particularly used by many of the school children from our village school. Under this option our residents would have to travel to Grassington to access the library service. Our library users consider the facilities and book stock available at the Grassington Hub extremely poor. In addition our elderly residents complain bitterly about the access to the Grassington Hub, as they have to negotiate the cobbled square and are very concerned with falling particularly when carrying heavy books.*

*We are pleased that the recommendation of the report is for option 2 but still have significant concerns. Firstly the village of Starbotton between Kettlewell and Buckden will*



*no longer have a service and feel that it should be possible to include a stop at this location as the proposed bus service passes through the village on route to Buckden. The village has several elderly residents who use the current library service.*

*The report states in its aims under option 2 the:*

*“Retention and reconfiguration of existing supermobile/HLIS services to Ensure coverage in areas of greatest rurality/sparsity furthest away from Static libraries;”*

*We believe that this statement is not being fulfilled with the proposals that are put forward with this option.*

*Firstly, the exclusion of Starbotton from the new route does not meet the stated criteria. Secondly, the complete exclusion of the several villages and hamlets beyond Buckden from the proposed service, who do have a service under the existing mobile library. These villages/hamlets most definitely qualify in their 'rurality' and 'sparsity'. We question why these villages/hamlets have had their library service withdrawn? Is it because of the size of the super mobile and its inability to negotiate the roads in this area of rurality and sparsity? If so then the proposal to use this vehicle to fulfil the stated aim is self-defeating.*

*We would strongly recommend that the committees question the reasoning of their officers in withdrawing the service from these rural communities. We feel that with the support of North Yorkshire Highways that services could be made to at least some of these villages/hamlets and request that a survey of the road network is carried out to look at creating turning areas for the supermobile library.*

*Councillor John Roberts own statement had also been circulated and is shown below:*

*I am the Upper Wharfedale Councillor on Craven District Council and I am particularly concerned with the proposals made in the report concerning the Mobile Library provision for my Ward, Upper Wharfedale. I am informed by Councillor Shelagh Marshall, NYCC that representations concerning the Library provision have to be with you by 1200 hours today.*

*I would be most grateful if this E Mail could be seen by members of the Care and Independence Committee to be held on 8th June 2011.*

*In the representation concerning the Library Review that was sent from the Parishes of Kettlewell with Starbotton and Buckden in February I reported that the residents were extremely keen to retain the mobile library service, which was very important to the residents, particularly the more elderly (whose numbers are increasing) . One Lady has been using the service since 1958!! The only concession that they were prepared to accept was an extension to a visit every 4 weeks instead of the current 3 weekly visit. The nearest provision is the Hub in Grassington but this facility was of little use as the elderly have difficulty walking on the 'studs' in Grassington and are unable to carry their books. In any case residents found the library facilities to be poor. One must also take into consideration the cost of fuel.*

*At the meeting held in Buckden between residents of Upper Wharfedale and NYCC Libraries the idea of using the Village Halls or other facilities to house a small library were considered to be unrealistic for many reasons. The residents at this meeting were of the view that for NYCC to meet their statutory obligations the status quo should remain. In the Report, as I read it there are but 2 Options for covering the NYCC Statutory requirement for the provision of a free and comprehensive library service to this very remote rural area of Upper Wharfedale.*

*Firstly the standard mobile vehicles are to be removed from Service but 2 super mobile vehicles are to be retained. These vehicles cannot negotiate roads to the north of*

*Buckden. Option 1 sees a super mobile serving Buckden and perhaps Starbotton alone. Option 2 sees a super mobile servicing Kettlewell, Starbotton and Buckden. These options depend on the distance to Grassington Hub (which is not considered to be a suitable facility). The mileage from Kettlewell to Grassington is somewhere in between 6 and 7 miles, some say the distance is over 7 miles.*

*The residents would wish for the status quo to continue however under the circumstances I would urge the Committee in their scrutiny to recommend Option 2 to the Executive Committee as being the only acceptable option. It would be ironic if the super mobile were to drive through Kettlewell to Buckden - this I would find politically totally unacceptable.*

*The residents of Buckden do question the decision for the super mobile to stop at Buckden and go no further. There are further isolated settlements up the Dale - Yockenthwaite, Beckermonds and Oughtershaw - where there is no bus service and now it is proposed to remove the statutory right for those people to be provided with a free and comprehensive library service.*

*The Overview committee will see that the NYCC Library service has met with and discussed with the residents but I was not entirely satisfied that the views of the residents were understood particularly the problems providing a service to the North of Buckden. A super mobile just could not negotiate the roads to the north. It might be that NYCC has to retain one smaller vehicle in order to continue to provide the current level of service.*

*If all that can be achieved from this review is a degradation of the current service to calls by a super mobile at Kettlewell, Starbotton and Buckden I must with great reluctance accept the propose compromise however, I must insist that consultation by NYCC with the Parish Councils of Buckden and Kettlewell with Starbotton take place to agree days, intervals and timings. This is crucial in order that the service is available to the village children.*

Councillor John Roberts expressed concerns regarding the mobile service as outlined in paragraph 5.3 of the report. He noted that no Members of the Care and Independence Committee or the Executive were Craven Councillors therefore he wanted to make sure that the rurality of the situation was understood. Residents wanted to retain the status quo a visit of the mobile library every three weeks. He indicated that there would be acceptance of a monthly visit by a super mobile in its place. He expressed reservations about the Grassington hub this being 7.1 miles away. He hoped that the super mobile would also visit Kettlewell and Buckden but recognised that north of this would be difficult due to the narrowness of the road. He questioned what provision would be made for Littondale and noted the responsibilities placed upon the local authority in terms of the Sustainable Communities Act. He urged caution regarding the removal of facilities and the impact this could have upon the community.

Responding Julie Blaisdale stressed that these were proposals and that the aim was to achieve best possible usage of facilities. She reiterated that the proposed super mobile routes would represent an improvement for Kettlewell and Buckden but stressed that arrangements would not be finalised until there had been further local meetings. She did recognise the need to serve the elderly and hoped that the Home Library Service could be extended in the area addressing the needs of those who could not leave their homes easily.

Judy Cumbor then spoke in support of Great Ayton library, her statement had been circulated (accompanied by a spreadsheet, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book) and is shown below:

*The people of Great Ayton have been actively using many means to highlight the unfairness and inequality of the NYCC's original strategy regarding the Libraries. We forwarded petitions and held a Public Meeting with representatives from the Library Services and County Council, 650 people attended, crammed into one of our local Halls.*

*The Public Meeting was very passionate. Immediately after the Meeting The Save Great Ayton Library Group met with the NYCC representatives to discuss how to move forward and secure a future for our Library.*

*It is our understanding that Great Ayton has been one of the leading lights of the County in helping NYCC review and amend their strategy to spread the required costs savings around more libraries resulting in a higher level of County Council involvement in more libraries than originally proposed. However, we would add that whilst Library Services are demonstrating they have listened and are sharing the pain more equally, it could be said that by creating so many Categories some Communities are treated more fairly/equally than others. The report would also indicate that any savings in Library Services Management and Back Office are negligible and it would appear no effort has been made to look at costs savings within this area, should this not be challenged more and "pain" taken at this level too.*

*Since the January Meeting Members of the Group have met with Library Services on two other occasions to discuss options available. From the discussions the Group was aiming towards a Library Service something along the lines of Category 2 (where many of the services enjoyed today would continue with staffing at a reduced level) in addition the Community would look to find additional ways of making money and creating a vibrant and dynamic social enterprise that is a partnership between the County Council and the Community. Many ideas to save significant costs and generate income have been put forward.*

*In addition the Group held two further Public Meetings to consult with them and clarify the will of the people. Residents of the Village have made it very clear that our Community cannot support a fully run Community Library.*

*The Group is very shocked to find that Great Ayton had been placed in Category 3, which would intimate that we would possibly lose some of the essential services supplied by the Library Services. This is despite the Report stating that, of the people responding to the Consultation process, Great Ayton was one of the top 4 used Libraries, the other 3 towns have been put in Category 2.*

*Great Ayton has the largest, if not one of the largest elderly populations in North Yorkshire. Many of the people using the Library (including young people) do so because they do not have internet access at home and do not have access to transport, or in the case of disabled people and young children could not use public transport on their own.*

*Our Library is ideally situated in the centre of the Village and is more than just a Library to the Residents; for some of the older generation it is a place where they can interface on a regular basis with others, it also helps the economy in our large Village. It is a true Community Hub. Many of the Residents went to school in the building and its continued success as a place of learning and community support is important to them.*

*We feel the Report is unfair to Great Ayton and our Community and would ask that more thought is given before final decisions are made. If Categories are to be used we would naturally wish to be in Category 2.*

Judy Cumbor noted that there had been lots of public meetings which were very well attended, 650 present on one occasion. There had also been petitions and letters, people were very passionate about the issue and saw their library as a real community hub. She noted that those at the Special School also used the facility. Following previous meetings with senior representatives of the County Council it had been understood that the library would be classified as a Category two and there was astonishment to see that this was now Category three. It was accepted that there was a need to share the pain but it was felt that there was a need to better understand back office arrangements as a way of achieving potential savings. There was a desire to work in partnership to resolve this issue. It was

also noted that there was a significant elderly population who were very reliant upon the library which was in a good location, central to the village and accessible to the majority. It was felt that sufficient weight had not been given to the petitions which had been submitted that they had become lost within the 63 page report. Concluding she noted that there was grave concern regarding the categorisation of the library as three rather than two.

Julie Blaisdale noted the passion which was evident and the wish to save Great Ayton library, commenting that she would certainly never forget the public meetings she had attended there. There was a great desire to work with the community and harness this passion hopefully to strengthen the status of the library as a community hub. She was unclear where the impression had been created that Great Ayton would be classed as a Category 2 rather than a Category 3 - it had not been discussed in those terms previously. The numbers didn't alter the geography and proximity to the other facilities. She reinforced the need to spend limited resources responsibly in future and added that savings would be achieved across all levels of staff. She cited the Category 2 libraries at Starbeck and Colburn - these were not stand alone libraries and that was why they were not categorised as 3, a multi agency approach was adopted. She accepted that there was a large elderly population locally and that hard work would be needed to address these concerns, but discussions would continue and would hopefully bear fruit.

Simon Jackson also spoke in support of Great Ayton library, his statement had been circulated and is shown below:

*I want to praise library services for holding the consultation however no-one in Great Ayton understands how the decision to make our library a category 3 library has been made.*

*In Great Ayton we just wanted cuts to be applied across all libraries rather than favouring some over others but now we are being penalised for speaking out. Why? What makes me think this way?*

*The libraries at Colburn, Eastfield, Scalby & Starbeck are similar distances or nearer to a core library than Great Ayton yet are considered as category 2 libraries whilst Great Ayton is a '3'. Of course I am sure that Ms Blaisdale will tell you that these places have rural &/or social deprivation! In addition the nearest core libraries to these are able to take the higher useage whilst Stokesley is not – there are currently residents from Stokesley who use Great Ayton library as they are better able to park. An aspect which also concerns greatly is that the library is 1/4mile from the bus stop and given that Great Ayton has an elderly age population this is not suitable in the winter. I would ask the councillors to make the journey themselves on the bus and in the rain, a trip to the library which will take some 1 & 1/2 hours!*

*On the basis of population numbers and the age profile Great Ayton should be a Category 2 library.*

*We are under no illusions we will have to make the library cost less and earn more but where is the financial data that should accompany such decisions and maybe have influence on them? I used to work for a financial institution and am alarmed that there seems to be little, detailed, financial analysis or at least evidence of such. For example the head office costs in the 'fact sheet' are allocated as £44 per open hour for each library whilst the actual costs behind this will be incurred unless savings are made in these directly at 'head office' & according to the report such action has been ruled out.*

*We would appreciate the opportunity for our categorisation to be reconsidered and for library services to work with the Group on the following:*

- i) Further clarity concerning Category 2 and 3?*
- ii) On what basis was Great Ayton placed in Category 3?*
- iii) How to move forward based on the basis previously discussed*
- iv) Move Great Ayton to a Category 2 library*

Simon Jackson added that he felt the financial position was not clear regarding the present situation: what was likely to go; and what would be left. He sought clarity regarding the difference between Category 2 and 3, noting that the future of Category 2 libraries wasn't clear in the report. He wished to see Great Ayton classified as a Category 2 library recognising the high usage.

Debbie Hogg - Assistant Director Resources, drew attention to page 16 of the report which set out the immediate priorities and areas where further work was required. She explained that the strategy addressed the initial shortfall in 2011/12 and then explained that further detail would be forthcoming in October regarding the detailed proposals to achieve savings in 2012/13 and 2013/14. An incremental approach was purposely being taken to facilitate community engagement. Julie Blaisdale reiterated the need for further detailed negotiation with community groups and hoped that by October the road map for Great Ayton would be established. She stressed that robust business plans were required for Category 2 libraries also.

County Councillor Heather Moorhouse then spoke as the local councillor for Great Ayton. She read out comments from County Councillor Caroline Seymour who was unable to attend, the key point being that the two communities of Great Ayton and Stokesley were very distinct and merited their own facilities. County Councillor Heather Moorhouse recorded her thanks to all those attending from Great Ayton - for their comments and support shown at the meeting. She expressed deep concern that information had appeared in the Northern Echo regarding the proposals, before it had been seen by some Members. She noted the issues around IT and questions around the sustainability of the building. She stated that she would not be supporting the proposals regarding Great Ayton library as she felt that the categories were unclear and also had concerned that the needs of older people would be overlooked. She noted that 38% of users were older. She also expressed concern about the impact on local shops if people were encouraged to use the library in Stokesley, they might then also choose to shop there – placing the future of local shops at risk.

County Councillor Andrew Goss spoke in support of Bilton library noting the proximity of Woodfield, Woodpark and Low Ward - areas of social deprivation and low income. He noted that there had been 892 signatures on petitions seeking the retention of Bilton Library reflecting that it was the life blood of the community. He felt it was very important that the facility was retained.

Sian Barber, who was not present, had submitted a late statement which was circulated and is shown below:

*It is not possible for me to attend your Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8th June so I hope you will forgive me taking a few minutes of your time to raise several queries.*

*I am concerned about the future of all the libraries but my particular concern is for Scalby Library. The press release was headed 'County Council set out fair solution to libraries' future' but the substance of the report reveals that this is not in fact the case; to take local examples Hunmanby and Ayton libraries still face closure unless a "community led solution" can be found. As for Scalby, the proposal is that this would be a "Category 2" library but some of the phrases used to explain the service that will be offered are confusing. It states there will be 'an element of "professional" staffing based in the library albeit at a reduced rate than currently provided.' The use of the word "professional" is confusing. Does it mean that the staff that are currently based at Scalby, or at least a proportion of them will continue to work there, supported by volunteers or are the Council actually still suggesting that the service be provided by volunteers with Team Leaders and Officers popping in occasionally? If the latter is the case then there is very little difference from the initial proposal for the library service; just the additional rather vague promise of 'ongoing support towards accommodation....' [Para 5.6] whereas before voluntary groups*

were told they would have to find the funding for rent as well as utilities and IT. It may be regarded as an improved offer but hardly a "fair solution". I firmly believe that a library as busy as Scalby needs the regulation and consistency of a permanent salaried staff to ensure a safe environment and provide an efficient service.

I do understand the need for cutbacks but I feel that they should be shared more fairly between all the libraries in the county and amongst all levels of the staffing structure. It angers me that the council can state 'the county council has taken full account of the passionate belief of those engaged in the consultation process that savings should be shared across all libraries' when a detailed reading of the report shows this is not the case and still raises so many uncertainties for both library users and staff.

I trust you will be able to call the Council officers to account and ensure that the 1000s of library users who took part in the consultation process did not waste their time.

Graham Kempson-Park who had submitted a late statement was then invited to speak. His statement had been circulated and is shown below:

*May I give you a Definition from the Oxford English Dictionary*

*Library – A building or room containing collections of books for use or borrowing by the public: Quite a dry definition and one that does not tell the Story of Bilton Library's place in our community.*

*Bilton is a special place, with its Cricket Club, open spaces, Community Centre, Churches, Youth Club, Schools, a fantastic Gala and at the heart of this Special Community.... Bilton Library.*

*For Bilton Library is an exceptional place, used by hundreds and thousands of people every year. A place that serves toddlers, school children, the very elderly and everyone else in between.*

*I could tell you stories of the eighty year old woman, recently widowed, who after many months of sitting alone after the death of her husband of 58 years, took her first steps back into the outside world by visiting Bilton Library. "Its like an old friend to me" she said... or the countless number of children who read here, surf the internet here or meet with their friends in a safe environment.*

*We have seen ever-increasing numbers use Bilton Library, even when we take into account the refurbishment of Harrogate Central Library.*

*Bilton Library's cost per lending, per active user, in fact however you want to cut the figures, are the best around.*

*Meaning that Bilton Library is amongst the most efficient, we have.*

*All this despite that fact that Bilton Library takes the hit on all the cost of the building (rates, IT, insurance, maintenance, the other users of the building do not bear a share of these costs).*

*And then there is the building itself and the planning permission granted in the 1970's. Will the building be able to be used for anything other than a Library? Will it just sit empty for years and years costing the Council Taxpayer?*

*Or will YOU the County Councillors of North Yorkshire County Council, take a Bold, Difficult and Far Reaching decision today and vote to keep Bilton Library Open.*

*In God (and County Councillors) We Trust*

He reiterated that it was an exceptional place which was really widely used by both the very young and very old. He felt it was an integral part of a great community with ever increasing usage, and whilst acknowledging the halo effect, felt that this was not the full explanation. He noted that a costing of £14 per active user was the true situation if the impact of the halo effect was removed from calculations. He noted that if others using the building paid their way, then these costs would be further reduced. He felt it would be impractical for local people to pass by Bilton Library to go and use Harrogate Library. He also noted the deprivation in the area and the consequent reliance on local facilities. He noted that many of those concerned had limited means would not go into Harrogate to use alternative facilities. He feared that if the library were decommissioned, the building could sit empty and unused. He urged members to recommend the reclassification of the library as a Category 2 and pledged that if this happened, the community would make sure it maintained the level of service and provide a beacon facility.

County Councillor David Jeffels asked whether the recipient libraries would be able to cope with the increased demand placed upon them in future. He felt that the key word was sustainability and suggested the need for flexibility too. He registered concern about the timetable for the completion of business plans by the end of October, given that peak holiday time was approaching and wondered if this would present a difficulty. Regarding the support for Category 3 libraries, he wished to know whether the support would be on going once facilities were up and running and stressed the need to closely monitor and review the situation.

County Councillor John Blackburn stated that the essence of the problem was the existence of Category 3, and the objective seemed to be the end Category 3s and to move them to Category 4. He explained that he represented Hertford and Cayton south of Scarborough, the most south easterly point of North Yorkshire. It was sparsely populated and Hunmanby was the largest village in the area. He noted the isolation of the area particularly since the recent bus cuts. He explained that local people accepted that the status quo could not prevail, however they would like to have been consulted on the question of the categorisation of their libraries. He noted the scale of the response to the libraries consultation with petition signatures amounting to 1,641. Large public meetings had been held, which he had attended these on his own and these meetings had been difficult. A Friends Group of Hunmanby Library had been formed following the public meeting but the group had been devastated to learn subsequently that they would have to support the building given its classification as a Category 3. They felt that this had not been highlighted before. He queried the reference to 5 miles to the nearest alternative library, adding that there were 7 parishes in Hertford and Cayton and that they were more than 5 miles from Filey. He also stressed the need to take people not just buildings into account, and reiterated the request that Hunmanby Library be reclassified as a Category 2. He also felt that the Home Library Service would be under threat if greater distances had to be travelled by volunteers collecting stock.

County Councillor Tony Hall then opened up the debate to the Committee.

County Councillor John McCartney queried the cost implications of changing the Category 3s to 2s and Debbie Hogg, Assistant Director Resources, confirmed that this would be in the region of £300,000 per annum.

County Councillor Bill Hoult commented that there seemed to be an over reliance on the distance aspect, occupation and ownership of buildings, and other users. He felt that the needs of people were not put first and that deprivation factors had not been given due weight. He reiterated that people of limited means tended to stay local for their facilities and would not travel to Harrogate as the core library. He felt that the use of Category 3 status perhaps created more problems than it solved and acknowledged that perhaps not all Category 2s would survive in the longer term. He felt that the extent of the commitment required from communities was not sufficiently understood.

County Councillor Chris Metcalfe commented that if all the Category 3s became Category 2s the expectation would be success. He stressed that those categorised as a 3 were not necessarily going to close, this was the worst case scenario. He also commented that there were more petitions signatures than library users in some cases.

County Councillor John Blackburn noted that at the Scarborough meeting half the attendees had been from Hunmanby.

County Councillor Melva Steckles welcomed the opportunity to listen to a wide range of public views and asked how this could move forward. She tried to capture the key issues noting that the issue of Category 2s and 3s was certainly the main concern. She suggested that the Executive should reflect upon the comments made and the future sustainability of individual libraries in particular:-

1. That the Executive consider moving libraries from Category 3 to 2 on the basis of the required business plans being developed and the savings required achieved.
2. That the Executive support on going discussion with community groups to progress this.
3. To note the Equality Impact Assessments and the huge change which was coming in terms of technology over the next five years.
4. That the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee take an annual report to keep track of progress in particular how arrangements are working in practice.

County Councillor Tony Hall sought other members views.

County Councillor Dave Peart noted that the Library Service was really a victim of its own success, he supported County Councillor Melva Steckles suggestion regarding the movement of Category 3s to 2 and the need for on going consultation, but stressed that the model must be sustainable. County Councillor Herbert Tindall speculated that perhaps a Category 2a and 2b could be used instead of the Category 3, with this arrangement to be reviewed in 12 months time.

County Councillor John McCartney noted that he lived 7 miles from Selby Library and obviously other constituents lived further afield. Given the mobile library service would be lost, the local community were looking actively to identify books spaces and to make arrangements for home deliveries. He felt that there was a need to tap into people's enthusiasm and so keep Category 3 libraries open – success would rely upon community involvement. He was in favour of grouping services together where possible and suggested that creating book deposits might work better than using a mobile service. He felt that in that way volunteers had more time to socialise with people. Finally, he noted that all library cuts were objectionable but the authority was in a difficult position, and communities had the opportunity to step up and help find a partnership solution.

County Councillor Brian Marshall stated that business plans weren't yet in place for Category 3s but stated that in his own area the Parish Council would 'take command' and get involved to help work up the plan, suggesting that others should do the same in their area.

County Councillor John Blackburn noted that in Hunmanby whilst people were happy to volunteer they were not prepared to become fund raisers for the County Council.

County Councillor Bill Hoult reiterated his support for County Councillor Herbert Tindall's suggestion, stressing that Bilton was a Category 3 which had no Parish Council to offer



support. County Councillor John Fox also supported County Councillor Herbert Tindall's proposal.

County Councillor Chris Metcalfe confirmed that work would continue with all those libraries in Category 2 and 3. Regarding County Councillor Melva Steckles suggestions he concurred with her desire for a sustainable approach but could not agree with the suggestion that Category 3 libraries be moved to Category 2 as there would be a need to pick up significantly more infrastructure costs. Regarding time scales, he noted that consultation had started the previous year and he felt that the time table proposed was sufficient with a cut off of 31 October. He questioned the interpretation of Category 3 classification as unfair, reminding Committee why the authority was in the position in the first place, there being reduced funds available in future. He reiterated that money given back to one library must be found from another. Whilst he felt sympathetic to the views tabled, there was no escaping the need to have a sustainable service in five years time. He spoke of technological advances and young people's appetite for modern IT applications; he felt there was a job to be done in attracting this audience back into libraries. There was a need to be honest about the challenges which must be faced to meet the needs of customers. He concluded that the alternative proposals tabled in the report represented the sustainable solution, rather than trying to apply a sticking plaster that would not suffice in the long term.

Derek Law, Corporate Director Adult and Community Services, confirmed that any digression from the proposals would have financial consequences elsewhere and he advised against a move away from them.

Julie Blaisdale commented that the passion of all concerned was evident however a strategic decision had to be taken about how to best spend the £5m budget in future. Illustrating the fundamental problem she posed the question that if a library strategy were to be devised from scratch at this time, would we truly position libraries where they are now. She urged the Committee to harness the enthusiasm and passion for libraries and refocus this on shaping the service for the future. She added that further information would come back to Committee in October as a good deal of work was still to be done, but in the meantime the present year's savings still needed to be achieved.

County Councillor Tony Hall reminded the Committee of the need to achieve consensus in terms of the feedback to be forwarded to the Executive. He explained that he had personally visited the majority of Category 3 libraries over recent days. His personal impression was that other functions and services needed to go into these buildings and he recognised that the County Council couldn't continue to support all of them; this would be unsustainable. He noted the strength of feeling expressed regarding the distinction between Category 2 and 3 libraries, noting that the principle of community involvement in all libraries was essential if a sustainable solution were to be found.

There was then general discussion between members of the Committee regarding the comments that they would forward to the Executive. There were differing views regarding alternative ways forward, and some members again spoke in favour of the proposals made by County Councillors Melva Steckles and Herbert Tindall.

In seeking to refocus the debate County Councillor Chris Metcalfe commented that there had always been a desire to listen to and work with community groups right from the outset. However, even if it were possible financially to maintain the status quo, it would represent a great waste when small libraries were open so few hours per week. He urged that the passion shown by the community be transferred into something tangible. He expressed grave concern that if hours were cut and continued to be cut, this would be a slippery slope - there was a need to achieve a sustainable solution. Regarding the question of reclassifying libraries from Category 3 to 2 he reminded everyone that it would cost communities £300,000 per annum to fund their proposal. Members commented that communities were not in a position to do this and similarly Derek Law, Corporate Director

for Adult and Community Services confirmed that departmentally money was not available for this.

Summing up County Councillor Tony Hall asked Ray Busby, Corporate Development Officer, to help craft a form of words which would capture the consensus of the meeting. After some deliberation the following was agreed:

That the Executive be asked to:

- a. Note the implications of the Equalities Impact Assessment and reassure itself that the proposals do not disadvantage some communities and users over others.
- b. Consider the view that planning must take into account how changes to technology anticipated over the next five years will affect how communities and individuals access Library Services.
- c. Agree that an annual report be made to Members tracking progress.
- d. Ensure that the County Council continues to work with community groups, especially those in Category 3, where business plans can be developed and it is shown that savings can still be made to retain the existing budget envelope.

At this point County Councillor Tony Hall drew the meeting to a conclusion, deferring the remaining items of business on the agenda until the next meeting. He thanked everyone for their attendance and active participation in the debate.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the Executive be asked to:

- a. Note the implications of the Equalities Impact Assessment and reassure itself that the proposals do not disadvantage some communities and users over others.
- b. Consider the view that planning must take into account how changes to technology anticipated over the next five years will affect how communities and individuals access Library Services.
- c. Agree that an annual report be made to Members tracking progress.
- d. Ensure that the County Council continues to work with community groups, especially those in Category 3, where business plans can be developed and it is shown that savings can still be made to retain the existing budget envelope.

#### **92. VALUING EMPLOYMENT NOW – DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING**

#### **93. RE-ABLEMENT SERVICES IN NORTH YORKSHIRE – DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING**

#### **94. WORK PROGRAMME – DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING**

The meeting concluded at approximately 5.30 pm.

JOD/ALJ