

**North Yorkshire County Council**  
**Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**13 October 2014**

**Task group report on the criteria used for categorisation of libraries**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report asks the Committee to consider and comment on the information in this report.

**2.0 Task Group Members**

2.1 The members of the Task Group were (from left to right below) County Councillors Derek Bastiman (Chairman), Steve Shaw-Wright, Elizabeth Shields, Val Arnold and John Blackburn.



2.2 The Executive Members County Councillors Chris Metcalfe and Carl Les were present at the workshop along with Mary Weastell (Assistant Chief Executive) and Julie Blaisdale (Assistant Director Library and Community Services). Lorraine Laverton (Corporate Development Officer) was also present as note taker.

**3.0 Background**

3.1 The purpose of the workshop was to look at the criteria for the categorisation of libraries. As members of the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee we wanted to reassure ourselves that any decisions taken around libraries in the future was based on sound evidence.

**4.0 The Workshop 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014**

4.1 Mary Weastell and Julie Blaisdale provided information that set the context for the Group. This included detail on the current service:

- There are currently 9 successful community run libraries
- A further 9 community library groups provide additional opening hours in the 33 North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) run libraries
- A Supermobile serves 21 communities
- There are outlets and book collections in village halls and pubs
- We have a home library service serving 2,522 people in their own homes

4.2 We were also advised that the library budget for 2014/15 is £5.8 million and this will reduce to a budget of £3.8 million by 2019. The fixed running costs for libraries whether community led or NYCC run is £1.49 million therefore it is important that any library provision must prove to be value for money.

4.3 For the main part of the workshop we were given two tasks.

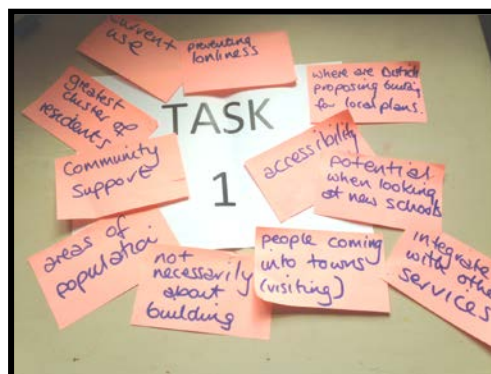
- Task 1 – If there were no libraries in North Yorkshire and your budget was limited, where would you put them? Why?
- Task 2 – If North Yorkshire is to have some Council run and some Community run libraries, how would you make this decision?

## 5.0 The Tasks – Our Views

5.1 Task 1 – Hypothetically speaking; where would we choose to set up a library if we had a limited budget?

5.1.1 We discussed this amongst ourselves and put forward our ideas. The ideas were written up on post it notes and included:

- Integrate with other services
- What is the level of current use?
- Accessibility
- Identifying where District & Borough Councils are looking at future residential developments
- Considering the potential of co-location in new schools
- Where there is community support
- Preventing loneliness and isolation
- Not necessarily about a particular building, be flexible
- Numbers of people that visit a town
- Where there are greater clusters of residents



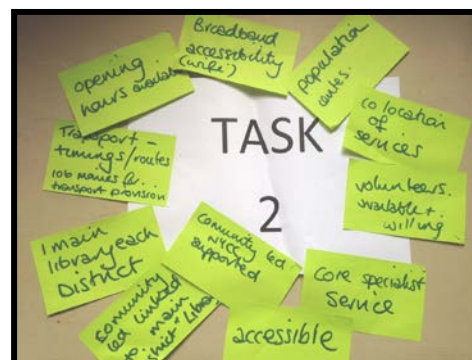
5.1.2 When considering where to put a library we believe that:

- The decision must not be based solely on the numbers of people who live in that area but it should also take into consideration the numbers who visit the area whether that is for work, shopping or social occasions
- The location has to be accessible but this is less about having a library building and more about making sure services are available to all. This can be through the internet and telephone as well as the physical presence of library provision.
- There has to be a flexible approach to where that library provision can be located working together with other services where possible.
- If it is to be Community led then that Community support must be present. It is little use trying to establish a community led and County Council supported library service if the community itself either cannot or will not take up the opportunity.
- There must be dialogue with District and Borough Councils to identify where future residential developments might be located

5.2 Task 2 – We then looked at the criteria we would use to decide which sort of libraries would be most suitable as community led or a County Council run library?

5.2.1 Several criteria were put forward including:

- The facility to co locate services where possible
- The opening hours that can be available
- The provision of a core specialist service
- Population centres
- Transport with appropriate routes and schedules
- The availability of 106 agreement monies<sup>1</sup> for transport provision
- Available and willing volunteers
- NYCC support for community led libraries
- Perhaps having a central 'hub' library in each area with smaller satellite libraries linked to it
- Take into consideration broadband accessibility



<sup>1</sup> This is money that developers of larger sites pay to the council to reduce the impact of the development.

Developers sign a Section 106 agreement as part of their planning permission. This is a legal document that specifies what the money is spent on and where

5.2.2 Through our discussion we realised that stating that a service should be accessible does not just mean for example that transport provision is available. It means that the transport provision that is available is suitable for the area, whether this is community provided or public transport, that the library opening times and the schedule of transport is linked, that the route of the transport provision also takes into consideration where the library is located and vice versa. We also suggest that with limited funding available for subsidising bus services there should be consideration given to using monies available through 106 agreements with developers to provide transport for new developments.

It is also important if we are trying to establish a service that provides a web based portal for information, that broadband provision is available to support this. It would be useful to work with Nynet to map where provision of broadband is unavoidably poor and look at how needs might be met in other ways.

Looking at accessibility of services the working group agreed is much more about ensuring that members of our communities are not isolated. This could be through accessing services or even volunteering in a community led setting. This is not simply about hard facts and statistics on use of a service but the value that can be placed in reducing loneliness whether that is through talking to someone on the telephone, via the internet or visiting (or volunteering in) a library.

## 6.0 The Criteria

After putting forward our own ideas we then compared them with some suggested criteria from the library service.

The suggested criteria came under the following headings:

- Population
- Business levels
- Geography & Rurality
- Socio – Demographic & Equalities



It was reassuring to see that we all came up with the same set of criteria with no obvious gaps. However there are some areas that we feel would benefit from further investigation by officers.

## 7.0 For further consideration

We were advised by officers that a programme of consultation with communities is being developed and this is hoped to commence in November 2014. Local County Councillors will be very much involved in that and we would urge our colleagues to make sure they are well informed when the consultation is happening in their own area. Although we set up our Task Group to take part in this workshop we would like to leave the option open to reconvene in the future as required.

The areas we would like to put forward for closer consideration are:

- Accessibility
  - Transport – scheduling, route identification, use of 106 agreement monies
  - Broadband availability
- Dialogue with District & Borough Councils to identify future residential developments

## 8.0 Conclusion

The workshop proved to be an effective way to have informal discussions between County Councillors and officers, and is a way of working, as the Chairman of the Corporate & Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I am keen to explore further looking at other topics.

Our discussions established that whilst there are certain key facts which need to be considered, decisions on library provision must also take into consideration the wider needs of the community and that does not necessarily mean a building that is labelled 'library'.

**8.0     Recommendations**

8.1     The Committee is asked to note and comment on the information in this report.

**County Councillor Derek Bastiman  
September 2014**