

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate and Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 5 June 2015 at 10.30 am.

Present:-

County Councillor Derek Bastiman in the Chair.

County Councillors: Val Arnold, Bernard Bateman MBE, John Blackburn, Sam Cross, John Ennis, Bryn Griffiths, Andrew Lee, Stuart Parsons, Tony Randerson, Eric Broadbent (as substitute for Steve Shaw-Wright), Peter Sowray (as substitute for Jean Butterfield) and Tim Swales.

Also in Attendance

County Councillors: Chris Metcalfe (Executive Member), Carl Les (Leader of the Council), John Blackie, Elizabeth Shields.

Officers: Mary Weastell, Assistant Chief Executive (Central Services), Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director (Library, Customer and Community Services), Neil White, Corporate Development Officer, Mark Taylor, Project Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors: Steve Shaw-Wright and Jean Butterfield.

There were 19 members of the public in attendance.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

53. Minutes

Resolved that – the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2015, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

54. Public Questions or Statements

There were eleven public questions or statements which are dealt with in Minute 55 below, reconfiguration of the Library Service.

55. Reconfiguration of the Library Services

The Committee considered the report and presentation from Mary Weastell, Assistant Chief Executive (Central Services) and Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director, Library, Customer and Community Services that informed the members of the outcome of the consultation on the future delivery of the library service.

Julie Blaisdale advised that the Library Service needed to save £1.6 million from its budget as part of the Council's overall savings of £167 million. Building on the success of the current 9 community managed libraries, the service consulted on proposals to increase the involvement of communities in the running of their local libraries, including transferring a further 20/21 libraries to community management.

Julie Blaisdale referred the Committee to the report that was going to the Council's Executive on 7 July 2015 which set out the outcomes from a three month public consultation on the future of the service, and set out a number of options for consideration by Executive members. These included a number of potential risks and wider impacts that the proposals will have for individuals and communities as well as setting out a preferred option and recommendations.

The key objectives addressed in the report were:-

- Achieving requested budget savings of £1.6m through reconfiguration of service
- Retaining current service provision through partnership working with communities and other agencies
- Minimising impact on communities, particularly older and young people

Julie Blaisdale advised that the Library Service had undergone considerable changes in the last few years. Following the previous consultation in 2010/11, the service embarked on a journey of greater involvement of communities in the running of their local libraries.

Since May 2012, the Library service has been delivered through 33 county run libraries (nine of which have additional opening hours provided by volunteers recruited by the local community library group); nine Community Managed libraries; a Supermobile and the Home Library Service. The service, supported by the voluntary sector through its Active Communities project, worked with local community groups who were passionate about retaining their local library.

Good working relationships had developed between these groups and the supporting library staff and the groups and their libraries have gone from strength to strength, expanding the range of services offered to local communities, beyond the purely "library" service. This mixed model of county run and community run and supported libraries has been a successful model to date, delivering a range of services directly to customers and communities in localities.

Following the presentation, Members made the following comments:

- A Member requested clarification of the level of library service that has to be provided by law. Mary Weastall noted that they were compelled by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. But the Act doesn't specify that this comprehensive service has to be done in a set way.
- A Member wanted clarification of the number of staff proposed for Hybrid libraries.

Julie Blaisdale confirmed that initial proposal for Hybrid libraries was to have one paid member of staff minimum in each Hybrid library, so that the staff to volunteer ratio was approximately 25:75. Option three of the proposals going to the Executive proposed to increase that ratio of paid staff to volunteers to 40:60.

- A Member wanted to clarify if the support staff under option three of the Executive report would be qualified librarians; how many years that support would be in place and where those staff would be located.

Julie Blaisdale advised that there would be a range of staff which would include qualified Librarians based at a core library who would provide support as it was needed within its geographical area. Each Library would

be monitored to assess how much support was needed with a full review after 18 months to consider which Libraries might need a longer period of support.

The Committee then heard from the following public speakers:

Eileen Driver representing the Save Stokesley Library Campaign:

2400 Stokesley Library supporters had sent letters, signed the petition and been actively involved in trying to save Stokesley Library. The Save Stokesley Library Campaign group had many concerns about the report and the proposals, namely the sustainability of the community library model and that this model would be unsustainable for Stokesley as well as the doubts that the community library model would continue to meet the Council's statutory provision to provide free and accessible access to library services.

86% of Stokesley residents who completed the consultation survey said no about whether they were interested in coming forward to volunteer. This meant that the lack of capacity for volunteers in the local community would be too big a risk for the Stokesley area. There were also doubts about the ability to meet rent costs. The premises cost approximately £27,000 per annum so the £6,000 grant from NYCC would be inadequate.

There is doubt about the training of volunteers to a sufficient standard given the high level of skill and training a professional librarian possesses. There are also concerns around the capacity that one Stronger Communities Manager would be able to develop and train volunteers across the District. The proposed number of 12 to 15 hours of support under option 3 detailed within the report to the Council's Executive is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of a busy library like Stokesley.

Given the difficulty of recruiting volunteers for Stokesley Library, paragraph 8.19 of the Executive report which refers to there being no precedent for the community transfer of the size of libraries proposed so it is difficult to accurately forecast the impact on performance that the changes will make, should be too tenuous to be able to recommend any of the proposals to the Executive. I propose a fourth option that Stokesley Library becomes a hybrid library allowing education and local businesses to flourish as residents from the surrounding areas come to Stokesley and use its Library.

Caroline Rathmell representing the Save Stokesley Library Campaign:

I am here today to give special consideration to the unique legal operations around Stokesley Library and the future of the library. There is considerable enthusiasm amongst the Stokesley community for a hybrid library at Stokesley although this would come at an additional cost to North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC). There is very little interest for a community library and to date no community group has shown any interest in taking that on. If the proposal goes ahead and no group comes forward then the library will close. In that situation what do you do with the building, which is what I am here to speak to the Committee about.

I am as a retired solicitor of thirty years and have considerable experience in reading and advising upon legal documents. I have carefully studied the two relevant documents here which are a lease made in 2005 when Town Close was created between Broadacres Housing Association and NYCC and also a Partnership Agreement between the aforementioned organisations as well as Hambleton District Council.

The Partnership Agreement clearly sets out each parties contributions to the site at Town Close. NYCC made almost £2m in contributions in land and building costs which now belong to Broadacres. NYCC would be walking away from that investment as Broadacres would not be legally compelled to return any part of the investment. If the library were to close then this would clearly be at a capital loss to NYCC.

The Partnership Agreement also sets out how the running costs of the whole building at Town Close will be shared by the various occupants, these being business rates, heating and lighting, insurance, cleaning etc. Clause 8.8 of the agreement contains provisions in the event that one party wishes to terminate the 999 year lease. It is inevitable that Broadacres will want to cover the cost of the loss of the lease. Broadacres has a duty to protect its financial position and will inevitably look to cover its losses for business rates and site contributions until a new tenant for the unit can be found.

However, due to no dedicated car parking spaces and sharing an entrance with an elderly person's facility, as well as more commercially attractive units in the business park in town could mean that this would be a difficult unit to re-let. This Committee has a duty to scrutinize the cost of the closure. I implore you to make a decision to create a hybrid library at Stokesley.

Following the public statements, Members asked the following clarifications:

- A Member noted the £2m of investment in cash and land and clarified if the termination of the 999 year lease would be significant. Caroline commented that her past legal experience gave her a strong feeling that it would be significant. Broadacres would need to cover business rates and running costs and NYCC would have to cover those costs indefinitely.
- A Member wanted to clarify the scale of the community who use the library. Caroline confirmed that there was lots of surrounding villages as well as the large market town of Stokesley who all use the library.
- A Member noted that Broadacres do have a running elderly people's home on the site so he would challenge the scale of the £2m of investment. Caroline confirmed that Broadacres did build the elderly persons home.

The Chairman invited Mary Weastall to read out to the Committee, the pre-prepared statement on behalf of NYCC's legal team with regard to the letter submitted by Caroline Rathmell to Cllr Weighell dated 18 May 2015 which had circulated to the Committee before the meeting started.

The Library and the upstairs accommodation for the Community Care Association is leased to NYCC on a 999 year lease for a peppercorn rent. The lease permits assignment of the premises (clause 3.7) or subletting of the premises (clause 3.8) with the consent of Broadacres Housing Association, the Landlord. Any consent from Broadacres to assign/sublet is not to be unreasonably withheld. There is no financial penalty clause in the lease and there has been no suggestion in our informal discussions with Broadacres that they would seek any payment. Broadacres have expressed willingness to continue working with the County Council and any new partners coming forward.

NYCC made contributions in kind and in cash towards the development of Town Close. The primary reason for this was to enable the development

of an Extra Care facility of 40 flats to replace the elderly person's home. The development also included premises for Hambleton District Council, a new library and modern accommodation for the Community Care Association and for use by other local groups. Updating of the Manor House had been considered, but estimates were in the region of £1million.

The service does not want the library to close and hopes that a group will come forward with whom we can work in partnership. We would hope the library could continue on the premises. If no group comes forward we would explore other options with Broadacres, including use of the premises for other NYCC services.

The Partnership agreement is a much broader document than the lease, and includes NYCC's ongoing relationship with Broadacres in respect of the extra care provision, so there is no likelihood that this would be terminated.

Mary Weastall confirmed that this was not a unique position and that NYCC has a similar arrangement in Catterick. The Council would explore other options for the use of the building.

Caroline Rathmell asked if NYCC accepts the clause of the Partnership Agreement in 8.8 is an exit strategy for the lease. Mary Weastall noted that NYCC were not intending to terminate with Broadacres.

Geoff Foxall representing the Friends of Starbeck Library:

I come to the panel today as Chair of the Starbeck Residents Association. Starbeck does suffer deprivation, 10% of households suffer from fuel poverty and 12% of households are struggling to pay bills. The library is a key point of access to services for residents in the area. The Council has already invested significantly, spending £548,000 to help move the library to a new site on the high street. In 2013/14 the library received 23,000 visits and is well used by the community.

I am going to focus my statement on the impact this will have on the young in our community. The library is heavily used by parents with toddlers utilising a range of services and clubs. Travel time and bus fares are a strong disincentive to parents to go to other libraries were Starbeck to close. It provides children with a cognizance of computer facilities that are unavailable at home. Professional librarians are invaluable with their knowledge of children's reading and for providing activities. I would doubt the experience of volunteers in being able to replicate this.

Literacy is a key to success. It is well documented that reading for pleasure is the most important factor in educational attainment. I would question paragraph 6.21 of the Executive report that refers to community library groups helping communities to become more digitally literate, as community groups would struggle to match the wide range of front facing services already on offer. I urge all Councillors to reject all three options and maintain the current libraries funding.

Julia Mosley representing the Friends of Starbeck Library:

I am a volunteer at Starbeck Library. Any cut to the library service is fundamentally wrong. What happens if you cannot find volunteers when the staff go? The Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman noted that it was vital that children have access to libraries. Literacy must first and foremost be enjoyable. It is even more vital for the under 5's to help with early educational attainment and to have the twin services of a school and local

library.

I quote Roly Keating who was shocked at how many smart people questioned the value of libraries. Libraries pre-date the internet and they may well outlast it. Libraries have traditionally had strong networks and have been pillars of the community. They are known as places of trust, history, safety and sanctuary. Keeping it open is absolutely essential. I can personally vouch for the difficulty of volunteers matching the experience of the paid members of staff.

Martin Brampton, Town Councillor, Kirkbymoorside Town Council:

I am upset by the destruction of the library service.

The five points I want to make are:

Fairness - it is unreasonable for ratepayers in Kirkbymoorside to pay for libraries in other towns, while having none themselves. Nor would it seem fair for the town council to use its taxation powers to provide a service that is paid for by NYCC in other towns.

Respect - the consultation is one sided, which is inappropriate in the context. If a reasonable valuation is placed on volunteer effort, then the proposed community libraries would receive more value from volunteers than from NYCC, yet all the discussions are high handed and inflexible.

Deprivation - libraries have high value for children and old people, with impact on the cost and effectiveness of other NYCC services. Yet Kirkbymoorside is isolated by poor public transport links.

Impracticality - we have experience of organising library volunteers, and do not believe it is practical to operate a community library with the present opening hours. Kirkbymoorside has many rival volunteer groups calling on people's time. The town council has rescued two failed community charities in the last few years.

Flexibility - the community library proposal has been put forward without genuine flexibility or creativity. For Kirkbymoorside the process has been confused by the possibly multiple purposes for the NYCC leased building. Other cost saving measures had not been properly investigated.

Susan Perkins representing the Friends of Bedale Library:

I endorse entirely what has been said so far. Library services are in crisis across the country. No one is keeping a central record, but it seems that more than 320 libraries have closed since 2011. In Bedale we want ours to remain open, but our immediate concerns focus on the number of volunteers available. Does Stronger Communities appreciate that there are gaps in volunteer services in Bedale already? Questionnaire responses from Bedale Library users showed that only 15 per cent showed interest in forming a friends or community management group; or volunteering.

We feel it is sleight of hand to call the 5 hours of support proposed for Bedale an 'additional resource'. Is it not the 'free training' we were promised in the consultation meeting on 20 January? How does 5 hours support an inadequate number of unskilled volunteers?

Our second concern is the necessity to generate an additional revenue stream. Bedale Library, part of a Grade 1 listed building, has very little space for diversification or additional activities. We do not want to

substitute retail space for bookshelf capacity, particularly as 98 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaires visit the library for books.

These two reasons make the proposed community model a difficult one for us, one that feels very inappropriate. Can we look at things from a different angle?

Information sheets issued at the start of the consultation show 84,989 'active borrowers' in 34 libraries. The £1.6m savings required therefore is £18.83 a year per borrower, which is £1.57 a month.

For this tiny saving per person a valuable infrastructure, built up over decades, is being put at great risk. It would be in everyone's interest to enable a small financial contribution by library users to contribute towards the cost of the service they value. If this were actively pursued locally and nationally, as an alternative model, it could have a transformative effect.

All sides are, understandably, in danger of becoming entrenched behind their own ideas. Time, money and personal pride have been invested in the report. However, I am suggesting that this committee delays acceptance of it until ideas put forward today, including this alternative model, have been thoroughly assessed, explored and developed.

I repeat the figures: £1.6million represents £18.83 a year, or less than 37 pence a week, for each 'active borrower'. That's far less than the cost of one cup of Costa a month.

Following the public statements, Members made the following comments and clarifications:

- A Member was pleased that Susan Perkins has thought about what can be done.
- A Member wanted to know what the legal position was around asking for donations in libraries. Mary Weastall clarified that libraries can ask for donations but they cannot charge.

The Chairman brought the Committee's attention to a letter submitted by Melva Steckles, which had been circulated before the committee meeting:

I refer to agenda item 3, RECONFIGURATION of the LIBRARY SERVICE and the Key Proposals in the press release by Julie Blaisdale, Assistant Director and Cllr Chris Metcalfe Cabinet Member.

It would seem that the recommendations for Richmondshire are:

- 1) A Core Library in Richmond Town.
- 2) No Hybrid Libraries.
- 3) Community Managed Libraries in Catterick and Colburn.

In my view this is a quite extraordinary and disastrous recommendation to the Scrutiny Committee and in due course to NYCC Executive on the 7th July 2015. Looking back through Richmondshire Area Committee agendas and minutes I cannot see any point where the recommendations have been debated by County Cllrs representing divisions in Richmondshire. I appreciate the excellent piece of work the task group of the scrutiny committee did and their report dated 13th October 2014 pulls out some very pertinent points i.e.

5.1.1 Integrate with other services.

Accessibility.

Identifying where District Councils are looking at future residential

developments.
Preventing loneliness and isolation.

&

5.1.2 Take into consideration the numbers who visit the area whether that is for work, shopping or social occasions.

The location has to be accessible so making sure services are available to all. Identify where future residential developments might be located.

If you look at the geography of Richmondshire one can see the main residential areas are Colburn, Catterick Garrison and Richmond with the new town centre of Catterick equal distance between Colburn and Richmond.

In the fast expanding Catterick town centre is a super-size Tesco, 24hr McDonalds, a multi-million swimming pool complex, which also includes an indoor sports hall, gymnasium and of course the newly built NYCC library. Adjacent to the library is currently being built a cinema, shops, bars, eateries and a hotel. This whole area is still growing, is serviced by hundreds of free parking places and is all accessible. When visiting the library at Catterick people can easily access disabled toilets, get a coffee etc within the complex. Catterick library is purpose built in a new modern building and is used as a community facility for many community events. The local plan designates the majority of future house building to be within two miles and the new town centre and broadband is available in part due to the expansion of the military needs.

Catterick Garrison town centre is extremely well served by frequent bus services between Richmond and the centre between Colburn and the new town centre. Catterick Garrison area is also home to some 5 primary schools and the main secondary school, Risedale. Also in Catterick, there are substantial numbers of young families in residence who often find the serving member away on exercise leaving many young mums alone, isolated and who might only access the new town centre, were the forces families consulted?

Colburn has a small but very active NYCC library which is well used and very much needed in an area of deprivation but it is in an old building which cannot be expanded. There is an established network in Colburn of voluntary groups and I agree that the Colburn Library could work well as a Community Managed Library.

Richmond's library is not well placed in town. It is in an old building which needs substantial refurbishment, has no parking at all and no nearby toilets. Richmond will only see residential expansion in very small numbers. Richmond is well known for its volunteers, many groups exist and it seems an obvious place for a Community Managed Library.

One further point is insurance. How will volunteers in NYCC libraries be covered? From recent experience in the Richmond library some volunteers who recently offered to work there were told they would not be covered by the NYCC insurance.

I urge you to consider that the Catterick Garrison Library should be the Core Library for Richmondshire.

In replying to the letter Julie Blaisdale noted that in proposing Richmond as the Core Library it was based on business levels which took into account a number of factors, some of those being, active users and borrowers, local population and socio-demographics. These statistics were then looked at across the board to

identify the busiest libraries within each District. Richmond had twice the total usage for its library compared to Catterick.

Richmond was also the administrative area for Richmondshire District Council which helped to increase the business levels for Richmond Library. The idea of the consultation was that nothing was set in stone and that the plans can change. Although it is acknowledged that there are development plans for Catterick Garrison going forward you still needed to take into account existing business levels.

The idea of the new model for libraries is that all libraries would receive support from the Core Library in the District and because of the close geographical nature of Richmond and Catterick Garrison significant support would be available between the libraries. Were it found that a community library was not suitable at Catterick Garrison the Council would work with a range of partners and other agencies to seek out alternative ways of delivering the library service in the area.

A Member noted that as the Richmond Town representative he was keen to see that all three libraries (Catterick, Colburn, Richmond) would remain open. If it were found that Richmond produced more volunteers he was happy to help search for a solution which involved core time being transferred between the libraries. He was keen to explore the solution of having Library hubs where one Trust managed the three libraries in the Richmond area rather than having three individual trusts or management boards.

Jill Knight as a member of the Public:

I am a library user and I am amazed by the amount of County wide support that has been expressed for libraries. The County Council is on the verge of destroying a 120 year old public service. Libraries are a place of enjoyment, learning, socializing and meeting with friends. These plans are excessively dependent on volunteers. How can the County Council justify paying eight Community Development Officers at £45,000 per annum to support the libraries at the same time as losing professional librarians.

This will have a devastating impact on some smaller communities who simply won't be able to meet the volunteer numbers required. It is not just library volunteers but also management committees needed to run the libraries. Hunmanby was asked to find 43 volunteers, it couldn't and the library closed. The closures will slip one by one from public notice. There is a huge difference between running a library and wanting to run a library.

There are always some vulnerable groups who seem to suffer more, library closures would hit the young and elderly disproportionately. Catterick has the largest number of young families and children, Eastfield is a relatively deprived area, and both of these communities would suffer were their library to become reliant on volunteers. I would recommend that further changes are made to the proposals before this committee makes its recommendations to the Executive.

Alan Avery representing the local Labour Party:

I must make it clear that I am here today to put forward the Labour Party point of view. A volunteer based library service will not work. Pickering Library can't do it. The aims of the service must be clear and these are the aims that I'm sure everyone would like to see:

- 1) Every library to remain open
- 2) Professional staff to be in place backed up by volunteers

3) To have secure funding where the service sits within a stable budget.

I propose a solution that satisfies all of those aims. It is based on limited opening hours. For instance at Kirbymoorside, the key library opening hours are between 3-6pm when the school children can access the services, I would propose that libraries opening hours are shaped on need. This would achieve all the aims as all libraries would remain open, as the public would get used to the revised hours and know when they can use their local library.

Professional staff would still be in place across all the libraries and having reduced hours would meet the savings required. Staff would be mobile and responsive to different libraries needs within their area. The structure would remain in place so that when funding became available again the service can be flexible and expand.

Following the public statements Members made the following comments and clarifications:

- The Executive Member noted that it was a political view and should be taken as no more than that. However, the proposal from Alan Avery does take the easy way out. It would under use the library buildings which would represent a significant waste of tax payer's money.
- A Member noted that there was a similar outcry from the community at Hunmanby when their library was closing and the building sold. Most of the signatories of their petition were from people who didn't even use the library. Now, no one mourned the loss of the library.
- A Member noted that the point was valid, that once a library was gone, it's gone for good.

Dr John Gibbins, a Professional Archivist and Researcher:

I have recently come back from a conference in Cambridge about the future economy and stimulating new knowledge and how important that is for the future of our society, knowledge is power. These proposals would be taking away opportunities from many people who wouldn't have those opportunities elsewhere. I am worried about the de-professionalism of the service and the loss of skills.

With regards to the Equalities Impact Assessment I am concerned about the legal aspect. The Council is responsible for certain duties and volunteers would be responsible for a certain standard of service, one that matches what the previously trained staff was providing. It takes three years to train a professional librarian and it only takes one or two instances across the County where something goes wrong and there will be a huge loss of finances and confidence in the Council. How will volunteers be insured?

I am worried about the value for money of the proposals. The Council don't seem to understand the financial cost. I would be interested to know how much the whole process costs as I suspect given the timeline that the exercise will cost more than the proposed savings.

John Dean representing the Save North Yorkshire Libraries:

Opportunities are diminishing across the County and the reduction of the library service is one example of this. The Yorkshire Post set up a rural deprivation conference that didn't even consider the Coast and Moors area which also suffers from rural deprivation and a reduction in services.

The report to the Executive notes that transport won't be affected by the proposals but how do we know as Integrated Passenger Transport have only just started their own consultation on bus reductions. The grant to individual libraries would be insufficient to cover running costs. Things such as photocopying licenses aren't factored in, how can staff run a library which is running at a loss? More work needs to be done on the costs as well as recruiting and maintaining volunteers.

Following the public statements, Members made the following comments and clarifications:

- A Member noted that the rural conference John Dean was referring to was the Rural Summit which was hosted by Richmondshire District Council and partners such as the Yorkshire Post and was tasked to look exclusively at Richmondshire, which is why the Coast and Moors were not considered.
- A Member noted his concern about the legal responsibility and that those volunteers would have the responsibility of the service. Dr Gibbins noted that your practice or trust provides legal indemnity if you are a doctor or medic. How would you organize insurance for volunteers? Julie Blaisdale replied that the burden of responsibility does not rest with volunteers. There are already a number of successful community libraries run by volunteers. The groups form Trusts and take out the relevant insurances to cover a range of services.
- A Member could not accept the negative comments around volunteering and insurance noting that if that were the case no one would volunteer for anything. Dr Gibbins replied that there is a lot of difference between running a professional service and being involved with a sports club.

Following the public questions and statements the Chairman invited County Councillors not on the Committee but present at the meeting to speak.

County Councillor Elizabeth Shields noted that it had been four years since the question of libraries had been considered. There had been a number of incorrect quotes from her in local papers and she noted that she was very concerned about the future of the County libraries including the ones at Malton and Norton.

The previous proposal was that one library would service both Malton and Norton and she was pleased to see in the report that Norton would preserve its library even if it were in a community managed form. This week a Norton community group sent out their letter of intent to run the service which gives the officers the best chance to judge it as a hub.

She drew the Committee's attention to page 16, option 3 of the Executive report. Norton is being considered for only 5-7 support hours per week because it has lower business levels as a result of it operating shorter hours. Councillor Shields reminded the Committee that that is only the case because NYCC closed down the hours of operation. Norton has 2000 more people than Malton and there are a range of services and infrastructure in Norton that are mistakenly called Malton. Are the libraries in each of the categories in option 3 set in stone? Will they change in time?

County Councillor John Blackie noted he speaks to the Committee today from his experience as first operator of a community library in Hawes. He commended the library service for the role that they have played to

support the library in Hawes. He referred the Committee to a number of papers he had circulated privately to members of the committee based on his experience at the coal face. North Yorkshire suffers from being at the wrong side of the North/South divide and the rural/urban divide from whatever government is in power.

Savings do have to be met and that can be agreed on but we disagree on the way you go about doing it. He would like the Committee to consider his recommendations. He submitted the recommendations to Julie Blaisdale earlier in the year but his recommendations were dismissed with arguments rather than a full financial disposition. All community libraries should get £15,000 for staffing. There is currently unfairness in the proposals between libraries that get 5-7 hours and those that get 12-15 hours of additional staff support. On top of this those community libraries in the first tranche don't get any help from these proposals.

The proposals also need to examine the issue of getting district and borough partners to meet the additional 20% of mandatory relief rate for registered charities. County Councillor Roger Harrison-Topham who would have liked to be here today would like to see a lifeboat fund for libraries. This decision is so important that I would implore the Committee to refer the decision to full council and not the Executive.

Following the County Councillors' questions and statements Members made the following comments and clarifications:

- Julie Blaisdale noted in reply to Councillor Shields that the libraries in option 3 were not set in stone but they were based on current business levels and that Norton libraries business levels weren't as high.
- Members wanted to know if the movement of libraries between 5-7 and 12-15 hours or from 12-15 hours to hybrid libraries could be taken into consideration. Mary Weastall noted that it could, but it would come at a cost.
- Julie Blaisdale stated that they did respond to Councillor Blackie's proposals back in March 2015. Although the cost would be £450,000 for all proposed and existing community libraries to provide £15,000 of staffing costs, this would need to be taken out of the staffing budget which would affect the core and hybrid libraries opening hours and services.

After hearing all the public statements and questions, the Chairman invited Members to debate the item.

Members considered that Eastfield Library could be a cause for concern. Eastfield has the largest housing estate in North Yorkshire as well as being an area of relative deprivation. 50% of its residents didn't use computers. The community did not seem to be interested in running or managing a library, not because they couldn't but because they expected the service to be run by the County Council. People from Cayton and Osgodby also used the library at Eastfield.

Mary Weastall commented that there were some potential opportunities at Eastfield to work with the District Council on development schemes to bring about an alternative proposition to make the library sustainable. The Chairman assured the local Member that he would be invited to a meeting between North Yorkshire County Council and Scarborough Borough Council's Economic Department on this matter.

The Executive Member noted that Eastfield library is greatly valued by young

people and was pleased to hear about the potential developments for Eastfield Library. Each library should be dealt with on a case by case basis. Libraries do operate at different levels and different requirements. The increase in the budget for the proposals is a significant revenue injection that would be there as long as it was required. The Council would not take away the support that it will provide at the Core Libraries.

The Committee noted that in respect of the training of staff and subsequently volunteers at Libraries this had been considered at the Members Workforce Planning Group who had been reassured with the approach that was being taken and it would be very good.

The Committee acknowledged that there was an element of risk with the level of public who were being asked to volunteer but that was no reason not to try. The Council's Stronger Communities approach could help communities to get the most out of these opportunities.

The Executive Member commented that it was up to the community to determine how they run and manage their library. The end date for the completion of the proposals was 2017. Once the Executive have decided on the proposals the discussions can commence and communities can begin to take over their library immediately. Some communities were more ready than others.

The Committee noted that it was intended for a report to go to the Executive in six months' time on the progress made with the community groups and agreed that this report should be considered by the Committee before it went to the Executive.

The Committee considered the question of whether libraries should ask for donations and whether it was possible to put a donation box in each library.

Mary Weastall suggested that through discussions with libraries and community groups the Council could promote the concept of donations allowing each Library to determine what it wanted to do without needing a formal policy.

A member raised the question of whether the Government funding received by the Council due to its rural nature and to deal with issues relating to rurality could be used to provide funding for the Libraries.

The Executive Member confirmed that the Government money for rural issues goes into the Council's base budget as it is meant to be spent across all the Council services as recognition that delivery of those services in rural areas is more costly than in urban areas.

A member raised the idea of Charitable Trusts running a group of libraries across a small geographical area to work together as a cluster. This could be particularly effective for the Libraries in Richmond, Catterick and Colburn.

The Committee agreed that the Executive should be asked to consider a voluntary model for Libraries that took into account Charitable Trusts who could manage a group of libraries in a geographical area.

A member queried whether Libraries would keep the income that they made. Julie Blaisdale confirmed that the community managed libraries would keep the additional income that they made. This could come from a variety of sources including room hire, fees and charges, fines and computer use and would give groups an income stream to offset some of the Library's running costs.

A member commented that due to the importance of the matter to the public that it would be appropriate for the final recommendations and report to be discussed and voted on at Full Council and not the Executive.

The Executive Member commented that the budgetary proposals had been agreed by Full Council and the Council's Executive was now seeking to enact that decision.

Following a vote the Committee agreed that the recommendations should not be considered by the Full Council.

Resolved that – (A) the Executive be advised that this Committee considers that the recommendations within the report to the Executive on the reconfiguration of the Library service be supported subject to the addition of:

(1) to recommendation 4. of the words “following consideration by the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee” after the words further report,

(2) a new recommendation 6 which states that “a voluntary model for Libraries is considered that takes into account Charitable Trusts who can manage a group of libraries in a geographical area”.,

(B) no further comments be made to the final draft of the Equality Impact Assessment, and

(C) the recommendation from the Harrogate Area Committee which considered the petition from Knaresborough be noted.

56. Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting comments from Members on the content of the Committee's programme of work scheduled for future meetings.

Resolved - that the content of the work programme report and schedule be agreed.

The meeting concluded at 13:30

NW/JD/MRT