

## **Options considered but not recommended at this stage**

This annex contains further detail about the options that were considered but not recommended at this stage, as listed in the report in Section 9

### **1 Commissioning the library service to another provider**

To date, only one library authority in England is operated by a private company i.e. Hounslow on a 12 year contract. Slough is run by Essex County Council, Harrow by Ealing. Wandsworth and Croydon are currently out to tender for joint operation of their library service. Three have now been invited to tender (a social enterprise company, a private company and an in-house local authority). One of the two leading private companies has just withdrew from the process. 7 other library services are considering outsourcing to private companies, many as part of a wider look at all the options. Sefton was approached by one of the two leading private companies but they did not follow this up with any details of how they could save money for Sefton. The other has not approached Sefton but has quoted Sefton as having excellent customer care. Whilst not ruling this out, this does not like an option that would bring any benefit to Sefton.

### **2 Trust status**

A few library services are part of charitable trusts (In England there are 8 to date, 4 of them in the North West; two of these are technically a social enterprise company). No library authority is a trust on its own, although Suffolk is now run by an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) since 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012. The library service is usually combined with other leisure services such as sport and arts to form trusts. Previously, this has provided local authorities with relief from NNDR and has saved councils money. This is no longer the case. In some cases, it has provided the trust with opportunities to change how it operates that it could not do when under local authority control. In Sefton, this option has been investigated in some detail for the sport and recreation service but concluded that there would be no advantage for Sefton. The library service would need to combine with this service to make a trust option viable so trust status is not likely to be an option worth further investigation.

### **3 Shared Services**

Shared services across a range of local authority services to achieve economies of scale is moving forward for some services in some local authorities. For library services the only example where whole library services are shared is Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster where the three services (Tri-Borough) are operating as one library service. Adult Social Services and Children's Services are also included in this.

The North West region has a strong tradition of regional shared library working. This includes a procurement contract for books and other items for the North West and Yorkshire regions, providing Sefton with efficient and effective commissioning and procurement. In addition there is a regional inter

library loans service, a reader development programme and a business information service. Sefton was part of a North West Improvement and Efficiency Programme (NWIEP) to examine the feasibility of a North West library service. The initial findings were that significant savings could be made from a number of regional savings but since then the level of savings that each local authority has had to deliver for itself means that this is no longer the case. There are still potential opportunities to share services such as information and archive services. Other opportunities are being actively followed through across the Greater Manchester local authorities but there does not appear to be any desire to do this across Merseyside.

#### **4 Community managed libraries**

There is a wide range of models for community managed libraries and the Arts Council has commissioned research that will 'classify' the different types of arrangement. Over 40 council areas in England have a least one library that is run by volunteers (or has some significant formal volunteer input e.g. volunteers run the library on some days, the council on others). The numbers have increased steadily over the past few years, mostly in response to actual or threatened closure of libraries. There are many different models ranging from the community leasing and paying for the running costs of the library and staffing it to the community staffing it but the local authority still continuing to pay for the costs of the building, ICT and bookstock. Some of the community run libraries have been successful, others less so. Prominent examples include Little Chalfont Community Library in Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire (ten local access points run by volunteers) and Dorset has the first council-maintained but volunteer-run library. This model is stronger in shire counties but about seven metropolitan areas also have volunteer libraries, including Liverpool, Warrington and Wigan. As part of their library reviews Oxfordshire and Surrey have asked for volunteers to keep smaller libraries open. Both have experienced difficulties. The next stage of consultation will seek opinions and find out what the willingness of Sefton's communities is to adopt any of these models, and if so, which ones. This will not be limited the libraries where closure is proposed.

#### **Alternative methods of service delivery**

##### **5 Volunteers**

Volunteers can and do contribute to library services without being involved in the management and running of the service. As already outlined as part of the mitigation actions, Sefton currently uses volunteers across a range of activities, from delivering books to housebound people through to delivering storytime sessions in libraries. The Council is committed to supporting volunteers and the service plays a full part in this programme. Volunteers make a valuable contribution in enhancing service delivery but they are not used to deliver mainstream services. Views will be sought with regard to managed and trained volunteers as an alternative form of service delivery e.g. working alongside library staff, performing the same tasks and perhaps helping to keep a library open for longer hours than it would otherwise be able to do so.

## **6 Postal delivery system**

The feasibility of establishing a bespoke postal delivery service was examined as part of the library review process. It concluded that it was too expensive to take forward as a free service and the costs would be too high for people to use if they were paying for it. As outlined in mitigating actions one alternative could be local access points and this will form part of the further consultation.

## **7 E-Books**

A number of library services have introduced an e-books service where library users can download e-books from the library service via their websites. This has been investigated in Sefton as part of the library review process. The findings showed that such a service is very complex and has a lot of difficulties surrounding it. The main difficulty is that unlike paper editions of books, e-books require licences from publishers to enable them to loan e-books. Currently, only about 20 per cent of publishers do this. Also, there are difficulties surrounding e-book readers e.g. those who have Kindles can only buy e-books via Amazon and there is no loans service. Those library services that do offer an e-books service have had numerous problems with third party suppliers changing terms and conditions without any notice and that users do not realise the limited availability of titles. There are a number of negotiations taking place locally and Sefton will be monitoring the situation. It does not recommend an e-books service until some of the issues are resolved but it may introduce an e-books service as a mitigating action, albeit a service that does not offer the range of titles that are available in hard copy.

## **8 Self service**

Self service is currently/will be available in four libraries i.e. Birkdale, Meadows, Netherton and Southport (at the new Atkinson). This could be extended further, resulting in savings of staff time which could either lead to a reduction in the level of staffing or in re-investing this time for longer opening hours and/or to target services and work more with vulnerable adults and children. Also, self service could help with the use of volunteers in libraries.

## **9 Income generation**

The library service is limited by the services on which it can levy a charge. Services that are currently charged for are hire of DVDs and music CDs, use of public computers, reservations, photocopying and printing, hire of rooms, some events. There are also penalty charges for late return of books and other items. Charged services have been examined as part of the review to establish whether the charged for service pays for itself, whether the level of charges could be changed to increase income, and whether there are any services currently free of charge for which a charge can be made. Views on library charges will be sought as part of the next stage of consultation.