

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)**

**MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE  
ON THURSDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2012**

Overview  
& Scrutiny



**PRESENT:** Councillor McKinley (in the Chair)

Councillors John Kelly, Bennett, Gatherer, Jones, Lappin, Maguire, Welsh, Robertson and Dawson

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Atkinson, Brodie-Browne, Blackburn, Carr, Crabtree, Dorgan, Dutton, Hartill, McIvor, Papworth, Preece and Shaw.

Councillor P. Dowd – Leader of the Council.  
Councillor Moncur – Cabinet Member for Children, Schools, Families and Leisure.

**12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Booth and Weavers.

**13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

**14. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record; and
- (2) in relation to Minute No 11 (Work Programme Key Decision Forward Plan) it be noted that Councillor Weavers is willing to serve on the Employment Development and the Development of Local Town Centres and Economies Working Group.

**15. CALL-IN - REVIEW OF LIBRARY SERVICE AND OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

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The Committee considered (a) the report of the Director of Corporate Commissioning, which set out the decision of the Cabinet on the above matter and the reason given for call-in; and (b) the report of the Strategic Director - Place in relation to this matter.

The decisions taken by the Cabinet on 11 October 2012 (Minute No. 65) in relation to this matter were as follows :-

### **“Decisions Made:**

- (1) the petition be noted;
- (2) the outcome of the local needs analysis, including the results from the public engagement exercise, resulting in options for a new model of delivery for a modern, sustainable, comprehensive and efficient Sefton Library Service be noted;
- (3) it be noted that all figures in the report are working assumptions in relation to the options to be considered and the figures should not be seen as predetermining any decisions;
- (4) it be agreed that the review process described in the report has been a robust process;
- (5) the general definition of a “*comprehensive and efficient*” library service for Sefton described in paragraph 2.3 of the report be approved;
- (6) the risks identified within the report be noted;
- (7) the option appraisal criteria set out in the report be approved and it be noted that they are influenced by previous Secretary of State/Judicial Review considerations and intervention;
- (8) Option B set out in the report be approved as the basis for consultation and engagement with the community, staff, partners, including businesses, voluntary, community and faith sectors, to transform the way Sefton delivers its library service;
- (9) it be noted that the equality implications would be thoroughly assessed in line with the Council’s Equality Impact Assessment process, should Members agree that the proposed option be taken forward at a later date; and
- (10) the potential mitigating actions identified to date be noted and that further work on Sefton’s Library Service offer, including the possible mitigating actions, be developed.

### **Reasons for Decisions:**

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This report provided an update on the Library Service Review and sought approval to commence consultation on options. Early consideration of potential budget options continued to be essential as this would lead to informed decision making, including the consideration of the outcome of any consultations undertaken, the impact of any decisions to be made and any steps that can be taken to mitigate the impact of a decision.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

In developing options, Officers have considered the approach other library authorities are taking across the country as they too are impacted by reductions in resources. Some Public Library Authorities are proposing new models which include:

- the part or whole replacement of staff by volunteers;
- closure of libraries with buildings being handed over to community groups;
- reducing the number of service points, reconfiguring the network and developing alternative service models;
- cutting opening hours across all libraries;
- replacing static buildings with additional mobile services;
- out-sourcing support and infrastructure services to commercial companies;
- commissioning services from other agencies, including other public library authorities;
- “friends of” groups raising funds external to council revenue.

The report identified elements of the above within the options for consideration. The options from the above list that relate to alternative methods of governance are complex. They would need time to evaluate and implement and most would need a lot of specialist legal support. Exploratory discussions had taken place which had indicated that the level of external support (e.g. volunteers) for taking over the full operation of individual libraries is very limited. Therefore, such proposals were not recommended to move forward at this stage. However, any partnership methods of service delivery would be investigated further. More detailed information about this was contained in Annex J of the report”.

The Chair, Councillor McKinley, reported on the procedure for consideration of the call-in.

The Head of Governance and Civic Services reported on the validity of the call-in and highlighted that the call-in requisition:-

- had been received within the specified call-in period in accordance with Chapter 6, paragraph 37 of the Constitution;
- had been signed by three Members of the Council who weren't Members of the Cabinet, in accordance with Chapter 6, paragraph 38 (a) of the Constitution; and

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- referred to a specific decision made by the Cabinet and provided a reason in accordance with Chapter 6, paragraph 40 of the Constitution.

The Committee considered the comments of Mr. Bill Milburn, Strategic Director - Place on the background to this matter and Councillor P. Dowd, Leader of the Council and Councillor Moncur Cabinet Member for Children, Schools, Families and Leisure, addressed the Committee in relation to the decisions taken.

Councillor Brodie-Browne, on behalf of Councillors Dodd, Preece and Shaw, outlined and amplified the following reason for call-in:-

“The decision on the Review of Library Service made by the Cabinet at the meeting on 11 October 2012 is unsound. When deciding to approve Option B for consultation, Cabinet did not weigh the relative merits of each option. Specifically, Cabinet failed to give proper consideration to Option C, in particular by failing to take into account the issue of accessibility. Cabinet also did not take into account whether any of the various measures set out in Annex J of the report could contribute towards providing a comprehensive and efficient library service”.

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor McKinley, invited any representatives of the public attending the meeting to address the Committee, but this invitation was declined.

Councillors P. Dowd and Moncur responded to the representations made by Councillor Brodie-Browne.

Councillors P. Dowd and Moncur and Mr. Milburn answered questions posed by Members of the Committee.

Members of the Committee raised the following issues:-

- That at least one week of the consultation with the public had been lost due to the call-in;
- That the geographical spread of libraries and the proposal to consult on the closure of Ainsdale, Birkdale and Churchtown libraries leaving Southport as the only locally available facility would mean that some residents could live more than two miles away from the remaining facility serving the Southport area;
- That the consultation should include information regarding the options set out in Annex J to the report; and
- That it would be difficult to obtain a balanced view through the consultation process as residents who would not be affected by specific closures might not respond.

Mr. Milburn confirmed that one week of the consultation process had been lost in order that the call in could be considered. Councillors P. Dowd and Moncur confirmed that the consultation would be a wide-ranging one and that all comments would be considered.

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) this Committee is not concerned about the decisions made by the Cabinet in relation to this matter; and
- (2) the matter be not referred back for further consideration.