

# **Sefton MBC - Review of Library Services**

## **Joint Further Submission - 18 February 2013**

### **Introduction**

At the Cabinet meeting held on 14 February 2013 a decision on the Review of Library Services was deferred for two weeks. This Joint Further Submission is an attempt to advance a feasible and sustainable alternative to "Option B" which proposed the closure of 7 of the Borough's 13 libraries. It is endorsed by:

- Friends of Ainsdale Library
- Birkdale Library Action Group (BLAG)
- Friends of Churchtown Library

This alternative approach results in a revenue saving of £400,000 pa (reducing to £312,000 pa when allowance is made for the revenue implications of all the Capital Expenditure required to put all the Borough's libraries into good repair).

### **Summary of previous BLAG submission**

This Joint Further Submission develops the costed alternative contained within Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the BLAG submission and contained within the report to the Cabinet meeting held 14 February 2013. Appendices 1 and 2 are reproduced at the end of this submission.

The key elements of the BLAG alternative were:

- Reduction in opening hours from 30 hours per week to 24 hours per week. This was proposed to be achieved by closing one afternoon per week and by opening at 10.30am rather than 10.00am (or 9.30am on Saturdays).
- Reducing paid staff from the present average of approximately 3.15 staff on duty to 1.5 staff, and using volunteers to cover the reduction. This would necessitate approximately 40 hours per week of volunteer time, or 15 volunteer sessions per week each of 2.5 to 3 hours. (with 1 volunteer present for some sessions and 2 present for others).

In the case of Birkdale Library this would result in a total saving of approximately £40,000 pa, of which £14,000 would be attributable to the reduction in opening hours and £26,000 to the use of volunteers.

## Details

The three Southport Library Campaign/Support groups now wish to propose a Borough-wide fully costed alternative which we believe to be both feasible and sustainable, which maintains all 13 current library locations and which achieves a saving of £400,000.

Our alternative assumes that the commercial development proposal in relation to the Crosby Civic Hall site (referred to in para 3.30 of the most recent report to Cabinet) comes to fruition.

Because we have a working assumption that a replacement Crosby Civic Hall Library would be provided within the development we make no allowance for any staff savings at that library. However there are potential significant savings in premises costs.

As per Annex D of the original Review of Library Services report to the October 2012 Cabinet, the Crosby Civic Hall Library currently has (revenue) premises costs of £106,544 pa (this amounts to 24.6% of all the library premises cost, which amount to £432,000 pa in total). This would reduce very substantially to approximately £25,000 pa, a saving in excess of £80,000 pa.

In addition to the reduction in (revenue) premises costs the commercial development proposal at the Crosby Civic Hall site would also address the very significant outstanding capital expenditure requirement on that library of £750,000 (amounting to 42% of the total Condition Survey Costs of £1.8m for all libraries). That redevelopment would result in the total 'Revenue Implication of Capital Spend' of £152,000 across all 13 libraries (as per para 4.4 of the most recent report to Cabinet) reducing by £63,800 to £88,200 (also refer to Annex A attached).

Other key aspects of our Borough-wide alternative are as follows:

- Reduce opening hours from 30 to 24 per week for all 8 "branch" libraries - saves around £9,000 to £15,000 pa per library, depending on the staffing level.
- Retain the current (more generous) opening hours for the remaining 5 "main" libraries (note that Netherton is treated as a "branch" library and so would reduce opening by 6 hours per week).
- Develop a volunteer model across all 13 Sefton libraries. Although the BLAG proposal in relation to Birkdale Library suggested an average of slightly over 1.5 volunteers present across the 24 hours of opening, a more prudent average of 1 volunteer present has been assumed across the 13 libraries in this Joint Further Submission. This would result in an average saving in staffing costs of £18,000 per library.
- In addition, there are two very lightly staffed branch libraries (Aintree and Litherland) which currently only have around 2 staff on duty. Because it is regarded as essential that a paid employee should be

present during all hours of library opening a rather lower level of staff saving through volunteers has been assumed for these two libraries, specifically £12,000 pa rather than the usual £18,000 pa. This equates to an average of approximately 2/3 a volunteer present.

To achieve the above an average minimum of 10 to 15 volunteers would need to be recruited for each library. There would be a major role for the various Friends groups and equivalents (? possibly parish councils, where they exist), who could assist in recruiting volunteers and organising volunteer rotas. However there is also an HR/"duty of care" role (vetting, including CRB, health checks etc) where the Council has legal responsibilities and where it would be desirable for a member of the Library Service staff to perform the role.

It may be that this role could be contained within current Library Service central staffing. At most, an additional 0.5 FTE post might be needed at an annual cost of around £12,000 to £15,000 pa. Note that allowance has not been made for this in the figures below.

## Financial Conclusion

Annex A identifies the financial savings arising from the various measures, which may be summarised as follows:

Reduction in premises costs at Crosby Civic Hall Library	£81,544
Saving through reducing opening hours at 8 branch libraries	£96,500
Saving through use of volunteers at 13 libraries	£222,000
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Total revenue savings before Capital Expenditure	£400,044
<b>Less</b> Revenue Implications of Capital Spend	- £88,200
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Total revenue savings after Revenue Implications of Capital Expenditure	£311,844
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Melanie Horridge (Chair)  
Cllr Haydn Preece

On behalf of Friends of Ainsdale Library

Terry Durrance (Chair)  
Cllr Simon Shaw

On behalf of Birkdale Library Action Group

Elaine Langley (Secretary)  
Cllr Nigel Ashton

On behalf of Friends of Churchtown Library