



A Consortium Proposal to Transform Birkdale Library

Name of Lead Organisation: Sefton CVS. A local infrastructure and development agency providing services to voluntary, community and faith sectors in Sefton founded in 1974. Sefton CVS is a registered charity number 1024546 and company limited by guarantee number 2832920.

Consortium Partners: Sefton Pensioners Advocacy Centre (SPAC) founded in 1996 providing one to one casework advocacy services to and information to older people aged 60 plus in Sefton and surrounding areas. SPAC is a registered charity number 1055951.

Brighter Living Partnership founded in 1999 is a virtual healthy living centre providing services and initiatives to promote health and wellbeing in Sefton. A registered charity and company limited by guarantee No 03973156 founded in 1999.

Each organisation has published independently audited annual accounts for at least 5 years.

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Vision: To transform an existing sole occupancy and single function library to become a flexible multi-purpose community hub delivering services with and for the local community.

Aim of Proposal: A voluntary sector consortium aims to develop Birkdale Library as a sustainable and resilient community resource centre at the heart of Birkdale.

Objectives: To enable people and groups to access information, advice, services and guidance to enhance independence and health for personal and community resilience in a social setting.

To create a flexible and accessible community space, including opportunities to bring new services and partners to Birkdale and wider community.

Background:

The consortium, comprising Sefton CVS, Sefton Pensioners' Advocacy Centre (SPAC) and Brighter Living Partnership, submitted an outline exploratory proposal in March 2013 to Sefton Council to develop the existing Birkdale Library building, as an alternative to the potential closure of the building, after all other options to maintain the library service had been considered and rejected.

The three organisations connected with this proposal have a substantial track record, (collectively 65 years), of delivering community services within the borough. By combining resources, and with a commitment to work proactively with the existing local user groups, the consortium believes it can present a vibrant, enhanced and sustainable future for the Birkdale library building. This proposal builds on the original submission, as an alternative to the closure and potential loss of the facility to the Birkdale community.

Proposed Service and Project Operation:

The proposal will see the three organisations vacating the 6th floor of Shakespeare Street (CVS's present offices) and relocate services and operations to the Birkdale library to create an accessible and visible access point to the community.

The consortium has reviewed the building area and its potential for multi-functional use to incorporate project operation areas and public access area. The consortium believe it is ideally placed to transform the existing use after making good from the *Sefton MBC Birkdale Library Conditions Survey 2012* and a redesign of the layout to realise the potential to create a multi-functional community hub.

Community Projects able to operate and provide services from the Birkdale site include:

- **Sefton CVS Outreach** Providing support and assistance to build the structures, systems, people and skills of the VCF sector to meet community need through organisational development support, charity, company, CIC and enterprise registration and start up, implementing policies and systems, funding advice and income generation support, training and development. Other services include: a Disclosure and Barring Service, community accountancy and pay roll service, business planning, quality assurance support, consortia development and information, advice and guidance (IAG) for small, medium and large projects, groups and organisations. Facilitation of community networks and consultation and engagement conduits between the VCF sector (1600 groups/organisations) and public sector organisations primarily Sefton MBC and the CCG's.
- **Volunteer Centre Sefton** Providing information, advice and guidance to new and existing volunteers, support for volunteering engaging organisations in recruitment and management, on-line database of volunteering opportunities and development of new projects such as the charity shop network, uniformed groups network and foodbank volunteers programme. Currently the VC Sefton has over 6,000 registered volunteers and marketing opportunities for over 900 organisations and projects.

- **Handy Help Scheme** Accident Prevention Scheme to support vulnerable older people to live independently in their own homes with reduced risk of injury, supporting mobility and security. The service incorporates minor adaptations, small household repairs and support service, available to all adults living in the North of Sefton aged over 55 years of age with a disability and all residents over 60, currently the project has over 2,000 people registered.
- **Social Inclusion Project for Older People** The project reduces the social & health related problems that surround social isolation and social exclusion of older people in the North of Sefton and enables them to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. The project provides 3 social clubs per week and 2 shopping services with the support of volunteers, currently the project supports over 81 people.
- **Buddy-Up (13 to 16 mentoring)** A mentoring project to support young people aged 13 to 16 with Special and Additional Needs and particularly those who attend special schools. The project works with young people from mainstream schools to increase social participation, self confidence and self-esteem, whilst reducing isolation and providing a pathway to local community activities and support families of the young people with the opportunity of a short break. Currently the project works with 80 young people.
- **Sefton Credit Union (outreach)** Providing information to local people on the service of the Credit Union enabling the community to come together to save and borrow money at low rates, operated on a not-for-profit basis, with surpluses being returned to members. Increasingly important to promote and increase access to safe lending.
- **Sefton Pensioners Advocacy Service** providing one to one casework advocacy and self-advocacy services to older people (aged 60+). The charity provides help in a range of areas, from general advocacy to specialist services to support people with a variety of needs. Additional projects include:
 - **Dementia Advocacy** - Older People with Dementia will have the support of a specialist advocate to enable access to health and social care systems and promote their choices and wishes.
 - **Nursing/Residential Care Advocacy** – providing an independent person to represent older people living in residential, nursing homes or sheltered accommodation or seeking to access these types of accommodation, in addition a one-to-one ongoing partnership between an advocate and the person who is not in a good position to exercise his/her rights and is at risk of being mistreated or excluded.
 - **Cancer Advocacy** - Promoting advocacy services for older people diagnosed with cancer and to enable older people diagnosed with cancer to receive appropriate information and support at critical times, to empower them to make informed choices, and to live in the way they choose whilst undertaking their cancer journey.

- **Sefton Older Peoples' Forums** - sub-groups of the Sefton Partnership of Older Citizens (SPOC). The Forums work with agencies from all sectors around developing mechanisms to facilitate consultation and participation with older people.
- **Brighter Living Partnership- Fruit and Vegetable Co-operatives** – currently running across North and South Sefton. The aim of the project is to provide affordable, fresh produce to people living in areas of deprivation and/or to those with limited access to fresh fruit and vegetables. They also run co-ops in partnership with Riverside and One Vision Housing including visits to accommodation schemes to sell produce to residents. The co-ops can be accessed by any member of the public.
- **Healthy Eating** – delivering cookery sessions/courses at various venues throughout the borough, teaching people basic cooking skills and providing information about eating healthily and different aspects such as cooking on a budget and healthy family meals.
- **Peer Mentors** – this project involves training members of the community to be able to deliver basic health information and provide support to other community members. The project educates individuals about services available locally so they can refer suitable individuals they encounter to the relevant organisations. The project has trained in excess of 100 people and has secured additional funding to train more mentors in the near future.
- **Parenting 2000**-manages established Children's Centre in Southport and Litherland currently providing drop-in sessions to support families in community settings, ranging from ante-natal and health services to play sessions, a toy library service, parenting support, counselling service and various courses. Parenting 2000 will support the existing Story time sessions and volunteers to enable this service to continue within the proposed service offer at Birkdale.

Information on the above projects can be found on the outline proposal or on the following websites:

<http://www.volunteeringsefton.org.uk>

<http://www.spac-advocacy.org.uk>

<http://www.brighterliving.org.uk>

<http://www.seftoncvcs.org.uk>

<http://www.seftoncreditunion.org>

<http://www.parenting2000.org.uk>

Other voluntary groups and partners have expressed interest in providing drop in, regular activities and facilities in the building should this scheme progress.

The consortium will develop a joint and rolling sustainability plan prior to transfer that will explore a full range of income generation and resource maximisation options. These will include developing new and imaginative ways to engage donors and charitable partners, drawing in voluntary and 'added value' support from local people and businesses, exploring the full range of grant funding and social investment options and scoping potential community enterprise initiatives based on local demand.

The consortium will also undertake to develop transparent and robust partnership arrangements to ensure that roles, rights and obligations of all partners are clear from the outset. It should be noted that the consortium partners have been operating shared services successfully for at least 8 years in the North of the Borough.

Each of the consortium partners are regularly developing services in response to identified needs. They will also look to incorporate additional services/projects to support income generation and service delivery.

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An Alternative Library Service 'Offer'

The consortium have met with representatives from the BLAG (Birkdale Library Action Group) and ABC (Ainsdale, Birkdale and Churchtown Group) and have shared the project proposals. The consortium is committed to working cooperatively with other interested parties to develop options that are balanced, realistic and sustainable for an alternative library service 'offer' to be made available within the new proposal.

The plan (*Appendix 1*) incorporates floor space of 131.1m² for public service delivery. This area could provide a service for the loaning of books utilising the current systems and equipment, however this will need to be discussed and agreed with Sefton MBC.

Based on the Sefton Libraries Review 2012, the Birkdale library holds a stock of 35,126 books. The new proposal would be unable to house the current level of library stock and transform the building to become a community resource.

From analysis of the current lending information statistics 2011/12, it appears that 20% of the total stock is regularly loaned. Therefore, it is proposed a stock of 7,000 books could deliver a credible loaning scheme, within the available public floor space of approximately 131 M₂.

The loaning service would aim to be open and operational from 9.30am to 4.30pm, 4 days per week with a review to increase the opening time in 6 months post launch. To support this new approach volunteer support would be required by a cohort of 20 to 30 volunteers acting in community liaison capacity.

The service will work with the existing Council Library Service and support the Home Visits Library scheme. The consortium will support the recruitment of volunteers to this new community development where there are new and additional services.

Sefton CVS endorsed the Volunteering England & TUC Charter (*see Appendix 2*), in 2012, which clarifies the role of volunteering as distinct from paid employment. To substitute volunteers for existing staff and identical roles is not an option for our proposal. Activity must be a genuine volunteering opportunity and be an 'added value' role. All volunteering developments will need to include equality, health & safety, and safeguarding training, DBS and include volunteer management and support systems.

The consortium would look to develop this community initiative with local residents and groups who have an interest in being involved in this service/project. Income generation opportunities for the Public Area will also be sort for exhibitions and rental of floor space.

Creation of an Internet & Reading Café:

Located at the rear of the building, a new café facility will support a number of initiatives, increase footfall and provide contributory revenue to building running costs. The Café will be managed by Brighter Living Partnership. The café aims are:

- Provide a meeting place for groups such as Henshaws, including continued development of their ICT training programme for people with visual impairments
- Provide a public place to read and relax

- Provide internet access to the public, supporting job & volunteering placement searches and on-line Benefit submissions.
- Healthy eating cookery sessions & courses, eating on a budget etc
- Older peoples “value for money” Luncheon hour
- Outlet for fruit & vegetable co-operatives
- Work placements for people with a learning difficulty who have a interest and qualification in catering

There will be dedicated computers in set areas enabling existing services provided by the Library can be continued in the new proposal.

Within 1 mile of the venue there is one other small privately owned café. The focus of the library based café will be healthy eating, facility for service users accessing the building.

Installation of a Community Meeting and Training Room:

As per the attached plan (*Appendix 1*) a new dedicated meeting and training room is envisaged. This will enable partnership working with local training providers to deliver community learning and skills, including returning to employment, lifelong learning and community training. The room will be open for use by local groups and would also be utilised to maintain the existing groups already meeting at the venue including: story time sessions, local history group and reading groups. The room will also provide an income generation opportunity for hire and will be open to groups who currently rent the training room at Sefton CVS Office in Southport.

Financial Summary:

Building Repairs & Re-modelling

The consortium have reviewed the Sefton MBC Condition Survey (dated 03/04/12) for Birkdale Library and have agreed, as part of the project, to “make good” key areas within the building which have been identified as priority work.

This will include:

Repairs

- Repair of roof areas - £ 13,000
- Flooring and electrical work which holds a health and safety risk– the proportion that will need doing outside the remodelling plan - £1,000
- Replacement of defective windows with UPVC - £ 14,000
- Replacement of cold water tank - £ 500

We will also work with the Community Payback Team to redecorate the exterior of the building - £ 1,000 for materials only

Estimated Costs of Repairs: £ 29,500-The partners will each be contributing one third.

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Re-modelling:

To provide the services listed above and enable future development and growth of projects, the building will require some remodelling as per the attached plan (*Appendix 1*). This includes:

- Sealing access to the public toilet from the outside of the building and create access from within via a new entrance and corridor.
- Kitchens and an internet café area would be built at the rear of the building with 2 consultation rooms in the office area.
- Towards the front of the building a meeting/training room will be constructed.
- The office area and public area will be section via a wall.
- The public area will be accessed by the main entrance and will flow into the book loaning project and internet café with access to the public toilets.

Indicative Costs of Re-modelling (excluding the repairs detailed above): £90,000 approximately (inclusive of VAT)

In the time available with restricted access to the building, the consortium has only been able to obtain one contract quotation presently. This comprises:

- Creating a kitchen area to support cafe £12,000
- Reopening public toilets including accessible facilities £23,000
- Installing and upgrading public access electrics and wi-fi £25,000
- Studding plaster doors for partitions, meeting rooms/office £20,000
- Patching and decoration £4,500
- External security fencing through construction £1,000

The consortium partners would contribute 33% investment to the remodelling plus the cost of the repairs making 50% total investment.

Annual Building Running Costs (excludes costs for service delivery)

The first table (below) is the actual revenue costs gained from the published running costs of the Library.

Table 1 Item or Activity	Cost (£)
Repairs and maintenance	8,840
Utilities	3,558
Refuse Collection	714
Business rates	£12,006
Cleaning	7,185
Total	£32,303

Indicative annual running costs for a twelve month period after change of use.

Table 2 Item or Activity	Cost (£)
Repairs and maintenance (assumption that after essential work carried out the annual cost will be lower)	5,000
Utilities (inclusive of running the café)	7,500
Refuse Collection (assuming full recycling in accordance with SCVS Corporate Responsibility Policy)	750
Business rates (assuming charity rating)	2,401 (80% of £12,006)
Insurance: public liability, buildings liability and contents (not including the café equipment and furniture)	1,170
IT costs and support	4,500
Cleaning	6,000

Total	£27,321
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These costs would all be split between the consortium members on an annual basis.

***It is anticipated that some of the activities that would be taking place would be income generating e.g. the café, room hire.**

Table 3 Additional costs for first year only – removals, phone, IT set up etc.	£15,000
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The costs in Table 3 would all be split between the consortium members.

Refurbishment and Leasehold

The consortium would be looking to the Council to consider granting a 20 year lease on the building at a peppercorn rent for the full duration of the lease. This would enable the consortium to apply to grant makers who require this length of lease term to consider capital and revenue investment. Additionally, the Consortium is requesting a lease that does not include mutual break clauses as these operate as a clear barrier for funders who would otherwise consider investing in the building on the basis of the charitable activities that we aim to deliver on and through the site.

On this basis the consortium would invest:

In making good the priority repair costs of £29,500 on the building with a matched commitment from each consortium partner.

As well as the above costs, would invest 33% of the indicative refurbishments costs

The investment from the partners represents 50% of the total indicative repair and refurbishment costs.

Operational Running costs: commitment from consortium partners on an annual basis as part of each organisations fixed operational costs of £32,303 per annum.

In order for this to be a smooth transition and to become an operational multi- purpose resource centre we anticipate works could be completed within 2/3 months of a potential closure date of 1st June.

Preferred Option for the Consortium:

In considering information for the development of community libraries/ resource centres drawn from *'Community Libraries 10 case studies undertaken by Locality Jan 2013,* catalyst investment in either ongoing running cost, transition costs for revenue and or capital has been critical to the establishment of these new locality services: e.g. LA transition grants, such as in the London Borough of Camden.

The consortium understands that Sefton MBC has developed a Community Resilience Transition Fund for public service transformation proposals in 2013/14.

The consortium would ask the Council to consider a 'one off' capital investment of £60,000 to match their 50% financial contribution to the indicative total costs of £120,000 (repair and refurbishment) to enable the transition of the existing Birkdale single function library to become a flexible multi-purpose hub with the view to sustain and develop a sustainable community managed option for the future.

Least Preferred Option for the Consortium:

Without the benefit of one off Transition investment, the consortium members would still consider relocating, making good the building to the cost of £29,500 and undertaking instead a staged refurbishment process, which would be entirely directed by the securing of external resources.

Risks

This would significantly delay the process and therefore the visible improvements and access to the public. This would impact on the Council's aspirations to diversify services within the local community and support emerging welfare reform and resilience interventions.

There could also be risks attached to this in relation to potential health and safety issues, whilst modifications are undertaken and would significantly disrupt the existing operations of the organisations.

Conclusion:

The offer and why us:

- **Imaginative**: as cuts impact and services are threatened, this represents an imaginative solution that:
 - Ensures the building remains open to the community
 - Physical improvements to the building will enhance area and provide a valuable asset
 - Provides ongoing public access to books and loaning provision in Birkdale
 - Provides an integrated range of additional services, support and opportunities for the wider community and support resilience
 - Shared financial investment maximising the Sefton £ between public and voluntary sectors for the benefit of local residents
- **Sustainable**: substantial, robust and sustainable organisations making up the consortium with a long track record of managing buildings and community venues;
- **Proven**: not a new consortium – we have been working together for at least 8 years operating shared facilities and managing partnership activity;
- **Instant**: we have a range of existing services, projects and initiatives that can be deployed from day one – as well as scope to develop many more;

- **Networked**: the consortium leads or participates in ALL of the key community networks across the north of the Borough ensuring that the venue will sit at the heart of community activity.

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