

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

RECORD OF OFFICER EXECUTIVE DECISION

Date of Decision: 12 May 2023

Decision Maker: Mark Fitton, Strategic Director for People

Brief Description of Decision

A Library Strategy for Worcestershire was written in 2019/20 following formal public engagement, a Local Government Association Library Peer Challenge and the creation of a Library Needs Assessment.

The Strategy, which sets out a medium-term vision for the service and a context for future service transformation, received Cabinet approval in December 2019 and included the implementation of an open library service delivery model aimed at securing the future of the Worcestershire's library network while providing opportunities to deliver efficiencies and meet the needs of Worcestershire residents

Following a successful 'early adopter' implementation of an open library service delivery model in June 2022 at Droitwich and Stourport Libraries under **Libraries Unlocked** branding, a Phase 2 implementation is proposed across remaining Worcestershire Libraries except for: The Hive; libraries with lowest relative need and poorest return on investment.

An indicative capital investment of up to £423k is required to install open library technology in up to 12 further libraries. Phase 2 Libraries Unlocked implementation is expected to result in staffing reductions to make the necessary savings.

Table 1. below identifies libraries in and out of scope of Phase 2 and where it is being considered subject to landlord approval.

Libraries Unlocked **Confirmed**

Malvern
Evesham
Redditch
Kidderminster
Bromsgrove
Hagley
Rubery
St Johns
Warndon

Libraries Unlocked **Maybe – subject to landlord approval**

Wythall
Persnore
Alvechurch

Libraries Unlocked

Not proceeding with

The Hive
Tenbury
Upton
Woodrow
Broadway
Catshill
Bewdley

At libraries where Libraries Unlocked is not implemented alternative approaches will be considered where appropriate to ensure that distribution of staff resource across libraries broadly aligns to relative library need, with higher staffing at higher need libraries.

Reason(s) For Decision

This second phase Libraries Unlocked implementation will:

1. increase library opening hours
2. improve the availability/accessibility of library services to a wider, more representative audience to optimise their take-up and reach across Worcestershire
3. grow libraries as community assets by increasing use of library space by community partners
4. future-proof Worcestershire Library network through a flexible, cost-efficient service delivery model delivery
5. support the recovery of library visits to pre-pandemic levels
6. deliver library staff efficiencies of £220k to meet CSP efficiency targets over 2023/24 and 2024/25

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Option 1 – Do nothing. This does not enable the necessary efficiency savings to be made. It also does not allow for Library opening hours to be extended.

Option 2 – Reduce opening hours. Whilst this option would enable efficiency savings to be made, it results in a reduction of the Library Offer, does not future proof Libraries and is not congruent with Worcestershire Library Strategy.

Option 3 – Implement Libraries unlocked technology in all remaining Libraries with the exception of The Hive (where service availability is already substantially higher than the rest of the library network at 94.5 hours a week).

This option does not consider the relative need of each Library (Library need is based on a combination of four factors: deprivation of library catchment area, relative isolation of each library, exclusive use of home library by customers, service activity levels/reach of each library including participation levels following the COVID pandemic). It also does not consider local funding pressures and site practicalities when identifying a final list of libraries for Phase 2 implementation. Landlord approval (in leased library building) and funder approval (in PFI library buildings) will also need to be secured.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments carried out

Yes available on request

Uploaded separately

Any Conflict of Interest declared by a consulted Cabinet Member/ any dispensation granted

N/A

Reference

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