



FACING THE CHALLENGE

Issue 3 • Warwickshire County Council • March 2011

Changing times for Warwickshire Library & Information Service



Nationally public sector bodies throughout the country are having to deal with the national deficit. Over the next three years Warwickshire County Council will have to reduce its budget by up to £60 million across all of its services.

The pace and magnitude of the financial challenge requires large scale reform and this will mean we will have to make difficult decisions across our services including our valued Libraries & Information Service.

We are proposing that Warwickshire's library service will be completely redesigned, with libraries joining, for example, one-stop shops for local services and communities. Technology will also play a much bigger role in enabling local people to connect to and access our services.

The library service in Warwickshire has already been undergoing change for some time to reflect the changing way people access information, books and its services. The reality of major

reductions in funding that the Council is facing, means we cannot afford to sustain the library network in its current form.

We are reviewing the whole network of libraries and have identified 16 libraries that are no longer sustainable in their current form. We are also reviewing the opening hours of all our other libraries. We are proposing continuing to run the county's most used libraries – those that account for more than 90% of all library visits. Financial pressures are an undeniable factor as the library service must reduce its annual costs by £2 million over the next three financial years (by April 2014).

The Facts

- **Warwickshire County Council must make unprecedented savings of more than £60 million by 2014 across all our services.**
- **We have to cut £2 million from our £7.4 million Library & Information Service budget.**
- **To do this, major reform of all our services is necessary. Of the £2m cuts, about £1m is proposed from the libraries network and the other £1m cuts from support, specialist services and management.**
- **County Council will look at the overall budget cuts for the council of £60m on 15th February**
- **A number of options were presented to cross-party councillors at Overview & Scrutiny on 1st March and to Cabinet on 17th March**
- **The 12-week library consultation period runs from 18 March to 9 June**

Where we are now

What we do

- We currently run 34 libraries countywide and a fleet of five mobiles
- Our operational budget for 2010/11 is £7.4m
- We raise approximately £800,000 income per annum
- We currently employ 192 (Full Time Equivalent)
- More than 250,000 local people are county library members

What we offer

- Free book loans - up to 10 at any one time
- Low-cost CD and DVD rental, faxing and photocopying
- A comprehensive enquiry and information service
- 234 public computers offering 30 minutes free time per day
- Events and activities for all ages and wide interests
- Spaces for study and relaxation and where people can meet
- Support for groups eg reading circles, Silver Surfers and job seekers
- 24/7 online services for renewals, reservations, enquiries, information and much more
- Mobile services to outlying communities, residential homes and sheltered housing for older people.
- Home visits to more than 750 housebound readers countywide, helped by Age Concern and volunteers
- Specialist library services for schools
- Local studies promoting the culture and heritage
- Music and Drama service
- Book Start - which gifts books to babies and young children
- Venues for community activities

Value for money in tough times

We must question the practicality and public value of trying to maintain 34 separate library buildings, and whether integrating and co-locating some libraries with other local services would be more cost-effective.

There may be other and better ways to offer non building-based library services to smaller Warwickshire communities - more relevant and convenient for today's 24/7 busy lifestyles.

What's been done

The transformation programme has already delivered:

- 15 library makeovers, along with the introduction of self-service equipment.
- Alterations to Wellesbourne and Wolston libraries integrating with on-site Children's Centres.
- Five libraries are One Stop Shops sharing premises with partners.
- The trial introduction of 'Playaway' ipod-style audio books.
- Extra online subscription services, free to library members, including the official Driver Theory Test and some interesting archives.
- The installation of free public WI-FI and Touchdown stations for mobile workers in all Warwickshire libraries.
- A free trial e-books service, with hundreds of downloadable titles to choose from.
- Teens and twenties 'Get it Loud in Libraries' events at Rugby attracting young people into the library
- The launch of Books on Prescription in conjunction with NHS Warwickshire



There may be other and better ways to offer non building-based library services to smaller Warwickshire communities.



The future

The future vision is about re-shaping the provision of the service to reach and engage with our customers in a new way within the budgetary restraints we find ourselves facing as a nation. It is less about buildings and more about developing quality services in flexible and cost-efficient ways.

We propose to reshape the library network, providing three categories or levels:

Category 1
with the widest range of opening hours

Category 2
with opening hours that reflect community needs

Category 3
online library open 24/7 plus mobile and outreach services to local communities



Category 1 • Library Hub

- in three main centres of population offering our longest opening hours a week within budgetary restrictions
- quality book stock which borrowers can return to any Warwickshire library
- special collections
- extensive, high-quality children's and young people's services
- fast internet access with learning support, bookable in one-hour slots
- well-trained, friendly staff
- specialist services and staff
- a wide range of events and regular activities
- information and specialist advice to help with life's challenges
- space to relax, chat or study
- self service borrowing and returns
- tourist information
- photocopying and fax services

Category 2 • Library Local

- in 15 locations with opening hours that reflect community needs
- quality stock focused on quick choice and self study
- high quality children's and young people's services
- fast internet access with learning support, bookable in one-hour slots
- well-trained, friendly staff
- an events and activities programme e.g. Story Time
- information to help with life's challenges
- self service borrowing and returns

Category 3 • Library Direct

Virtual Library

- online membership
- online enquiry service
- online reference library
- e-books service
- online library catalogue
- online request and renewal service

Mobile Library Service

- regular mobile library visits
- tailored range of books and materials
- internet-linked computer carrying office systems and giving access to email and the library catalogue
- reservation and request service

Outreach service

- a programme of activities and events delivered at local venues

Housebound reader service

- Home deliveries to housebound readers countywide - run in conjunction with Age UK (Warwickshire) and staffed by volunteers

Tough choices - achieving the £2m savings

A review has been carried out of all 34 libraries in Warwickshire and the relative performance of each has been assessed by:

- an aggregate score of the number of visits and issues per hour open
- existing or planned partnership arrangements

The following 16 Library buildings have been identified as being no longer sustainable in their current form:

**Baddesley
Bedworth Heath
Bidford on Avon
Binley Woods
Bulkington
Camp Hill
Dordon
Dunchurch**

**Harbury
Hartshill
Henley in Arden
Keresley
Kineton
Kingsbury
Studley
Water Orton**

Reconfiguring services at all 16 would reduce the number of buildings by almost half but would affect only 9.6% of the current visits.

The aim would be to look at alternative ways of providing our service to these customers and the Council is open to looking at how this could be done with local communities.

In addition there will also be a need to reduce the opening hours in the remaining libraries. The precise hours and days of opening will be discussed with local communities as part of the proposed consultation process for these changes.

The initial proposals are:

Reducing Opening hours:

Libraries

Nuneaton, Rugby and Leamington

Alcester, Atherstone, Bedworth, Kenilworth, Polesworth*, Southam, Stratford, Warwick

Coleshill, Lillington, Shipston, Stockingford, Wellesbourne, Whitnash, Wolston

Average hours open

Up to **50** hours a week

Up to **35** hours a week

Up to **20** hours a week

- * Polesworth library has gone up from 27 hours to 35 hours to bring it in line with the hours offered at other similar performing libraries.
- It is also proposed to reduce the current fleet of mobile libraries from five to three.

- For mobile libraries we propose to review current schedules, remove least-used stops and revise routes so that the fleet of mobile libraries can be reduced from five to three vehicles. We will also be sharing a vehicle with Solihull Library Service, which will help with shared costs.



It is also proposed to reduce the current fleet of mobile libraries from five to three.





Consultation

Warwickshire County Council will conduct a 12 week public consultation on the proposed changes so people's views can be considered and taken into account before any final decisions are made.

A consultation plan has been drawn up to give local people opportunities to express their views. A roadshow will tour Warwickshire libraries during the consultation period so people can find out more and have their say. Over the 12 weeks, we will attend a range of other public meetings, across the county, to explain more about the proposals and answer questions. Consultation questionnaires will be available at all public sessions, in Warwickshire libraries and online - for completion and return by June 9 (2011).

The consultation information will include a factsheet for each of Warwickshire's 34 libraries so people can see exactly what the options are for their local service - and why, so that people can have their input into the future shape of the libraries. The consultation will give the public an opportunity to say how the proposed changes would affect them, if implemented.

Anyone who lives, works, or is being educated in Warwickshire will be invited to make their views known.

We will contact/consult:

- **Library users**
- **Our staff and union representative**
- **Warwickshire MPs**
- **County, Parish, Town, District and Borough Councillors**
- **Warwickshire schools**
- **Our partners and wider stakeholders**

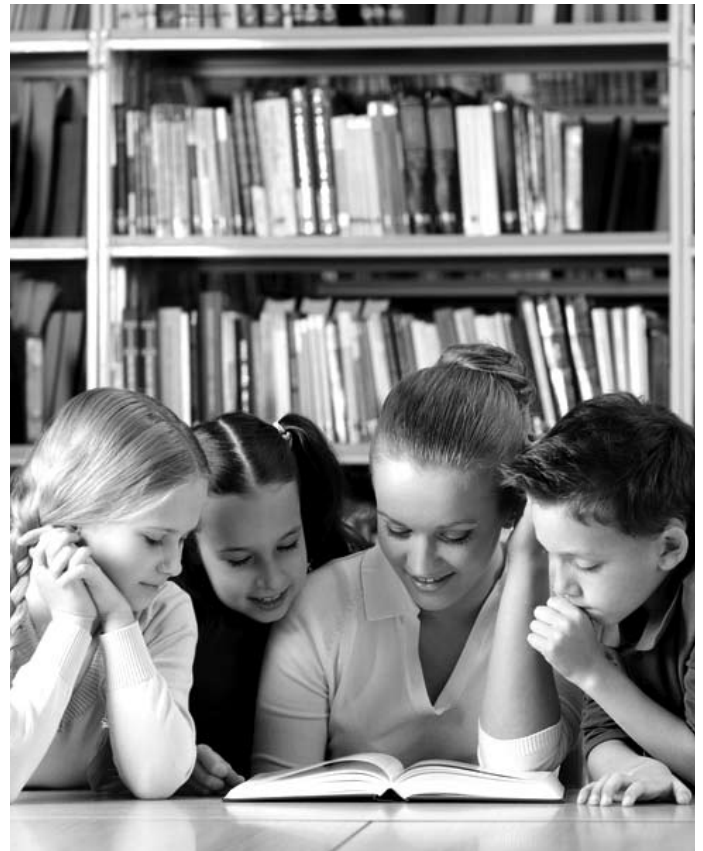
Community options

As part of the decision making process, discussions with communities will look at a range of options for the provision of a library service for the community. These will include:

- **The local community delivering library services (Big Society principles)**
- **Working in partnership to deliver library services from another building in the community**
- **Use the existing building to deliver extra services to provide income to maintain a library service**

The Library and Information Service already works with many volunteers on a regular basis, for example through the housebound reader service. Through consultation communities may express an interest in providing a volunteer-run service.

Communities would need to come forward with a robust business case for operating their own service, which we will explore with them. The business case will need to cover all the associated costs e.g. buildings and would need to take account of the on-costs and resource implications which would also need careful consideration. If no sustainable option is identified, Warwickshire County Council will vacate the building at that location.





Conclusion

We are proposing to:

- **invest in a core network of main libraries geographically spread across the county**
- **make best use of technology in the areas where our customers value it most**
- **think creatively about how to sustain services in as many communities as possible by sharing costs and premises with partners, and**
- **give the community the opportunity to run community libraries themselves**

Meeting the needs of the most vulnerable

We will have conversations with the most vulnerable users of our library service and those living in very rural areas about meeting their needs. This could include:

- **extending services to housebound people provided by volunteers**
- **order and direct delivery by village and community agents or volunteers**
- **community drop off points for books**
- **continuing to support a postal service to visually impaired people**
- **providing library related learning activities at other community venues e.g. children's centres**

With the future budgets that we have available, we are seeking to deliver a library service which provides:

- **a geographic spread of main libraries across the county**
- **develops a library service that fits the changing lifestyles of our customers, embraces technology and ensures our libraries remain relevant to people's lives**
- **reflects the changes happening in our society**
- **creates opportunities to share buildings with partners and offer a one stop shop to our customers**
- **gives the community the opportunity to introduce new services to meet local needs**
- **learns from other authorities and from the private sector**
- **builds on the developments we have made to our library service in recent years, and of which we are most proud**

This approach aims to give us a modern and affordable library service that can be accessed from home as well as being geographically spread across the county. It also gives the opportunity for communities and other organisations to work together to influence what services they need for the future in their local area.

Contact us by email: libraries@warwickshire.gov.uk

or by post: **Head of Customer Service & Communications, Shire Hall, Market Square, Warwick CV34 4RR**

CHALLENGE