

## INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION REPORT

Published on 24 September 2019

Proposed re-location of Stonehouse Library to Stonehouse Town Council building,  
High Street, Stonehouse.

<b>Dates between which decision will be taken</b>	Earliest date: 1 October 2019 Latest date : 10 October 2019
<b>Public Protection, Parking and Libraries</b>	Cllr Dave Norman
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Background Papers</b>	Library Strategy 2012 Officer Decision to consult on re-location Medium Term Financial Strategy
<b>Location/Contact for inspection of Background Documents</b>	<b><i>Library Strategy 2012</i></b> <a href="https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/3413/updated_strategy1_-_64623.pdf">https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/3413/updated_strategy1_-_64623.pdf</a> <b><i>Officer Decision to consult on re-location</i></b> <a href="http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1137">http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1137</a> <b><i>Medium Term Financial Strategy</i></b> <a href="https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2086541/mtfs-doc-as-approved-council-feb-2019.pdf">https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2086541/mtfs-doc-as-approved-council-feb-2019.pdf</a>
<b>Main Consultees</b>	Customer consultation Lesley Williams (Divisional Councillor) Stonehouse Town Council Relevant GCC internal support services
<b>Planned Dates</b>	Customer consultation – 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2019 and 25 <sup>th</sup> May 2019
<b>Divisional Councillor</b>	Cllr Lesley Williams

<b>Officer</b>	<p><b>Any representations should be sent to:</b></p> <p>Jane Everiss  01452 425027  Jane.everiss@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p> <p><b>By 5.00pm on Monday 30 September 2019</b></p>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<p>To consider the outcome of the consultation and the proposal to re-locate Stonehouse Library to Stonehouse Town Council building, High Street, Stonehouse.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>To use agreed capital funding to undertake refurbishment works to Stonehouse Town Council building and to re-locate the library into Stonehouse Town Council building, High Street, Stonehouse.</p>
<b>Reasons for Recommendations</b>	<p>The reasons for the recommendation are laid out in section 2 Options appraisal. The recommendation will enable the service to extend opening hours, increase services available from the new site and will aim to draw higher footfall to the High Street location. The results of the engagement survey shows this to be a positive move supported by the residents who commented.</p>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	<p>Capital funding £300k – approved by County Council 13th February 2019. S106 developers funding of £111,302</p>

# MAIN REPORT CONTENTS

## 1. Background

The current Stonehouse Library building is in a remote location, which means that opportunities for further engagement with the community or expansion of the service are limited. The current location also means the building requires double staffing.

The current building is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain with a significant maintenance backlog associated with it. The property is now deteriorating rapidly and as of August 2019, it was identified that an investment of around £348k would be needed to keep the building operational. Whilst at the moment, the building does not pose a significant risk to its occupants, the building is deteriorating to the point it is becoming a health & safety risk.

The library is only open for 12 hours per week, operating for the lowest opening hours of any County Library in Gloucestershire and the planned move will enable us to extend the opening hours as we will be operating in a shared building.

In order to fully understand the impact the re-location of the library would have on customers and residents we undertook a customer survey which ran from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 25<sup>th</sup> May 2019. This survey attracted 193 written responses.

## 2. Options

Four options have been considered in respect of the future of Stonehouse Library.

### **Option 1 – No investment into current building or service**

This option will result in a library service being withdrawn from the community in Stonehouse. The building is in a poor state of repair and service from the current building with no investment is not sustainable. It is highly likely that the service would need to be withdrawn within the next 12 months. This is likely to lead to challenge from the local community, Town Council and Divisional Councillor.

### **Option 2 - Maintain current building**

This option would require a capital investment of £348k in order to address the maintenance backlog for the building. In order to undertake the necessary work a temporary location would need to be identified in order to continue service delivery, thus adding to the overall cost of investment. The statutory library is open for 12 hours per week and must be double-staffed due to its location, therefore there is little opportunity to extend hours and the service would not benefit from a High Street presence and increased footfall.

### **Option 3 – Re-locate Library into private High Street accommodation**

The options for suitable accommodation on the High Street are limited and GCC would not wish to enter into a revenue rental model. Purchase prices for High Street locations are high and are likely to outweigh the income from the sale of the current land. GCC would be solely responsible for the revenue running costs associated with an alternative building and there is likely to be capital investment needed into any premises to ensure the building is suitable to operate as a public library.

### **Option 4 - Co-locate in Stonehouse Town Hall**

Discussions have been ongoing with Stonehouse Town Council who would like to see a community hub created with the library re-locating to their current building. The current site would be sold and GCC would secure a leasehold interest in part of the Town Council building for a period of at least 40 years. The library would benefit from a High Street presence and it is anticipated that it would receive increased footfall. GCC would invest £300k capital to refurbish the building in order to accommodate the library and use developer contributions to fit the library space out. GCC would be responsible for a proportion of the running costs together with Stonehouse Town Council and therefore not bear full responsibility for the whole building. Running costs are likely to be similar or lower than the current library building. Due to the location of the site there is an opportunity to extend opening hours. We anticipate that any increased opening hours would see no increased resource spend. The additional hours will be sought in co-operation with Stonehouse Town Council to ensure that we can continue to single staff these hours whilst working alongside Council colleagues. Through our Customer Survey, we have also identified a number of people keen to volunteer at the new library. In addition this option is in line with the One Public Estate initiative with public sector partners getting best value through collaboration.

### **3. Risk Assessment**

There is a risk that the sale of the current property and land would not recoup the capital expenditure invested into the new location. A customer engagement exercise was undertaken in order to assess the risk to customers not being able to access library services. The results of this engagement showed that only 4% of customers will be negatively impacted if the library were to be re-located with 1.6% of customers (3 people) being unable to use the new location. Risks associated with the Health & Safety of employees will be greatly reduced with the move to the new location.

### **4. Officer Advice**

To approve Option 4 and re-locate the library from its current premises to Stonehouse Town Council building, High Street, Stonehouse under the terms of a 40+ year lease. To extend opening hours, in order to provide greater access to library services, for the community of Stonehouse and to undertake a refurbishment of the Town Council building.

If Option 4 is approved we would aim to instruct contractors once formal legal agreements are signed with the anticipation that we would look to re-locate the library early in 2020.

## **5. Equalities considerations**

Consultation was undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2019 in order to understand the impact on customers and residents and equalities information was gathered from this survey. The full results are contained within the Due Regard statement.

68% of respondents to the survey were female, 26% male and 6% preferred not to say. 88% of respondents stated that their gender identity was the same as assigned at birth with 10.7% preferring not to say. The highest response rate we received was from people aged 65 and over and who identified themselves as White English. 11% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability with 9% preferring not to say. 66.5% of respondents were married with 9% preferring not to say.

## **6. Consultation arrangements/feedback**

193 people responded to the customer engagement survey with the majority (32%) being library users who use the library every 2-3 weeks. 84% of people who responded use the library to borrow books.

The survey asked people to respond on how the move may impact on their use of the library. 92.1% said they would be able to visit the library more often or would not be affected by the move. 2.6% said they would be able to visit but less often and 1.6% (3 people) said they would not be able to continue using the library. 7 people (3.7%) responded to the "other" option – 2 people were concerned about parking but the remainder all gave positive opportunities if it were to be re-located. Although we asked people to leave their contact details if it would have an impact no one chose to do so.

The majority of respondents (36%) would like us to set up a library club for older residents in the new location and 17% of respondents said they would volunteer in order to extend opening hours.

Staff will be consulted on whether the move will have any impact on them. Face to face meetings are planned in order to understand and address any concerns staff might have about their ability to work from the new location. Trades Unions have also been consulted.

## **7. Performance Management/Follow-up**

The 3 customers who identified that the re-location would have a negative impact did not leave contact details even though they were given the opportunity to do so, therefore we are unable to contact them directly to discuss their circumstances.

The library service will, however, continue to engage with all customers using the library to ensure all are fully aware of the re-location plans and to discuss any mitigating factors we can put in place in order to ensure customers continue to be able to access library services.

Any concerns that are brought forward by staff will be considered in order to ensure that these are considered.

<b>Report Title</b>	Proposed re-location of Stonehouse Library to Stonehouse Town Council building, High Street, Stonehouse.
<b>Statutory Authority</b>	Public Library & Museums Act 1964
<b>Relevant County Council policy</b>	Library Strategy 2012
<b>Sustainability checklist:</b>	
Partnerships	A partnership with Stonehouse Town Council has been formed with the aim of creating a community hub within the Town Council building. We would work with the Town Council to undertake the refurbishment works and deliver services from the building in the future. A legal lease agreement would be entered into. We would partner with members of the local community to volunteer with us and would build partnerships with local community groups and businesses to help provide activities from the new location.
Decision Making and Involvement	Formal consultation was undertaken with customers which provided overwhelming support for the re-location of the library. The Town Council will be consulted throughout the project in order to ensure their views are taken on board.
Economy and Employment	The library will become a location where members of the local community can volunteer. We will be encouraging younger people or people with disabilities in order to help provide work experience. Additionally Stonehouse Library will be part of the Growth Hub network and will be able to provide an access point to the wider Growth Hub resources, advice and information. The aim of which is to encourage local business start ups and SMEs to grow. The re-location of the library to the High Street is also anticipated to bring greater footfall to the location and may increase use of local shops.
Caring for people	It is hoped that the new location will enable more residents of Stonehouse to access library service provision. 36% of respondents to the survey would like us to set up a library club for older people. This library club will reduce social isolation by bringing older people together once a month in the library setting allowing them to choose their own books and to interact with others. We will also be looking to increase our activities for children. Volunteering will enable people to assist within a local resource and help provide a service for their local

<p>Social Value</p> <p>Built Environment</p> <p>Natural Environment' including Ecology (Biodiversity)</p> <p>Education and Information</p>	<p>community.</p> <p>The move of the library to the Town Council building is hoped to have a positive impact on the High Street by bringing increased footfall. The library will be providing enhanced access to digital services and support in use of ICT and mobile devices. There will be wider availability of health &amp; wellbeing advice and guidance and the move will fit with the aspiration for Gloucestershire to be a child friendly county.</p> <p>The old library does not provide a healthy environment for staff or customers. The new building is far brighter and without damp. The space will be refurbished and new equipment and stock procured for use.</p> <p>The library re-location will enable us to use an existing building which is fitted with solar panels and therefore a proportion of the electric in that location will be supplied by these. The property is well maintained, which is likely to lead to reduced service costs. New energy efficient heating and lighting will be installed as part of the project.</p> <p>Communication to the residents of Stonehouse and the current library users will be ongoing. We have provided infographics advising people of the outcome of the consultation. Library staff will be engaging with all customers using the library to ensure all are fully aware of the re-location plans and to discuss any mitigating factors which may be needed in order to ensure customers continue to be able to access library services.</p> <p>The new space will allow us to provide a greater range of services which will include digital assistance, coding and access to Innovation equipment.</p>
<p><b>Tackling Climate Change</b></p>	<p>Carbon Emissions Implications? Positive</p> <p>Vulnerable to climate change? Maybe</p>
<p><b>Due Regard Statement</b></p>	<p>Has a Due Regard Statement been completed? Yes</p> <p>Yes - considerations included in main body of report</p> <p>A copy of the full Due Regard Statement can be accessed on GLOSTEXT via <a href="http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1">http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1</a></p> <p>Alternatively a hard copy is available for inspection from Jo Moore, Democratic Services Unit, e-mail: <a href="mailto:jo.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk">jo.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk</a>.</p>

**Human rights  
Implications**

We are not aware that this re-location will have any Human rights implications.