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My Ref: GH-/001CS

Your Ref:

Date: 8 January 2018

Dear Colleague

**Re: Public consultation regarding Staffordshire County Council Managed and Delivered Libraries and the Mobile and Travelling Library Service**

As you may be aware, financial challenges are seeing public libraries close across the country.

However, not in Staffordshire, here we are bucking the national trend by choosing to modernise and develop our library service in collaboration with our community rather than close our libraries.

Following extensive public consultation during 2014, more people are now volunteering to support their library and community groups have stepped up to take the lead at 23 Community Managed Libraries. As a result all 43 libraries across our county remain open.

23 Community Managed Libraries is a great achievement, however as you will be aware, the funding allocated to local authorities by Central Government is diminishing when demand for the support the County Council provides locally, especially from our growing ageing population, is increasing dramatically. During 2018- 2019, we need to spend £310m on care, more than ever before.

Although the County Council has reduced costs by more than £200m over the last seven years, we need to find new ways for the 20 County Council Managed and Delivered Libraries and the Mobile and Travelling Library Service to operate within the reduced budget available.

Following discussions held at the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee and the County Council's Cabinet, a 12 week public consultation began on Monday 8



January 2018 to discuss our ideas with communities and individuals to identify the best way to deliver the service differently and at a reduced cost.

Our ideas do not represent sweeping changes to the library service, but are suggestions that could enable libraries to remain sustainable and relevant to people's lives into the future.

Through this consultation we are exploring a proposal to introduce self-service technology at County Council managed and delivered libraries to potentially extend opening hours. We will also ask how we can encourage more volunteers to work alongside paid staff at these libraries.

As part of the consultation, we will test the appetite for Penkrige, Cheadle, Clayton and Eccleshall Libraries to become Community Managed Libraries. This could reduce the number of fully – funded County Council libraries while enabling more communities have the opportunity access a revitalised service that benefits from the local leadership of local people.

I particularly want to draw your attention to our proposal to reshape the Mobile and Travelling Library Service. Fewer people use mobile and travelling libraries in Staffordshire than ever before and the cost of running the service continues to be high at £6.50 per visitor.

Whilst the service was reshaped during 2015 to focus on providing a service to those communities that need it most, we need to ensure that the service provides better value for money whilst serving the rural or isolated communities that both need and make use of it.

We are proposing to withdraw the larger Travelling Library vehicle and deliver the service via the two smaller Mobile Libraries. These are more flexible vehicles that are able reach more isolated rural communities.

We will consult on a set of principles that will be used to inform which stops the service will continue to make. The principles are based on the need to ensure mobile libraries do not duplicate static library provision; that the mobiles only visit communities where more than 5 people use them and that there is continuation of service to those in greatest need.

As always, our proposals are initial suggestions, and we welcome all ideas for continuing to transform the service to match people's need whilst operating within the budget available.

The consultation runs until 1 April 2018 and we welcome your views and those in your division:



- Through the online survey – which is available at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/connectedlibraries](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/connectedlibraries)
- Through your Community Partnership Officer
- At any of the drop-in consultation events across the county – there is one at every county council managed library
- At any Staffordshire Library where paper consultation documents are available.

A final decision on these proposals will be made during the summer.

During the public consultation, questionnaires will be made available for members of the public to collect from all Staffordshire Libraries, including Community Managed Libraries and Mobile and Travelling Libraries.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



**Gill Heath**  
**Cabinet Member for Communities**

