



The purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for the Town Council's consideration of its response to the decision of the Isle of Wight Council's Executive meeting of 27 October 2015 to reclassify Ventnor's Library as a Partnership Library.

No. DETAIL

1) BACKGROUND

- a) As Members are aware, the Isle of Wight Council (IoWC) identified as part of its Budget cuts the reclassification of the Libraries of Ventnor, Freshwater and Cowes from part of their statutory provision of a Library Service – along with those of Newport, Ryde and Sandown – to a new category of Community Supported Libraries.
 - b) The savings from changes to the Library Service were identified as being £140,000 in 2015/16 and £280,000 in 2016/17 and each successive year.
 - c) The Report for the IoWC Executive meeting of 27 October recorded that the savings achieved to date in the current financial year total £114,107 and together with other planned changes that leaves a total of £96,840 to be found in order to achieve the full year saving of £280,000 from 2016/17 onwards.
 - d) The Executive resolved to effect the change of status of the three libraries with a change of title to Partnership Libraries in aiming to achieve the additional savings by their Town and Parish Councils paying the running costs of the Libraries and reducing staffing for them.
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2) DECISION

- a) The actual resolution as recorded in the Minutes of the Executive meetings was:
 - i) *THAT the authorisation of Commercial Services to begin negotiations with the town and parish councils to deliver partnership library services in Cowes, Freshwater and Ventnor keeping their current opening hours, be agreed.*
 - ii) *THAT the authorisation of Commercial Services to complete the negotiations with the town and parish councils using the template lease based on that used with the community libraries previously (Appendix 3 of the report and forming part of this Record of Decision), be agreed.*
 - b) The Officers have been given a deadline of the Executive Meeting of 26 January for a Report on the outcomes of the negotiations with a decision expected to be made for implementation by 1 April 2016.
 - c) An initial meeting between the Lead Officers – Lee Matthews and Rob Jones – and the Town Clerk has been arranged for Wednesday 11 November at the Library
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3) ISSUES

- a) There is a range of significant issues that will need to be included in the proposed negotiations including those identified briefly in the remainder of this section.
 - b) *Condition of the buildings:*

The condition of the current buildings is a significant issue for all three affected Town and Parish Councils. Condition Surveys have been carried out by the IoWC and it has been agreed that they be released before the negotiations commence. Town Councils will be reluctant to take on responsibility for the buildings and their ongoing maintenance unless the identified matters are rectified in advance.
 - c) *Location*

For Ventnor in particular, the matter of the location of the Library is an issue given the condition of the building and its limited accessibility, particularly in the context of the significant role the facility has to perform in addressing the deprivation identified in the IMD 2015.
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d) *Staffing*

The decision to retain current opening hours is, of course, welcome, but highlights the importance of effective and qualified staffing at the level required for maintaining standards and leading its development.

e) *Basis of transfer*

The current proposal is for Town and Parish Councils to take on responsibility on the basis of the template lease previously used for the Community Libraries; however, Town and Parish Councils may wish to consider a freehold basis for the transfer.

f) *Partner contributions*

While it is clear that the Town Council's contribution is at a minimum to fund the running costs of the building, more detail is needed of the IoWC's contribution in the staffing arrangements, book service, inter-library loans and IT infrastructure and support.

4) RECOMMENDATIONS

a) In view of the range and complexity of the identified issues, neither detailed discussion or specific decision making can be appropriately informed at this stage.

b) Consequently the Town Council is recommended to:

- i) identify any further issues it would want to see included in the negotiations;
 - ii) authorise the Town Clerk to enter into detailed discussions with the IoWC's lead officers for these matters;
 - iii) ask its Public Buildings Working Group to discuss and develop the detailed negotiations on all the identified issues and report with recommendations to the Town Council Meeting of 14 December on progress to that date;
 - iv) recognise that this will provide the opportunity for the Town Council to provide further guidance to the Group and the Town Clerk for any additional work that needs to be completed before the need to make formal decisions at the Town Council meeting of 11 January 2016.
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