

Information

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for County Councillors

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To:	All County Councillors
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Customer Access & Shared Assets (CASA) and feedback from Listening Learning Changing – the future of hubs and libraries public engagement

Summary

This provides an update on the Customer Access & Shared Assets (CASA) Programme; and the feedback from the recent Listening, Learning & Changing public engagement exercise on the future of hubs and libraries. It also provides the latest on the development of the first shared customer access hub in Glastonbury and what is happening next.

Project Update

Cabinet previously indicated their desire to implement customer access hubs across Somerset and that this approach would form part of the future for our libraries. Delivery of the first 'pilot' hub was approved by Cabinet in September 2015 and will be delivered at Glastonbury in the current Library Building and will provide space for a number of SCC and partner services to deliver more joined up services for the benefit of customers and the council. Public engagement which took place in summer 2015 gave us a good insight about what was important to people which has helped to shape the shared hub and decisions for Glastonbury. It is estimated that these changes will generate revenue savings of £1.5 million over 25 years for the Council.

Between 17 December 2015 and 11 February 2016 the Council also engaged library customers around the future of hubs and libraries and sought views on:

- The public and voluntary sector services people use and which are most important to them;
- Views on what their library currently offers;
- What is important to people in a hub;
- Views about hubs across the County in general;
- Views about the direction of travel for the library service
- Comments about their local area, including in relation to the proposed

amendments to opening hours.

Below is a summary of the feedback received from the public along with a list of actions which demonstrate that we have listened to the what people have said which will in turn help us shape services going forward:

YOU SAID

- Almost 1180 individuals plus ten organisations gave us feedback
- Nearly 430 conversations were had at 15 drop-in sessions
- Over 2500 free text comments were made by over 900 people
- About 90% of responses were from people who said they were over 35 with the 65+ age group being the single largest group
- About 1 in 6 respondents said they provided unpaid care
- About 1 in 6 people said they had a disability
- About 90% said they used the library 'sometimes' or 'regularly'
- Overall people rated their local library highly, particularly for customer care
- Accessible location and a wide range of books were highlighted as the most important facilities in a hub
- More than half of all respondents thought it was important or very important that the local library was included in a hub
- Many people supported hubs because they thought they were better for customers and for reducing costs
- Others disagreed, raising concerns about accessibility by public transport, parking, favouring large towns at the expense of villages, visitor congestion, loss of specialist staff and skills, quiet space, zoning, confidentiality, conflicting services and overall downgrading of libraries
- Over 400 comments were made about branding
- Of over 100 negative comments made about the new name the majority wanted the name library to be retained
- There were nearly 400 comments about changes to library opening hours

WE DID/WE WILL

- Library Chat (the county-wide library user group), the Friends of Somerset Libraries (county-wide) and individual library Friends Groups will continue to be our key user groups to help shape future plans
- Our aspiration is for a local forum for each of our libraries
- Feedback about hubs in Glastonbury (due to open in September 2016), Williton (early 2017), Yeovil (2017), Shepton Mallet (2017), Bridgwater (to be confirmed) will be used as further details for each are drawn up
- The feasibility for hubs in other locations is being considered - feedback from the LLC will be used to inform this
- Following responses from Castle Cary residents a decision has been made not to move the library from the town centre
- Decisions about Dulverton and Martock local library partnerships will include feedback and be made in May
- A branding re-design exercise has been completed to reflect feedback. It incorporates the word Library as part of a new name and look plus listing all the services available in the shared building
- Public and staff feedback about library opening hours has led to proposals being amended for 50% of Somerset libraries

- New arrangements for library opening hours will start in June 2016 and make savings of £128,000
- We will continue to focus on the wider contribution that libraries can make for reading, the digital world, strong communities, informed choices for health and well-being and economic growth

This wealth of feedback will be used by the CASA Programme, the Library Service and Property Services as particular locations for shared hubs and sustainable local library partnerships are considered. There will continue to be further engagement with the public as individual projects progress. The identity of the library and a defined space will be provided in hub locations even though space could be shared. Libraries support a wide range of activities for the wider community and the flexibility provided by a hub arrangement will enable libraries to continue to operate at the heart of communities providing spaces for people to meet, to network and to be inspired. A full summary is here: [Listening, Learning, Changing - the future of hubs and libraries](#)

A link to the Scrutiny report presented on 19 April is <http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/meetings/reports.asp?item=1315>

Glastonbury Progress

Cabinet approved the delivery of the first hub at Orchard Court in Glastonbury in 2015. Refurbishment work has started and it will be operational in the summer of 2016. The new hub will bring the following services together:

- Library Service
- getset Service (Children's Centre) to include Midwives and Health Visitors
- Registration Services (not including ceremonies);
- Mendip District Council Customer Access Point
- Citizens Advice
- Nursery provision
- Flexible bookable meeting space for other services and partners
- SMART drop-in and back office space and commercial space for rent.

There will be some impacts on service delivery during refurbishment but every effort has been made to keep these to a minimum. A press release is being developed to inform the public of the planned changes during refurbishment.

- Glastonbury library will be closed from the Friday 20th May until Wednesday 8th June and from Friday 15th July until Wednesday 27th July however a temporary service will be available on the same site.
- Wells Registration Office will be closed from Friday 22nd July reopening in the newly refurbished Orchard Court from Tuesday 26th July.
- Getset Children's Centre, Benedict Street, Glastonbury will be closed from 20th July and will reopen in Orchard Court on the 8th August.

Further information is here: <http://change.somerset.gov.uk/home/dcs/casa/>

What's next?

The CASA programme has been given a mandate to work with internal services and partner organisations to look at the feasibility of creating hubs in other towns where there is a high customer need and where there are opportunities to create significant revenue savings. The next priorities are:

- Williton
- Yeovil
- Shepton Mallet
- Bridgwater

The intention is to produce fully costed Business Cases and detailed impact assessments for each opportunity to enable a final decision to be taken. The findings from the LLC will be used to help us to develop plans in line with the feedback received. Further detailed engagement with the public and service users will also take place to help inform our decisions going forward.

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