

## Libraries

During its review of the savings proposals in September 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Board felt that proposals in relation to library services were being “rushed through without due thought or proper consideration of the concerns of the community” and that there is a “window of opportunity to find different funding solutions”.

**What work is being undertaken to ensure a “comprehensive and efficient library service” into the future given ever reducing resources?**

The Library Service continues to look at alternative ways to deliver the service more efficiently and effectively.

The transformation of the library service started in 2011 with the Residents and Visitors Services Transformation Project. The library service was costing £1.891m in 2010/11 and was employing 42 FTE’s against the current service which after the reductions in 2015/16 will be £1,088m employing 34.16 FTE’s.

The implementation of the Radio Frequency Identification system in 2009/10 made some significant efficiency savings of £125,000 without any loss to the service provided to customers. Reductions since then have seen service cuts take place. The reduction in opening hours equivalent to 30 hours per week, were also introduced in 2012/13. Service reductions in 2014/15 included the loss of the dedicated mobile library service. The mobile library service still needs to meet the needs of around 50 vulnerable individuals and an emerging partnership with the Rotary Club is likely to meet this need in the spring.

The performance of the current library service before the reductions in 2013/14, 2014/15 and those planned for 2015/16:

**Libraries: CIPFA Comparative profile 2012/13 for Torbay compared with 14 other authorities with similar characteristics (benchmark group):**

### Where High is Good

- Number of active borrowers – higher quartile (7<sup>th</sup> of 15)
- Physical visits per 1000 population – higher quartile (4<sup>th</sup> of 15)
- Book issues per 1000 population - higher quartile (6<sup>th</sup> of 15)
- Audiovisual issues per 1000 population – higher quartile (2<sup>nd</sup> of 15)
- Visits to website per 1000 population – higher quartile (2<sup>nd</sup> of 15)
- Stock turn (average issue rate per book per year) – higher quartile (6<sup>th</sup> of 15)
- Revenue income per 1000 population – above average (10<sup>th</sup> of 15)

### Where Low is Good

- Cost per visit –Middle quartile (11<sup>th</sup> cheapest of 15)
- Employee costs per 1000 population – average (9<sup>th</sup> of 15)
- Revenue expenditure per 1000 population – average (6<sup>th</sup> of 15)
- Service points per 1,000 population - lower quartile (14<sup>th</sup> of 15)

Torbay's Library Service performs really well against its benchmark authorities on cost and usage.

Torbay is an active member of the Society of Chief Librarians and submits applications to take part in all new initiatives as they arise. This includes many of those identified in the Annual Library report which has the link below including Books on prescription, eBooks of which we have over 2,000 titles available to download. Other new initiatives include a paid commissioned service with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide help to individuals to access welfare and job opportunities through the Free Friday schemes.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/387946/Annual Library Report - 16 Dec.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387946/Annual_Library_Report_-_16_Dec.pdf)

Department Budget	2010/11 Budget £'000	2011/12 Budget £'000	2012/13 Budget £'000	2013/14 Budget £'000	2014/15 Budget £'000	2015/16 Projected £'000
Library Service	1,891	1,658	1,454	1,374	1,265	1,088

**Proposed activity to meet the current and future reduction in Library Services and still maintain an 'efficient and comprehensive' service :**

**1. Shared Services with other authorities:**

Initial discussions took place with Devon County Council in 2013 with a view to providing a joint service hosted by Devon County Council. This would be operationally possible as we share the same IT systems within the library and operating arrangements could easily be adjusted to provide a single managed service. The failure to take this to the final stage related to apportionment of costs of the central authority charges. Devon County Council required a contribution of £125,000 per annum to pay for all centrally provided services, like IT support, HR, payroll, insurances, and audit. Torbay apportions overheads to the library service which is a much higher proportion than for Devon. When taking this into account there was no cost saving for Torbay overall and this could not be pursued.

- Torbay are currently re-examining shared services with Devon County Council. Devon is currently assessing alternative delivery model(s) with communities. The emerging entity may wish to grow its business once set up, and deliver services for Torbay and Somerset. However, Devon County Council has been clear this stage is unlikely to happen before 2016/17.

## **2. Volunteering within the Service:**

Generally volunteering has seen limited success but in some areas like the local studies, events and social/well being related activity has been very well supported by community voluntary support. The priority in 2015 is to try to engage volunteering as part of supporting the opening hours to reduce the need to cut the service accessibility further. In the RVS restructure there will be posts focused on developing volunteering within the library and Torre Abbey Service areas initially.

Churston Library options still need to be explored further with the community hub approach. There are mixed reactions from the community where the users of library do not see volunteers as a replacement for expert staff whereas the non library users in other community groups have suggested they would like to take on such a challenge to provide a community hub with a library facility. As yet no further discussions have taken place to further this option.

## **3. Efficiencies/ internal economies of scale:**

As part of the restructure for of RVS and PLACE, the library management structure is being re-shaped in order to allow library services to deliver service areas in support at a business unit level. This will enable better resilience across all RVS services and support the library function with a multi skilled group of staff.

An internal assessment of current working practices will be undertaken once the PLACE and RVS structure is finalised, to ensure that management, support and frontline functions are streamlined to maximise efficiency in the services.

The joint procurement of automated library management system with Devon County Council, will build in flexibility for the future should merged services be pursued and ensure the best value for money for the Torbay residents.

The library and connections service are investigating alternative 'customer service' delivery models. One consideration is to look at the 'One stop' approach currently being developed in Plymouth and B&NES.

## **4. Reshaping of Library Services**

Comprehensive review on the shaping of the future library service in light of:

- a. Independent Report on Public Libraries (William Sieghart)
- b. Society of Chief Librarians national Offers (reading, information, digital, health and learning)

## **5. Maximising use of other funding resources**

Torbay Libraries will continue to seek to work in partnership with others in order to maximise service delivery, meet common agendas and secure efficiencies

- a. JobCentrePlus – already a commissioned service
- b. Assisted digital – more discussion of health links are required
- c. Public Health – Alcohol Strategy, mental health support, stroke rehabilitation etc
- d. Heritage Lottery Funding – local history project
- e. Rotary Club of Torbay (housebound delivery service replacing Mobile library and Inclusion Services)