

Decision-Making Body

Cabinet

Date Decision Taken

Tuesday, 24 July 2012

Date of publication of decision

Thursday, 26 July 2012

Decision

Item 6: Public Value Review: Surrey Library Service – Community Partnered Libraries

Select Committee calling in decision

Communities Select Committee

Members of select committee calling in the decision

John Orrick – Liberal Democrat
Colin Taylor – Liberal Democrat
Jan Mason – Residents Association

Reasons for Call In

1. Since the issue was last discussed by the Cabinet there has been (a). a High Court judgment declaring aspects of the policy unlawful (b). a consultation exercise which had to be repeated, and which many consultees found confusing and (c). an admission by the Cabinet Member for Community Services that the major justification for the policy – cost saving – is no longer valid. None of these issues have been discussed in any Committee or forum of the Council neither have they been formally discussed with the 10 User Groups which are being required to implement the policy.
2. The Cabinet Member for Community Services made an announcement at a Cabinet Meeting on 29th May that the major justification for the community partnership policy – cost saving – is no longer valid. In its place the Cabinet Member for Community Services introduced a new concept of “sustainability”. The Cabinet Member for Community Services has never been questioned at a Scrutiny Committee about the new financial situation nor the meaning of the

term “sustainability”. It would be a failure of the role of scrutiny if she were not questioned.

3. In recent weeks Cabinet Members have received at least three letters from members of the library community i.e. Bramley Parish Council, Stoneleigh Library and SLAM setting out additional options and/or seeking a meeting to discuss an agreed way forward on community partnerships in the light of the new financial information. There is no evidence that the Cabinet has taken their requests seriously or addressed their legitimate concerns.

4. That the Cabinet has not fully considered the judgment from the Judicial Review, as a result the judgment has not been fully satisfied. That the consultation and consideration of the Cabinet has not considered the experience of volunteers who have been consulted on training in identifying their training needs. That it has not been considered whether volunteers will be required to pass some form assessment as part of the training process to assess their ability to work in Community Partnered Libraries, and that the processes of managing cascaded training from volunteers to volunteers has not been considered.

5. That the consultation process has been deficient and defective. It has been defective in many ways, including volunteers being consulted twice, once as volunteers and once as members of the public. It has been deficient in the failure to effectively consult with certain key protected categories and groups such as Travellers and people with learning difficulties and learning disabilities.

6. That the Cabinet failed to answer legitimate concerns raised in the question from Mrs Jenny Meineck to the Cabinet on 24 July 2012.

7. That the Cabinet failed to answer the conflicting answers by the Cabinet Member as to whether the Community Partnered Libraries proposals will make financial savings.

8. That the Cabinet failed to consider concerns as to whether Community Partnered Libraries will be covered by the Public Lending Rights licence.

Desired Outcome

1. For the Select Committee to resolve that the Cabinet halt the introduction of community partnership libraries and consult with library user groups and other interested parties, including Bramley Parish Council, Stoneleigh Library, Ewell Court Library and representatives of SLAM, with a view to developing a more multi-faceted version of community partnership libraries that includes for example satellite libraries (Bramley Parish Council letter 26/06/12 refers).

2. That the concept of volunteers extending opening hours and facilities at libraries should be extended to all libraries in the core library network.

Identified Evidence

- Answer given by the Cabinet Member for Community Services on 29th May 2012 to the question tabled by Hazel Watson
- Letters to Cabinet Members/CE from: Bramley Parish Council 26/06/12; Chair of Friends of Stoneleigh Library 11/07/12 and Lee Godfrey (SLAM) 09/07/12.

Desired Witnesses

Cabinet member for Community Services and the 2012 Games.

The Leader of the council

Chairman of Bramley Parish Council – Sue O’Connell

Representative of Ewell Court Library – Jenny Meineck

Representative of SLAM – Lee Godfrey