

## **A Cambridge Local Library Network**

### **Introduction**

Cambridgeshire County Council considered a report on the library service at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010 and approved the following recommendations of its Cabinet:

- i) To endorse the work underway on alternative options for governance, management and support;
- ii) To agree to officers urgently pursuing an alternative approach to service delivery based on self service technology and greater community involvement
- iii) To agree to officers undertaking an urgent review of library provision in Cambridge City and the surrounding area
- iv) To agree to the approach suggested for identifying libraries for closure, should this be required
- v) To agree to the implementation of proposals for savings on support for Library Access Points, especially in relation to stock provision
- vi) To agree to the implementation of proposals for savings on the Mobile Service, based on a move to monthly stops
- vii) To authorise officers to proceed with full public engagement about library services and consultation on the proposals above.

Since then there have been meetings of user groups at all Cambridge's libraries and most now have a formal "Friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Library" group in place

In discussions about the future of Cambridge's local libraries at Milton Road Library the suggestion has been made that we might have a Cambridge trust to run all five within the City leaving the Central Library with the County Council due to its pivotal role within the overall library service for Cambridgeshire. Some doubt has been expressed over the viability of such a trust so this report explores the practicalities of such a trust and the possibilities that could be opened up given good will on all sides. It only deals with major issues of principle so does not go to the level of detail one would expect to find in a fully worked business plan.

A lot of the information relating to individual libraries is taken from the report by Kentwood Associates "A Strategic Review of the Library Archive & Information Service" for Cambridgeshire County Council delivered to them in November 2009, but only published in late May 2010, conversations with staff and users of Cambridge libraries and information given at the public meeting held at Cambridge /Central Library on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2010.

### **The Practicalities**

#### **The Trust**

The preferred legal framework would be a charitable company limited by guarantee. This would provide a 'legal person' to hold the titles (most likely to be some form of leasehold arrangement) to the five properties and be the counterparty to agreements with the County Council in respect of services to be provided by them or on their behalf from each. This is a tried and trusted pattern.

Using a Charity Commission approved model document for a company limited by guarantee the cost is minimal. The author of this report has created such companies for Age Concern Cambridgeshire and Age Concern Regional Support Services Eastern and is a board member of these and two other charitable companies. The director trustees of charitable companies are unpaid but may recover out of pocket expenses.

As a registered charity the trust would be eligible for mandatory rate relief of 80% of non-domestic rates and could apply to Cambridge City Council for a grant of discretionary relief in respect of all or part of the remainder. It would be exempt from income and corporation tax on any surplus income and eligible to recover tax paid on donations made under Gift Aid. It would also be eligible for grants from charitable and other foundations.

Charities are not exempt from VAT. There are some specific reliefs available but in general charities have to pay VAT with little or no prospect of recovery as they usually have no 'business income' generating input tax against which their output tax can be offset. It is for this reason that most charities are not registered for VAT unless they are very large or operate in areas where special VAT regimes apply.

If a trust is to be successful it must not be dependent on one source of funding and the aim should be to ensure that it is sustainable for the foreseeable future. This will require investment and the support of both the County Council and City Council in transferring the premises together with such curtilage as is needed to enable the full benefit of each site to be realised for the benefit of the community. The trust also requires the freedom to manage its affairs with minimal restriction.

### **The Library Service**

It is not envisaged that the trust would provide the core library service as this requires qualified professional staff. It is envisaged that the County Council would provide the service to at least the standard currently achieved at each location. The trust would seek to influence the locally held stock to reflect local interests as happens now.

### **Management**

The trust would be managed by a board of local people with knowledge and experience of running community activities across the city. It would be advised by the local Friends groups and develop a coherent strategy for maintaining and improving the library service across the city. A small core staff would handle the finance and basic administration of the trust.

### **Staffing**

The Kentwood report appears to draw a distinction between local staff and those provided by the library service. If this distinction is real then the trust might have to consider whether it would be appropriate for the trust to employ all local staff. Each library would require at least one fully trained librarian and an adequate level of support staff.

It is likely that any existing local authority staff transferring to another employer would expect to have their current terms and conditions of employment safeguarded under the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981) [this is usually a requirement of any transfer deal by the transferor local authority]. The main problem for the acceptor arises from accrued pensions and employment rights as these can become very expensive. It is unlikely that a

local trust would have the resources to accept the potential liabilities attached to any TUPE transfer unless there was an agreement which would limit their liability in a predictable way.

New services and activities would require appropriate staff and these could be provided directly or by contractors depending on the nature of the work to be done. It is likely that the trust would eventually be the employer of staff in respect of most local library-based activities other than the existing core library service.

## Finance

The authors of the Kentwood report admitted difficulty in establishing the costs associated with each local library and this finding was confirmed by County Council officers at the 10<sup>th</sup> August meeting. The author would expect to be able to carry out due diligence to discover the actual costs of the present local library service in Cambridge and of running the buildings.

The funding of the library service appears to be through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) administered by central government. The niceties of this is not understood by local people who cannot understand why there should have to be a 25% cut in libraries when their Council Tax is going up faster than the rate of inflation. It appears that the amount of money, and consequently service, actually available may be diminished by whatever final percentage of cut is made by HM Treasury in the RSG. It would be unfortunate if this were done without serious consideration of the need for a proper appraisal and needs analysis as recommended by Kentwood.

## Income

The library service has an income from fines (the largest item), hire charges and sales. The only income figure the author has seen is a total of £2.264 Million against a total cost figure of £10.183 million contained in the County Council Integrated Plan 2009. The author has received the following information on the budgeted income for Cambridge local libraries

Library	Arbury Court	Barnwell	Cherry Hinton	Milton Road	Rock Road	Totals
Income	10,633	2,742	12,500	11,400	15,185	52,460

The income was described as 'fragile' by a County Council officer on 10<sup>th</sup> August as it is dependent on people not returning books and other media on time and to hiring and sales that are vulnerable to changes in buying habits.

## Expenditure

Local authority expenditure has three strands:

1. costs directly related to an operation which can be identified and related to the operation with confidence;
2. costs incurred on corporate services such as finance and corporate administration that are then reallocated to services but not then further allocated to operational centres; and
3. one-off grants or short term finance for particular activities and projects

Grants and short-term finance are often known in the voluntary sector as 'funny money' as it's great while you have it but almost impossible to replace when it stops. An example of such one-off library funding has been the provision of the computer networks into each local library. It is believed that

some children’s activities and training activities may also be funded by specific government grant that could be reduced or even come to an end.

The County Council has stated that it wants to make cuts in library expenditure totalling 25%. They are already consulting on a severe cut to the mobile library service (55% reduction in the number of mobile library vehicles), and are committed to cut £150,000 from the book fund plus some reduction in central administration costs. The costs in the table below are taken from the Kentwood report.

<b>Library</b>	<b>Arbury Court</b>	<b>Barnwell</b>	<b>Cherry Hinton</b>	<b>Milton Road</b>	<b>Rock Road</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Open for (hours)	33	22	31	29	29	
Expenditure	£	£	£	£	£	£
Local Staffing & operating costs	34,563	20,373	33,026	22,152	23,665	133,779
National Non-Domestic Rates	14,065	5,699	6,669	9,215	6,911	42,559
Management & Prof staff time	15,487	8,303	12,642	9,989	9,737	56,158
Book and audio visual fund	21,350	10,455	21,350	21,350	21,350	95,855
Centrally held operating budgets	11,022	5,899	8,981	7,097	6,918	39,917
In house support services	14,077	7,547	11,491	9,080	8,851	51,046
Corporate support costs recharge	33,394	17,904	27,259	21,540	20,997	121,094
<b>Total</b>	<b>143,958</b>	<b>76,180</b>	<b>121,418</b>	<b>100,423</b>	<b>98,429</b>	<b>540,408</b>

The local staffing and operating costs shown for Milton Road and Rock Road appear to be out of line with those at Arbury Court and Cherry Hinton despite similar opening hours and level of service.

The 2010-2011 budget figures for local staffing and premises costs are:

<b>Library</b>	<b>Arbury Court</b>	<b>Barnwell</b>	<b>Cherry Hinton</b>	<b>Milton Road</b>	<b>Rock Road</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Local Staffing & operating costs	47,118	22,097	42,001	36,978	36,746	184,940
Premises	15,874	7,190	8,830	16,400	13,242	61,536
<b>Total local costs</b>	<b>62,992</b>	<b>29,287</b>	<b>50,831</b>	<b>53,378</b>	<b>49,988</b>	<b>246,476</b>

A community building in Cambridge known to the author costs around £75,000 a year to staff and maintain. Using this figure as a benchmark the overall cost of opening and running five community buildings would be at least £375,000 a year. Libraries are obviously different and management has to be alert to safeguarding their equipment and stock so that in general it is not appropriate to allow unrestricted access to library areas in the absence of staff. The County Council has expressed a wish to see more community use of library premises but there is a real problem in reconciling two space hungry activities: browsing an extensive book and media stock; and meetings and activities which require seating, seats and tables or clear space.

To be successfully managed within the community the managers must have the freedom to appoint new staff and to develop the buildings to generate income over and above the resources available for delivery of the library service. As outlined above there are sources of funding for such developments available to a community organisation that would not be available to a local authority. To access them the operating organisation would require a secure title to the premises, usually for a minimum period of 25 years, and the overt support of the relevant local authorities for what they are trying to achieve. At present some European funds may be accessible through East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and it is expected that these will still be accessible in some form for qualifying developments in the new arrangements following the demise of EEDA.

## Buildings

There are five Cambridge local libraries: Arbury Court, Barnwell Road, Cherry Hinton, Milton Road and Rock Road. All are purpose built library buildings, provided by the City of Cambridge when it enjoyed County Borough status, with little provision or scope for additional non-library uses in their present state. The Kentwood description and the author's view of the potential for each is set out in the appendices to this report. The Kentwood report had the following overview:

### *8.4. Cambridge Branches*

*Whilst the Central Library was closed the five branches in Cambridge extended their opening hours and variously housed parts of the stock of the Central Library. In this period there was a substantial increase in use at Milton Road (the nearest branch to the Central Library) and at Rock Road, with smaller increases apparent at Arbury Court and Cherry Hinton. Barnwell Road Library showed virtually no change.*

*The new Central Library has now been open for almost two months but whilst the nearest branches at Milton Road and Rock Road show signs of a drop in use, we think it is too early to identify whether this is due to a permanent transfer of membership to a better resourced library or it is just temporary curiosity. Even so, we believe that the proposals for new development, which will provide opportunities to improve library facilities around the edge of the city, require us to examine the location and use of the five Cambridge branches. We have done so in the context that local branches are important to specific communities, some of whom will be using this service point because of its proximity to their home, time constraints or the cost or difficulties of travelling elsewhere.*

*Kentwood Associates "A Strategic Review of the Library Archive & Information Service"*

The hours of the branches have now been cut back so meaningful comparisons are difficult to make but it is worth noting that of the 414,000 visitors to Central Library before its closure only 90,000 appear to have turned up elsewhere during the closure period, 10,000 of them at Bar Hill. This indicates that the role of the Central Library is dramatically different to that of the local libraries. A moment's thought makes it clear where the main differences are:

- Children cannot easily go to the Central Library and use the one nearest to their home or school;
- Parents taking their children to the library are likely to go by car or on foot as the cost, inconvenience and poor reliability of bus travel, especially with small children, precludes its frequent use;
- Workers tend to use the library closest to their place of work;
- Shoppers are likely to use the library closest to the shops they use for regular shopping and these are mostly not near to the Central Library;
- For most residents of Cambridge visits to the City Centre are relatively infrequent events and the Central Library, when used, is as a backup to their local service.

No firm figures are yet available for current usage of the Cambridge branch libraries but anecdotal evidence suggests that the level of patronage is, if anything, higher than before the closure of Central Library. This suggests that people having discovered their local branch have continued to make good use of it.

The author has visited all five branches and talked to a number of staff who displayed an infectious pride and enthusiasm for their work. The branches were uniformly busy with people of all ages using the computers, raiding the book stock, reading newspapers and journals or simply looking something up. The following notes on each are the sole responsibility of the author who has used information gleaned from his visits to inform his suggestions for development.

Chesterton Community Association has already indicated an interest in running the Milton Road Library premises and expects to discuss this proposal with officers of the County Council shortly.

### **Next steps**

If the ideas presented in this report for a city-wide trust strike an answering chord then the next step is to carry out a feasibility study for which funding should be available from the Community Builders Fund. Chesterton Community Association expects achieve formal registration with the Charity Commission shortly and will then be in a position to apply to this fund.

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### **Biographical Note**

Michael Bond qualified as a research chemist and after seven years at the Patent Office joined Torbay Borough Council in its General Services and Personnel Section. He qualified as a Chartered Secretary during this period. After ten years he moved to Cambridge and was Director of Cambridgeshire Community Council (now Cambridgeshire ACRE) from 1986 to 1994. During this period he was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and served on its Charities Panel. He was actively involved in work that led to the current regulatory framework for charities and defining the "Hallmarks of an Effective Charity". From 1994 to 2004 he acted as Independent Examiner for a number of local charities and other organisations. He is currently a trustee of the following charities:

- The Magog Trust a Governor and Treasurer since 1994
- Age UK Cambridgeshire (until recently Age Concern Cambridgeshire) Trustee since 1994
- Age Concern Regional Support Services Eastern Trustee and Treasurer since its creation in 2004
- St Andrew's Hall, Chesterton, Committee member since before it opened in 2005
- COVER East Trustee since 2006
- Chesterton Community Association formed in 2009, currently Chair and Treasurer

## Appendix 1.

### Arbury Court Library

#### 8.5. Arbury Court

A Level 2 branch, Arbury Court Library is located in a predominantly residential area, adjacent to the main shopping centre and close to a large car park. It primarily serves the residents of Arbury, Kings Hedges, and parts of East Chesterton. Purpose built in 1966, the library is a single-storey building of 270 sq metres. More recently the library has benefitted from an improved layout and has won a "Directions Plus" award, recognizing it to be "disability friendly".

The customer profile at Arbury Court falls into three broad groups: an established core of regular readers who use the library for book borrowing, but who do not use the ICT facilities; a newer clientele, often younger people, who are attracted by the Learning Centre and People's Network computers; and families with young children who enjoy using resources across the range of books and ICT facilities. The library is open for 49 hours a week.

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**Current hours:** Library 32.5 hours with some additional hours for Learning Centre activities

**Status:** Purpose built library currently owned by the County Council

**Local Services:** There are two public car parks close by and the Citi1 bus service passes the premises with stops in Arbury Road and Campkin Road. Arbury Court has a wide range of shops, a pub and chip shop and serves an extensive population in the north of the city, including the new development at Orchard Park. Arbury Community Centre is close by in Campkin Road and the North Area Housing Office is to the rear of the premises. Manor School is opposite and the Grove Primary School and Arbury Primary School somewhat further away with St Lawrence School at the far end of Arbury Road and the Meadows Community Centre a little further away.

**Users:** The library is used by residents of Kings Hedges, East Chesterton and Arbury.

**Potential for development:** The scope for development on this site is significant as it is adjacent a supermarket and away from houses and flats. It would need to be significantly extended to provide space for other activities. A second storey would not be obtrusive and there may be scope for extending the footprint of the building at ground floor level. Provision for community activities is good in the locality with two community centres not far away so a community provision may not be the best use of this site which could provide scope for an independent source of trust income by developing a commercial use consistent with the locality. The Iceni Partnership at Swaffham, Norfolk, is an example of a local trust where industrial units have been acquired with the support of the local authorities to provide such a resource.

The library has a small enclosed garden area that is accessible to the public but in need of a level of regular care and maintenance that cannot be provided by hard-pressed library staff. There is a vertical crack in the south wall where it is becoming detached from the main part of what appears to be a frame structure. Investigation will be required to ascertain the underlying problem and to check whether the building has been structurally compromised.

## Appendix 2.

### Barnwell Road Library

#### 8.6. Barnwell Road

A Level 1 branch, Barnwell Road Library is a single storey purpose built building, opened in 1964. It has 114.2 sq metres of floor space. It serves the residents of the Abbey Ward of the City and is situated at the end of a small shopping precinct. The library is open for 21 hours a week and is located near two supermarkets and the Cambridge Retail Centre. Car parking is limited to spaces in front of the shops and behind the library.

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**Current hours:** Library 22 hours

**Status:** Purpose built library currently owned by the County Council

**Local Services:** The library lies in the south east quadrant of a major road junction formed by Newmarket Road, Barnwell Road and Wadloes Road. There is limited car parking close by and bus services include the Citi 3 and country buses along Newmarket Road and Barnwell Road. There are a few nearby shops, two churches and the Barnwell Community Centre not far away in the same quadrant. The northeast quadrant has a major business park, a small cafe in the former post office and a McDonalds, the northwest quadrant is mostly residential and the southwest quadrant has a playing field and some sports provision. There is a large school along Barnwell Road.

**Users:** The library is used by residents of Abbey.

**Potential for development:** The scope for development on this site is significant with some potential to extend the footprint of the building and add a second storey to create lettable space for community or commercial use. The library can best be described as compact but was very well used during my visit. Its location does not make for easy access and there is little that can be done to improve this given the proximity of two principal roads. "Cambridge Architecture" Edition 58 published two ideas for improving this area but neither could really overcome the problems posed by the current road layout.

A proposal to include a Post Office as part of the library offer is under consideration but it is not easy to see how it could be accommodated in what is a very small building without a significant ground floor extension. It is likely that most patrons of the library would wish to have access to Post Office services during their visit so simultaneous operation is essential.

The building appears to be structurally sound.

### Appendix 3.

#### Cherry Hinton Library

##### 8.7. Cherry Hinton

The library is situated in the centre of Cherry Hinton, surrounded by shops and a bank. The single storey library was built in 1963 and provides 166 square metres of space. The library was refurbished in 1990 when the decoration, carpets, shelving and other fittings were replaced. Building improvements including the replacement of windows were made in 2005. This is a Level 2 Library and is open for 37 hours a week.

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**Current hours:** Library 30.5 hours

**Status:** Purpose built library currently owned by the County Council

**Local Services:** The library is adjacent the Community Centre with good car parking close by. The Citi1 and Citi3 bus services pass the premises. The High Street has a wide range of shops and a health centre. Colville School is to the rear of the library and a larger school is further along the high Street.

**Users:** The library is used by residents of Cherry Hinton

**Potential for development:** The scope for development on this site is limited as it forms the ground floor of a block of flats. The approach has been revamped recently by the City Council as part of an overall improvement of Cherry Hinton High Street. There has been a suggestion that the operational area of the library could be extended towards the High Street, which could also provide a patio area for the first floor flats. This idea could create some space for revenue generating activities.

The building appears to be structurally sound

## Appendix 4.

### Milton Road Library

#### 8.8. Milton Road

The library is located in a purpose-built single storey building opened in 1937. It sits on the one mile radius from the Central Library and is approximately three quarters of a mile from Arbury Court Library. A Level 2 Library, the floor space is 211.11 sq metres spread over three main rooms: a large children's library, a reading room with computer terminals and the main adult collection. There is concern about possible subsidence but plans to investigate the structural issues and refurbish the library were postponed until after the Central Library had re-opened. Milton Road Library is open for 63 hours a week.

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**Current hours:** Library 29 hours

**Status:** Purpose built library currently owned by the County Council

**Local Services:** There is on street car parking only, the nearest buses are Citi1 serving the southern part of Milton Road and Citi4 serving part of Milton Road beyond its junction with Elizabeth Way. There are shops close to both bus stops but none really close to the library. Milton Road School has an entrance on Ascham Road, Chesterton Community College is at some distance in Gilbert Road. There is a meeting room at the adjacent St Laurence Catholic Church and some community use of the school but otherwise there is no community facility in this part of the City.

**Users:** The library is used by residents of Arbury, Castle, East and West Chesterton. It probably has the largest population of the five Cambridge local libraries within its catchment area.

**Potential for development:** The scope for development on this site is significant although it is recognised that the building is the second oldest and most neglected of the five and will need major work to make it more energy efficient. The rear wall is extensively buttressed indicating a significant problem in the past and there are steel tension rods apparent on the front of the building. I have been told that the structural problem first became apparent shortly after the library opened and it seems to be related to extremely friable soil conditions for which deep piling appears to be the only answer. It is noted that recent new buildings in Chesterton above two stories are all being deep piled.

However the size and proportions of the building indicate that a second floor might be added by raising the roof and inserting a level resting on its own piled foundation. This could remove stress from the existing walls and create an extensive area for other uses at a location where there is little in the way of community facilities outside the schools. In the past the Friends of Milton Road Library have suggested use of the open space between the library and Milton Road and this idea is well worth pursuing.

## Appendix 5.

### Rock Road Library

#### 8.9. Rock Road

The single storey library was built in 1936 and is sited in a residential area with little commercial activity in the immediate vicinity. A Level 3 Library, it occupies 230 square metres and is open for 49 hours per week. There is a small learning centre that offering Skills for Life courses for adults, leading to numeracy and literacy qualifications.

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**Current hours:** Library 29 hours

**Status:** Purpose built library currently owned by the County Council

**Local Services:** There is on street car parking only and bus services along Cherry Hinton Road (Citi3) and Hills Road (Citi1). There are some shops in Cherry Hinton Road. There is no Community Centre or recreation ground serving this part of Cambridge which is almost entirely residential.

**Users:** The library is used by residents of Queen Edith's and Coleridge.

**Potential for development:** The scope for development on this site is significant. A second storey could be added, which would not be intrusive in terms of impact on the streetscape, to provide community space and greatly increase the value of the premises as a community hub. There is an extensive garden to the rear that has recently been taken in hand by the Friends of Rock Road Library and could provide a refreshing green oasis, especially if an access to it was created from the rear side of the library.

There is an urgent need to improve the energy efficiency of the building and it is understood that work is in hand to do this and to carry out maintenance on the roof. Otherwise the building appears to be sound.