

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 1 December 2020

## Mobile Library Service Feasibility Study

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 The Policy and Sustainability Committee is asked to:
- 1.1.1 Note that planning permission for a new library and early years centre was approved on the 9 of July 2020, which requires the current library to be decanted and demolished by the end of 2020 before building can begin.
  - 1.1.2 Note the current restrictions and challenges placed on community libraries due to Covid 19.
  - 1.1.3 Note the interim options for Ratho library and approve option three, subject to the appropriate risk assessments and health and safety guidance being put in place.
  - 1.1.4 Note that the interim plans for a library service in Ratho will be in place until the new building opens, currently planned for August 2022.

**Andrew Kerr**  
**Chief Executive**

Contact: Hana MacKechnie, Acting Lifelong Learning Service Manager

E-mail: [hana.mackechnie@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:hana.mackechnie@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 6482

## Mobile Library Service Feasibility Study Executive Summary

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 This report outlines the current situation regarding library provision in Ratho due to the planned demolition of the current branch and the building of a new library and early years centre.
- 2.2 It outlines the challenges faced by the Council to continue to provide a library service in line with government guidelines and public health guidance, alongside the key pressure that remains on facilities management.
- 2.3 It proposes that the most suitable interim option to maintain a library service in Ratho during the build of the new library and early years centre is to provide a dedicated mobile library service to Ratho Village.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 Ratho Primary School's existing nursery does not have the capacity to support the expansion of entitlement to 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare. Following an assessment of options on and around the Ratho Primary School site, it was also determined that the physical expansion of the existing nursery building would not provide the required space and that the Ratho Primary School site as a whole is extremely limited due to the gradient of the site. Accordingly, the option to rationalise nursery and library provision into a single building on the site of the existing library building was developed. The existing prefabricated Ratho library building will be replaced with a new state of the art community hub building that includes a library, a larger, purpose built nursery and a flexible community room. The new building and the decant will be fully funded from the Scottish Government Grant secured by the Council to allow expansion of Early Years services.
- 3.2 The programme is in the process of being revised following Ecology survey feedback and discussions with procurement regarding impact of COVID-19 on CEC framework. Accordingly, timetables are subject to change, although it is anticipated that work on site will begin just prior to Easter 2021. However the library is required to be decanted by the end of this calendar year to let intrusive surveys (such as asbestos) take place.

- 3.3 In March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council took the decision to close all non-essential buildings, including all libraries and community centres.
- 3.4 The first phase of Library building re-opening was subsequently approved and on Tuesday 6th October six libraries reopened for public use, offering a range of services.
- 3.5 The building work for Ratho Library must progress due to pressure on early years numbers and so the physical library building in Ratho is unable to reopen

## 4. Main report

---

- 4.1 The challenge before the City and the Council cannot be underestimated in both the immediate and longer term. The national position regarding Covid-19 continues to evolve. Therefore, any programme arrangements put in place need to have the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and Public Health Guidance.
- 4.2 In accordance with Public Health Guidance the six libraries currently open are delivering a reduced service so as to maintain good infection control, and this consists of: returning, browsing and borrowing books, collecting hearing aid batteries, National Entitlement Card (bus passes) applications and access to public computers. A further four libraries are planned to reopen on 14 December.
- 4.3 Before it closed to the public in March 2020, Ratho Library was well used, with overall, 23% (almost 1 in 4) people living in Ratho being active library users. This is well above the Scottish National average of 16%. This is much higher for children and young people age 0 to 15, with almost 60% of children and young people being active users.
- 4.4 73% of active users in Ratho use their card to borrow books, and only 27% use their card to access the Peoples Network only. Ratho library also has one of the highest Issues per capita in the city of 5.9 (Scottish National Average 2.8)
- 4.5 Officers have looked at these statistics, Covid restrictions and Public Health Guidance and have identified that a mobile library is the best option to meet the needs of the village whilst keeping staff and customers safe. Although there are currently talks in place with the community to look at alternative buildings, at this moment the mobile library continues to be the most suitable option. Alongside offering books the mobile library will also be able to supply hearing aid batteries and process National Entitlement Card applications in line with the restricted offer in place in the current open branches. The mobile cannot offer access to computers for self-help service options and so officers will work to identify a way to do this in addition to the mobile (although so far they have been unable to identify a solution).
- 4.6 The Library Access team have scoped out three options to provide a mobile library service to Ratho village to cover the period between demolition of the current building and the opening of the new facility:

- 4.6.1 Option 1: Incorporate Ratho onto the new route for mobile libraries so that they are included as a stop when this starts back up again. This would mean one half hour visit a week. Subject to a health and safety assessment it is thought that to comply with social distancing the mobile will be restricted to one customer at a time.
- 4.6.2 Option 2: The library access services teamwork with the Community to identify a location in the village that a dedicated mobile library vehicle can be left at for one week and then staffed by the regular Ratho library team, and would then be collected at the end of each week to restock and charge.
- 4.6.3 Option 3: The Ratho library team take responsibility for a dedicated mobile library vehicle, which they bring to the village for up to four hours up to four days a week (subject to staff availability) and take back to access services each night to restock and charge. The access team are currently running a range of other services across the city and working towards restarting a mobile library route and so are unable to support the staffing of this mobile. A member of staff from the Ratho library team has already been identified to be able to carry out the role of driving this vehicle so can support this service at least four days a week. This would be the recommended option as it means that Ratho will have regular access to a library service, and the mobile library will be secured at the end of each day at access services.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 A health and safety assessment on this use of a mobile library has to be completed, along with training for library staff members who do not normally work in the mobile library service. Subject to all relevant permissions and health and safety checks this service can then be in place in early 2021.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

- 6.1 This proposal will have minimal financial impact. There will be a daily cleaning requirement of FM although staff will carry out regular touch point cleaning throughout the day. Costs for provision of the mobile service will include: fuel, PPE, additional cleaning materials and vehicle maintenance and for the training of one staff member. The staffing costs, fuel and maintenance costs are already costed and accounted for in the current mobile library service budget and all additional costs will be contained within the existing service budget allocation.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

---

- 7.1 Officers will work with the local community and the Community Council to establish the most appropriate space for the mobile library vehicle. The overall proposal will have a positive impact on the community who are active users of their local library.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

---

8.1 None.

## **9. Appendices**

---

9.1 None.