

Libraries, Learning Centres & Heritage: Future Service Delivery Option

The following proposal is brought forward for consideration of how to implement the Libraries service strategic statement in the context of reducing financial resources.

The option below would require public consultation ahead of implementation and Integrated Impact Assessments would be available for consideration by the Council in reaching decisions.

Consideration has also been given to mitigating impacts. It is suggested that a new rural community outreach service could offer access to library services locally at a modest cost which responds to the accessibility and location commitments in the strategy.

Retain the following 4 libraries (North, South, East and West provision):

Facility	Facility Usage 2023/24	Facility Usage Per Head Of Locality Population (Associated School Group – ASG)	Drive Points (No. of Households Within 20min Drive Catchment Of Library)	Operating Hours/ Week	Facility Condition	Membership Levels	2024/25 Budget
Elgin	139,966	5.08 (both Elgin ASG populations)	27,411	56	Grade C – poor	4,698	£883,932
Buckie	27,783	1.79	13,693	36	Grade C – poor	1,121	£162,339
Forres	55,679	3.25	17,740	36	Grade B – satisfactory	1,812	£146,652
Aberlour	7,884	0.94	5,581	16	Grade B – satisfactory	446	£46,507
TOTAL							£1,239,430

Close the following 7 libraries:

Facility	Facility Usage 2023/24	Facility Usage Per Head Of Locality Population (Associated School Group – ASG)	Drive Points (No. of Households Within 20min Drive Catchment Of Library)	Operating Hours/ Week	Facility Condition	Membership Levels	2024/25 Budget
Lossie	6,105	0.46	22,803	16	Grade A – good	581	£42,985
Cullen	3,765	0.24	12,014	12	Rented facility	233	£25,997
Burghead	2,226	0.17	25,687	8		193	£9,752
Dufftown	2,809	0.33	6,634	10	Grade B - satisfactory	187	£16,948
Milnes (Fochabers)	2,196	0.28	31,236	10		199	£18,756
Tomintoul	2,534	0.30	478	11		90	£9,780
Keith	9,586	1.35	15,110	30	Grade B – satisfactory	506	£113,059
TOTAL							£237,277

Staff savings of **£176,549** would be possible from closure of these 7 branches, there would be **additional savings** achieved through reduced supplies and services required as well as reduction in central support functions. Although this will require further detailed investigation it is anticipated that this could be in the region of **£200,000**.

Finally if closure of Keith and Dufftown library branches were to be progressed then the Council could consider selling both these assets.

It is important to note that the budget for some of the above facilities are not entirely accurate due to for example single meter systems in a multi functional site therefore detailed breakdown of energy and water costs may not be included. Also some anomalies in budgets due to historic budgeting and centralised costs allocated to Elgin Library due to support function being based at the facility.

Mitigation to proposed closures

Rural Community Outreach Service and Digital Inclusion Option: In addition to the minimal facility service delivery set out in the table above (retention of 4 libraries), community outreach could be provided one morning/afternoon/evening per week in the 7 locations identified for closure if budget was retained to enable this.

Requirements would be:

- 2 x Library and Information Assistants Grade 3 x 29hrs per week (0.8FTE) = 58hrs per week which would enable the provision of book loans, digital device usage/support as well as the opportunity to deliver activities such as bookbug, reminiscence activity, help hub or job club sessions (£46,980).
- Budget for van to travel to/from community locations (£7,500); and
- Digital resources £10,000 (estimate).

This cost is estimated at £65,000 and would be offset against the savings identified above. The 7 library facilities identified above for closure currently require approximately 150hrs of contractual staffing hours per week to operate. This outreach service also coincides with the new mobile library operating model which was a previous budget saving for the service. This would result in the service having a team of outreach library and information assistants delivering community outreach in villages and towns that is not serviced by a library facility within a certain distance catchment. The outreach team would be line managed by an existing Senior Library and Information Officer.

What will outreach look like?

Community outreach provision will be delivered through a range of methods comprising of the following;

- Housebound delivery service - A housebound delivery service is currently offered to Moray residents who have limited mobility due to age, ill health or disability. This provision has initially focussed on those residents who previously accessed the mobile library vehicle that were deemed housebound. This service will be marketed wider and expand in due course upon successful recruitment of volunteers.
- Activities and programmes delivered to specific groups on request – nurseries, schools, care homes and community organisations such as Men's Sheds/Parent & Child groups etc (attend facility where group is located)
- Community Pop Ups – Pool van with Library staff attend community locations, such as a village hall, and bring a range of resources such as a box of books/resources/games for lending (including digital devices and mifi (mobile broadband connection)). At these sessions provide individual support/advice to deal with online/digital issues and individual enquiries such as heritage requests or bus pass authorisation support as well as a focussed group session – which could be a digital learning session or a book club group. These community pop ups would be established and regular and would be remain at these community locations for approx. 2hrs in duration. The sessions would be co-designed by the local communities depending on specific needs. Currently liaising with village hall federation representatives and community councils on the development of these and aiming to align these pop ups with other local provision opportunities for example a village hall is establishing a community café one morning a week so hoping to provide pop-up at same time and provide a joint approach to supporting the local community. Also looking at mobile bank provision or local food bank provision to align with when these mobile services are available in communities.
- Event attendance/support – attend events in locality areas to promote libraries service, provide support and advice and engage to identify future service demand/need.
- Utilise the Mobile Information Bus (or similar) on occasion to deliver a pop-up session in a local community if a physical asset is unavailable.

Digital Inclusion: Eligible users can access digital lending devices for borrowing as well as digital lending kits which include free mobile broadband connection to support digital inclusion across Moray. It is proposed that following launch of the digital lending kits, usage is monitored and if there is demand, the level of service could be augmented from the savings generated by the changes to the service.

These digital lending devices will be available from our physical libraries, via the housebound delivery service and through our community pop up provision.

Other mitigating factors/implications connected to the above proposal

Opening hours: It is proposed that Aberlour Library would increase opening hours to 36hrs per week to align with Buckie and Forres. This increase in hours would have to be offset against the savings identified through the other facility closures.

Equity of service operations: Certain programmes and services delivered through this team are currently limited in branches due to resource capacity for example we currently have 3.5FTE Learning Centre Advisers (5 staff) covering 11 branches. Through reducing the number of libraries this would enable us to have Learning Centre Adviser presence at each remaining facility on a weekly basis as well as provision of support to the outreach provision service.

Staffing: With a potential change of service provision through a hybrid model of facility based and outreach provision it will be necessary to review the senior and lead officer staff levels within the service as well as the central support functions. This will present additional savings over and above those identified for example if we reduce the number of physical libraries we operate then we will not require to acquire the same volume of resources.

Facility conditions: At present our library facilities are not included in the capital plan for refurbishment. This has been the case for a number of years and the team has simply taken a make do and mend approach for any urgent facility failures. It is noted that 2 of the proposed facilities to retain are graded as being in a poor condition, Elgin and Buckie. Improvement works are currently being progressed at Elgin Library and with the proposed STEM developments identified at this facility it is hoped that these works will upgrade the condition to B satisfactory. There is acknowledgement that the Buckie facility will need capital funding for refurbishment in the long term – however as more Council services are moving into the Buckie Library/Town House building it is assumed that this facility will be retained as a Council asset long term.

Neighbouring Council Library Access: a longstanding ad hoc ‘good neighbour’ agreement has been in place with Highland and Aberdeenshire Councils to enable Moray residents to access resources from neighbouring libraries. This agreement could be reviewed and formalised in the short term. The new Spydus library management system is intended to enable the ‘One Card’ option, which is similar to the Leisure Link, where members can use their cards in certain local authorities across Scotland that are on the same system (Highland and Shire are on same system). The Scottish Library & Information Council (SLIC) have advised that the one card system is not operational as yet as they have been unable to resource this development.

Mitigation additional costs;

Outreach provision		£67,000
Aberlour hours	Additional staffing and property running costs	£34,750

Total	£101,750
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Facility	Closure Considerations/Mitigations
Lossie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library space continues to be utilised as a school library • Space continues to be used as a community space in Lossie with free wifi access • Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up (at current facility) • Public transport available to Elgin to access nearest library
Cullen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library area reverts back to Three Kings Cullen Association • Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up (could this be delivered at Primary School) • Public transport available to Buckie to access nearest library • If One Card project progresses – could access Banff Library
Burghead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library space could be utilised by Primary School and/or; • Space continues to be used as a community space in Burghead with free wifi access • Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up (at current facility) • Public transport available to Elgin and Forres to access nearest libraries
Dufftown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell asset • Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up (could this be delivered at Primary School) • Public transport available to Aberlour to access nearest library • If One Card project progresses – could access Huntly Library
Milnes (Fochabers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library space continues to be utilised as a school library • Space continues to be used as a community space in Fochabers with free wifi access • Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up (at current facility) • Public transport available to Elgin and Buckie to access nearest library
Tomintoul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library space could be utilised by Primary School and/or; • Space continues to be used as a community space in Tomintoul with free wifi access • Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up (at current facility) • If One Card project progresses – could access Grantown on Spey Library
Keith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell asset

Facility	Closure Considerations/Mitigations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="488 237 1437 309">• Deliver a level of outreach support to community – housebound delivery, digital lending devices, community pop up<li data-bbox="488 315 1406 349">• If One Card project progresses – could access Huntly Library<li data-bbox="488 356 1418 418">• Public transport available to Elgin or Buckie to access nearest library

LIBRARY USAGE

The breakdown of library usage across the 11 static libraries is detailed in the table below

	23/24						
	Population	Visits	Issues	Active Borrowers (1)* based on 22/23 stats as new system implemented in 23/24	PN Usage (2)	Events (3)	Attendance
Aberlour	1,120	7,884	13,594	446	7%	146	1,631
Buckie	8,430	27,783	30,121	1,121	14%	226	2,409
Burghead	1,930	2,226	4,738	193	12%	17	147
Cullen	1,450	3,765	6,971	233	4.0%	12	313
Dufftown	1,660	2,809	4,769	187	5%	101	1,352
Elgin	22,980	139,966	104,873	4,698	17%	1,027	10,284
Fochabers	1,690	2,196	4,750	199	15%	87	267
Forres	9,900	55,679	43,547	1,812	16%	527	7,020
Keith	4,740	9,586	16,148	506	14%	171	1,269
Lossiemouth	7,620	6,105	8,975	581	3%	399	2,182
Tomintoul	322	2,534	3,233	90	1%	142	1,280

Active Borrowers - at least 1 loan in 12 month period 22/23

Peoples Network (PC/Internet access) Usage - Average Occupancy - Usage against Availability

Events - Library Led Only