

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**REVIEW OF LIBRARY STOCK RECOVERY PROCEDURES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to implement a revised approach to library stock collection procedures including the deletion of the post of stock collector (1.54 fte) from the Libraries establishment.

Information and Advice

2. The report to Culture Committee at its meeting on 28 April 2015 on Restructure of the Libraries, Archives, Arts and Learning Services stated that:

"The review also considered the roles of Book Collectors ... The book collector function requires further review to consider other options to recover non return of library books."

3. This report presents the findings and recommendations of that further review.
4. Nottinghamshire Libraries currently employ 1.54 fte stock collectors to recover overdue and non-returned library lending stock. This is done through a combination of phone calls and home visits, resulting in most cases either in the return of the items or payment of a replacement cost.
5. Loans are considered 'long overdue' and subject to action when more than eight weeks past the due date for return. Annually this amounts to approximately 14,500 individual items, which represents 0.1% of total loans.
6. The purchase value of stock recovered by this activity for 2014-15 was £65,500, of which £31,900 was for stock less than five years old (and therefore of continued serviceable quality).
7. The total cost of the 1.54 fte stock collector posts and facilities is £31,004 per year for 2014-15, including travel costs. The activity of the stock collectors therefore represents a negligible net gain in value to the service.
8. The review investigated alternative lower-cost options to ensure stock is returned, which included:
 - internal action by other library staff
 - increased use of automated reminder messages
 - debt collection by internal Council income and credit team

- use of an external specialist stock debt recovery agency.
9. It is proposed that revised procedures to retrieve overdue stock should include:
 - an increase in the frequency of overdue reminders sent to borrowers, via email, text messages and automated voicemail
 - actions to increase the number of email addresses held to provide comprehensive coverage of the cheapest form of communication
 10. It should be noted that provision of reminders to return overdue library items is not an obligation on the part of the Council, and that all customers are fully informed of the loan periods for items borrowed. However, options for reminders by email, text messaging and automated phone calls are provided as a courtesy to all customers within the first week after due return date.
 11. The Council provides a library lending service without charge, but it is well established within the provision of the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act that overdue administration fees can be levied along with penalty charges for late or non-return of loaned items.

Other Options Considered

12. Internal Libraries solution: staff could be deployed to make phone call reminders. However:
 - this would add to costs in terms of staff time. Library staff are paid on a higher scale than existing stock collectors so this would not represent a saving in costed staff time.
 - staff with most flexibility in their duties to do this, based at smaller libraries, are not in most cases on duty during evening hours when customers are likely to be at home.
13. The use of debt recovery mechanisms to pursue persistent non-returners is excluded from the recommendations of this report. However depending on the success of measures detailed above a further report following six months of the new approach may seek Committee approval to pilot the use of the internal and/or the external recovery mechanisms.
14. Leave arrangements unchanged: this would not deliver any budget savings as required by the operational business case for 2015-16.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. The proposed reduction in staffing costs will alleviate budgetary pressures; the alternative minimal cost reminder procedures would at least partly meet the need to retrieve overdue stock.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such

implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

17. Customers who fail to return items are liable to existing overdue and replacement cost fees. There is a potential benefit to library users generally in the speedier return of items attained through this new procedure, and better utilisation of and access to stock resources

Financial Implications

18. Estimated savings amount to £28,000 per year. The residual element of the current costs, £4,000, are retained to offset systems administration fees and to cover unsuccessful pursuit of stock to be recovered.
19. This proposal retains the existing fees and charges policy.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

20. Notices about overdue loans are made to customers by phone, email, text messages and if necessary by written communications, which will ensure that all contacts are successful regardless of disability or circumstance.

Human Resources Implications

21. All three current post-holders were included in the Section 188 Notice in October 2014 as part of the consultative process for budget planning. Two of the existing post-holders have indicated acceptance of Voluntary Redundancy. The third post-holder has requested consideration for suitable redeployment.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the 1.54 fte post of stock collector be deleted from the Libraries establishment
- 2) additional electronic notices be generated to encourage the return of overdue stock.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 16/10/2015)

22. Culture Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report, subject to the Employment Procedure Rules which require all reports regarding staffing structures to be accompanied by HR comments. The recognised trade unions must be consulted on all proposed changes to staffing structures.

Financial Comments (SS 19/10/15)

23. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 18 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Restructure of the Libraries, Archives, Arts and Learning services – report to Culture Committee on 28 April 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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