

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO GENERAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 April 2018

Question 1

Councillor CA Gandy

Volunteer run rural Community Libraries particularly for our most vulnerable residents in rural communities are a life line with 43,622 visitors in 2017.

I seek assurance that none of the proposals will impact negatively on community libraries who rely upon the Herefordshire Council library for support and if outsourced what influence the local member will have in decision taking which may impact negatively upon their local community library.

Response

The Assistant Director Communities replied: The front-line delivery of community libraries is operated by local groups and parish councils who give up their time to services valued by those individuals and the local communities, and important to the network of libraries in the county. As independent from the council these libraries would not be part of an outsourced service. The council does support these libraries with training, advice and in some cases IT – also the council pays for the book stock (as broken down in paragraph 31 of the report at a value of £17,484 across all community libraries). This will be subject to future decisions depending on the impact on the book fund and she would welcome the committee's view of that proposal. If implemented the proposal would be a 10% reduction across the board and the impact on community libraries would be £1,748.

Supplementary Question

What evidence is there that contracting the library service whilst fulfilling the council's four priorities will produce the savings required, improve the service, and by how much, and over what period of time, and also guarantee that in a few years' time we will not be regretting the loss of our community run libraries, two of which are increasing visitor numbers due to the lack of support from the centre?

Response

The Assistant Director Communities replied: If the council goes through a procurement process, terms would be specified and the response of bidders to those terms would be evaluated. If the response did not meet expectations or would mean a reduction in service this would not be considered viable. The council would have to wait to see what responses were received.