

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET REPORT****DATE: 26 JUNE 2018****REPORT OF: MS DENISE TURNER-STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES****LEAD OFFICER: JASON RUSSELL, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT****SUBJECT: SURREY PERFORMING ARTS LIBRARY – PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Surrey Performing Arts Library (SPAL) helps support the cultural life of the county by bringing together a wide range of material on all aspects of performing arts, including the loan of multiple sets of music and drama items borrowed by groups. In order to ensure the long term sustainability of the collection, a review, including extensive public consultation, of how the collections are managed has been carried out.

Arising from this, discussions have been initiated with a group, established as a charity, ('NewSPAL') around the potential user and service benefits that could accrue were the collections to be transferred to them.

Both music and drama collections are currently housed at Denbies in Dorking. To ensure the effectiveness, coherence and continuity of the service, the collection is to be relocated to Ewell Library where the collections will be within the main library system.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:-

1. NewSPAL, a new charitable body, is invited and supported to prepare a comprehensive business plan to take on operational responsibility for SPAL,
2. That a report on the NewSPAL business plan be brought to Cabinet for decision in the Autumn, 2018.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

A review of the SPAL collections identified a number of measures to improve business operations and options to address issues for its long term sustainability. The option of transferring the function to an independent operator was proposed as it would mean that SPAL could operate outside of the continuing pressures on local government budgets. Despite considerable work, ultimately no suitable existing organisation confirmed their interest. However a new charity (NewSPAL) has recently been set up for the purpose of taking on SPAL. Potential advantages of the NewSPAL option is that it will be a user-led organisation and have potential to access funding opportunities not available to local authorities.

There will be a robust process in place to test the viability of any transfer of the collections to NewSPAL and a report brought to Cabinet in the Autumn, 2018.

The Communities Select Committee considered options for SPAL and agreed to support in principle NewSPAL taking over the collections. In the interim, while the NewSPAL proposal is worked up in greater detail, to ensure the cost-effectiveness, coherence and continuity of the service, the collection is to be relocated to Ewell Library.

DETAILS:

Background

1. SPAL is one of very few music and drama libraries remaining in the UK, illustrating the challenges to local authorities of keeping a specialist library open in difficult financial times. It belongs to a number of regional and national inter library lending schemes where authorities borrow and lend items to each other to satisfy requests from their users. Due to reductions in other library services SPAL has become a significant net lender of material, which has put a financial and staffing strain on the service.
2. SPAL currently occupies premises at Denbies Wine Estate in Dorking, where the lease runs until April 2021. The lease and building running costs of SPAL are circa £90,000 a year. The County Council has been in discussion with Denbies concerning this lease and future options for use of the space.
3. A review of possible locations within the mainstream library service was carried out and the decision has been taken with the Cabinet Member, to relocate the music and drama collections to a single location at Ewell library.
4. Following the November 2017 Communities Select Committee meeting, a Forum to investigate the viability of an independent option for SPAL was formed, including representatives from Friends of Surrey Performing Arts Library (FOSPAL), Making Music, the International Association of Music Librarians (IAML) and officers from Cultural Services. During the process of this consideration these organisations decided to establish a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) called NewSPAL for the purpose of taking on operational management of SPAL.
5. Subject to the Cabinet decision in the Autumn 2018 regarding the NewSPAL business case, the collections will remain at Ewell. Should the decision be made to keep the collections, a further one off cost (estimated at £20,000) would arise to adapt the infrastructure at Ewell Library.

DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS AND RISKS:

6. A review of library premises, including extensive public consultation, took into account areas of Surrey where there are the highest concentrations of SPAL users and a set of criteria based on accessibility and ease of use. The consultation identified users' support for keeping the collections together if possible and was also positive about a possible independent future for the service (see below, '4. Consultation'). The conclusion was that Ewell Library provided the optimum spatial solution for the location of SPAL.
7. The emergence of NewSPAL as a potential community partner presents a number of opportunities and potential benefits for users and the service and potentially addresses a number of the issues, priorities and concerns expressed in the public consultation. Being

newly formed, the transfer of the collections to Ewell in the short term will helpfully give NewSPAL time to develop their business plan.

8. SCC recognizes the value of the collection and its importance to users. The NewSPAL proposition and transition plan will be reviewed against a range of assessment criteria to ensure future sustainability and cost-effectiveness. The review will consider all opportunities, benefits, risks and the transition arrangements associated with a potential transfer of the collections to NewSPAL.

CONSULTATION:

9. A consultation was undertaken in September 2017, a total of 1474 responses were received. 64.2% of respondents were from music interests, 11% from drama and 24.8% from individuals.
10. The key views expressed in the consultation were:
 - Many respondents expressed the view that the actual location did not matter and the greatest concern was the continuation of the availability of the multiple sets for music and drama. The range of items to borrow and the facility to book reservations in advance and competitive hire were the most valued parts of the service.
 - 91.6% of respondents were against closure.
 - 60% of respondents said they would continue to use the service if the music and drama collections were relocated in separate libraries. Less than 10% said they would stop using the service.
 - 32% strongly agreed with the option of transferring ownership to a community or other organisation. Some concerns were expressed that there would have to be strong agreements with the new body to ensure future access for Surrey residents.

FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

11. In the event that the NewSPAL proposal is approved, after a transition period SCC would have no financial responsibility for SPAL, which would be outside of local government budget pressures. As a charitable organisation NewSPAL could access additional new funding sources and it would be free to trade widely. User involvement and volunteering could have positive effects. The service would be maintained for Surrey residents and able also to serve a wider user group.
12. It is estimated that the relocation could be actioned by August. Of the initial £150,000 annual savings this would achieve in year savings of £100,000, after allowing an estimated £15,000 for the initial cost of relocation. Future savings of £90,000 could be achieved through relinquishing the lease at Denbies
13. The NewSPAL business plan, its value-for money and financial implications will be robustly assessed against a range of criteria before a report is brought to Cabinet for a decision in the Autumn 2018.

SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY:

14. The County Council is facing a very serious financial situation, whereby it does not have a balanced nor sustainable budget plan for future years. Relocating SPAL utilises existing library premises and staffing resources and generates immediate savings as set

out above, leading to additional later savings through the reduction in external property costs. In the meantime investigation and development of future alternative delivery models will continue, which could deliver further savings and benefits.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER:

15. The Council is under a general statutory duty by virtue of section 7(1) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'. SPAL falls outside of this general duty due to its specialist nature and as such is a discretionary service.
16. Notwithstanding this, it is subject to the normal public sector requirements for consultation and equalities impact assessment, both of which must be considered as part of the decision making process. A public consultation has been carried out and the report sets out how the results have been taken into account. The equalities paragraphs below summarise the equality impacts and mitigations that have been identified. The Council's duty to secure best value in the way in which its functions are exercised has been met by considering the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the proposals.
17. If the library is transferred to NewSpal or another organisation, the legal issues connected to the transfer will require more detailed assessment, and further consultation would need to be considered.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY:

18. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the recommendations.
19. Summary of Key Impact and Actions from EIA:
 - Engagement with key stakeholders including Friends of the Surrey Performing Arts Library (FOSPAL), Making Music, the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society and the Leith Hill Festival.
 - User consultation open for one month in September 2017, with the opportunity for respondents to express an interest with regard to taking on responsibility for the management of SPAL.
 - The user survey was sent to 346 music groups, 164 drama groups and 752 individual borrowers. Also 43 other active stakeholders were invited to comment and to be involved in options development. A total of 1,474 responses were received.
20. At the time of the consultation, a range of options were proposed. These included consideration of splitting the collection into drama and music collections and housing them separately at alternative libraries within the network, as well as the possibility to transfer management to a third party agency.
21. Potential Negative Impact:
 - The proposal may result in users and/or staff needing to travel a greater distance to obtain the service or employment, which may incur greater cost, inconvenience and time. This may have a negative impact on the following protected groups: Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, Carers, and Age and Sex as older people and females represent a greater proportion of SPAL users.

- SPAL staff may also find it difficult to retrain or find alternative employment. This may have a negative impact on the following protected groups: Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Carers.

22. Potential Positive Impact:

- The transition of the collection into Ewell Library would result in slightly extended opening hours of physical access to the collection compared with the current offer, potentially widen the exposure of the collection to other service users, and be more accessible by public transport for users.
- These may have a positive impact on the following protected groups: Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Carers.
- The proposal may result in users and/or staff needing to travel a shorter distance to obtain the service or employment, which may incur less cost, inconvenience and time.
- This may have a positive impact on the following protected groups: Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, Carers; Age and Sex for users only as older people and females represent a greater proportion of SPAL users; and Race and Religion and Belief for users only as Other Asian, and the Hindu and Muslim population is greater than average in this part of the County.

23. Key impacts (positive and/or negative) on people with protected characteristic:

- None identified

24. Key mitigating actions planned to address any outstanding negative impact:

- Maintaining ability for items to be collected from any Surrey Library
- Consideration to be given following user feedback on providing a later evening opening
- SPAL staff to be given the opportunity of redeployment within the Library Service

25. Potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated::

- None identified

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

26. Both the music and drama collections will be relocated to Ewell library. A communications plan will be developed and enacted to minimise disruption to users.
27. The library service will provide technical advice and guidance where necessary to the trustees of the NewSPAL charity to assist their development of a sustainable business plan, transition arrangements; and a suitable legal and practical framework for takeover of the collections. The County Council will not be making a financial contribution to the charity for set up or transitional costs.
28. NewSPAL will submit their business and operational/financial plans circa September 2018 for review and decision by Cabinet.

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Consulted:

Cabinet Member, Executive Director, Select Committee, users of the Surrey Performing Arts library, key stakeholders- Friends of the Performing Arts Library (FOSPAL), Making Music, IAML