

Mobile Library Service Provision

Report by Eibhlin McHugh, Joint Director, Health and Social Care

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to advise Cabinet of the re-launch of the Mobile Library Service within Midlothian and to provide details of a new shared service agreement with East Lothian Council.

2. Background

- 2.1** Midlothian Libraries have delivered a much-loved mobile library service to a number of rural communities across Midlothian where there are no physical libraries, since the early 1950s.
- 2.2** The existing mobile library required to be replaced due to the significant age of the vehicle and a replacement vehicle was planned in capital estimates and purchased in early 2015. This presented the opportunity to review provision and to re-launch an enhanced service which would better meet customer demand.
- 2.3** A review of the existing mobile route was undertaken which identified a number of stops where there had been no customer visits for a period of 12 months or more. The removal of these stops allowed for a redesign of the route and the capacity to add new stops in response to customer demand.
- 2.4** The review also identified stops with visits from a single household. These customers were transferred to the bespoke Midlothian Libraries Housebound delivery service in order to provide more targeted support.
- 2.5** During this period East Lothian Council approached Midlothian Council to assess if a service could be provided to East Lothian Council villages to the west of the county. They had recently withdrawn their mobile library service as a result of staff illness and numerous mechanical failures in their ageing mobile library vehicle.
- 2.6** The East Lothian villages of Whitecraig, Pencaitland, Humbie, Macmerry, East Saltoun and Gifford were included as part of the development of the new route for the Midlothian Mobile Library Service and availability was identified every second Thursday and part of the day every second Friday.
- 2.7** A Service Level Agreement was developed between Midlothian Council and East Lothian Council with costs of £5,974.46 payable to Midlothian Council on a yearly basis.

- 2.8** There has been extensive consultation with current customers of the mobile library service and also across communities throughout Midlothian with regard to the proposed new route and also generally in relation to the new service provision. 93% of respondents were happy with the new route and the other 7% of respondents will have access delivered through the Midlothian Libraries Housebound service or be able to visit a branch library.
- 2.9** Customers in East Lothian have also been consulted and have recently been provided with the opportunity to opt-in to automatic joining the Midlothian Mobile Library Service, which has been accepted by the majority of customers.
- 2.10** A local designer has created bespoke illustrations for the mobile library vehicle's livery which represent popular Midlothian landscapes.
- 2.11** The new service will begin on Monday 23rd May 2016 with stops in East Lothian commencing during that week.

3. Report Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no resource implications as the current Library Assistant (Mobile Driver) post will transfer directly to the new service.

Midlothian Council's Library service is currently undergoing a service review as part of the overall Customer Service review and the role of Mobile Library Driver will be considered as part of this review with plans to develop the role to incorporate wider customer service functions. Any potential cost increases based on any changes to the role have been provided to East Lothian and accepted.

3.2 Risk

Failure to deliver the new service at the identified time will impact negatively on customer satisfaction in both Midlothian and East Lothian communities.

3.3 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Midlothian Council and its Community Planning Partners have made a commitment to treat the following areas as key priorities under the Single Midlothian Plan:

- ☐ Early years and reducing child poverty
- ☐ Economic Growth and Business Support
- ☐ Positive destinations for young people.

The themes addressed in this report impact on the delivery of the Single

Midlothian Plan outcomes particularly in terms of priorities in relation to improving opportunities in Midlothian by increasing access to council services for rurally excluded communities and by transforming business to provide effective services making best use of council funds particularly in relation to delivering efficient shared services.

- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The recommendations in this Report impact positively upon achieving the following Customer Service Strategy outcomes:

- Listen, engage and involve our customers in the design and delivery of our services
- Provide excellent customer service with first time resolution at first point of contact
- Improve customer access by fully utilising all available channels for the delivery of transactions
- Improve our customer experience by transforming the way we deliver services

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The proposed changes ensure a continued focus on providing access to council services for citizens across Midlothian and also East Lothian who may be excluded in terms of rural or social isolation.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

All current customers have been directly consulted with through face to face discussion and printed survey. Wider communities across Midlothian have also had an opportunity to be involved through survey response. The launch of the new service will be widely advertised and current customers will receive direct mail to advise of route changes and starting date.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

An EQIA has been carried out as a new service provision.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not applicable.

3.9 IT Issues

There are currently no IT issues.

External funding has recently been received from the Scottish Government to allow free public WiFi to be made available from the new mobile library vehicle which will increase digital access for communities across Midlothian.

4 Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to note the content of this Report.

Date: 2 May 2016

Report Contact

Name: Kevin Anderson, Head of Customer and Housing Services

Tel No. 0131 271 3225

Email: kevin.anderson@midlothian.gov.uk