

TITLE OF REPORT: Surplus Declaration and Proposed Lettings: Rowlands Gill Library, Whickham Library and Felling Library.

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to (i) the libraries at Rowlands Gill and Whickham being declared surplus to the Council's requirements and (ii) the letting of these two properties together with the Library accommodation in The Hub @ Felling High Street to the respective volunteer library associations.

Background

2. Cabinet approved a review of the library service at its meeting on the 21st February 2017 (Minute No. C 183(2017)) and agreed to the implementation of a network of eight Council operated libraries and the development of new volunteer managed libraries at Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling.
3. The volunteer managed libraries will operate alongside the libraries at Dunston, Low Fell, Ryton and Winlaton which are already managed by the respective volunteer organisations.
4. The three libraries at Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling are currently operated by library volunteers subject to a 'Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement' with the Council continuing to take full responsibility for the operational running costs of the buildings.
5. In line with the approach taken with the Volunteer Associations which took on leases of the libraries at Low Fell, Winlaton and Sunderland Road, council officers have supported the volunteers as they move towards becoming self-sustaining, to be in a position to take on more responsibility for the building, in addition to delivering and developing a library offer.
6. Working with the groups has resulted in Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling volunteer library associations each indicating a willingness to enter into a short term lease. This will enable the three Associations to have more control over the running of the building and as such assess the potential for becoming self-sustaining operations.
7. To facilitate the grant of the short term leases, Rowlands Gill and Whickham libraries will need to be declared surplus to Council requirements; however as

Felling library forms part of The Hub @ Felling and this building will remain operational, there is no need for the property to be declared surplus.

Proposal

8. It is proposed that
- a) Rowland Gill Library and Whickham Library be declared surplus to the Council's requirements and
 - b) Appropriate leases be granted to the voluntary organisations at Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that Cabinet: -
- (i) Declares Rowland Gill Library and Whickham Library surplus to Council requirements;
 - (ii) Authorises the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance to grant leases and new Service Provision Agreements to the voluntary organisations at Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling libraries;

For the following reason:

To manage the Council's assets in line with the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.

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APPENDIX 1: Rowlands Gill Library, Norman Road, Rowlands Gill, NE39 1JT

Policy Context

1. The proposed surplus declaration supports the overall vision for Gateshead as set out in Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives. In particular, support our communities to support themselves and each other.
2. The proposal will also accord with the provisions of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020, particularly, the rationalisation of the estate through disposal of assets.

Background

3. Cabinet approved a review of the library service at its meeting on the 21st February 2017 and agreed to the implementation of a network of eight Council operated libraries consisting of Gateshead Central Library, area libraries at Blaydon, Birtley and Leam Lane, and local libraries at Chopwell, Crawcrook, Pelaw and Wrekenton and the development of additional volunteer managed libraries at Rowlands Gill, Wickham and Felling.
4. The day to day operation of Rowlands Gill library transferred to community volunteers on 10 July 2017, and in line with the approach previously taken with the library volunteer associations which took on the operation of the libraries at Dunston, Ryton, Winlaton, Lobley Hill, Low Fell and Sunderland Road. Council officers have been working in partnership with Rowlands Gill Volunteer Library Association over the last 18 months to build capacity within the association and to support their application to successfully become a charitable incorporated organisation.

Current Position

5. As a result of the work undertaken, the Rowland Gill Volunteer Library Association has indicated a willingness to enter into a lease of the building when the existing Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement expires at the end of June this year.
6. It is proposed that the new lease will be granted for a term expiring on the 30th June 2022. The lease will be on a full repairing and insuring basis at nil rent. This figure represents the open market value of the property as its use is restricted to that of a library. In addition to the lease, the Association and the Council will enter into a new Service Provision Agreement which will run concurrently with the lease and will also expire on the 30th June 2022. This will confirm the service to be provided by the Association and the obligations of the Council in terms of funding and support in terms of repair and maintenance of the building.

Proposal

7. It is proposed that the library be declared surplus to the Council's requirements to facilitate that grant of a lease and new Service Provision Agreement to the Rowlands Gill Volunteer Library Association with effect from 1 July 2019, on the expiration of the current Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement at the end of June.

Consultation

8. In preparing this report, consultations have taken place with the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Cabinet Member for Culture Sport and Leisure, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering and Ward Councillors for Chopwell and Rowlands Gill who have raised no objections to the proposal.

Alternative Options

9. The option of retaining the property has been discounted as this would impact on the future operation of the building as a volunteer library.

Implications of Recommended Option

10. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the leasing the property to the Volunteer Library Association will contribute towards the delivery of revenue savings within the Council's approved budget.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** - There are no human resource implications arising from this recommendation.
- c) **Property Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will result in a reduction in the Council's operational costs.

11. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

12. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

13. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

14. **Health Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

15. **Sustainability Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will reduce the level of the Council's operational costs, especially gas and electricity use, which will subsequently result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

16. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

17. **Ward Implications** - Chopwell and Rowlands Gill

18. **Background Information** – Minute Nos.C183(2017)

APPENDIX 2: Whickham Library, St. Marys Green, Whickham, NE16 4DN

Policy Context

1. The proposed surplus declaration supports the overall vision for Gateshead as set out in Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives. In particular, support our communities to support themselves and each other.
2. The proposal will also accord with the provisions of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020, particularly, the rationalisation of the estate through disposal of assets.

Background

3. Cabinet approved a review of the library service at its meeting on the 21st February 2017 and agreed to the implementation of a network of eight Council operated libraries consisting of Gateshead Central Library, area libraries at Blaydon, Birtley and Leam Lane, and local libraries at Chopwell, Crawcrook, Pelaw and Wrekenton and the development of additional new volunteer managed libraries at Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling
4. The day to day operation of Whickham library transferred to community volunteers on 10 July 2017, and in line with the approach previously taken with the library volunteer associations which took on the operation of the libraries at Dunston, Ryton, Lobley Hill, Winlaton, Low Fell and Sunderland Road. Council officers have been working in partnership with Whickham Volunteer Library Association over the last 18 months to build capacity within the association and to support their application to successfully become a charitable incorporated organisation.
5. Council officers have also identified underused accommodation at the property that could be let out independently with a view to generating an income that will be used to support the running costs of the library.

Current Position

6. As a result of the work undertaken, the Whickham Volunteer Library Association has indicated a willingness to enter into a lease of the building when the existing Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement expires at the end of June this year.
7. It is proposed that the new lease will be granted for a term expiring on the 30th June 2022. The lease will be on a full repairing and insuring basis at nil rent. This figure represents the open market value of the property as its use is restricted to that of a library. In addition to the lease, the Association and the Council will enter into a new Service Provision Agreement which will run concurrently with the lease and will also expire on the 30th June 2022. This will confirm the service to be provided by the Association and the obligations of the Council in terms of funding and support in terms of repair and maintenance of the building.
8. Discussions have recently fallen through with a party interested in converting the underused accommodation into a café/ coffee shop. This proposal would have generated an income that would have provided a significant level of support to the

income raised by the Volunteer Library Association. Consequently, arrangements have been made to market the underused accommodation to identify another occupant.

Proposal

9. It is proposed that the library be declared surplus to the Council's requirements to facilitate the grant of a lease and new Service Provision Agreement to the Wickham Volunteer Library Association with effect from 1 July 2019, after the expiration of the current Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement at the end of June, and a lease to the occupant identified for the underused accommodation.

Consultation

10. In preparing this report, consultations have taken place with the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Cabinet Members for Culture, Sport and Leisure, the Cabinet Members for Communities and Volunteering and Ward Councillors for Wickham North who have raised no objections to the proposal.

Alternative Options

11. The option of retaining the property has been discounted as this would impact on the future operation of the building as a volunteer library.

Implications of Recommended Option

12. Resources:

- a. **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that leasing the property to the Volunteer Library Association will contribute towards the delivery of revenue savings for the Council.
- b. **Human Resources Implications** - There are no human resource implications arising from this recommendation.
- c. **Property Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will result in a reduction in the Council's operational costs.

13. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

14. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

15. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

16. **Health Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

17. **Sustainability Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will reduce the level of the Council's operational costs, especially gas and electricity use, which will subsequently result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

18. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

19. **Ward Implications** - Whickham North

20. **Background Information** – Minute Nos. C183(2017)

APPENDIX 3: Felling Library, The Hub @ Felling High Street, High Street, Felling, NE10 9LT

Policy Context

1. The proposed letting supports the overall vision for Gateshead as set out in Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives. In particular, support our communities to support themselves and each other.
2. The proposal will also accord with the provisions of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020, particularly, the rationalisation of the estate through disposal of assets.

Background

3. Felling Library relocated into the Surestart building to create The Hub @ High Street, Felling in 2012. The library has exclusive occupation of the accommodation shown hatched on the attached plan and share use of the rooms shown cross hatched.
4. Cabinet approved a review of the library service at its meeting on the 21st February 2017 and agreed to the implementation of a network of eight Council libraries consisting of Gateshead Central Library, area libraries at Blaydon, Birtley and Leam Lane, and local libraries at Chopwell, Crawcrook, Pelaw and Wrekenton and the development of three additional volunteer managed libraries at Rowlands Gill, Whickham and Felling
5. The day to day operation of Felling library transferred to community volunteers on 10 July 2017, and in line with the approach previously taken with the library volunteer associations which took the operation of the libraries at Dunston, Ryton, Lobely Hill, Winlaton, Low Fell and Sunderland Road, council officers have been working in partnership with CVS over the last 18 months to build capacity within Felling Volunteer Library Association.

Current Position

6. As a result of the work undertaken, the Felling Volunteer Library Association has indicated a willingness to enter into a lease of the accommodation when the existing Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement expires at the end of June this year.
7. It is proposed that the new lease will be granted for a term expiring on the 30th June 2022. The lease will be on a full repairing and insuring basis at nil rent. This figure represents the open market value of the accommodation as its use is restricted to that of a library. In addition to the lease, the Association and the Council will enter into a new Service Provision Agreement which will run concurrently with the lease and will also expire on the 30th June 2022. This will confirm the service to be provided by the Association and the obligations of the Council in terms of funding and support in terms of repair and maintenance of the building.

Proposal

8. It is proposed that a Lease and new Service Provision Agreement be entered into with the Felling Volunteer Library Association with effect from 1st July 2019 after the expiration of the current Right to Occupy and Service Provision Agreement at the end of June.

Consultation

9. In preparing this report, consultations have taken place with the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Cabinet Member for Culture Sport and Leisure, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering and Ward Councillors for Felling who have raised no objections to the proposal.

Alternative Options

10. The option of retaining the accommodation has been discounted as this would impact on the future operation of the space as a volunteer library.

Implications of Recommended Option

11. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that letting the library accommodation to the Volunteer Library Association will contribute towards the delivery of revenue savings for the Council.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** - There are no human resource implications arising from this recommendation.
- c) **Property Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will result in a reduction in the Council's operational costs.

12. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

13. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

14. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

15. **Health Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

16. **Sustainability Implications** – The grant of a lease of this property will reduce the level of the Council's operational costs, especially gas and electricity use, which will subsequently result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

17. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

18. **Ward Implications** - Felling.

26. **Background Information** – Minute Nos. C183 (2017)