

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**  
**Wednesday, 8 March 2017**

**1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VINT**  
**Re: Devon Libraries Unlimited**

In light of recent assurances given by this Council that effective measures have been taken to ensure the long-term protection of library services and library staff when establishing Libraries Unlimited and entering into a contract with them, I would welcome a statement from the Cabinet Member for Community & Environmental Services on recent reports about pay cuts for staff - including reported pay cuts of over 30% for 16 staff. Is this Council assured that this particular cost-saving strategy is the best way of protecting library services and library staff?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD**

Libraries Unlimited (LU) commenced operations in April 2016 with the requirement to deliver £1.5 million savings in order to achieve the target set as part of its contract with the County Council.

How these savings are achieved are sovereign decisions of the Libraries Unlimited Board. The Board has a legal responsibility for the overall financial viability of the organisation.

Despite financial pressures Libraries Unlimited has not only been able to develop its offer and influence but has been able to maintain each of the Libraries across Devon, supporting people and communities across the County. In its first year LU has established The Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) in Exeter Library, part of the British Library's national network of BIPCs and has secured new sources of funding such as a £200,000 grant from Arts Council England for research on libraries' social impact and £56,000 from the Big Potential to look at how the organisation develops its future.

As part of its overall savings plan to deliver the £1.5 million savings as part of its contract with the Council, the organisation has consulted its staff on the removal of enhanced pay for weekend working. Many organisations across the public, private and third sector do not pay extra for working at the weekend and, across the library sector itself; many local authorities have removed the enhancement in recent years.

The removal of enhanced weekend working rates has been a difficult decision for the Board to make. However, they have taken the decision following a thorough and robust consultation process with staff and Trades Unions and mindful of their need to ensure a sustainable business model which sustains a strong library footprint across communities.

The organisation is committed to supporting staff as much as it can to adjust to the change. Affected staff were given two additional months' notice of the change (1st June instead of 1st April) to make adjustments. Staff have been aware of the possibility of this change since late November.

LU is providing further mitigation by offering staff the opportunity to work extra hours to cover sickness and annual leave (something that currently is only offered to relief staff). All vacancies are being advertised internally until September 2017 to give staff the opportunity to pick up additional hours.

## 2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VINT

**Re:** Devon Libraries Unlimited

Did the elected Staff Forum and/or the elected staff representatives on the Libraries Unlimited Board propose alternate cost-saving strategies that could have more effectively protected library staff - and are the staff representatives and this Council assured that these alternatives have been given due consideration?

### REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

Libraries Unlimited conducted eight weeks of consultation following a launch at a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) of the trade unions on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016. This was followed by a series of staff meetings at eight different libraries from 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November across the county to enable staff to learn more about the proposals from senior managers. These meetings were supported by a range of consultation documents made available to all staff via email and SharePoint immediately following the JCC on 21<sup>st</sup> November. Around 150 staff attended the meetings.

Staff contributed their feedback in the following ways:

- Via an online questionnaire
- Via email to a consultation mailbox which was regularly reviewed
- Via their trade union representative
- Via individual meetings with the Senior Management Team (SMT) or Service Delivery Managers upon request.

The consultation closed at 5pm on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The Service Development team within LU analysed the responses received using the same methodology adopted in previous consultations. This involved reading all responses and coding feedback against particular themes.

To increase openness and transparency and with LU Chair's endorsement, Staff Forum members observed the Workforce Resources and Remuneration Committee discussion on 13<sup>th</sup> January and were invited to observe the Board discussion on this issue on 27<sup>th</sup> January. Members of the Board observed the Staff Forum discussion on this issue on 25<sup>th</sup> January.

The Board met on 27<sup>th</sup> January to review the feedback from the staff consultation, consider the recommendations from the Leadership Team and make their decision on the outcome of the consultation examining the best way forward for the organisation and its workforce.

The Board considered a full analysis of staff feedback; feedback from trade unions; benchmarking with other library services and other sectors; eight separate options reflecting the most substantive areas suggested by the staff group or by SMT - this included proposals on savings, efficiencies and additional sources of income; an Equality Impact Assessment and the input from each of the online questionnaires from staff.

The Board made the decision to remove enhanced pay at its Board meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January and the organisation has now made considerable progress in implementing this change, which will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June.



**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**  
**Wednesday, 8 March 2017**

**1. QUESTION FROM MR M WALTON**  
**Re: Transport Infrastructure Plan**

We recognise the uncertain funding environment we now operate under and the hard work that Jamie Hulland and his transport team do for the people of Devon.

We would like reassurance that Cabinet remains committed to their agreed strategic target, stated in the 'Cycling and Multi-use Trail Network Strategy (2015)', of making Exeter a top 10 cycling city with (a modest) 12% commuter joiners by bike by 2021, that progress against these goals will be regularly measured and reported to Cabinet and that to support this goal Cabinet will move in the near future to allocating transport capital funding to walking and cycling in proportion to the number of journeys planned for these modes

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES**

The County Council has a strong track record in investment in cycling and recognises the important role it has in supporting a modern and growing economy.

The Local Transport Plan capital programme continues to allocate funds to progress design of the cycle proposals as prioritised in the Cycling and Multi-Use Trail Strategy. However, with a significantly reduced LTP allocation, funding needs to be spread across a range of transport schemes and particularly to projects where there is a reasonable prospect of securing Government grant funding or being supported by developer contributions.

Whilst the Council was disappointed not to secure Growth Deal funding for the Exeter Cycle Routes project, this year it has committed £1m out of the £4m National Productivity Investment Funding to progress ambitious urban cycle routes in Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple. Specifically, this will include delivery of the first section of the Exeter E4 route at its eastern end. This will be a high quality section of route reflecting best practice design standards and segregating cyclists from traffic and pedestrians. Work will continue to progress the next sections of the route.

The recent £1.5m Access Fund announcement means that over the next three years the Council will also be able to dedicate resources to work with employers and schools across the city to boost walking and cycling levels.

In terms of monitoring of progress, the Council has a series of cycle counters across the city recording daily cycle movements. Based on 5 of these major cycle counters, there has been a 35% increase in cycling between 2010 and 2015. The next major opportunity to monitor progress is at the 2021 Census where the Council is hopeful of seeing the proportion of people cycling to work having increased upon 2011 levels.