

Fifers encouraged to take part in library services consultation

14/08/2015 10:00

A consultation is now under way to help councillors decide what the future of Fife's library service should look like.

A proposal from Fife Cultural Trust, who operate most of Fife Council's libraries, was recently discussed by the Executive Committee. It has been developed to respond to the significant financial pressures being faced by the Council which have resulted in a reduction in the funding available for the Trust.

The main change the Trust is proposing, in order to deliver the financial savings required by Fife Council, is to move to a new way of working for libraries. They say this proposal would respond to the changing needs of local communities and make library services fit for the future. However, it would also mean closing 16 of Fife's 51 libraries, reviewing library opening hours and mobile library routes, and standardising the range of services offered across the library network.

The Executive Committee asked for the communities affected by the proposed library closures to be consulted with on the potential impact that the proposals would have.

Council Leader David Ross is keen for people to help inform the tough decisions that the Executive Committee is facing. He said: "We know that this service is important to people and we also know that people understand the severe budget cuts that all public services are facing. This 12-week consultation is a chance for anyone with an interest in library services to have their say."

Robin Presswood, Head of the Council's Economy, Planning and Employability Services said: "This consultation asks people from all across Fife how these proposals might affect them and their families. The Trust and Council officers are also exploring the possibility of alternative models so that a library service could still be offered whilst still delivering the required savings.

"Before decisions are taken we want your views on these proposals. In due course the Executive Committee will be deciding whether to progress with the proposals as they are, reject them, or make changes to them."

Laurie Piper, Head of External Relations for Fife Cultural Trust added: “Library services represent the largest element of the Trust’s service provision. We invest over two thirds of the management fee we receive from Fife Council into running libraries, with all library services delivered free of charge to Fife’s communities.

“Our proposals have been developed as a result of a Trust-wide review of all the services we provide. They are based on a number of factors, including the state of the building, access to alternative libraries and also how customers have actually used the library over the last seven years.

“We are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Fife’s library service despite the financial challenges we are facing, and to create a modern, responsive library service that is accessible for customers across Fife.”

You can also read more about the proposals and take part online at www.fifedirect.org.uk/libreview. You can also take part in the consultation at any of Fife’s libraries and aboard the mobile libraries.

The robust 12-week consultation process also includes:

- an invitation to all community councils to meet Fife Cultural Trust face to face
- information and a questionnaire posted to more than 3,000 service users affected by the proposed changes
- an email to over 24,000 active library users linking to the online questionnaire
- a series of public drop-in events in libraries for people to find out more.

The public drop-in events began earlier this week and will take place as follows:

Date	Venue	Times
Monday 10 th August	East Wemyss	10am – 12 noon
	Pitteuchar	2pm – 4pm
Tuesday 11 th August	Colinsburgh	3pm – 5pm
	Markinch	5pm – 7pm
Wednesday 12 th August	Kinghorn	10am – 12 noon
	Markinch	2pm – 4pm
Thursday 13 th August	Crossgates	10am – 12 noon
	Crail	2pm – 4pm

Friday 14 th August	Pitteuchar	10am – 12 noon
	Falkland	2pm – 4pm
Monday 17 th August	Glenwood	10am – 12 noon
	Crossgates	2pm – 4pm
Tuesday 18 th August	Bowhill	2pm – 4pm
	Kinghorn	5pm – 7pm
Wednesday 19 th August	Abbeyview	10am – 12 noon
	Thornton	10am – 12 noon
	Freuchie	2pm – 4pm
Thursday 20 th August	Falkland	10am – 12 noon
	Thornton	2pm – 4pm
Friday 21 st August	Bowhill	10am – 12 noon
	Pittenweem	10am – 12 noon
	Glenwood	2pm – 4pm
Monday 24 th August	Townhill	10am – 12 noon
	Pittenweem	2pm – 4pm
	Abbeyview	2pm – 4pm
Tuesday 25 th August	Colinsburgh	5pm – 7pm
Wednesday 26 th August	Lundin Links	2pm – 4pm
	Freuchie	5pm – 7pm
Thursday 27 th August	Lundin Links	10am – 12 noon
	Townhill	2pm – 4pm
Friday 28 th August	Crail	10am – 12 noon
	East Wemyss	2pm – 4pm

This mix of consultation activity should ensure that all 115,000 registered library users will have the opportunity to contribute their views, in their preferred way. The consultation will close on Friday 6 November 2015.

Notes to Editors

- At its meeting on 23rd June, the Executive Committee agreed that the proposals should be the subject of full consultation with the communities affected by the proposed library closures and that a report on these consultations and alternative delivery models with revised proposals from Fife Cultural Trust should be submitted to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 29th September 2015. However, as this consultation will take place for 12 weeks, running until Friday 6th November, the results will now be presented to the Committee on 8th December 2015
- The main change the Trust is proposing in order to deliver the required savings for Fife Council is by moving to a new operating model for library services
- This change will reduce the number of library branches across Fife by 16
- The 16 libraries proposed for closure are: Abbeyview, Bowhill, Colinsburgh, Crail, Crossgates, East Wemyss, Falkland, Freuchie, Glenwood, Kinghorn, Lundin Links, Markinch, Pittenweem, Pitteuchar, Thornton and Townhill
- Everyone will still have access to the library service, but it will mean some buildings will close and the way the service is delivered will change. How this happens will be informed by a public consultation exercise.
- Opening hours, mobile library routes and housebound services will be reviewed to ensure the widest access possible.
- Fife Cultural Trust (FCT) receives a management fee from Fife Council to operate museums, galleries, libraries and theatres on its behalf.
- The original budget saving set by Fife Council in 2013 to be delivered by FCT was £1,485,000. A further £234,000 efficiency savings target has since been required of FCT bringing the total savings which will be delivered through FCT by 2017/18 to £1.7m.
- FCT has already delivered £906,000 of the budget savings target and is required to deliver the remaining £813,000 by March 2018.
- Further budget savings may also be required of the Trust in future.
- Fife has 51 libraries; Fife Cultural Trust currently run 47 of these for Fife Council
- Some libraries are more popular than others, with opening hours ranging from six hours to over 50 each week
- Fife currently has three mobile libraries
- The number of items issued by Fife libraries has fallen by over 23% in the last seven years
- The number of visitors to Fife libraries has fallen by 13% in the last seven years
- The number of public access PC sessions is continuing to see an increase in demand – in 2013/14 it was up 9% on the previous year.
- The average 'cost per issue' for libraries is £1.24

- The average 'cost per issue' for mobile libraries is £5.72

Contact**Media Manager**

Fife Council

Office: 01592 583312

Email: fifecouncil.news@fife.gov.uk

Lauren Macauley

Fife Council

Office: 03451 55 55 55 ext 444501

Email: lauren.macauley@fife.gov.uk