
**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 MARCH 2004**

NOTE: Copies of the reports mentioned below have been sent to all members of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and other members who had requested them. Further copies are available from Nicola Hayden, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Telephone: 01992 555560)
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SINGLE STAFFING OF LIBRARIES

The Committee has considered a report on the single staffing of libraries, as requested by County Councillor Jane Hobday, to enable Members to decide whether they want to scrutinise the policy.

The report sets out the background to the move to single staffing and the current measures being undertaken to move towards implementation.

Background

- The Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) review of the library service highlighted the need to improve value for money over staffing, specifically the single staffing of the smaller static and the mobile service points.
- The CPA report informed the subsequent Best Value Review (BVR).
- The BVR report was approved by Cabinet on 23 June 2003 and included a decision to proceed with single staffing.
- The BVR was examined by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 10 June 2003 and is scheduled for further scrutiny in June 2004.
- Implementation of single staffing will produce a reduction in payroll cost of £200,000 p.a.
- Implementation of single staffing is planned for April 2004. A process has been carried out to develop the single-staffing proposals in accordance with HCC's protocol for managing organisational change.

- A Lone Working Group, including Health & Safety representation, UNISON and staff from the service points has been in operation to co-ordinate health and safety aspects of single staffing implementation.
- Risk assessments have been carried out and external security advice has been obtained. As a result a number of measures including physical changes to premises and systems as well as changes to operating procedures will be introduced prior to implementation of single staffing.
- Mobile libraries have been subject to a similar process with the addition of a single-staffing pilot for the Hertford mobile, which operated successfully last year.
- The process of finalising the outcomes for individuals affected is ongoing at the time of this report. There are 65 staff involved. 18 have been re-deployed, 26 are taking redundancy/early retirement, 3 have left or finished contracts, 6 have expressed an interest in redundancy but not yet confirmed and 12 remain as supernumerary to be absorbed by vacancy management.
- Trailer libraries in Hertfordshire have always been single-staffed.
- The following list is not exhaustive but gives a sample of the many different types of authorities across the country that single staff appropriate service points and mobiles. Those listed in bold type are Hertfordshire's statistical comparator family of 18 authorities. The only authority in HCC's comparator group not operating single staffing is Bedfordshire.

Bath & NE Somerset	East Sussex	Northamptonshire
Blackpool	Enfield	Nottinghamshire
Buckinghamshire	Essex	Oxfordshire
Caerphilly	Gloucestershire	Shropshire
Cambridgeshire	Hampshire	Somerset
Cheshire	Hertfordshire	Staffordshire
Cumbria	Isle of Wight	Suffolk
Devon	Kent	Surrey
Dudley	Leicestershire	Warwickshire
Durham	Lincolnshire	Wiltshire
East Riding	Norfolk	

- The list of static service points proposed for single staff operation is

Adeyfield	Knebworth
Brookmans Park	Leverstock Green
Cranbourne	London Colney
Cuffley	Redbourn
Cunningham	Stevenage Old Town
Fleetville	Welwyn
Jackmans	Wheathampstead

The Committee were advised that UNISON had declared a formal dispute over this matter but that following a special meeting of the Joint Staff Advisory Committee, the dispute was in abeyance pending a review of the security measures in place at libraries proposed for single staffing. The results of this review would be reported back to the Joint Staff Advisory Committee on Wednesday 24 March.

Officers provided assurances that single staffing was not linked to the closure of libraries, and that libraries included in the scheme would be double staffed at peak hours and when staff were involved in other activities, such as story telling.

Members discussed when the appropriate time would be to scrutinise this issue. Opinion was divided about whether or not it was appropriate to scrutinise before the policy had been implemented.

Comments of the Scrutiny Committee

The Committee agreed that, after a reasonable period of implementation, it should scrutinise this matter and that the report should include the following issues:

- A comparison with the experiences of Hertfordshire's comparative authorities in their move to single staffing;
- How, and how effectively, health and safety issues have been addressed;
- Any changes in the usage, effectiveness or efficiency of libraries, which have moved to single staffing.
- Any difficulties identified with individual libraries related to local circumstances, and;
- The views of library users and staff.

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22 March 2004