



LIBRARY SYSTEMS
& SERVICES, UK Ltd.

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*Partnering with Communities
to Build Better Libraries*

Thursday 24th November 2010

Councillor Jane Storey
Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for
Resource Management and Transformation
Suffolk County Council
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich IP1 2BX

Dear Councillor Storey

Library Management Services

It was a great pleasure to speak to you last night at the Divestment Seminar at Endeavour House. Congratulations on a very successful event and a most impressive turn out. In talking to people around the room, I had the impression of a very positive response to the council's new strategic direction.

Thank you for sparing me so much time to chat about library management after what must have been a very long day. Thanks also for introducing me to Roger McMaster. We had a very interesting conversation exploring the possibilities of developing a mixed economy for libraries.

If I may repeat in writing the gist of our conversation, we applaud your bold and imaginative proposals to devolve library management to local communities across Suffolk as part of your response to the localism and Big Society ideas. This will give local people the opportunity to have a direct say in the way their local libraries operate in such matters as opening hours and programming and to link these to local priorities such as job creation, work with health agencies and inclusion.

We at LSSI totally support your consideration of radical approaches for service delivery and the close involvement of local people. These principles of designing and delivering bespoke library services for individual communities are at the heart of our operations. However, we do wonder whether the community approach will be viable and appropriate for your larger libraries in Bury St. Edmunds, Lowestoft and the county library in Ipswich.

These strategically important sites offer a seven day a week service including reference, learning and a wide range of events in addition to general borrowing. They are the heart of the Suffolk library service. They also provide a crucial link to wider council services and the library network across the country. We believe that it is vital that these sites continue to offer a full service through professional management.

We would like to make a proposal to you to undertake management of these three strategic sites. Not only would a contract with LSSI sustain the professional and strategic heart of the Suffolk service in a cost effective manner, it could also provide a support service for professional advice, staff training and service development to the other branches at a time of great change. A further benefit would be our ability to provide a degree of strategic coordination for what will remain the county library service.

It is inevitable that there will be some teething troubles and inconsistencies as up to 30 separate community organisations take over the running of their local libraries. The experience of Cambridgeshire CC in its 10 library access points (LAPs) has shown that the variable levels of expertise and sustained commitment have led to significant service delivery problems in some of the LAP communities. By commissioning an experienced library company – indeed, LSSI is the only library specialist contractor in the UK market - at the heart of your service you could ensure that these main, strategically important libraries continue to be well managed. This would also minimise the risks of your community-run libraries strategy by providing a source of consistent advice, support, encouragement and professionalism to those community groups.

We feel that your radical, innovative approach, allied to our proposal to manage the reputational and service risks, would offer a mature, laudable and ground-breaking contribution to national government's Big Society agenda.

You will be aware that our parent company LSSI is a long established US company working with the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution and 15 library authorities in 5 states. LSSI is the global field-leader in providing such library services in partnership with the private sector. We have delivered a wide range of service developments to clients including longer opening hours and opening several new branches as well as maximizing financial efficiency and cost-effectiveness. We would be delighted to combine this experience with your bold approach to community management to develop a truly unique and innovative service in Suffolk.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to developing these proposals with you as part of the divestment strategy. Please can you advise us on the best way to achieve this? I am based in Brentwood in Essex which is only an hour's drive away from Ipswich. I would be happy to make this short journey if you wished to meet to discuss the possibilities face to face.

In the meantime you can read more about LSSI at www.lssi.com.

In addition to the contracts and client authorities you can read about there, I am delighted to announce that last week we won a new contract at Santa Clarita County, California to run their 3 branch facilities.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J Lynch', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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cc Cllr. Rosemary Clarke, Roger McMaster