

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND LOCALISM PANEL  
TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 10:00AM**

Agenda  
Item No.

**7**

**‘INSPIRING LIBRARIES’ – THE NEXT PHASE**

Report of the Director Resources

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To set out ambitions and priorities for the next phase of the Inspiring Libraries Strategy from April 2018 onwards.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The ‘Inspiring Libraries’ Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in July 2014 to provide a vision and direction for the library service over the next ten years. Specific proposals were agreed for the implementation of the strategy in its first three years. The County Council now needs to set priorities for the next phase of the Strategy.
- 2.2 In addition to the £2.5 million in revenue savings already identified from the original ‘Inspiring Libraries’ proposals, the library service has now been asked to consider ways of making a further reduction in the annual revenue budget of £500,000 due to ongoing budget pressures.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the Library Service should continue its programme of improving Hertfordshire library buildings to ensure that they are bright, attractive, welcoming, flexible, tech-enabled spaces in convenient locations.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the Library Service should seek opportunities to extend self-service access to libraries by rolling out swipe-card access and supported self-service initiatives.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the Library Service should continue to invest in the development of technology to improve service delivery, to support digital inclusion, and to empower citizens.
- 2.6 It is proposed that the Library Service should continue to deliver high quality services to contribute to the seven key outcomes identified in the national ‘Libraries Deliver’ document. This will be achieved through a workforce of skilled and trained library staff, supported, where appropriate by volunteers from the local community.
- 2.7 It is proposed that progress in the transition of Tier 3 Libraries into volunteer-partnered Community Libraries should be reviewed in March 2018 with a view to completing the roll-out in 2018/19.

- 2.8 It is proposed that in order to achieve an additional £500,000 revenue saving, a new model for service delivery should be explored, as set out in the accompanying paper – ‘An Alternative Delivery Model for Hertfordshire Libraries’

### 3. **RECOMMENDATION**

That Panel recommends to Cabinet that Cabinet endorses the ambitions and priorities for the next phase of the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ Strategy, as set out in the report.

### 4. **BACKGROUND**

#### 4.1 **Inspiring Libraries Strategy**

- 4.1.1 [‘Inspiring Libraries: a new strategy for Hertfordshire Library Service 2014-2024’](#) was adopted by [Cabinet](#) on 14 July 2014 to set the vision and direction for the service over the next ten years, and provide a framework for future decisions about service priorities. The strategy is based on three main themes:

- The library as a vibrant community asset – shaped with local people and partners to reflect local need, support sustainability and enrich communities.
- The digital library – a service that is ambitious in its use of technology and digital formats for the benefit of residents.
- The library as an enhanced gateway to reading, information and wellbeing.

- 4.1.2 ‘Inspiring Libraries’ is designed to ensure that the library service remains relevant and sustainable in challenging times. It set the following ambitions for the service in 2024:

- to have a network of libraries that are valued local assets at the very heart of the communities they serve.
- to attract more visitors (physical, virtual and outreach).
- to be open to residents for longer hours.
- to cost the taxpayer less.

- 4.1.3 Over the last three years, the implementation of the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ Strategy has led to significant changes in the Library Service:

- The reorganisation of Hertfordshire’s 46 libraries into three tiers, based on usage and population served.
- The introduction of Community Libraries, managed in partnership with local volunteer groups, at Chorleywood, Redbourn, Goffs Oak, Kings Langley and Wheathampstead.
- Improvements to library buildings, including new libraries at Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, and major refurbishments at Watford, Abbots Langley and North Watford.
- Withdrawal of the Mobile Library Service and expansion of the Home Library Service
- Innovations in technology, including new CreatorSpaces at Watford and Hemel Hempstead, self-service Wi-Fi printing, and ‘LibraryLink’ – our video link enabling volunteers and customers in Community Libraries to summon assistance from trained staff.
- Developments in online services, including the Library App, the expansion of the eLibrary, and the use of social media to promote the service.

- 4.1.4 The ‘Inspiring Libraries’ approach of reducing services where necessary to achieve budget savings, whilst continuing to invest in library buildings and technology to ensure that the service is equipped to meet future demands has also helped to secure Hertfordshire’s reputation nationally as an ambitious and responsible library authority.

- 4.1.5 Usage statistics indicate that the library service continues to be popular with Hertfordshire residents, with the total number of library visits (physical and virtual) increasing by 26% over the last five years.

*Figures in thousands*

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Physical visits</b>	3,808	3,832	3,842	3,665	3,574
<b>Virtual visits</b>	655	1,279	1,549	2,045	2,055
<b>Total visits</b>	<b>4,463</b>	<b>5,111</b>	<b>5,391</b>	<b>5,710</b>	<b>5,629</b>

Virtual Library visits include visits to the Libraries website, the library catalogue and online functions, the e-Library and the Online Reference Library.

## 4.2 The financial challenge

- 4.2.1 Budget reduction measures taken during the Libraries Transformation in 2011/12, and the implementation of 'Inspiring Libraries' mean that the Libraries' budget has been reduced by 35% since 2011, and total revenue expenditure on public libraries in Hertfordshire (including property costs and recharges) has been reduced by 25%. The net cost of library services per 1000 population has therefore reduced from £16,746 in 2011/12 to £12,905 in 2015/16. Over the same time period, cost per library visit has reduced from £3.90 to £2.64.

- 4.2.2 The implementation of 'Inspiring Libraries' was expected to save £2.5 million from the annual revenue budget over a three year period from 2015/16. In practice, the savings achieved have been as follows

- 2015/16 - £1 million
- 2016/17 - a further £1 million

This has been achieved by reductions in revenue expenditure through the re-profiling of staffing and library stock, a reduction in transport costs, and efficiency savings in supplies and services budgets.

- 4.2.3 It is planned to achieve the remaining £500,000 saving by completing the roll-out of 16 community libraries across the County. This is progressing, but the need to win the trust and support of volunteer groups in each community means that it is a slower process than originally anticipated.

- 4.2.4 Of the total Library Service revenue budget of £9.4 million, around 10% is expected to be contributed by income generation. A number of new revenue streams have been explored as part of the Inspiring Libraries Strategy, including commissioned services, charges for the hire of library space, and donations for early years activities. However, this has to be balanced against the sharp decline in traditional sources of library income. Income from overdue charges is reduced because it is so much easier for customers to renew their items online, and income from DVD charges is falling as this is becoming an increasingly obsolete format. As a result any income generated from new revenue sources is serving to offset the decline rather than raising additional money for the service.

- 4.2.5 This means that the final £500,000 of the expected savings from 'Inspiring Libraries' will not be fully achieved in the current financial year. It is hoped that the full saving can be achieved in 2018/19.

4.2.6 The ongoing pressure on the County Council budget is such that the Library Service has now been asked to consider ways to find an additional £500,000 in savings from the annual revenue budget over the next two to three years, over and above those already identified, whilst maintaining the overall spirit and ambition of the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy.

## **5. AMBITIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF 'INSPIRING LIBRARIES'**

### **5.1 Improving library buildings**

- 5.1.1 The 'Inspiring Libraries' Strategy set out our ambition for all Hertfordshire library buildings to be bright, attractive, welcoming, flexible, tech-enabled spaces in convenient locations. Recent County Council investment has demonstrated the potential of 'state of the art' library facilities, such as Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Watford Central, and we aim to continue this programme of improvement, using Section 106 funding, wherever possible.
- 5.1.2 Planning permission has been obtained for the re-provision of **Knebworth Library** in a shared building with a health centre and doctors' surgery.
- 5.1.3 Work is progressing to obtain planning permission for the co-location of **Redbourn, Sawbridgeworth** and **Wheathampstead** Libraries with the local retained fire stations in a project supported by grant-funding from the Home Office.
- 5.1.4 Plans are in place for the refurbishment of **St Albans** and **Hitchin** Libraries in the current financial year.
- 5.1.5 The County Council is a partner in plans for the regeneration of **Stevenage** town centre, which would include the provision of a new library.
- 5.1.6 We will continue to seek solutions for the long term improvement of library facilities in **Cheshunt, Potters Bar, North Watford** and **Ware**, which were identified as priorities for re-provision in the original Inspiring Libraries papers, based on the condition, suitability, size or location of the current buildings.
- 5.1.7 If opportunities arise to improve library provision and reduce costs in other locations over the next two years, then these will be considered as they arise.
- 5.1.8 It is likely that over the next few years, the best opportunities for improving library buildings will come through co-locating libraries with other services. Sharing buildings provides opportunities to share costs with partners and enables customers to access a number of services in one visit, potentially attracting new customers to the library. However, this will not be suitable in every case. The advantages of co-location will need to be balanced against considerations of location and accessibility to find the right solution for each community.

### **5.2 Extending access**

- 5.2.1 In 2011, opening hours in Hertfordshire Libraries were reduced by an average of 30% due to the need to make urgent budget savings. This led to a sharp decline in library usage (21% reduction in library visits) and customer satisfaction with the service.

- 5.2.2 Since 2011, the Library Service has kept opening hours under review, making local adjustments and taking advantage of opportunities to extend customer access to the service wherever possible. These local initiatives have enabled us to extend total library access hours by 8.5%.
- **Library Express** - a number of libraries (Borehamwood, Harpenden, Hemel Hempstead, Hoddesdon and Watford) offer Library Express hours, which allow access to part of the building for extended hours with minimum staff supervision.
  - **Supported Self-Service** – in Bovingdon, Harpenden, Radlett, and Waltham Cross, volunteers or staff from partner organisations supervise self-service access to all or part of the building for some hours each week outside core staffed times.
  - **Swipe-card access** – a pilot project is currently underway at Croxley Green Library, using Bibliotheca's Open+ product to enable the library to operate in self-service mode outside normal opening hours, by allowing access to library members using a card reader and PIN, whilst still maintaining a secure environment. This pilot has now been extended to the new Berkhamsted Library in order to evaluate its impact in a busier library.
- 5.2.3 Over the next three years, we will seek opportunities to roll-out swipe-card access and other self-service initiatives in order to extend access to the service in all Tier 1 and Tier 2 Libraries in line with the ambitions of the Inspiring Libraries Strategy.
- 5.2.4 The particular advantage of swipe-card access is that extended access could include early mornings, late evenings, Sundays and Bank Holidays, when it would never be cost-effective to provide a staffed service. It also opens up the possibility of seasonal variations to meet customer demand, so that libraries could open later on summer evenings, and close earlier in the winter.
- 5.2.5 The infrastructure for swipe-card access is relatively inexpensive to provide as part of a new building - it has already been installed in the new Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead Libraries. However, it can be more expensive to retrofit into an existing building, depending on the size, layout and construction of the building.
- 5.2.6 In those Libraries where it would be impractical to install Open+, we will seek to extend access by offering supervised self-service use of the library, or part of the library, for some additional hours each week. This would be achieved by extending the use of volunteers, either to supervise self-service directly, or to carry out support tasks during staffed hours to allow some staff time to be redeployed across the week.

### 5.3 Developing technology

- 5.3.1 The 'Inspiring Libraries' Strategy set out our ambition for Hertfordshire Library Service to be ambitious in its use of technology and digital solutions to improve service delivery, to support digital inclusion, and to empower citizens.
- 5.3.2 At Watford and Hemel Hempstead Libraries, CreatorSpace provides opportunities for library users and community groups to be inspired and to explore cutting-edge technologies and develop new skills in coding and digital making in a safe and supportive environment. Over the next three years we will seek opportunities to develop this concept and extend access to CreatorSpace technology to other Tier 1 Libraries.

- 5.3.3 LibraryLink– our video link between libraries – enables customers and volunteers in Community Libraries to summon immediate assistance from trained library staff, by linking a large user-friendly touchscreen tablet in the library to a ‘receiving’ tablet based with the Enquiry Team in Welwyn Garden City Library. In the next phase of ‘Inspiring Libraries’, our ambition is to extend the use of LibraryLink to support the extension of self-service access across Tier1 and Tier 2 Libraries.
- 5.3.4 Hertfordshire Libraries have provided public access to desktop computers for more than twenty years, enabling and supporting many residents to take their first steps into the digital world. Whilst there is still considerable demand for this service, the trend is for an increasing number of library users to bring their own laptops, tablets and smartphones into the library. We will review our model for providing public access to ICT with a view to reducing the number of desktop PCs in favour of Wi-Fi enabled study spaces.
- 5.3.5 Visits to online library services – the online catalogue, renewals, reservations, the eLibrary and the Online Reference Library - now account for 36% of all library visits in Hertfordshire, and 220,000 e-books were borrowed last year. We will continue to develop and promote our digital offer, including extending the use of social media and low cost online advertising to promote library services.
- 5.3.6 Technology has changed the face of public libraries over the last ten years, and the pace of change is such that this is certain to continue. In order to thrive in the future, it is essential that Hertfordshire Library Service should continue to review and evaluate technological innovations to improve the service – in particular, the ambition of the national Libraries Taskforce to create a digital platform for public libraries to enable a greater degree of personalisation and co-operation between library users across the country.

#### **5.4 Maintaining service delivery**

- 5.4.1 The Inspiring Libraries Strategy supports all four of the ambitions of Hertfordshire’s Corporate Plan 2017-2021, offering residents opportunities to thrive, to prosper, to stay healthy and safe, and to participate in the life of their communities.
- 5.4.2 [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021](#), published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in December 2016, and endorsed by the Local Government Association, sets out a vision for public library services in England. It describes how modern public library services contribute to 7 Outcomes that are critical to individuals and communities. Hertfordshire Libraries have a strong record of delivery against these outcomes:
- 5.4.3 **Reading and Literacy** – More than 20,000 children participate in the annual Summer Reading Challenge. 98% of Hertfordshire babies receive a Bookstart pack through the library service. Hertfordshire Libraries support more than 450 reading groups across the county.
- 5.4.4 **Digital Access and Literacy** - All Hertfordshire Libraries offer self-service public access to computers and printing, including Wi-Fi printing. All Tier 1 and Tier 2 Libraries offer tablet taster sessions for people who lack skills and confidence in using ICT. 78 volunteer IT champions are available to assist members of the public in accessing digital services.

- 5.4.5 **Learning** - CreatorSpace and coding clubs enable people to develop new skills in a supportive environment. Libraries offer guided class visits for reception and year 6 classes to introduce children to the service. Libraries provide access to online courses and learning resources, including academic journal articles through 'Access to Research'. Tier 1 and Tier 2 libraries provide valuable study space for students.
- 5.4.6 **Health and Wellbeing** - Our Reading Well: Books on Prescription collections offer medically approved titles to help people suffering from long term conditions and mental health problems to manage their conditions. Reminiscence collections support dementia sufferers and their carers. Libraries provide venues for health events and promotions.
- 5.4.7 **Prosperity** – The Business Information service at Welwyn Garden City Library offers access to company information, market research and British Standards. Tier 1 Libraries offer access to online business advice for SMEs. Scam awareness sessions in libraries help vulnerable people to protect themselves from online fraud.
- 5.4.8 **Cultural and Creative Enrichment** – Hertfordshire's annual LitFest offers a programme of more than 40 author talks and library events for adults and children. Libraries provide venues for cultural activities from theatre to 'knit and natter' groups. The Performing Arts Service loans music scores and play scripts to choirs, orchestras, music and drama groups across the county.
- 5.4.9 **Stronger, More Resilient Communities** – Each Tier 1 and Tier 2 library has a dedicated Library Manager to lead the library team and act as 'the face of the library' in the local community, engaging with partners and stakeholders to help to embed libraries as local community hubs. Libraries offer space for community groups and activities, such as PCSO desks, Slipper Swaps and Councillor surgeries. Services such as the Home Library Service, Carer's Cards and 'Borrowing without taking' for homeless people help to combat social exclusion and isolation.
- 5.4.10 Over the next three years, we will strive to ensure that Hertfordshire Libraries can continue to support these local and national agendas, enabling citizens of all ages to help themselves in order to prevent the need for expensive public sector interventions at a later date. We will achieve this through our workforce of skilled and trained library staff, supported, where appropriate by volunteers from the local community.
- 5.4.11 The transition of the 16 Tier 3 Libraries into Community Libraries, managed in partnership with local communities, is progressing, but is unlikely to be completed in the current financial year. This programme will be reviewed in March 2018, with a view to completing the roll-out in 2018-19.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The last £500,000 of the £2.5 million in revenue savings identified in the original 'Inspiring Libraries' documentation will be achieved by completing the planned withdrawal of staff from the Tier 3 libraries as they become Community Libraries.
- 6.2 In order to achieve an additional £500,000 saving in the annual libraries revenue budget without significantly reducing the quality of the service, it will be necessary to explore a new model for service delivery. This is addressed in the accompanying paper – 'An Alternative Delivery Model for Hertfordshire Libraries'.

- 6.3 Many of the changes, which save money, will continue to require capital investment to modernise the service.
- Around £2 million in Section 106 funding is currently available around the county for the improvement of library services. This will be used wherever it is available to finance the improvement of library buildings and the roll-out of swipe card access.
  - Further capital funding of £2.15 million over the next two years has been identified to support the continuing modernisation of library buildings and technology, where Section 106 funding is not available or not admissible.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered, the equality implications of the decision that they are making.
- 7.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 7.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.4 An overarching Equalities Impact Assessment for the next phase of the 'Inspiring Libraries' Strategy is included as Appendix 1. This document indicates possible areas of differential impact on groups with protected characteristics, and measures taken to mitigate this. It also sets out where further information gathering is required to identify potential impacts, and where additional EqIAs may be required for specific aspects of the Strategy as implementation proceeds.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Equalities Impact Assessment – Appendix 1

## **9. Background papers**

- [Inspiring Libraries: A new strategy for Hertfordshire Library Service 2014-2024](#) (July 2014)
- [Delivering the Inspiring Libraries Strategy](#) ( September 2014)
- [Delivering the Inspiring Libraries Strategy – Revised Proposals Following Public Consultation](#) (February 2015)
- [Inspiring Libraries Strategy - Implementation](#) (March 2015)
- [Inspiring Libraries – Report of the Scrutiny Topic Group](#) (March 2017)

- [Inspiring Libraries Strategy – Implementation Update](#) (June 2017)