

Libraries and Heritage Services	
Title of Report	Results of the 'Inspiring Libraries 2018-2021' Public Consultation
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Summary of feedback

In response to the question 'Which of the following statements best describes your response to our ambitions for the next phase of 'Inspiring Libraries':

- 67.2% either agreed or strongly agreed
- 13.1% either disagreed or strongly disagreed

In response to the question 'Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about our proposal to establish an alternative delivery model for the library service in Hertfordshire?'

- 30.9% either agreed or strongly agreed
- 41.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 27.4% either didn't know or expressed no preference

For those who agreed with the proposal, the main reasons given were as follows:

- An alternative delivery model appears to be the best way to maintain the current service within a reduced budget (around 26% of comments)
- It would provide new opportunities for the service (around 16% of comments)

For those who disagreed with the proposal, the main reasons given were as follows:

- Against the outsourcing council services on principle (around 71% of comments)
- Opposed any changes in the current library service (around 40% of comments)
- Opposed to outsourcing to a profit-making organisation (around 28% of comments)
- An alternative delivery model would inevitably lead to a reduction in service quality (around 19% of comments).
- Opposed to any further reductions in library funding (around 13% of comments).

In response to the question 'If you agree that Hertfordshire should adopt an alternative delivery model for library services, which model would you prefer? , 53.9% expressed a preference for a Public Service Mutual.

1. Purpose of the report

To publish the results of the public consultation on the next phase of the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy and the proposal to develop an alternative delivery model for library services in Hertfordshire.

2. Background

2.1 In November 2017. Cabinet agreed ambitions and priorities for the next phase of the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy from April 2018 onwards, including:

- Improving library buildings
- Extending access to library services

- Developing technology
 - Maintaining service delivery to contribute to the seven key outcomes identified in the national 'Libraries Deliver' document and the Corporate Plan priorities.
- 2.2 Ongoing pressures on the County Council budget mean that the library service is now required to make a further reduction of £500,000 in the annual revenue budget by 2019/20, over and above the £2.5 million in revenue savings already identified from the original 'Inspiring Libraries' proposals.
- 2.3 When the 'Inspiring Libraries' Strategy was first adopted by Cabinet in 2014, it included the provision that "the service will also consider the best operating models to deliver the strategy within a reduced budget."
- 2.4 [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021](#), published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2016, challenges local authorities "to explore alternative forms of delivery and financing for library services before making any reductions in library services.
- 2.5 In November 2017, Cabinet agreed that:
- A multi-disciplinary working group be established to further explore the business case and governance for establishing an alternative delivery model for Hertfordshire Libraries, including representatives from Legal Services, Finance and HR.
 - An application should be made to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Mutuals Team for free professional support and advice to inform this work.
 - A consultation document should be published on the principle of creating an alternative delivery model for Hertfordshire Libraries in order to seek feedback on the idea from customers, partners, stakeholders, library staff and volunteers.
 - This work should inform a further paper to be presented to the Education, Libraries and Localism Panel and to Cabinet in the spring of 2018, when a decision will be taken on whether to adopt an alternative delivery model.

3. Consultation methodology

3.1 Consultation period

The consultation ran for six weeks from 8th January to 18th February 2018.

Due to an administrative error, the online consultation was switched off at 12 noon on 18th February rather than 12 midnight. When this error was notified, the consultation was reopened for a further three days until midnight on 21st February 2018.

3.2 Consultation document and questionnaire

The consultation document and questionnaire was made available online on the www.hertfordshire.gov.uk website, and printed copies were made available in all Hertfordshire libraries and distributed to Home Library Service customers. An Easy Read version of the questionnaire was developed for people with learning disabilities, and a Large Print version was produced for people with visual impairments.

The questionnaire contained a mixture of options to select and free text boxes to capture respondents' comments. The consultation document is included as Appendix A.

3.3 Promotion of the consultation

The consultation was promoted by library staff and by displays in every library, and posters and flyers distributed to other community venues. HCC Corporate Communications issued press releases publicising the consultation, which resulted in extensive coverage in the local press.

Social media (Facebook and Twitter) channels were used throughout the period to maintain awareness of the consultation, and it was also promoted in the library e-newsletter in January and February. The consultation featured prominently on the Libraries and Heritage Services and Consultation pages of the council website throughout the six week period. Social media was also used to publicise the extension to the online consultation.

The consultation document was e-mailed or posted to over 350 stakeholder groups (including borough, town and parish councils, community library volunteer groups, partners and other local societies and organisations) inviting them to comment on the proposals and asking them to publicise it through their networks.

4. Campaigns and petitions

During the consultation period, a petition was launched in Berkhamsted under the heading ‘Don’t Privatise Berkhamsted Library’. The wording is as follows:
That Hertfordshire Council abandon any proposals to privatise the services of Berkhamsted library. A library is a public asset. It should never be a business for a private company to make profit. The current consultation is flawed and the council must never sell off our library.

This petition does not close until 31 March 2018, but by the end of February it had attracted 438 signatures.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

5. Response rate

In total, we received **2,060** responses to the consultation. There were 2,052 completed questionnaires (1,430 online, 619 on paper, and 3 Easy Read versions).

Thirty questionnaires stated that they had been completed on behalf of organisations, including seven District and Parish Councils. In addition, eight Parish Councils chose to submit their views in writing, rather than using the questionnaire. All this feedback has been included in the analysis

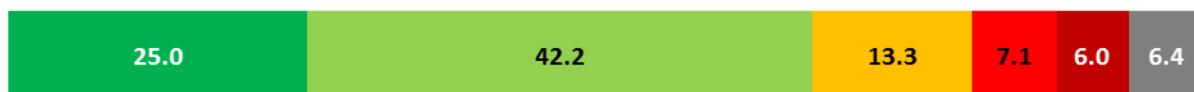
6. Ambitions for ‘Inspiring Libraries’

The first part of the questionnaire invited respondents to give their views on our ambitions for the next phase of the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ strategy, as set out in the consultation document

6.1 Question 1

Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about these ambitions?

The results show strong agreement with the ambitions of ‘Inspiring Libraries’, with 67.2% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 13.1% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.



The full breakdown of responses was as follows:

Response	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	513	25.0%
Agree	866	42.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	274	13.3%
Disagree	145	7.1%
Strongly disagree	123	6.0%
Don't know	49	2.4%
No response	82	4.0%

6.2 Question 2

Do you have any further comments about our ambitions? Is there anything missing? If there are any other services that you would like to see delivered in Hertfordshire libraries, please tell us here.

1171 respondents answered this question. There was a wide variety of comments, many of which related to very specific or local issues, but some common themes emerged.

Community asset

Around 10% of all comments referred to the importance of libraries as local community resources, and hubs for local services and activities. This view was particularly marked among those who supported the ambitions of the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ strategy.

- *“The library is very valuable to our Community as it provides a great source of information and support to all age groups.”*
- *“The libraries are important community hubs. They are especially important for those with young children, disabilities and the elderly. Don’t change them too much as they are a lifeline for some people”.*

Books and information

Around 10% of all comments referred to the continuing importance of libraries as sources of books and information. This comment was common to those who agreed with the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ ambitions and those who disagreed. Those who disagreed felt that insufficient emphasis had been placed on this aspect of the service in ‘Inspiring Libraries’

- *“There is no point in looking at alternative delivery models, longer hours and improving premises when all the time there are fewer and fewer books of poorer quality available.”*
- *“I would have liked to see the word ‘book’ in there. While I am a great fan of digital information and enjoy a lot of my reading on a Kindle, books are still a key part of what I expect a library service to provide.”*

Opening hours

Around 13% of all comments referred to the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ ambition to increase library opening hours by extending the availability of self-service access. The majority of these comments welcomed this move as a way of extending access to the service beyond core hours. However a significant minority (around a third) expressed opposition to the principle of swipe-card access to library buildings.

- *“Important to have libraries open at some times during evenings and weekends even if this requires some volunteer help during quiet periods in the week”.*

- *“I have used a library in Denmark with swipe-card access, unattended, and was pleasantly surprised at how easy and secure the visit was (with a Danish resident). It made perfect sense because all the investment in books etc. is made to 'work harder' for the residents who can access it any time day or night”.*
- *“I agree with the main aims e.g. longer hours. I do not agree with some of the proposed implementation e.g. self-service swipe systems are not a substitute or a satisfactory complement to staffed library hours”.*
- *“Swipe card access to busy libraries is a dreadful idea. If you can't staff the library, don't open it”.*

No change to services

Around 9% of all comments expressed opposition to any significant changes to existing library services. This was the most commonly expressed view among those who disagreed with the 'Inspiring Libraries' ambitions.

- *“Your 'Ambitions?' What is ambitious about them? Plans for destruction more like”.*
- *“I have used Hertfordshire Libraries since at least 1945 and they have always served me well. As with many things these days, leave well alone, progress is not always good”.*

Value of libraries in society

Around 9% of all comments referred to the wider value of public libraries in society through support for learning, literacy, health and wellbeing etc.

- *“I feel like the word learning or education could be added to the last ambition about being a gateway to reading, information and wellbeing.”*
- *“I would like to see a commitment to raising the standards of literacy and a clear ambition to improve/aid the education of the users. This would mean more explicit commitment to online education and a better range of physical books beyond simply popular”.*

Value of library staff

Around 8% of all comments referred to the expertise and helpfulness of library staff, and the important contribution this made to the quality of the service. This was often expressed in opposition to the increasing use of volunteers to support library services, particularly among those who disagreed with the 'Inspiring Libraries' ambitions.

- *“You are exploiting the goodwill of volunteers and expect volunteers to do everything instead of paying and rewarding staff”.*
- *“Libraries require qualified librarians to be run efficiently and effectively, it requires an accredited professional qualification - not volunteers!”*
- *“Investing in video links between libraries is not a substitute for library staff being able to meet, share professional good practice and then advise members of the public”.*

Online and digital services

Around 7% of all comments referred to the increased provision of online and digital services, including the loan of e-books. The great majority of these comments were positive, but some felt that the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy placed too great an emphasis on technology, and there was some criticism of the quality of the IT provided in libraries.

- *“The improvements over the last few years with regard to digital services and availability of periodicals have reinvigorated my interest in the library system as a whole.”*

- *“Improving the speed of wifi access in libraries and improving the computer equipment so it is faster”*

Increasing income and saving money

Around 7% of all comments referred to ideas for generating income for the service, or for saving money.

- *“You should be rationalising premises - I live in Ware and I would prefer to travel to Hertford if it were a better library. Why keep small ones in places like Cuffley, Goffs Oak”*
- *“One Stop Shop occupation that pays for having its office on library location.”*
- *“Putting in a coffee and cake shop within the library as a secondary funding source would be useful too”*
- *“Maybe the library should introduce a nominal membership fee, £2-3 pound a year. I'm sure the public is willing to pay that amount if it means to save the library. Also it will reduce the number of dormant accounts that the library needs to maintain in the system hence reduce maintenance cost.”*

Library buildings

Around 7% of all comments referred to the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ ambition to improve library buildings. The great majority of these comments were positive, with some praising the improvements that had been made in Hertfordshire libraries in recent years.

- *“More community hubs so people can access a variety of services which would then be mutually supportive.”*
- *“I like ideas about including other community type needs alongside provision of books etc. in library buildings; also creating a sort of social atmosphere - a place to meet with toys, coffee shop, etc. Also a source of information for other aspects of government and council services: a sort of ‘one stop shop’”.*
- *“Within the building there needs to be adequate space for seating, perusing, access to computer terminals etc”.*

Safe, inclusive public space

Around 6% of all comments referred to the value of libraries as safe, inclusive, accessible or non-judgemental public spaces open to everybody. All these comments were made by people who supported the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ ambitions.

- *“The library was formed to give free access to books & information, it now provides free access to computers, it is a ‘safe’ space for adults, females, teens, families & the elderly”.*
- *“Libraries remain an essential part of the fabric of our local communities.”*

7. An alternative delivery model

The second part of the questionnaire invited respondents to give their views on the proposal to establish an alternative delivery model for the delivery of library services.

7.1 Question 3

Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about our proposal to establish an alternative delivery model for the library service in Hertfordshire?.

The results show a range of views. 30.9% of respondents either strongly agreed, or agreed with the proposal; 41.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed; the remaining 27.4% either didn't know or expressed no preference. It is notable that those who disagreed with the proposal felt more strongly than those who agreed, with 23.5% strongly disagreeing.



The full breakdown of responses was as follows:

Response	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	143	7.0%
Agree	491	23.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	401	19.5%
Disagree	372	18.1%
Strongly disagree	483	23.5%
Don't know	80	3.9%
No response	82	4.0%

7.2 Question 4

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

1595 respondents went on to make specific comments. The themes of these comments reflected the spread of views expressed in response to question 3.

There were 461 comments from respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.

Best way to maintain services

Around 26% of these comments expressed the view that an alternative delivery model appeared to be the best way to maintain the current quality of library services within a reduced budget.

- *“Remaining part of the county council may lead to further budget cuts and potential closure of library services”*
- *“Budgets are challenged and the options proposed would all provide for communities to still influence and shape their local services. I like several of the options including the charitable option and the trading company.”*
- *“Libraries are a vital community facility for all sorts of reasons and many people would suffer if they are lost. An alternative delivery method appears to be the best way to*

preserve the library service.”

- *“If this change allows more key services of health and education to be the focus whilst libraries become self-managing, under direction of the Council, I feel this would be beneficial. I also feel allowing members of the community to join libraries as charity board members would be of benefit and help cement the libraries within the community.”*

Support with caveats

Around 20% of these comments expressed a similar view with a slightly different emphasis – that they supported the proposal for an alternative delivery model as long as this did not lead to a reduction in the quality of services.

- *“Given the financial constraints, I find myself reluctantly agreeing it should be seriously considered. It is unfortunate that Library funding cannot be ring-fenced”*
- *“If an alternative model avoids the need for cuts in the budget for libraries, and means that services will at least be maintained, then an alternative is worth considering.”*

Opportunities

Around 16% of these comments referred to the new opportunities for the service that an alternative delivery model may bring.

- *“To allow for pooling of resources and the potential development in new sources of income and to set the library service at the centre of community development”*
- *“An organisation that just focuses on the library service will hopefully provide a better service tailored to local users’ requirements.”*
- *“If executed properly, the benefits could be numerous. Care must be taken to learn from other attempts at alternative models across the UK. York for instance has an independent library service now”*
- *“I feel more partnership working is crucial with people who have a keen interest in the library provision. This will benefit the service users and help to expand on how the service is currently being delivered. Outside agencies will invest money, time and resource to make the library more accessible and develop services to meet the needs of the service users on a long term basis.”*

There were 359 comments from respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the alternative delivery model proposal, or said they didn’t know.

Need more information

The most commonly expressed view in this group, accounting for around 23% of their comments, was that they felt they had insufficient information at this stage, or that there were too many variables and uncertainties around potential alternative delivery models to enable them to make an informed choice. Their primary concern was to maintain the quality of the library service.

- *“I don’t believe I know enough to agree or disagree with the proposal. If pursuing it would enable the libraries to be more sustainable and increase their opening hours, services, and provisions then I would support it. If it would have the opposite effect, then I would not.”*
- *It all depends where you wish to find the savings. No doubt the £500k savings could be found from elsewhere if there is a political desire to do so. If it has to come from Libraries then your proposals are certainly an option worth exploring but clearly bring their own risks. I am also not certain that the ability to attract external grants will in reality materialise.*

There were 766 comments from respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal.

Opposed to the principle of outsourcing

By far the most frequently expressed view from this group (reflected in around 71% of their comments) was that they were opposed to the principle of outsourcing public services.

- *“Privatisation is not the answer - look at how the cost of the Railways, Electricity, Gas, etc, have gone up and up the pay of the bosses risen exponentially.”*
- *“We've seen failures of outsourcing across the country and impact on a variety of services - including costs - in health, education etc, and most recently with the Carillion disaster. We do not need any more.”*
- *“Provision of services cannot be outsourced - see what has happened with Carillion”*
- *“In principle I think libraries should be run by the council and this is part of what we pay our council tax for. They are a vital resource for the community - used by people of all ages and backgrounds.”*

No change to current library service

Around 40% of comments from this group expressed opposition to any change in the way the library service is currently delivered. Some of these comments related the alternative delivery model and the use of volunteers to support community libraries.

- *“Our public libraries are one of our MOST important assets and should remain just that - ours and public.”*
- *“Stop trying to get volunteers and 3rd parties to do the job you are paid to do. It's not difficult, just get on with it”*
- *“Libraries provide a crucial service and increasingly a strong community service which is scarce as local authority cuts continue and worsen. There is no serious benefit in changing the model and it will have negative impact on generations to come.”*
- *“Why fix something if it is not broken? This questionnaire is simply a means of testing the waters because the council want to implement cuts. The library is exactly right the way it is. Leave it alone.”*

Opposed to outsourcing to a profit making organisation

Around 28% of comments from this group expressed opposition to any model that would outsource the delivery of the library service to a profit-making organisation. Many felt that this would be incompatible with the public library ethos. Many specifically mentioned the example of Carillion, which had collapsed during the course of the consultation.

- *“I feel that libraries should remain part of the government/council services for the population. I very strongly do not want libraries to be tendered out to a for-profit company, as it would ultimately lead to profit being the main focus, which would detract from the real purpose of libraries as very important community resource.”*
- *“Libraries should be a public service owned & funded by the public. If an alternative is chosen - which is probably inevitable, it should not be outsourced to a third party.”*
- *“The private sector must not be allowed in. (look at Carillion).”*

Reduction in quality of service

Around 19% of comments from this group expressed the fear that an alternative delivery model would inevitably lead to a reduction in the quality of library services in Hertfordshire.

- *“This looks like an attempt to remove the ownership and running of libraries from being council responsibility so that paid staff will have to accept lower wages and pension provisions and assets sold off. The council can then continue to reduce the budget each year without having to take responsibility or blame for the ensuing cuts in service.”*
- *“Herts libraries offer a fantastic service. The various privatisation options will all dilute and eventually destroy this service in the name of efficiency and saving money.”*

No reductions in library funding

Around 13% of comments from this group rejected the proposal on the grounds of opposition to any further reductions in the library service budget.

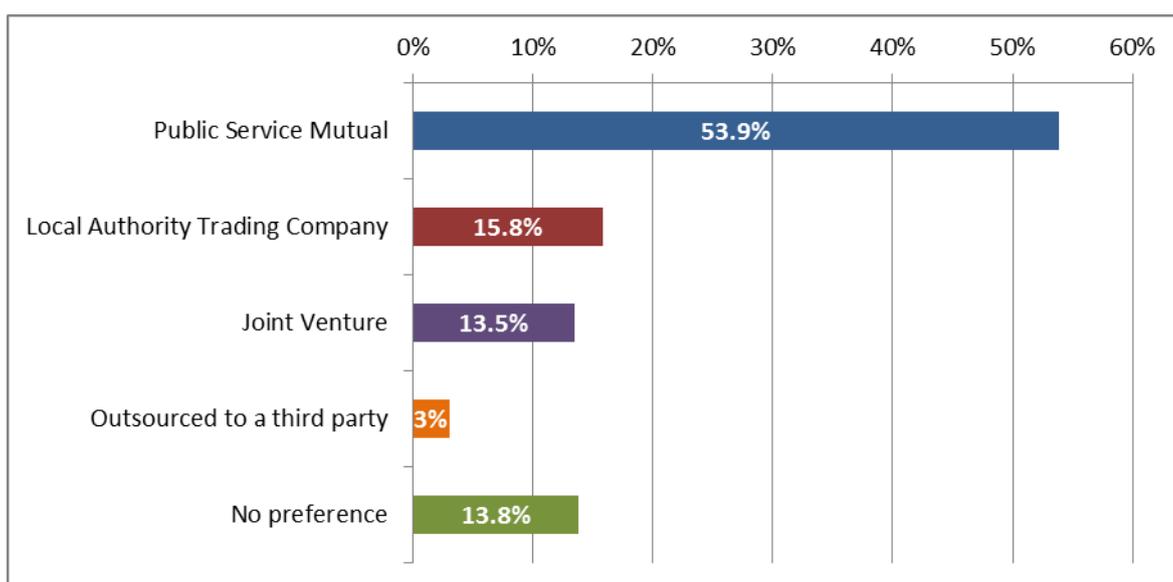
- *“I fail to see how spinning off the underfunded local libraries into underfunded independent vehicles will solve the problem -- they're still underfunded.”*
- *“Libraries remain an essential part of the fabric of our local communities. They should be given priority. Your ambitions sound good, but expecting the libraries to find a further £500K on top of huge savings already made is not reasonable.”*

8. Feedback on types of alternative delivery model

8.1 Question 5

If you agree that Hertfordshire should adopt an alternative delivery model for library services, which model would you prefer?

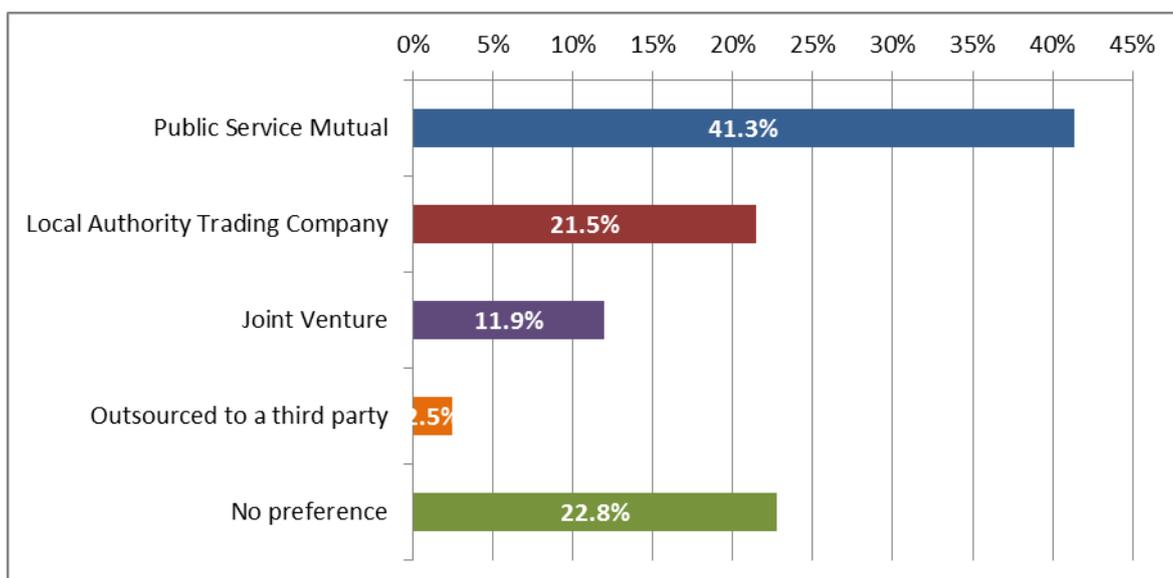
609 respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to adopt an alternative delivery model for library services went on to answer this question. The clear majority of responses expressed a preference for a Public Service Mutual.



The full breakdown of responses was as follows::

Response	Number	Percentage
Public Service Mutual	328	53.9%
Local Authority Trading Company	96	15.8%
Joint Venture	82	13.5%
Outsourced to a third party	19	3.1%
No preference	84	13.8%

However, a large number of respondents (731) who had disagreed with the alternative delivery model proposal in Question 3, or expressed no preference, went on to answer Question 5 in any case. If these views are taken into account, then the Public Service Mutual is still clearly the most popular option, but there is a stronger showing for the Local Authority Trading Company, reflecting the fact that this option retains the greatest level of control for the County Council, and most of these respondents' first preference would be for the service to be retained in-house.



The full breakdown of responses was as follows:

Response	Number	Percentage
Public Service Mutual	554	41.3%
Local Authority Trading Company	288	21.5%
Joint Venture	160	11.8%
Outsourced to a third party	33	2.5%
No preference	305	22.8%

8.2 Question 6

Please let us know the reasons for your choice.

Public Service Mutual

461 respondents who expressed a preference for a Public Service Mutual went on to make specific comments in answer to this question:

Best fit for the library service

Around 35% of the comments from this group expressed the view that a Public Service Mutual appeared to be the 'best fit' for the library service.

- *“A public service mutual would offer the best opportunity to deliver 'Inspiring Libraries' and maintain services with minimum risk of detrimental changes to the current service. It appears to offer more flexibility than the other options.”*
- *“More independence while retaining public service ethos”.*
- *“I suspect that such a body would have greater potential than any of the other options to provide an innovative and interesting solution to the problems facing libraries nowadays.”*

Not for profit

Around 22% of comments from this group referred to the fact that a Public Service Mutual is a not-for-profit organisation that would invest any surplus back into the service.

- *“I am totally opposed to any form of outsourcing to the private sector either entirely or as a joint venture. The dangers of this have been amply demonstrated in recent times. It is unlikely much, if any, income would be re-invested in the service.”*
- *“I wouldn't want a commercial company taking over the library service as that may lead to decisions being made for financial reasons rather than in the interest of the community.”*
- *“I am against outsourcing to a third party or any joint venture including a third party because precious funds would be diverted to boost the profitability of those parties.”*

County Council influence

Around 15% felt that it would allow the County Council to retain a fair degree of influence over service provision.

- *“I don't agree with the alternative model proposed. If there has to be one then keeping a very close contact with the council is appropriate as is the not-for-profit status”*
- *“I like the idea of the Public Service Mutual or Joint Venture models as I think they give greater flexibility over services to respond to trends in customer requirements and also embed the library in its community. I would like to ensure that the governance of libraries remains with the County Council as they have all the necessary expertise and regulations in place.”*

Community input

Around 13% of comments from this group expressed the view that a Public Service Mutual would allow the library service to remain rooted in the local community.

- *“Public Service Mutual would be my choice if keeping the service in-house is not the approved option. This option seems the closest to providing for the needs of the community.”*

- *“Ownership” increases commitment and prompts increased usage if members of community get involved. Where facilities are provided, there is a danger of taking things for granted and low usage may ensue. A library should be a vibrant community hub, vital for young and old alike, singles and marrieds, those facing transition/bereavement change of life circumstances.”*

New opportunities

Around 11% felt that a Public Service Mutual would offer new opportunities for the future development of the service.

- *“I feel option B (Public Service Mutual) offers more opportunities to expand the library and its provision. It will provide the best opportunity to work in partnership with a range of people from community involvement, investments from other people and working with libraries outside of Hertfordshire.”*

Financial viability

Around 11% felt that a Public Service Mutual would be the most viable option financially.

- *“Given financial constraints of Local Government the ability of the library to be able to enter into additional contracts outside HCC should be seen to be beneficial. By choosing a PSM which has charitable status it will be able to access charitable grants.”*

Local Authority Trading Company

214 people who expressed a preference for a Local Authority Trading Company went on to give the reasons for their choice. The principal reason given was that in this model, the County Council retains a greater degree of direct control.

- *“While I think getting local communities more involved in the running of local libraries is a positive step, it is important that the council is still held account for the provision of services. It is not clear how this can be achieved with the other models.”*
- *“More control, less risky, probably most experienced staff and management.”*
- *“Likely to be better regulated, accountable and wholly transparent model.”*
- *“Because there would still be some democratic accountability”*

9. Response from organisations

There was strong agreement with the ambitions of the Inspiring Libraries strategy amongst the organisations that responded; recognising the value of libraries in society, the services offered and the importance of these to their town or parish and Hertfordshire communities more widely, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups .

Many did not comment directly on whether or not they supported the proposal to adopt an alternative delivery model but expressed their concern regarding further cuts to the library service budget and their opposition to any reduction in library services, paid staffing, opening hours or buildings.

Where there was comment, some expressed concern or caution about adopting an alternative delivery model and the risks to the standard of the service, but there was a clear preference for any alternative delivery model to be not for profit, charitable or mutual.

The majority preferences expressed directly were for a Public Service Mutual or a Joint Venture, with the latter preference more likely to be associated with comments on the opportunities for incorporation, collaboration and partnership working with other public and

local government services.

10. Conclusion

The consultation attracted 2060 responses. This is a considerably smaller number than previous 'Inspiring Libraries' consultations, but it is very much in line with expectations for a consultation about governance and delivery models, rather than changes to frontline services.

The results indicate the value that residents place on library services, and indicate a strong endorsement of the ambitions of the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy, with 67.2% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with these ambitions.

The results indicate a spread of opinion regarding the adoption of an alternative delivery model for library services. More people (41.7%) disagreed with the proposal than agreed with it (30.9%), but the large number who expressed no preference (27.4%) meant that there was no majority either in favour or against the proposal. The principal concern for most respondents was maintaining the quality of the library service.

Most of those who agreed with the alternative delivery model proposal felt that it provided the best way of maintaining library services within a reduced budget. Some felt that it provided positive opportunities for the future development of the service.

Of those who disagreed with the proposal, many expressed opposition to the principle of outsourcing public services and did not want to see any change to the current delivery of library services. Some felt that an alternative delivery model would inevitably lead to a reduction in services, and some challenged the need for any further reductions in the libraries budget. There was particularly strong opposition to the outsourcing of the library service to a private company or profit-making organisation.

A clear majority of those who agreed with the proposal to adopt an alternative delivery model preferred the Public Service Mutual option.

11. Appendix A - Questionnaire

Foreword

Hertfordshire libraries are well used and highly valued by residents of all ages, and the County Council wants to see them thrive into the future. Over the last few years, through our 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy, we have continued to invest in the development and improvement of services, despite the constraints on funding for local government. This document includes examples of the range of services our libraries provide.

However, ongoing pressure on the County Council budget means that we have to consider further budget savings across all services. In order to achieve our ambitions for 'Inspiring Libraries' within a reduced budget, and put ourselves in the best position to grasp future opportunities, we need to identify the most appropriate way of managing the library services in the years ahead, and we welcome your views. You can help us by **reading this document and completing the attached questionnaire**. Your feedback will help council members to make a final decision in the spring of 2018.

Terry Douris, Executive Member for Education, Libraries and Localism

Inspiring Libraries

Hertfordshire County Council launched its 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy in 2014, following an extensive public consultation, which attracted more than 15,000 responses.

'Inspiring Libraries' aimed to set a vision and direction for the service over the next 10 years, 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.

Reading and Literacy

More than 21,000 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.

Our achievements

Since 2014, the implementation of 'Inspiring Libraries' has led to significant changes in the Library Service:

- Improvements to **library buildings**, including new libraries at Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, and major refurbishments at Watford, Hitchin, Abbots Langley and North Watford.
- Innovations in **technology**, including new CreatorSpaces at Watford and Hemel Hempstead offering library users and community groups the opportunity to explore a range of creative technologies from coding to 3D printing.
- Developments in **online services**, including the Library App, the loan of e-books and e-magazines, and the use of social media to promote the 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, with plans to roll-out to a further eleven communities.
- Expansion of the **Home Library Service** for people with disabilities and mobility difficulties and their carers, when the mobile library service was withdrawn.

Library Usage

Usage figures demonstrate the continuing popularity of library services, with the total number of library visits increasing by 10% since 2014.

Figures in thousands

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Physical visits	3,832	3,842	3,665	3,574
Online visits	1,279	1,549	2,045	2,055
Total Visits	5,111	5,391	5,710	5,629

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

Our ambitions

Over the next three years, from 2018 to 2021, we want to build on these achievements in the next phase of the Inspiring Libraries strategy:

- **Improving library buildings**
Our ambition is for Hertfordshire library buildings to be bright, attractive, welcoming, flexible, tech-enabled spaces in convenient locations. To achieve this, we aim to continue our programme of investment in the improvement of library buildings.

- **Extending access**

Our ambition is for Hertfordshire libraries to be open to residents for longer hours. To achieve this, we aim to seek opportunities to introduce swipe-card access and other self-service options in our 30 busiest libraries in order to extend access to the service beyond core staffed hours.

- **Developing technology**

Our ambition is to use technology and digital solutions to improve service delivery, to support digital inclusion, and to empower citizens. To achieve this, we aim to extend access to CreatorSpace technology to all our largest libraries, and to develop LibraryLink – our video link between libraries – to provide professional support for self-service access and volunteer-supervised libraries.

- **Maintaining service delivery**

Our ambition is to ensure that Hertfordshire libraries continue to provide a range of services to support reading, learning, access to information, digital literacy, health and wellbeing, cultural enrichment and participation in community life. We will achieve this through our workforce of skilled and trained library staff, supported, where appropriate by local volunteers.

Digital Access and Literacy

All Hertfordshire libraries offer self-service public access to computers and printing, including Wi-Fi printing. Our larger libraries offer tablet taster sessions for people who lack skills and confidence in using technology. 88 volunteer IT champions are available to assist members of the public in accessing digital services.

The financial challenge

Due to ongoing reductions in national funding for local government, and increasing demand for key services such as social care, the County Council budget has been under great pressure over the last few years.

The implementation of the Inspiring Libraries strategy was expected to achieve £2.5 million in savings from the annual revenue budget for Libraries over a three year period. More than £2 million has already been saved, and the remainder will be achieved through the roll-out of volunteer-partnered community libraries in smaller communities.

However, continuing pressure on funding for public services means that the County Council needs to find new ways to deliver more flexible and cost-effective library services in order to find an additional £500,000 in annual budget savings, over and above those already identified, by 2019/20.

Health and Wellbeing

Our Reading Well: Books on Prescription collections offer medically approved titles to help people suffering from long term illness and mental health problems to manage their conditions. Reminiscence collections support dementia sufferers and their carers. Libraries provide venues for health events and promotions.

An alternative delivery model?

[‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition for the Public Libraries in England 2016-2021’](#), published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2016, and endorsed by the Local Government Association, challenges local authorities “to explore alternative forms of delivery and financing for library services before making any reductions in library services.” In Hertfordshire, we now need to consider the best operating model to achieve the ambitions of the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ strategy within a reduced budget.

There are a number of local authorities, similar to Hertfordshire, which have successfully created independent, not for profit organisations with charitable status to deliver library services under contract to the County Council; for example:

- Suffolk Libraries
- Libraries Unlimited South West (Devon)
- Inspire Nottinghamshire

The County Council believes that an alternative delivery model could be a bold and positive way forward – an expression of confidence in the future of the library service and the ‘Inspiring Libraries’ strategy in challenging times.

Potential benefits

Delivery of library services through an alternative delivery model may:

- Enable the service to be more flexible and responsive, as it would be independent from the County Council, with a clear single focus on libraries.
- Enable the library service to access grants and alternative sources of funding that would not be available to the County Council.
- Enable the service to make some immediate savings in rates relief, and potentially some further long-term savings in overheads and administration costs.
- Allow the service to work more easily with partners across county borders, which could potentially bring efficiencies.
- Help to root the service in the communities it serves, by including community seats on the governing body.
- Enable the service to be more innovative, and respond more rapidly to market opportunities and changes in customer demand.
- Enable the service to develop more commercial behaviours and to take advantage of sponsorship and closer working with businesses.

If the decision is taken not to pursue an alternative delivery model, then the County Council will have to consider other options for making £500,000 savings from the Libraries budget.

Types of alternative delivery model

There are a number of different ways of organising and delivering library services, which are summarised in the [Alternative Delivery Models Toolkit](#), published by the DCMS in March 2017. These include:

- Keeping the service in-house – run by the County Council.
- Operating the service through a Local Authority Trading Company.
- Transferring the service to a Public Service Mutual – a not for profit organisation, created and commissioned by the County Council to run the service.
- Outsourcing the service to a third party – an independent organisation or business.
- Operating the service through a joint venture – a partnership between the County Council and a third party organisation.

Appendix A provides a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each option, based on the DCMS Toolkit.

Next steps

Over the next few months we will be further exploring the pros and cons of creating an alternative delivery model for Hertfordshire Libraries, including the costs of establishing an alternative organisation, the business case and the governance arrangements.

Your views will form an important part of this work.

This exploratory work and feedback from this consultation exercise will enable the County Council to make a final decision on whether to adopt an alternative delivery model in the spring of 2018. If the decision is to go ahead, then a timetable will be set out with a view to launching the new organisation in 2019.

Appendix A

Options' advantages and disadvantages (based on Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 'Alternative Delivery Models Toolkit' – March 2017)

Option	Ownership	Governance	Services	Advantages	Disadvantages
Retain service in-house	100% county council	Within county council	Local public sector services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No set up costs • Full county council control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No rates relief • Service reductions required to make budget saving • Limited opportunity for new funding streams • No added flexibility
Local Authority Trading Company	100% county council	Designed for flexibility/autonomy Council appointed Board. Service level agreement (SLA) with county council.	Flexible, but most services delivered on behalf of county council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No procurement • Full county council control • Added freedom to pursue commercial opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up costs • Limited opportunity for new funding streams • Income from non-statutory service limited to 20% • Limited opportunities for community involvement • VAT and corporation tax liability
Public Service Mutual	Variety of options – county council/ community/ staff.	Designed as required Board membership dependent on ownership SLA/contract with county council.	Flexible – can deliver services to councils, private or voluntary and community sector customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community involvement • Opportunity to identify new funding streams • Most flexible model • Savings from rates relief • Opportunity for cross-border working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up costs • Need to disentangle central services – HR, IT, Property, Finance, etc. • VAT and corporation tax liability
Outsourced to Third Party	100% 3 rd party	Arranged under contract	Contracted services on behalf of county council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap into expertise of larger organisation • Increased purchasing power • Potential savings from economies of scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of poor performance • Risk that income is not reinvested in service • Need to disentangle central services – HR, IT, Property, Finance, etc. • Limited opportunity for community involvement • VAT and corporation tax liability
Joint venture	Potential for joint ownership	Designed as required SLA/contract with county	Flexible – can deliver services to councils, private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various from the list above, depending on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various from the list above, depending on the model

	- council and 3 rd party.	council	or voluntary and community sector customers.	model	
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Inspiring Libraries - the next phase: Consultation Questionnaire

Question 1

We set out our ambitions for the next phase of 'Inspiring Libraries' from page 2. Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about these ambitions? Do you: *(please tick ✓ one box)*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Question 2

Do you have any further comments about our ambitions? Is there anything missing? If there are any other services that you would like to see delivered in Hertfordshire libraries, please tell us here:

Question 3

Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about our proposal to establish an alternative delivery model for the library service in Hertfordshire? Do you: *(please tick ✓ one box)*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Question 4

Please let us know the reasons for your choice:

Question 5

If you agree that Hertfordshire should adopt an alternative delivery model for library services, which model would you prefer: *(please tick ✓ one box)*

- Local Authority Trading Company
- Public Service Mutual
- Outsourced to a third party
- Joint Venture
- No preference

Question 6

Please let us know the reasons for your choice:

Question 7

Are you completing this questionnaire as an individual or on behalf of a group/organisation (*please tick ✓ one box*)

- As an individual
- For an organisation

Please state your organisation:

About You

Equal Opportunities Form



This Equal Opportunities Form is confidential and anonymous. It does not ask about your name or address (apart from your postcode). When we receive the completed form, we keep this data separate from any other information that could link it to you. The information you give us will remain strictly confidential and will be used for monitoring purposes only, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Postcode							
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Age

Under 18	<input type="checkbox"/>	18 - 24	<input type="checkbox"/>	25 - 34	<input type="checkbox"/>	35 - 44	<input type="checkbox"/>	45 - 54	<input type="checkbox"/>
55 - 64	<input type="checkbox"/>	65 - 74	<input type="checkbox"/>	75 - 84	<input type="checkbox"/>	85 - 89	<input type="checkbox"/>	90+	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gender

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
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Ethnicity

<u>White</u> <input type="checkbox"/> British <input type="checkbox"/> Irish <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy or Irish Traveller <input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background	<u>Mixed</u> <input type="checkbox"/> White and Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> White and Black African <input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background	<u>Asian or Asian British</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background
<u>Black or Black British</u> <input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Any other black background	<u>Other Ethnic Group</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Arab <input type="checkbox"/> Any other ethnic background	<u>Prefer not to say</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	Do you have a caring responsibility for an adult and/or a child with a disability? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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**Please return your completed questionnaire to your local library by
Sunday 18 February 2018**