Delivering local solutions for public library services

A guide for councillors

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Foreword

Millions of people use libraries: in England alone public libraries were visited 225 million times in 2014/15 – more than visits to Premier League football games, the cinema, and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined.

Libraries are trusted spaces, free to enter and open to all. In them, people explore and share reading, information, knowledge and culture. We know that people value the range of books, digital and other resources available, as well as the trained staff who help them. But how people use libraries is changing. If we want our services to continue to be at the heart of communities for generations to come libraries must change as well.

'Libraries change lives for the better. They not only provide access to books and other literature but also help people to help themselves and improve their opportunities, bring people together, and provide practical support and guidance. As a locally accountable service, they are well-placed to respond to local needs and issues.'

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England, 2016-2021
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Written for all councillors who have an interest in supporting the development of public library services, this guide will take you through the how and why of transformation in your area. Whether you are a portfolio holder with responsibility for libraries and wider cultural services, or a ward councillor who has campaigned tirelessly to keep a local library open in a period of cost-cutting and rationalisation, it will set out ways in which you can ensure your library service excels and meets the needs of your communities.

In continuing to deliver the very best services libraries face unprecedented pressures in response to changing and increasing customer demand. Despite budget reductions and tight fiscal constraint, they have to demonstrate that they remain economic, efficient and effective and contribute to achieving important strategic corporate objectives. Old ways of working are being challenged and new models of service delivery are being developed. There has never been so much change and innovation within the library service.

Alongside this, many library services are seeing the enormous benefits that technological and digital innovation can bring – giving them opportunities to offer new services, bring in new customers and extend their reach into communities.

Beyond this, libraries are being seen increasingly as vital community hubs – bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to live better lives. As part of a 'Libraries First' approach, many councils recognise that library services are critical to the effective delivery of a wide range of desired strategic outcomes – what the joint LGA/DCMS Leadership for Libraries Taskforce nationally has identified as:

- cultural and creative enrichment

- increased reading and literacy

- improved digital access and literacy

- helping everyone achieve their full potential

- healthier and happier lives

- greater prosperity

- stronger, more resilient communities.

There is a statutory requirement for your council to deliver a 'comprehensive and efficient library service'. This should not be seen as a burden, but a massive opportunity – one in which you can play an active and influential role.

Councillor Ian Stephens
Chair
LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

Executive summary

Public libraries are funded to provide a unique 'cradle-to-grave' service. Through their buildings, outreach activities and online digital services, they are being seen increasingly as community hubs – bringing people together and giving them access to a greater breadth and depth of services and support and operating as a gateway to physical and digital information; from public health to adult learning, school readiness to employment, and a broad range of business, community and cultural services.

But libraries face significant challenges as almost every aspect of modern life continues to change rapidly. People's experience and expectations around living, learning, shopping, leisure and entertainment are radically different to those which existed a decade before. And like all public services, libraries have to adapt accordingly – continually developing their offer and responding to changing needs and circumstances.

The financial and demographic pressures on local authorities are not diminishing. To best protect frontline services, libraries should be seen as genuinely integral to the delivery of your council's broader corporate strategies. Library services can achieve more impact by working in partnership with other agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors, and the adoption of new service delivery models is helping many to reduce costs, share risks and generate new sources of income.

As a councillor, you are best placed to work with your colleagues to ensure that there is strong local leadership of libraries at this time, focused on meeting community needs. You can make the case for libraries: positioning them as central to the council's

strategic thinking and investment plans. Convincing local decision makers – inside and outside of the council – of the positive impact and outcomes that they can achieve for individuals, communities and a broad range of public services. Championing the need for continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery to meet new circumstances and changing customer need. And providing political leadership in the formulation and implementation of your council's library strategy.

Introduction

'Libraries are places where democracy, freedom and equality are not only respected but celebrated. The unique added value of a library is that it makes these outcomes universally accessible and relevant on equal terms to all members of the community in a way that is highly cost-effective for the local authority.'

CILIP, 2017

Helping libraries deliver on their ambition

Public libraries are funded to provide a unique 'cradle-to-grave' service. Through their buildings, outreach activities and online digital services, they offer significant reach into communities and a cost-effective way of ensuring that local people are connected to the services they need, when they need them.

Libraries reach and support the whole community regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status or educational attainment, and they – and the people who work in them – can also support other public services to achieve the outcomes needed for individuals and communities to flourish. The Libraries Taskforce has specifically identified seven outcomes that libraries contribute to in their 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England' document[1]:

- cultural and creative enrichment

- increased reading and literacy

- improved digital access and literacy

- helping everyone achieve their full potential

- healthier and happier lives

- greater prosperity

- stronger, more resilient communities

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1   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Enterprising Libraries
Supporting local businesses to generate greater prosperity

The British Library and 10 library services across the country form the Business & Intellectual Property (IP) Centre Network. These are: Birmingham, Exeter (Devon), Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich (Norfolk), Northamptonshire and Sheffield. The national network is transforming city libraries into engines of innovation, economic growth and social mobility.

The Business & IP Centres are physical hubs where people can come together to learn, network and access free and low-cost advice and support in protecting and commercialising business ideas. The British Library has successfully negotiated a number of discounted license agreements with business database publishers, enabling each public library to take up subscriptions to new resources or make substantial savings on existing collections. The national network has the proven potential to create essential knowledge-based businesses and jobs at a relatively low cost, due to its consolidation of existing resources, knowledge and public buildings, as well as its unique public-private partnership model.

The Business & IP Centre Network supported over 3,500 entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs in the first half of the 2016/17 financial year. Fifty-three per cent of service users were women, and 29 per cent were from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background.

www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/enterprising-libraries

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Helping everyone achieve their full potential

The WorkZone area of the Shepherd's Bush library in Westfield is an innovative partnership between Hammersmith and Fulham Council and Westfield London. WorkZone is a one stop destination for jobs, apprenticeships and training needs. This free recruitment service, supports local people into work and enables employers to recruit and retain new talent. WorkZone offers:

- exclusive access to the latest available jobs in Westfield and the London area

- access to a range of jobs and apprenticeships in retail, customer service, administration, construction, hospitality, and more

- one-to-one, information, advice, and guidance towards finding work

- access to the right employment and skills training to prepare people for employment.

Clare Edgson, Interim WorkZone Manager, says: "Being based in the library provides easy access for our candidates and a friendly environment, as well as good IT access for our candidates to create CVs and for online job searches."

This doesn't mean that all library branches must or should remain open, if they are in the wrong location or in a building unsuited to delivering the services needed by today's communities, and the communities of the future. In fact, there is a shift away from thinking about library services as being defined by physical assets. In this light, libraries are being seen increasingly as community hubs – bringing people together and giving them access to a greater breadth and depth of services and support and operating as a gateway to physical and digital information; from public health to adult learning, employment advice, access to the police, and a broad range of business, community and cultural services. This is not to say that literacy and reading do not remain central to the role of a library – borrowing books is still the predominant thing people use libraries for – and any other roles should not relegate reading and literacy to the background.

"What we've been doing is trying to reconceptualise our libraries as the council's 'front door', delivering a whole range of council services."

Ayub Khan, Face to Face Services Manager, Warwickshire County Council

Against this backdrop, there are significant challenges for your library service. Almost every aspect of modern life continues to change rapidly. People's experience and expectations around living, learning, shopping, leisure and entertainment are radically different to those which existed a decade before. Like all public services, libraries have to adapt accordingly – continually developing their offer and responding to changing needs and circumstances.

The Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964 places a statutory duty on your council to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living or studying in the area who want to make use of it. This has never been formally defined, in order to allow local areas to

Clapham Library follows a continuous spiral around a central performance space, and includes an NHS Clinic

design services that best meet their unique local circumstances and needs. However, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) retains a superintendence role and the Secretary of State can order an inquiry if they are not satisfied that the library service can be shown to be meeting the needs of the community: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service

Financial and demographic pressures are not diminishing. As a councillor, you are best placed to work with your colleagues in ensuring that there is strong local leadership of libraries at this time, focused on meeting community needs. To best protect frontline services, libraries should be seen as an asset not a cost and viewed as integral to the delivery of your broader corporate strategies – libraries can add real value. Thinking 'Libraries First' when planning all council services should help to identify opportunities and synergies for aligning libraries to the broadest range of public, voluntary and commercial services locally.

Nottingham City Council
Healthier and happier lives

Nottingham City Libraries work closely with public health colleagues and other local partners to raise awareness of the 'Reading Well Books on Prescription' (RWBoP) service available in all city libraries. The RWBoP service was developed nationally by The Reading Agency in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and with funding from Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust. Currently there are three collections: adult mental health, dementia and young people's mental health with a fourth collection around long-term health conditions planned for launch in July 2017.

Through public libraries, RWBoP provides a bibliotherapy scheme in which patients can be given prescriptions by GPs or other health professionals for self-help books from an approved list of titles. Importantly, the collections are available on open shelves within libraries, offering all library customers the chance to access the collections with or without prescription. With relaxed lending rules for the collections, there are no reservations or overdue fees, in order to reduce potential barriers to lending, reduce any stigma associated with mental health and increase access generally to high quality self-help materials.

One of the three existing collections was funded locally via public health and the scheme featured within the city council's Strategic Health and Wellbeing Action Plan for 2016/17 – an acknowledgement that libraries provide a vital source of materials to help people manage their own mental health and wellbeing. The Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group also now publicises the scheme on its web page about mental health services because the service fits with the aim to support early help and safe self-care for people with mental health problems.

Library and public health colleagues monitor loan statistics regularly and exchange information regarding potential contacts and developments to maintain the profile of the collections. Since the first collection launched in 2013 and loans increased, the collections have maintained steady levels of issue. Building on this success, issues for the latest collection have almost doubled compared to those of the initial collection in its first year.

In working this way it has been possible for key library staff to develop a good network of contacts across the city which has led, for instance, to presenting the scheme to a dementia activities coordinators' training forum. These key partnerships also create the opportunity to promote other library services more widely, such as reading groups, memory packs for dementia, and wellbeing workshops and activities. It has also led to a new partnership with The Nottingham Primary Health and Recovery College whereby libraries host courses.

If it has not done so already, your council may need to radically rethink the way that it views library services. Across the country, local authorities are taking bold steps to transform services, collaborating with others to find new and effective delivery models. Similarly, there is a need to consider new ways of funding frontline library services and offsetting the investment in buildings and staff through greater partnership working. Economies and efficiencies cannot come from simply trimming the libraries budget or making transactional savings. A wider transformation programme is required – one that is rooted in the positive and essential contribution that effective libraries can make.

Many libraries participate in schemes, like Reading Well, for long term conditions

Somerset 'Glass Box'
Supporting local businesses to create greater prosperity

Somerset Library Service has created a new, free to use, community digital space in its busiest library. The experimental 'Glass Box' based at Taunton Library is where business start-ups, innovators and digital makers can come together to share knowledge and increase digital skills development. It also aims to work with local business representatives to upskill future entrepreneurs; inspiring young people to build their digital confidence through coding, robotics and digital making.

The Glass Box facility offers:

• digital skills training for business start-ups and small businesses

• digital making activities such as code club, robotics and 3D printing

• opportunities for local service providers and businesses to share knowledge and ultimately raise their profile by running digital focused workshops

• free Wi-Fi and a space to meet

• business information databases, signposting and support drop-ins

• access to British Library Business and Intellectual Property Centre webinars and guides, to help businesses to protect and develop their business ideas

• a skills swap board, designed to encourage collaboration, where businesses can offer to share a skill or ask for help to develop a skill

• a café with exhibition space and a bookable meeting room onsite.

The Glass Box has hosted a variety of expert-led workshops on a range of topics to help businesses to flourish. For example, a Google Digital Garage masterclass, where experts from Google offered advice and tips to local business owners on making the internet a growth engine for their business.

Local businesses have supported the project through sponsorship and volunteering, which has enabled initiatives such as a digital maker in residence, two code clubs and an open innovation challenge for college students. The project has been led by managers from Somerset Library Service and delivered by library staff with expert volunteers and partners.

www.somerset.gov.uk/glassbox

Making the case for libraries

As a local councillor you are well placed to champion the delivery of your library strategy. You can use your influence as a politician and community champion to make the case for libraries within and outside of the council.

Championing libraries to decision makers

This is not just about the influence of portfolio holders or decision makers with a specific focus on libraries and cultural services. In making the case for libraries, the influence must extend to decision makers across the board – from public health to economic regeneration – to ensure that the contribution of libraries in delivering wider public outcomes is understood and built upon. This is about getting key decision makers to think 'Libraries First' in both planning and delivery.

You can do this by talking openly within the council and with partner organisations about the wide range of services that libraries can provide and the significant benefits that they bring. This will include challenging perceptions and combatting stereotypes so that people see libraries as much more than a depository for books. You can help to make the case for them to be seen as community assets based on solid data and evidence about what they offer.

Creating wider public awareness of what libraries have to offer

As a high-profile library champion you can help to raise public awareness of what libraries can do for them across the seven outcomes of 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition'[2]:

This could include:

- Helping to promote the library brand and encouraging public participation in what libraries have to offer through national initiatives like National Libraries Week and the Summer Reading Challenge. Building new partnerships and involvement with national events led by others that are relevant to libraries, such as Get Online Week, Volunteers Week, Black History Month and LGBT History Month.

- Highlighting and celebrating the transformative work that library staff do every day.

- Talking about library initiatives that are meeting local needs and delivering positive benefits and outcomes.

- Encouraging people who have never had contact with the library service or have lost touch to find out what their local library could offer them.

- Encouraging people to explore some of the new ways that they could access information and support through digital channels.

- Holding councillor surgeries in libraries, and encouraging your local MP to do so too.

2   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Promoting positive messages about libraries in the media

Making the case for libraries will require you and your councillor colleagues to think about the way that the library service is portrayed in the media, particularly if your council is making significant changes to service delivery or closing libraries. While you cannot prevent some of the negative publicity that traditionally accompanies such changes, you can think proactively about the ways that you can shape perceptions and talk openly about the rationale for change. Focusing specifically on the social and economic benefits that the transformation programme will deliver for local people is a good starting point.

The delivery of the library strategy should be underpinned by a broad media strategy which can reflect commonly agreed messages about your library services. These can be used consistently throughout interviews, placed editorial and other media – including online coverage. The primary focus should be on promoting public awareness of what libraries can do and persuading more people to use them.

Most councils have a communications team whose job it is to represent the council from a corporate point of view, reflecting the policy decisions made. By law, they are not allowed to write or send out press releases on behalf of individual councillors, but they can still help you to promote council work you have been involved with. If you think you have a newsworthy item, your communications team can advise you on how best to promote it.

Media tips for councillors

Make sure the message is relevant to the intended audience, for example don't bombard afternoon radio listeners with a long list of facts about library transformation – many will switch off (literally).

Try to keep your communications topical – avoid talking too much about what has gone on in the past.

Keep your communications short and succinct and come straight to the point – remember the 'headline grabber'.

Build in some fascinating features to get your point across, for example a good quote or a few helpful statistics.

In a written feature, pictures and charts can be a useful addition, but remember – if a picture paints a thousand words don't use a thousand words as well.

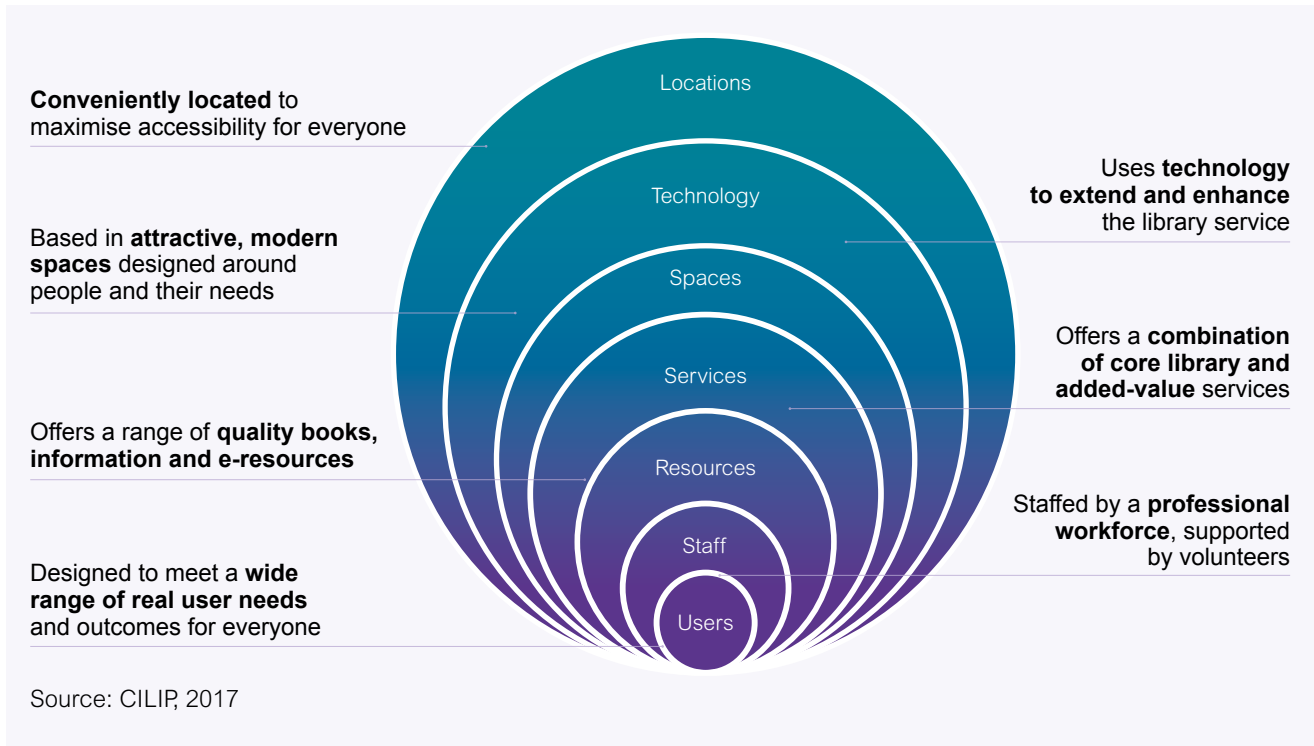Focus, wherever possible, on the human angle – people want to hear about people.

Keep your media team in the loop – they can advise on best practice, and connect it to corporate releases or social media

For more information visit the LGA's guide to using social media: https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/communications-support/digital-councils

Encouraging common design principles

Many of your public libraries may be perfectly placed to deliver on the seven outcomes referred to earlier – the staffing, building, location, accessibility and resources available making them ideal as 'community hubs' delivering core and added-value services (Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: Visualising the library of the future

Conveniently located to maximise accessibility for everyone

Based in attractive, modern spaces designed around people and their needs

Offers a range of quality books, information and e-resources

Designed to meet a wide range of real user needs and outcomes for everyone

Locations

Technology

Spaces

Services

Resources

Staff

Users

Uses technology to extend and enhance the library service

Offers a combination of core library and added-value services

Staffed by a professional workforce, supported by volunteers

Source: CILIP, 2017

Libraries Deliver © Julia Chandler

Others may need to be reconsidered as suitable library service points. With your councillor colleagues and senior officers, you will need to consider a wide range of factors in redesigning the overall library service to be economic, efficient and effective. Within this, each library service point should be considered in terms of its:

- accessibility – providing physical, virtual and outreach services

- quality – being mapped to local needs

- availability – open at times which meet the requirements of library customers

- sustainability – capable of delivering value for money into the future.

The national report, 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition'[3] has identified a number of conceptual design principles (see text box) which should enable all library services across the country to deliver certain core services consistently – and more efficiently and effectively – while sharing good practice. Adherence to these principles should also help in the delivery of the seven outcomes.

3   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Common 'design principles'

Library services should:

Meet legal requirements – comply with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and other legal obligations, including the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty.

Be shaped by local needs – co-designed and co-created with the active support, engagement and participation of their communities, so services are accessible and available to all who need them. Library Friends groups can help with this. Public services should think 'Libraries First' when considering how to deliver information and/or services into communities in an effective and value for money way.

Focus on public benefit and deliver a high-quality user experience – be designed to provide a high-quality user experience, based on explicit statements about the public benefit, outcomes and impact that they deliver.

Make decisions informed by evidence, building on success – base decisions on evidence, data and analysis of good practice from the UK and overseas. They should evaluate the impact and outcomes of programmes and projects they run and share learning widely across the sector.

Support delivery of consistent England-wide core offers – sign up to the Society of Chief Librarians' universal offers which underpin the seven outcomes.

Promote partnership working, innovation and enterprise – empower and support their workforce to innovate and develop new services; and encourage them to be entrepreneurial and creative in building new service models and strengthening partnerships with other organisations.

Use public funds effectively and efficiently – regularly review how they provide library services so they remain economic, efficient and effective. In line with broader public sector reform, councils should actively examine alternative delivery models and revenue streams that could unlock additional investment.

In providing strong local leadership for your library service you should consider:

- Articulating the role of libraries in delivering core corporate objectives, such as those relating to public health and economic growth, to fellow councils, commissioners and the public, including non-users.

- Strengthening libraries' organisational and financial resilience by commissioning the development of a robust evidence base and benchmarking against other library services.

- Taking a strategic approach to your service, using the common set of design principles, and targeting service activity at the needs of the community. This will mean having a robust overall library strategy which has been developed as part of the council's strategic planning process (covered in the next section of this guide).

In considering how best services can innovate and adapt, CILIP has identified a number of useful design criteria to enable councils to think about how they develop library services to meet current and future needs (see text box). These should also be considered alongside the design principles and seven outcomes in reshaping your local library services.

Useful 'design criteria'

Local decision makers should consider:

Distribution and reach – planning for the distribution of library services by considering factors such as population density and demographics, proximity to other services, co-located services, etc.

Location and vicinity – ensuring that libraries are appropriate located at the heart of their communities, close to shops and amenities and with excellent transport links and parking.

Buildings and spaces – considering factors such as the appearance, context, buildability, maintenance and operation in new or existing buildings.

Digital engagement – using technology to enable the delivery of services 24/7 and to provide new platforms for engagement and overcoming barriers to digital inclusion.

Community relations – hosting consultations, bringing people together and providing community information.

Books and e-resources – promoting books, reading and literacy in libraries and making best use of all relevant electronic resources, for example e-book access and online magazines.

Events and promotions – using a combination of physical, digital, social and content-based marketing to reach out to new and existing audiences.

Staffing and leadership – supporting library staff to deliver an innovative, person-centred service to the public, eg empowering library workers to be involved in the planning, design and delivery of services.

Governance – designing appropriate governance structures around the outcomes and impact the library service aims to deliver.

Finance and funding – being innovative in looking at other sources of finance and funding, eg selling services, income generation, Lottery funding, etc.

The following sections of this guide provide further detail on some of the factors to consider in reviewing and redesigning your local library service to enable it to deliver on its ambitions.

Manchester City Council
The Arcadia Library and Leisure Centre

The Arcadia Library and Leisure Centre opened in February 2016 – a new build, combined facility in Levenshulme, which cost £9.1 million. The centre sits at the heart of one of Manchester's most diverse communities. The library is open 90 hours per week over seven days, which is achieved through maximising the use of Radio-Frequency Identification, self-service PCs and printing. There is a dedicated library staff presence for 30 hours a week, with leisure staff supervising the space outside of these hours. The library is an integral part of the centre with access to a wide range of library services and a suite of PCs, as well as Wi-Fi, an attractive children's library, comfortable seating areas and study spaces, along with a wide range of books for all ages.

From inception, the design of the ground floor space was led by the aspiration that the leisure and library offers would be seemless to the customer. The joint reception area overlooks both aspects of the service, ensuring – through design – that customers see the space as blended and coherent.

Library staff worked in close partnership with leisure centre staff and other council officers to really influence the way that new services are delivered on site. In particular, they readily adjusted to the new collaborative approach. As a result, leisure and library services are now available from 6.30am till 10pm, seven days a week.

The focus for all staff is the delivery of good services to the residents of Levenshulme. Since opening, the centre has been a great success with local residents and use of the library has risen dramatically with the seven day offer. The centre has achieved all of its targets and surpassed expectations. Recent performance shows a 146 per cent increase in new library members, an 80 per cent increase in visits and a 29 per cent increase in book lending. The 2016 PLUS survey showed that 93 per cent of customers surveyed judged the interior and exterior attractiveness of the centre to be 'good' or 'very good'.

Part of the children's area at Manchester Arcadia

Planning public library services to meet local needs

The strategic context

Every council aspires to ensure the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their local area, meeting the unique circumstances and needs of their residents. Its strategic plans should set out how it will achieve this. Fully integrating library services into these will help the council fulfil its duties more effectively and efficiently.

A library authority needs to think long-term as it plans and transforms the library service, and do this in consultation with staff, local communities and partner organisations. It needs to be clear how what is proposed for the library service fits in with the overall corporate strategy and vision for the future (Diagram 2). It should be looking at how the library service can help meet the council's wider objectives, taking into account other local service provision both within the area and across council boundaries.

Diagram 2: Planning and transforming the library service
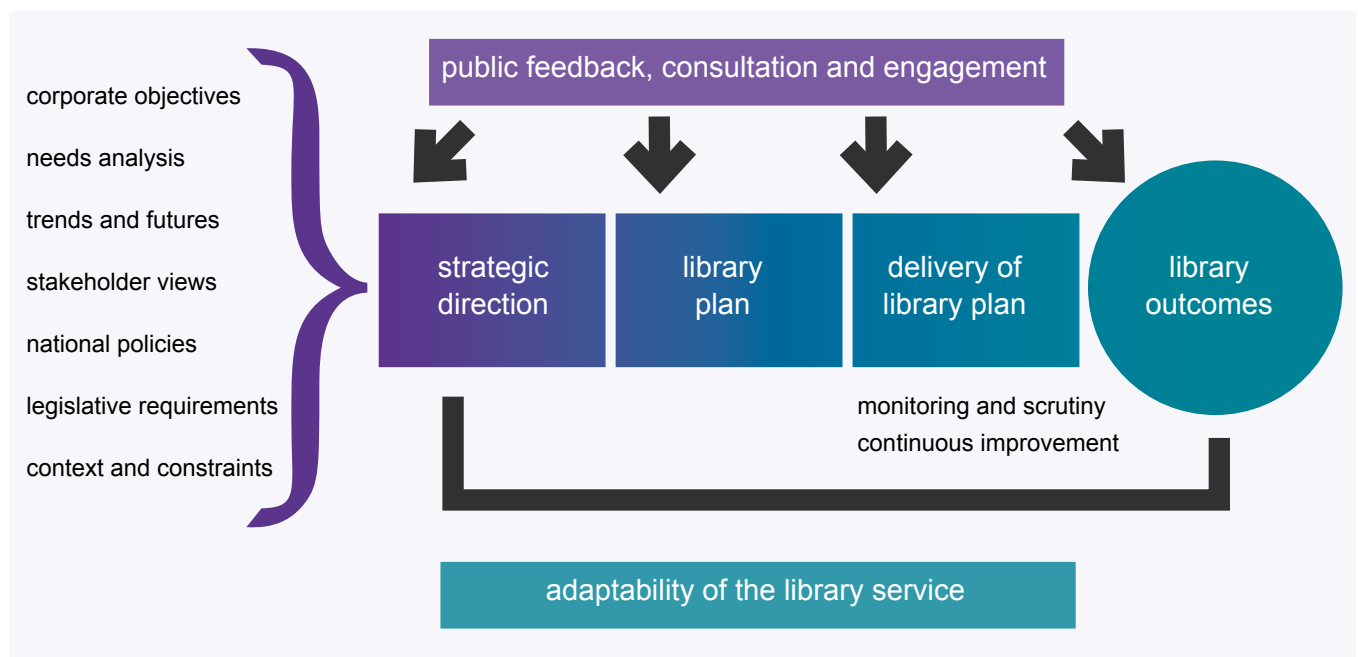
Taking a strategic, long-term approach to transforming the library service should strengthen its organisational and financial resilience. And any decisions taken for the future should be based on a solid strategic assessment of need – and actively managed with community and library professionals – not carried out in an adhoc or reactive way.

It is not the purpose of this guide to spell out the intricacies of strategic planning. In any case, your council will have its own preferred ways of undertaking such a process. We have, however, highlighted some areas which you should consider in pulling together an overall library strategy.

As a rule, the best library strategies tend to be those that are:

- clear about goals (objectives), relative priorities and desired outcomes for the service

- underpinned by a solid understanding of the changing environment in which libraries are operating, for example societal trends, changing customer demands, the nature of the local economy, opportunities and threats to services, etc

- based on a realistic understanding of what is possible, for example a plan that is deliverable in terms of the council's context and resource capabilities

- developed with, and communicated to, all those with a stake in the implementation of the strategy, for example library staff, other council directorates/departments, partner organisations and community groups

- creative – designed around new possibilities and ways of working to challenge complacency, inspire innovation and enable continuous improvement

- clearly aligned with – and integral to – wider corporate strategies and plans, for example the overall corporate plan, capital strategy and relevant directorate/departmental plans.

Your local library strategy

A clear library strategy can help councillors, library professionals, stakeholders and customers work together to achieve shared objectives. Your library strategy could include:

- a description of the authority/area covered by the strategy

- a vision for the library service and how it connects to the vision and mission of the council

- a statement of the outcomes the library service will deliver on behalf of the council

- four to six strategic priorities to guide development

- a clear, costed delivery plan for implementation

- an indication of how the service will be monitored and improved in the future

- a statement of commitment or support from key stakeholders/decision makers.

Source: CILIP, 2017

Strategic needs analysis

Library services must respond to the needs of their communities, and demonstrate how they are doing this. They must also think long-term as they plan and transform their library service, and do this in consultation with their communities. An effective service can only be achieved by understanding community needs in general and the specific needs of particular sections of the community. Data plays an important role within this, helping councils to make informed decisions. For example:

- **Meeting the needs of the community** – data can identify particular groups within a community who may need support, or particular issues that need tackling, such as obesity or the provision of digital skills training.

- **Meeting corporate priorities** – with pressures on council budgets, every service has to be clear about how it is delivering against these council priorities. Many services will already be delivering work against these priorities, but being able to demonstrate the evidence base for their approach will help demonstrate that to decision-makers.

- **Targeting services or designing new ones** – any changes to a service, including considering new models of delivery or service re-design, should be based on the makeup of the local community, what it is expected to become, and what it wants. Evidence is critical to this.

- **Being efficient** – using evidence of what your community needs will ensure you are providing services and activities that achieve the best possible outcomes for your resources.

- **Meeting statutory duties** – using evidence to inform proposals and consulting with the community are two important ways to help library services to meet their statutory duties.

Your council will already have a great deal of information to start the process. Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), developed by Health and Wellbeing Boards to commission health-related activity, are a rich data source in relation to demographic trends and social, economic, health and wellbeing measures, but your council can supplement this with data from regional observatories, customer surveys and local staff intelligence. At a national level, the LGA also maintains a package of key performance data for councils – alongside contextual and financial information – in online tools known as LG Inform and LG Inform Plus (see text box).

LG Inform

LG Inform brings together a range of key performance data for authorities, alongside contextual and financial information – such as the location of library branches – in a single online tool. Users can view data from over 1000 individual items, make comparisons between their authority and other councils or groups of councils, or construct their own reports bringing several data items together. Importantly, the data is updated quickly after being published at source.

LG Inform is a flexible site that can be personalised to each authority's needs. The home page dashboard can be tailored to monitor important indicators and, in future, the ability to collect local data will be available.

LG Inform Plus is a subscription service for councils to drill down further, from top level strategic metrics in LG Inform to more detailed information. Councils can view ward reports and create charts, maps and tables using small area data, including Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA). Where the data is available, users can analyse smaller geographies such as LSOA and then aggregate these back into larger bespoke areas for specific needs. For example, creating geographies based on the catchment areas for individual libraries.

www.local.gov.uk/our-support/benchmarking-data-lg-inform

Further advice on doing this will be found in the forthcoming Libraries Taskforce's toolkit on evidence-based planning: www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce

London Borough of Sutton
Evidence-based planning

The London Borough of Sutton needed to make significant savings by 2019. Libraries were no longer exempt from contributing to this.

All consultations in Sutton are run under the banner of 'Sutton's Future', looking at ways to engage citizens in making savings from the budget. This structure allowed the library service to receive professional support, for example in questionnaire design and analysis and subsequent reporting, which eased work pressures on library staff.

Prior to the consultation the council already had a library strategy for Sutton, which set out the core priorities of the service to 2019. These were:

- literacy – growing the readers of the future

- meeting the needs of an ageing population

- narrowing the digital divide

- creating a viable, sustainable and quality service within available budgets.

These priorities provided a framework for the questions in the consultation and made targeting key groups much easier. For example, Sutton held a focus group for elderly people with Age UK and engaged an existing young user group in a special session.

The consultation was backed by research mapping demographic trends and needs analysis across the borough. This was so staff had a clear view of the communities the libraries serve.

https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200571/suttons_future

https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/sutton-libraries-public-consultation

In terms of the needs of particular sections of the community, information on ward profiles and deprivation indices can be supplemented with commercial data sets relating to shopping patterns, travel maps and other demographic information mapping.

Needs assessment must take account of trends and future projections and particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged communities. Your council is required to undertake equality analyses. These should be applied throughout the process of needs analysis for libraries.

Listening to your community

In order to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service into the future, it is important that your council listens to and takes account of the changing needs of the various parts of the local community it serves, in producing and delivering the library strategy.

Checklist: listening to your community

Have you considered closely the impact of any proposed changes on different communities?

Have you identified priority needs and sought to ensure that the statutory duties of the library service will continue to be met?

Have you considered and agreed a corporate approach to communication, engagement and consultation with customers, the wider community and other stakeholders?

Have you taken steps to ensure that any process of consultation has been designed to withstand a potential legal challenge to the decision making process?

Libraries are often some of the most treasured of public sector services and any proposed changes to what already exists can provoke significant community reaction. So it is never too early to engage the community in the process of planning library services to meet local needs. It is sometimes suggested that community engagement too early can generate fears, and that engagement too late results in people feeling decisions are already made. But for a meaningful engagement process, generally, the earlier the better, is the maxim.

There is a huge difference between engaging with communities on the future delivery of services and consulting with them on a set of proposals. The dynamics of the processes are entirely different and produce significantly different outcomes.

So, a good communications plan is essential and information about the change process must be managed well. There needs to be confidence from the community that the process is an open and transparent one, that options can be explored before a preferred option is identified, and that there will be no decisions until after effective consultation. New ideas should be piloted transparently to test if they can work, focusing on identifying the bottom-up benefits to customers and communities, before the top-down value for money benefits are espoused, to generate greater buy-in from residents.

The LGA publication, 'New conversations: LGA guide to engagement', can provide you with comprehensive information on all aspects of the community engagement process: www.local.gov.uk/new-conversations-lga-guide-engagement

You may also wish to develop your own leadership skills as a councillor, The LGA has a range of courses and resources designed to help you do this: www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership

Staff involvement

Throughout any process of service planning and delivery, it is vitally important to seek early and constructive input from library staff. Staff buy-in is fundamental in delivering change, as their in-depth knowledge of library customers can add value and insight to any re-design process.

Changing the way library services are delivered in a tough financial climate can be very difficult for staff, so clear and strong leadership from councillors and senior managers can help everyone to understand the rationale and proposals for change. Done effectively, it can also increase the cooperation of staff and ownership of the delivery plan, particularly where this involves staff developing new skills to deliver broader public service outcomes.

Bradford City Council
Planning public library services to meet local needs

In 2013, Bradford Libraries commissioned a review of its library service. This was a major piece of work and involved considerable consultation with library users, non-users and other stakeholders. The review measured 26 libraries on all aspects of performance and came up with a ranking of those libraries. Four community managed libraries were not included in the review.

The review allowed for various aspects of scenario modelling; not just performance measures. This included educational attainment and physical proximity. The benefit of the data analysis was that it could address most scenarios and provide a ranking.

In late 2015, the proposal for Bradford Libraries was to offer all but seven libraries out to community management. These were the top ranking seven from the libraries review based on performance. As a further two libraries in the meantime had become venue-managed, this meant the offer for 14 communities was for their libraries to become community managed by April 2017, or they would close.

Following public consultation throughout January and February 2016, the proposal was amended and the decision taken so that ten libraries would remain council-managed, two would be hybrid (a mix of staff and volunteers) and twelve would be volunteer managed. The rationale for this was not based on work undertaken in the review but rather a geographical and numerical distribution in political constituencies.

All but one community expressed an interest in managing their libraries – some sooner than others and not all in time for April 2017. However, the political will is for work to continue with those communities who weren't ready (though eight libraries have closed temporarily to allow this to happen). By summer 2017, the council anticipates that there will be: 10 council managed libraries, two hybrid libraries, two venue-managed libraries (both in community hubs rather than retail premises), and 15 community managed libraries. All 29 libraries will continue to be supported by Bradford Libraries and remain part of the public libraries network.

Suffolk County Council
Staff engagement during the process of becoming a mutual

Many library staff felt very anxious about leaving Suffolk County Council, so the council saw it as important to engage with them as much as possible and help them feel part of the move to a new employer. The TUPE transfer process included formal staff meetings, with discussion to give the new employer the opportunity to set out their vision for the future and offering staff the chance to ask questions.

Suffolk Libraries also held a number of well attended staff workshops after the TUPE meetings, but before the transfer, to engage with over 100 staff. Areas explored during the workshops included what sort of organisation staff wanted to work in and how they would like to be involved.

Suffolk Libraries learned a great deal from these sessions and was able to factor in many of the staff requests as part of its design for the new back office, new staffing structure and in its longer-term staffing strategy, e.g. named people for all support services and help, much better HR and IT and a reward/recognition scheme. It also empowered a group of staff to completely redesign the staff appraisal scheme.

Suffolk Libraries created a staff advisory group which still exists and acts as a sounding board. It focuses on topics like communication and rewards, and has observer status on the organisation's main board. There is no fee paid and any member of staff can be involved. This doesn't undertake collective bargaining on terms and conditions – that is the role of the trade union.

Before transfer, the union was an important part of staff engagement in agreeing a direction. Suffolk Libraries has resolutely taken the view that it works with the trade union as a partner and has invited its members to join focus groups, or pieces of work on staffing matters. In Suffolk Libraries Industrial and Provident Society the membership is approximately 20 per cent of the workforce. The trade union is especially useful when dealing with individual casework.

Suffolk Libraries ran its first staff survey in 2014 and now undertakes one each year. The results get better and better: morale is high, with over 93 per cent of staff proud to work there, and 92 per cent proud to work for the community.

www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/suffolk-libraries-staff-engagement

Helping libraries use better evidence to support decision making

Both in strategic planning and ongoing service delivery, it is vital that your library service uses the very best evidence to support decision making. The national report, 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition'[4] has called for the development of a core set of data on all libraries that can be consistently andregularly collected and openly published. It is suggested that this information could be used to:

- identify, understand and meet user needs better.

- support strategic planning.

- help libraries to secure future investment and encourage increased usage.

- identify areas for improvement.

- manage day to day operations in a more effective and timely way.

- advocate for library services at a local and national level.

Evidence-based planning: The Libraries Taskforce toolkit

It is important that councils think about their library service in this broader context as they plan and transform their services, and that they do this in consultation with their communities, and with library services staff. They need to be clear how:

- their proposals for future library service provision fits in with their overall strategy and vision for the future

- the library service can help meet their wider objectives, taking into account other local service provision, both within the area and across council boundaries.

The Libraries Taskforce is developing a toolkit which will help with evidence-based planning. It brings together some of the most relevant sets of information which can be used to help: (a) identify a local area's needs, for example information that can promote healthier and happier lives, greater prosperity, education and literacy, and help people to achieve their full potential, (b) measure any impact a library service is having locally, and/or (c) library services explore and evaluate options for redesigning or improving the service, including managing their asset base.

The toolkit also contains advice on how to use this evidence to build a library strategy, giving a clear direction for the library service.

This toolkit will be available at: www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce

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4 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

There are some challenges in developing a national dataset which allows for some element of comparison between councils, and it is important that library services are compared on a 'like-for-like' basis. For example, while some library services operate within their own council boundaries and may be broadly comparable with similar authority areas, others now operate on a cross-boundary basis. There is also a need to take into account the extent and impact of other library services which operate at local level alongside public library services, for example academic and school libraries.

While the national dataset is being progressed at national level, it is important that your library service develops its own evidence base for the impact that library services have on the lives of individuals and communities and the extent to which wider public sector outcomes are being delivered. This evidence base needs to include both quantitative data (for example the number of library customers and those taking up added-value services) and qualitative data (how library customers rated any services they received and the extent to which they felt it met their needs).

This information is particularly important for councillors. In your governance and stewardship role, it is the sort of information that you need to assess whether the library service is delivering against the aspirations, objectives and outcomes of the library strategy and demonstrating value for money. Further advice on this can be found in the Libraries Taskforce's toolkit: www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce

Considering different models for local service delivery

Alternative delivery models

Once your council has a clear view of its communities' needs, it can then plan how to meet them. There is a range of different delivery models already being used across England which are described in an 'Alternative Delivery Models' toolkit: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-alternative-delivery-models-toolkit/alternative-delivery-models-explained

The different delivery models include:

Local authority-run – library services maintained and staffed by council personnel.

Commissioned – library services outsourced or contracted to a third-party organisation. A number of councils have investigated delivering their library services with new partners in the private or voluntary sectors, or in different organisational models, such as the creation of public service mutuals, trusts or charitable companies. A few are including their library services within wider delivery arrangements by including sport, leisure and/or arts to serve wider community needs in one place.

Outsourced – library services outsourced to another local authority. These are known as 'shared services', and involve outsourcing the whole library service or specific functions.

Community run with local authority support – this includes models where the council provides buildings, equipment and book stock; some funding; and some input from paid staff who visit (on a limited basis), liaise and provide professional input.

Each model has its pros and cons. Some approaches – such as mutuals – allow for formal 'ownership' and influence of the service by the local community and the library workforce. This can help with staff retention and motivation, as well as enhancing local growth. However, in-house delivery can make it easier to integrate library and other council services.

Moving to a new delivery partner, as an alternative to in-house provision, requires a thorough options appraisal prior to procurement. Such approaches also require careful consideration to separate the 'commissioning' and 'provider' functions. And in all cases, the council should seek appropriate legal advice to ensure that it continues to meet its statutory obligations.

Changing to a different model is rarely a 'quick fix', and is not always cheaper than in-house provision. Transitioning takes considerable time and support. And a solid business case is needed for the transition, which considers the likely impact on governance and service delivery arrangements. Throughout the process, councillors should be robust in challenging the rationale for any change (see text box).

The emerging delivery models are frequently hybrid – a combination of approaches to meet local political priorities, community needs and aspirations and the ambitions of other partners.

Having considered the potential for alternative delivery models, your council may decide to retain its existing service delivery arrangements. In this situation, the library authority should still explore the potential for other ways to share services or costs to improve efficiency and effectiveness for local people.

This potential for sharing services – as well as sharing experiences and learning – is also particularly important for community managed libraries, where resources are usually very limited and volunteers often have low levels of knowledge on establishing and running a library.

In the later section of this guide on 'stronger coordination and partnership working', there is further information on shared services and the delivery of services through co-location or new, non-traditional outlets and service points, including digital access.

Community-managed and community-supported libraries

In some areas of the country local people are taking a more active role in running their libraries. In these situations, councils, in consultation with local communities, have re-designed their library services to give communities the opportunity to run or support library services. Community libraries are more likely to be co-located with other services. This is contributing to a diverse picture of libraries provided within village halls, pubs, shops, churches, day care centres, tourist information centres, development trusts and social enterprises.

Your council may be considering the potential for community libraries.

Suffolk County Council
Considering different models for local service delivery

After an extensive public consultation in 2011, Suffolk County Council decided to externalise its library service to give the community a voice in its governance, whilst ensuring that the council discharged its obligations as the statutory library authority. This decision was taken after a service review and an options appraisal on possible different delivery models.

By December 2011, the council had decided on an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) as the most appropriate form for the new organisation. A needs assessment identified the council's responsibility as the statutory library authority as: '[being] legally accountable for a 'comprehensive and efficient' service, and for the strategic direction of the service'. It recommended that Suffolk County Council: 'Employ in-house sufficient library expertise within its strategic commissioning functions to ensure that its providers comply with the statutory duties that they are providing on the council's behalf. It will commission the library service, through a grant agreement with the library service body, delegate the budget, via schedule of payments, and a set of agreed targets and measures to be achieved. It [will have] regular monitoring sessions with the library service'.

The IPS became Suffolk Libraries IPS and the service was divested on 1 August 2012. Suffolk took the decision early on that any externalisation of the service must be reversible, and that it should retain ownership of the infrastructure, eg buildings, IT infrastructure/ devices and mobile library vehicles. This has not stopped Suffolk Libraries from making savings in this area, eg, Suffolk Libraries IPS has employed local contractors to maintain the internal decoration and repair of the buildings, including the use of suitably skilled volunteers. Similarly, Suffolk's ownership of both the staff and public computers does not stop Suffolk Libraries IPS from procuring more innovatively.

The 'expert commissioner' has played a vital role – pre- and post-contract – acting as a point of contact for other council departments and advocating for Suffolk Libraries to be trusted to deliver on its commitments. Although the contract was for an initial five year term, and Suffolk Libraries IPS has recently chosen to exercise its right to extend this for a second five years, the contract must be actively and expertly managed. The commissioner leads on the annual contract price and specification negotiations, and briefs the specialist cabinet and shadow cabinet members throughout the year on how the council is discharging its statutory duty, and how libraries fit into the council's wider strategic plans.

www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/suffolk-county-council-expert-commissioning

A Libraries Taskforce toolkit provides further guidance on this: www.gov.uk/ government/collections/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit

As with other delivery models, local circumstances differ and a community model may not be the best solution in all cases. In areas where the community model has been successful, there have been a wide range of approaches, with varying degrees of support from the council concerned and its professional library staff, reflecting what works best locally.

The benefits of community libraries will, again, vary between areas. They can support local government's desire to maintain, or even increase, local library provision while at the same time reducing costs and achieving economic and social objectives through community engagement. For both local communities and customers, this model can result in greater involvement and influence over service provision, helping to combat social isolation and assisting volunteers to develop skills and work experience.

London Borough of Lewisham
A new model for local service delivery

The London Borough of Lewisham is reaping rewards from a transformation programme embarked on in 2010. The programme embodies the inextricable link between the public library service and the communities it serves. The results have produced a solid, scalable, and replicable model that offers unprecedented opportunities.

The Lewisham model is based on a shared understanding – at corporate, political, and community levels – that public libraries exist in two distinct and synergetic realms, the 'service' and the 'space'. The public library 'service' is the one that pertains to the libraries' mandate to deliver 'unbiased access to information, learning, and works of the creative imagination'. This is supported by trusted, knowledgeable, flexible people and accessed in buildings, out-and-about, and online. But the public library has a critical function as a 'space' too. One that is open, trusted and welcoming – and one of the few truly 'public' spaces that require no affiliation or fee, nor qualifying criteria of any sort.

Lewisham understands that libraries are relevant by definition if they carry out their primary mandate (ie the 'unbiased access') and do so – at the same time – as a 'service' and as a 'space'. Lewisham recently extended its community library model from five to eight library buildings. These maintain or, in most cases, have increased opening hours, introduced new services and solutions that are relevant to local communities, and maintain access to the council's library service.

The local authority owns and manages the stock and the library services in Hub libraries, community libraries, and online, through a team of community engagement officers. The partner organisations manage the (community) buildings – rent free – to sustain their own objectives while committing to support 'the promotion of the love of books and reading'. Through supporting local social enterprises, charitable organisations, groups of residents, and many others, the Lewisham Library and Information Service increased opening hours by 69 per cent, increased the number of library service points, delivered over £2.4 million of savings, and increased the number of visits year on year for the last five years.

The most common approaches emerging are:

- To transfer the library asset and management to an existing established community development trust, voluntary body or social enterprise which has the necessary skills and experience and is readily able to take on new service.

- To transfer the library asset and management to a newly-formed community organisation or social enterprise. Such areas may require a programme to build sufficient capacity and skills over time.

- To transfer only the management of a library to an existing or new community organisation, with the council retaining the responsibility for the building and infrastructure.

In most situations, the community model relies on an increased use of volunteers, working alongside professionals to support opening hours and the services delivered directly by the council. The support provided by local authorities can come in a variety of forms, for example supplying library stock or equipment, one-off grants, transferring assets, paying the rent on library buildings, leadership support or providing access to library management systems.

Giving local people a greater role in running library services is an opportunity to strengthen local civic society but it poses challenges too. Any council which pursues this delivery model should ensure that it has a strong commissioning framework which identifies how the council is continuing to discharge its statutory functions.

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Checklist: community libraries

Have you put in place a robust community consultation strategy ahead of taking any decisions?

Does the community organisation, social enterprise or voluntary body have the necessary skills, experience and capacity to take on new services?

Have you considered the details around transferring the library assets and/or library management?

Have you developed a strong commissioning framework which identifies how the council
is discharging its statutory functions, with clarity about what services it will commission local people to deliver?

What provisions are in place to deal with any service failure or any situation where local people decide that they no longer want to run the library?

Within this, it must be clear what elements of service the council will continue to provide, with clarity around those elements it has commissioned the community organisation to deliver.

Equally essential is the line between the role of volunteers and professional library staff. Library staff are trained in specific skills and librarians work to a professional code of practice. They bring expertise in reading, knowledge and learning, acting as guides to the mass of data and online information that is increasingly used by citizens in daily life.

Councils should be clear that they are not simply using volunteers as a direct replacement for trained library staff. The focus should be on new models of delivery, taken forward after robust consultation with staff, and involving local people to maintain or increase existing services while achieving value for money. Set up in the right way, community libraries can complement and work with professional staff.

Funding library services in varied and sustainable ways

The financial landscape
Relative to other forms of intervention, libraries offer councils a low-cost, high-impact investment in their communities which delivers a huge return in terms of social, economic and cultural capital. This return on investment was measured by Arts Council England in 2014. Its research suggested that the benefit-cost ratio was as high as five to one.

'Councils have historically been the primary funding source for public libraries. But libraries increasingly need to diversify their funding: generating additional income streams to help support existing services and to develop new ones.'

Libraries Deliver: Ambition

Given the direction of the public finances, your council has no option but to look at efficiency savings across the board, including library services. In this climate, it is essential that you and your councillor colleagues recognise and articulate to local and national decision makers, the economic case for libraries – in other words, the significant benefits and impact that they can generate. Investing in libraries can help your council to achieve more in relation to its strategic priorities. Delivering critical services direct to the community through libraries can lead to better outcomes for the public, and savings in other council budgets.

That said, your library service still needs to continue to explore the potential for efficiency improvements wherever possible and explore new sources of funding and financing for the future. The Libraries Taskforce nationally has suggested that this could include:

- philanthropy and fundraising
- community share issues – into local projects that benefit the community

- social impact bonds – to support initiatives such as digital inclusion, literacy or business growth

- private sector partnerships

- providing discretionary services to local businesses or residents

- wider grants and blended funds where relevant.

It has also highlighted that using alternative finance models depends on libraries creating a revenue stream, so this should be a clear priority for local commissioners and libraries if they choose to take this approach. A number of councils have already developed new financing approaches to maintain and enhance existing library services and develop new ones. This has required them to:

- take a strategic view on how libraries will contribute to achieving the council's and partners' overall corporate objectives

- marshall evidence of benefits from using public libraries for use with commissioners within the council and external public service partners

- identify opportunities for joint working with other library and local authority services and partners to reduce costs, such as shared purchasing, shared services and co-location and/or integration of services (covered in a later section of this guide)

- seek support-in-kind (for example from private sector partners) and other income generation sources, whilst maintaining their neutrality

- consider some innovative forms of financing as mentioned earlier.

Some local authorities have shown great entrepreneurial spirit by looking at different funding methods to make library re-design possible, to provide better services to residents or more efficient services to realise longer-term savings. In general, there seem to be three different approaches to this – social enterprise, private partnership and using the library service itself to generate revenue.

Investing in library services
Key points to consider

A capital programme of library modernisation is a great opportunity to create a modern, attractive cultural 'centre' for villages, towns and cities, driving regeneration, supporting local businesses and giving local people a sense of pride in their locality.

The benefit of a strong library offer is not limited to leisure and cultural services – libraries provide frontline support for health and social care, digital programmes, local enterprise and other council services.

Librarians [and library staff] are skilled at making a little go a long, long way. When developing library budgets, it is always useful to engage with professional librarians to identify options and ensure that your budget can achieve its maximum impact.

To deliver the full range of benefits for your communities, libraries need to be refreshed and updated periodically. This doesn't need to be expensive, but neglecting libraries is a sure way to drive people away.

Source: CILIP, 2017

Rochdale library is now co-located alongside the council offices, cafes and private workspaces in a move that merged 33 buildings into one and won the award for best workplace in 2014

New sources of funding and financing

In this section, we summarise some of the more innovative funding and financing sources which you should consider in planning a long-term strategy for library services.

Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements

Traditionally, only a small proportion of infrastructure development funds have gone towards libraries. As a councillor, you should be challenging local decision makers in your authority and other organisations to explain how libraries (and their funding) feature within community investment plans and the public consultation processes related to these. Given the high use of libraries and their scope to save money in other public service budgets (such as health and social care), it is important that the case for investing in libraries is made at an early stage of the planning process.

Many areas are actively examining the potential for funding library developments through the Community Infrastructure Levy and the use of Section 106 agreements. To achieve maximum effectiveness, library authorities should treat both funding streams as complementary mechanisms.

The Community Infrastructure Levy is designed to raise funds for infrastructure needed generally as a result of an increase in development in an area. In contrast, contributions raised through Section 106 planning agreements can only be used to support infrastructure projects required to directly mitigate the impact of the development to which the agreement is associated. Money raised through the levy can be used alongside funding from the other sources to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure projects. The levy can be spent by the authority that collects it, but the collecting authority can also choose to pass Community Infrastructure Levy receipts to other infrastructure providers, such as library authorities.

Bicester
A library that is a focal point for town centre regeneration

Bicester library had long been planned by Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council as part of Franklins House, a new community building at the heart of the multi-million pound regeneration of Bicester town centre. The new library, with greatly improved facilities, is a focal point for a town that is growing yet retaining its own distinctive character as an Oxfordshire town. The project to create the new library was paid for by developers as part of the expansion of Bicester. As such, there was no cost to the public purse.

The new library is larger than the original facility. It provides more public access computers and the availability of Wi-Fi enables more people to get online and further develop their digital skills. There is also a broader choice of books and audio visual items and increased opportunities to join in with regular activities such as weekly 'rhyme-times' for babies and toddlers, family learning activities and reading groups.

Bicester Local History Society and the National Careers Service have their own dedicated areas in the library and there is a fortnightly Job Club surgery in the Bicester Connect area of the facility.

Since opening its doors to the public in April 2016, the new library has signed up and welcomed some 4,000 new library members. The number of people attending library activities has tripled and borrowed items and visits to the library are up by almost 40 per cent.

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements (based on that section of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) are private agreements made between local planning authorities and developers in association with the granting of planning permission.

These legally binding agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable

in planning terms. A number of authorities have successfully used planning obligations under Section 106 to support investment in the development of library services.

New Home Building Fund

The Home Building Fund is a flexible source of funding administered by the Homes and Communities Agency on behalf of the Government. Alongside loan funding to meet the development costs of building homes for sale or rent, the scheme allows for some infrastructure finance loan for site preparation and the infrastructure needed to enable housing to progress and to prepare land for development. Although these funds are coming under increased pressure, a number of authorities have successfully secured funding under this to enable them to support the investment in libraries.

Income generation

In general – given their duty to provide services that are free and universally accessible – it is difficult for libraries to generate revenue from their core activities. However, many have integrated added-value offers, such as catering, room hire, IT equipment hire and retail into their services. Income generated from these activities may range from relatively small sums to complete subsidy of the library branch. They can therefore be a valuable source of complementary funding. Research commissioned by Arts Council England in 2014 can provide you with lots of ideas on the sorts of income generation schemes that can be considered: www.locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries-Feb-2017.pdf

Project funding

There are lots of sources of grant funding for project work, from National Lottery Funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Arts Council England provides a 'Funding Finder'[5] tool which can help you to navigate through the different options.

5   www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding

Finance and funding
Myths and misconceptions

Closing libraries saves money – a number of councils have had to take the difficult decision to close library branches, only to find that the costs of securing the vacant buildings are higher than the running costs for the service. It is always best to seek every alternative to closing a library branch – once closed, it can be very expensive to re-open a library. However, if the building is unsuited to the needs of your future library service, it may be more appropriate to dispose of it or use it for another council function, and reinvest any savings in the provision of a new, more suitable library service for that area.

Volunteers can run libraries with no money – while volunteers have always been a vital part of delivering excellent local library services, they do need access to proper support and advice. The strongest services are often formed through a partnership between professional staff and volunteers, and it is not straightforward to hand a service over to volunteers to maintain and run. For more on involving communities in delivering services, look at our community action toolkit: www.local.gov.uk/community-action-overview The Libraries Taskforce has also published a toolkit on establishing community libraries: www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit

The biggest asset of a library is the building – it can be tempting to consider library buildings as simply part of the public estate and therefore as a financial asset. When considering the financing of libraries, it is important to look at the whole picture, not just the potential value of the building, for example consider the value of jobs and skills and the potential savings to other services. Remember that library branches are often in high-profile sites on key streets, and therefore well-placed to act as a route for the public to engage with other council services – acting as a 'front door' for the council. As we have highlighted earlier, think 'Libraries First'.

Stronger coordination and partnership working

Strong local leadership of public library services can be enhanced when libraries work as a network with national support. Over and above this, library services can achieve more impact by combining expertise and sharing resources, improvement ideas and insight with other agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Joint working can reduce costs, share risks and make it easier for national partners to work with libraries. Alongside this, all library services should be developing a compelling virtual presence, integrated seamlessly with physical library provision, as more people communicate, use services and engage digitally.

Joint procurement

As we outlined earlier, in developing your library strategy it is vital that your front-line library services are co-created with local communities. Equally, there can be significant benefits to be gained by working collaboratively with other organisations on procurement matters:

- merging back-office functions to reduce costs and free-up funding for front-line activities

- exploring even greater integration through alternative delivery models such as setting up consortia-based public service mutuals

- combining to deliver national programmes, such as the Reading Well Books on Prescription Service, developed by the Reading Agency

- sharing the procurement of book stock or library management systems to reduce costs, for example the Digital Library, a framework with suppliers for online resources.

Co-location

If it has not already done so, your council should be exploring all opportunities to integrate and co-locate libraries with other government and partner services, particularly as part of the One Public Estate programme (see text box). This can help join up services for customers, allow buildings to be opened for longer, and enable costs to be shared. It works best if services are designed to join up.

LibrariesWest
Stronger coordination and partnership working

The LibrariesWest consortium is a partnership between the library services of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, Dorset, North Somerset, Poole, Somerset and South Gloucestershire. It aims to achieve significant economies of scale and to deliver better services for customers.

All consortium members share a library management system and a joint catalogue. In addition five authorities share a stock procurement and processing service, and some authorities share an information service. Members also coordinate training and staff support while maintaining local policies within their own authorities. The consortium is managed by a board comprising the heads of service of the member authorities. A consortium agreement governs the management of LibrariesWest and outlines the scope of activity and responsibilities within the consortium, and a strategic plan sets out the direction of travel and priority areas of activity.

Customers can use their membership card in any one of more than 140 consortium libraries to borrow, return and reserve items, giving access to a catalogue of more than 2.5 million items. The joint catalogue means that library users can access up to six times as many titles as they would be able to through a single authority's catalogue

Many libraries are already co-located with local colleges, job centres, post offices, Citizens Advice, tourist information, health centres and many other services. They also provide access points for things like IT and language training, and government face-to-face services. Co-location provides opportunities for increased access – for example, using technology to extend access to library buildings outside staffed hours – and reduced costs.

The starting point for change may be the need to rationalise your outdated or inefficient building stock. Rationalisation may also be required for those library buildings with lower usage or where customer expectations are changing in terms of the kinds of services people want and how they want to access them. In all cases, this rationalisation must be underpinned by a thorough analysis of people's needs and your council must be able to demonstrate that those needs will continue to be met through any newly transformed service.

Many councils have already used the service location approach to co-locate a range of council and partner services in one building. Some councils are putting existing libraries at the heart of their communities by opening up council customer service points and using them as a venue for police surgeries, health centres and volunteer groups. Others are co-locating libraries in shops, sports centres, village halls and children's centres, enabling services to share costs, extend opening hours and provide a more accessible service.

When services are co-located it becomes easier to create community hubs that offer a range of services from the library.

One Public Estate

The One Public Estate (OPE) programme is delivered in partnership by the Cabinet Office Government Property Unit and the LGA. It provides practical and technical support and funding to councils to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration with central government and other public sector partners.

OPE partnerships have shown the value of working together across the public sector and taking a strategic approach to asset management. At its heart, the programme is about getting more from our collective assets – whether that's catalysing major service transformation, through the integration of services; unlocking land for commercial space; or creating new opportunities to save on running costs or generate income.

www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate

Rutland County Council
Strong coordination and partnership working

The development of the Ketton Library and Surgery Hub was the result of strong partnership working between county and parish councils, the local GP surgery and the NHS. The councils were exploring ways to increase the use of the library site – by extending beyond traditional library services – when, in 2010, the surgery announced its intention to close the Ketton Surgery because it could not be upgraded to meet modern standards. This provided an opportunity to retain essential local services, and also to improve the accessibility of both elements. The library was transformed into a joint service Hub in June 2012, and since this date has increased customer numbers for both the library and surgery – with library use increasing from 7,077 visitors in 2012 to 9,749 visitors in 2016, a 38 per cent increase.

Ketton Councillor Diana MacDuff said: "The Ketton Hub is a great example of how successful a multipurpose site can be. The increase in library use is partly due to the additional footfall that has come about as a result of the inclusion of nurse and surgery services in the same location. Multipurpose sites are particularly relevant for our villages, where the retention of local services is vital to maintaining their identity and community spirit."

Warwickshire County Council
Libraries a 'front door' to wider council services

Warwickshire County Council has a clear vision to provide a range of public services through its libraries. Seeing libraries as the council's 'front door', the authority is integrating branches with council one-stop shops making it easier for residents to access several services in one place at their local library.

Many services have already been moved into libraries, for example, the Bedworth branch already registers births and deaths, while others deal with queries on blue badges, concessionary travel and council tax. Since October 2016, 12 branches have provided front counter enquiry services for Warwickshire Police. In the summer of 2017, Stratford-upon-Avon's public library will re-open with a new service: it will be the new home of the town's registration office, hosting weddings.

Warwickshire has transferred some smaller branches to social enterprises run by volunteers, with the county providing support services. To further extend the reach of its libraries, the authority is also focusing on those who never visit a branch – some 10 per cent of its library customers only use online services, which include access to magazines, newspapers, e-books and information. So, while book issues and visitor numbers in libraries are declining, online usage is increasing. Warwickshire has responded by improving the clarity, accessibility and navigability of web pages to make it easier for online customers to access the services and information they need.

Selling services
Many public libraries have diversified their offer to include commissioned services such as providing space and support for NHS clinics. Staffordshire County Council has adopted a completely different approach. It now has eight community libraries managed and delivered by South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The service is delivered by volunteers and supported by the council's library service as part of their statutory network.

Library services such as book loans, information provision and computer access are still a core part of what's on offer, but the libraries are able to work with the community to develop other functions based on what local people want and need. The county council continues to provide the buildings, utilities, books, IT, training for volunteers and a small support team. The trust receives no payment for managing the eight libraries, but retains the income from overdue charges and meeting room hire that is reinvested into the service.

Shared services
A growing number of councils are joining forces with neighbouring authorities to make stretched resources go further. In addition to full mergers, levels of sharing include:

- mergers of specific functions, such as bibliographic services

- remodelling and sharing specific functions, such as mobile or home library services

- back office mergers, including shared library management systems

- shared specialist and professional services

- joint strategic management structures.

This approach requires strong political engagement from the outset to negotiate and agree how best to achieve savings and efficiency gains, while maintaining acceptable levels of local accountability. Often, there are also employment legislation and human resource policy implications to consider, for example implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. In addition, your council may need to recognise and manage the implications of merging sometimes very different organisational cultures.

Most shared services require some form of initial upfront investment to achieve longer-term savings. And while potentially significant,

the achievement of these financial savings and efficiency improvements will require transformation to be effectively managed from start to finish. As such, elected councillors need to take an active stewardship role throughout the process, rather than relying solely on the expertise of their officers and financial/legal advisers.

You can find out more about how to create a shared service on the LGA website: www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/shared-services

Delivering wider community outcomes

With growing financial pressures, libraries could play an even stronger role in delivering your council's wider community outcomes by harnessing the power of new technology and digital access. In line with the seven outcomes of the 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition'[6] this can include:

Cultural and creative enrichment
Your local libraries are well placed to extend cultural engagement because of their use by all social groups and their role as inclusive cultural hubs within communities. Fun Palaces are a particularly popular and accessible example. Libraries can also deliver a wide range of educational, fun and social events enhanced by new technologies and promoted by social media which can build community cohesion as well as giving people the opportunity to enjoy themselves.

Increased reading and literacy
Libraries give everyone free access to books and literature regardless of age, disability, wealth or education. Digital services can extend the range of online reading material available. This access makes libraries a catalyst for improved reading and literacy skills.

Helping everyone achieve their full potential
Libraries help to improve residents' life chances. They can offer free resources for

study and learning, including online courses and information sources. They also provide opportunities for people to develop core skills such as the ability to handle and assess information confidently, as well as learn new skills that can enable them to move to new jobs or move up the ladder.

Healthier and happier lives
As a core part of the 'Universal Offer' all libraries should now offer a wide range of health information, both online and through quality assured reading lists dealing with the more common health conditions. In their role as community hubs, libraries also offer non-clinical spaces in localities where health and wellbeing groups can work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue. This helps support people in self-care and in the self-management of long-term conditions.

Libraries play an important role in boosting health literacy: a person's skills, knowledge and understanding about how to find and use information so they can act to support and improve their own health and wellbeing. They're also places where people can come to meet others, helping to reduce social isolation.

Greater prosperity
Libraries support businesses to start up and grow by providing information and working with local economic development organisations to signpost businesses to online sources of support and advice. Low-cost and accessible technologies are also fuelling a new wave of creativity, problem solving and entrepreneurialism. The development of Makerspaces in some libraries has offered people the potential to design, create prototypes and solve problems. These spaces vary from a simple space with work benches to a fully equipped lab with a wide range of digital and manual tools.

As well as supporting businesses, libraries often help individuals into work. Alongside job clubs, back to work programmes and facilitated sessions with partner agencies (such as Jobcentre Plus), some also provide training and support for digital skills and lifelong learning to prepare people for successful and productive careers and help them with money advice.

6   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Stronger, more resilient communities
Libraries already bring people together by hosting local events and providing a shared sense of place for their users – ever more important in an increasingly digital age. And as we have highlighted, they are uniquely placed to help local government and its partners deliver their strategic objectives, whether linked to community cohesion, health and wellbeing or economic growth. Making effective use of new technologies and broadening digital access is helping libraries to extend their reach out into communities.

Improved digital access
Library services can play a critical role in getting more local people online which itself brings many opportunities – such as being more efficient and attracting new customers, and opening doors for individual customers, for example combating their social isolation and enabling them to learn or develop new skills.

Alongside their traditional physical foothold in local communities, libraries – like all other public services – are expanding their digital presence in response to rapidly-changing customer demands and expectations. The pace of change has never been quicker and the digital landscape is starkly different today even compared to the position five years ago. Developing digital access – and integrating this seamlessly with your council's physical library provision – can open up massive opportunities for public services in your area, and can also help to increase people's confidence and ability in using digital technology (see text box).

Developing a compelling digital presence is increasingly important as more people communicate, use services and engage digitally. An improved digital presence can, in turn, stimulate and increase physical visits to libraries. The latest survey by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) suggests that libraries' digital presence has fallen behind other cultural organisations, such as museums and galleries.[7] In many areas, the online services offered by

libraries through council websites tends be transactional (for example reserving a book), rather than services which are designed to attract people to explore, discover and engage with library activities and assets.

Promoting digital inclusion

In the UK 12.6 million people are digitally excluded – that's 25 per cent of the population. And six million people have never been online. Digitally excluded residents are more likely to have a long-term illness or disability, be over 65, and living in poverty. It is these individuals that most rely on local public services, yet in the face of channel shift and service transformation, they are the ones at risk of being left behind.

Local authorities are on the front line in tackling digital exclusion, reaching deep into communities through services such as libraries. With continuing budget pressure for local authorities, it's currently more vital than ever that residents are supported to maximise their digital skills and access, allowing councils to reimagine their service delivery using innovative technology models.

A recent report commissioned by the Good Things Foundation found that investing in digital inclusion saved central and local government £10 for every £1 invested. This is generated both through direct savings – from the uptake of digital public services – and indirect savings, across a wider range of social outcomes such as health and wellbeing, employability, financial inclusion, etc.

Source: Good Things Foundation, 2016

Libraries are playing a major role in equipping all ages with the digital skills they need © Bristol libraries

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7 Taking Part, DCMS 2017: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201617-quarter-2-statistical-release

Online Centres Network
Improving digital access

Good Things Foundation is a national digital and social inclusion charity; and is the organisation behind the Online Centres Network which is made up of 5,000 community partners across the UK. They work to support the most vulnerable members of society to gain the digital support and skills they need to make the most of life, and to access the online services they need. Around half of the Online Centres Network is made up of library services.

Good Things Foundation's partners include the London boroughs of Islington and Tower Hamlets, Dorset County Council and the city councils of Sunderland and Leeds. Libraries in these areas are on the frontline in helping digitally-excluded citizens. By joining the Online Centres Network, libraries receive support to help provide residents with free online learning tools, training, advice and advocacy. Being part of the network enables them to support some of the hardest-to-reach, marginalised residents in their communities.

In 2016, Good Things Foundation worked with 16 library services across the UK to deliver the Libraries Action Research Project. The findings demonstrated significant financial savings could be made as citizens used digital public services in favour of more costly face-to-face and telephone service channels. The direct savings were estimated at more than £86,000 per participating authority. Other programmes delivered by the Online Centres Network – including library services – have also shown digital inclusion can:

- help people to progress into employment and further learning

- reduce the number of visits people make to GPs and the accident and emergency departments of acute hospitals

- improve people's general sense of health and wellbeing, eg making them feel less lonely and isolated.

In addition to these benefits, Good Things Foundation is able to demonstrate a clear and significant return on investment in these projects, with direct and indirect savings to central and local government through the uptake of digital public services.

www.goodthingsfoundation.org/our-network

Some residents in your area may not be able to visit libraries, because they have a disability or because the opening hours do not fit their working patterns. Others may just prefer to use digital means. Your library service should cater for all of these needs through digital and outreach provision.

Virtually all libraries now offer free Wi-Fi access to customers, following the investment secured by the joint LGA/DCMS Leadership for Libraries Taskforce. The digital offer can also be enhanced by increased provision of e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers, allowing people to access a wider range of material beyond the resources of the library.

With a footfall that many other council services could only dream of, libraries cannot be ignored as a key tool to help local government provide better local services. As we have highlighted earlier in this report, there is an increasing appetite both by communities as well as councils, to co-locate services with or within libraries to provide access to a wider range of services as a form of community hub. Digital access is a key element of this transformation.

Peterborough City Council
A different model for local service delivery

Peterborough's library network comprises 10 libraries and a mobile service. Local residents value these libraries not only for books but as community meeting places and for education, computer and internet access. Peterborough City Council was keen to secure the service for the future, but also faced inevitable budget cuts.

In 2014, a public consultation showed that the most valued aspects of the library service were the ability to borrow books, access to information and location. When people were asked what would make them use their library more, 75 per cent said that access outside of normal opening hours was important. The way people use libraries was also changing, with 90 per cent of book loans now completed through self-service kiosks and staff focusing on helping people with specific enquiries.

In response to the consultation, the council developed a range of models and opted for the Open+ model, delivered by Bibliotheca, as its preferred option. Open+ uses technology to complement a library's core staffed hours by extending opening times. It has enabled all the libraries to remain open through a combination of staffed and extended self-service hours. This option was put out to a second public consultation and won overwhelming public support.

The decision to switch to Open+ has enabled Peterborough to save £305,000 a year by moving from 261 staffed hours to 387 hours of opening, of which Open+ enables 238 self-service hours. In essence, this has reduced the cost of the library service by over 20 per cent while increasing availability by 50 per cent. The system can be easily controlled from a central point by one member of staff and integrates with existing library systems. With so many customers already accustomed to self-service, accessing the library building by scanning their library card and entering a pin number was easy for them to adapt to. In addition to managing opening hours and accessibility, Open+ can be used to control other elements such as lights, public announcements, PCs, self-service kiosks and a full CCTV surveillance system.

Open+ has been well received by Peterborough's councillors and won cross-party support. It enabled the council to save money while keeping all the libraries open, extending access and future-proofing services for the next five to 10 years. Installing Open+ cost £170,000 which came from the council's invest-to-save fund.

Over 15,000 library members have already opted in to Open+ from an active membership of 32,000, with a peak usage of 250 Open+ users in one day. Overall library usage rose by three per cent in the first year and there was more use of libraries by community groups and council workers. Keen to extend this further, Peterborough is inviting other organisations to make greater use of the libraries. For example, police officers and police community support officers are encouraged to use libraries as an alternative workspace and a convenient base between appointments.

USA
Technology-driven service delivery

The Contra Costa County Library has a unique program called Library-a-Go-Go, similar to an initiative called GoLibrary used in Swedish libraries. It's a completely automated library book vending machine. Library customers just swipe their library cards in the machine's card reader, select the book or books they want via the touch-screen, and the machine dispenses their choices. Each unit can hold up to 400 books, and customers may borrow up to three books at one time. Returning the books is just as simple; the customer just brings them back to the kiosk from which they borrowed them.

Developing the library workforce, now and for the future

Like other parts of the council, your library service is facing an unprecedented period of declining resources and growing demands, and will be looking to increase its productivity by doing more with the same, or less, funding. As a result, it will be looking for ways of maintaining key frontline services, while reducing the expenditure on pay, pensions and other workforce related costs. One way of doing this is through customer-focused service transformation in the ways we have outlined, ie developing new delivery models, working in partnership and sharing services.

All of these changes have major implications for your library workforce. And if service transformation is to be successful, staff will need to be fully engaged in the planning and transformation process and prepared to adapt and take on new roles and ways of working.

Service transformation may require different organisational cultures and performance management regimes to be brought together. This is likely to raise issues about staff working together on different terms and conditions. If budgets are to be pooled, there will need to be clarity about who employs staff or how any staff transfer arrangements can be best managed. Workforce planning has a central role to play in this service transformation and as a councillor you should keep a 'watching brief' on some of the routine workforce matters affecting your library service (see text box).

Library staff are key stakeholders within all of this. They have the knowledge, skills and experience of working with communities, and the technical and operational know-how which needs to be harnessed in order to truly transform services. More than the building or library stock, it is the workforce that enables the library to deliver a truly innovative, person-centred service to the public.

Library workforce issues

Councillors should keep a watching brief on:

- the UK Public Library Skills Strategy created by the Society of Chief Librarians and CILIP

- the general wellbeing of the workforce, for example any messages arising from staff surveys or consultation

- the outcomes resulting from any investment in workforce training and development

- the engagement of staff in local or national networks, partnerships, or professional bodies.

Bringing it all together

Planning for the future and bringing together a library strategy that can successfully deliver your council's ambitions is a tall, but not insurmountable, task. In essence, it will require action on four fronts:

Firstly, the **strategic framework** – the political and managerial leadership, governance, corporate prioritisation and resourcing planning needed to ensure that the service is 'fit for the future'.

Secondly, **capacity issues** – ensuring that there is internal capacity to support change, external support and challenge, and the opportunities to exploit digital solutions in transforming library services.

Thirdly, the **technical information basis** – specifically, the community needs analysis and understanding of current costs and performance from which to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the library service.

Fourthly, the **essential relationships** with communities, staff and partner organisations required to successfully **deliver** the library strategy.

Norfolk County Council
Promoting healthier and happier lives

In addition to its delivery of a statutory library service, Norfolk County Council has identified ways that its Library Service can deliver on wider corporate priorities like the health agenda. This is seen as critical, with almost two thirds (65.7 per cent) of the adult population in Norfolk being overweight and increasing examples of obesity among local children, who have one of the lowest levels of childhood activity in the East of England (49.7 per cent). In addition, an estimated 16,400 people in Norfolk have dementia (diagnosed or undiagnosed). Dealing with these conditions costs local public health an estimated £19 million every year.

The work of local library teams has been focused on the council's public health goal and is making a tangible difference to the health of residents and reaffirming the place of libraries at the heart of healthy communities. Library staff have been trained to understand health improvement, nutrition and mental health first aid. They can also offer information, advice and guidance on local health services; and between May 2015 and April 2016, over two thousand Norfolk residents participated in a dedicated health-based activity under the programme.

Norfolk received the 2016 Libraries Change Lives Award from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals for this work. It has led to new partnerships, for example working alongside MacMillan and local cancer charity Big C. All libraries are local cancer information hubs with a range of leaflets to support people with the disease and their carers.

Councillor Margaret Dewsbury, Portfolio Holder for Communities at Norfolk County Council, said of the approach: "Of course, we still have to make difficult choices over resources, but we are confident that our library service is more than pulling its weight when it comes to supporting our residents and relieving the pressure on other services."

Jan Holden of Norfolk Libraries presenting at The Innovation Zone, LGA Annual Conference 2017

Scrutinising and championing the delivery plan

Defining what an excellent library service looks like

At a national level, the Libraries Taskforce is developing and promoting a sector-led benchmarking framework that library services can choose to use to support self-assessment, promotion, planning and improvement. Using outcome-focused descriptions, it will set out what an excellent library or library service could look like, although meeting local needs and priorities should always be the primary focus of a service.

The work of the Society of Chief Librarians in developing the Universal Offers, referred to earlier, has helped to set out a baseline for the future of public libraries by establishing a consistent offer that all libraries are expected to provide.

At a local level, it is essential that councillors have access to reliable information about the performance of the library service to ensure that it is delivering against the council's agreed library strategy and is focused on continuous improvement. This is about developing a local system for measuring and monitoring outcomes and performance.

If it has not already done so, your council should be looking to ensure that this performance monitoring framework allows councillors to assess the following:

- **Inputs** – the resources used in delivering the library service, for example the financial and staffing costs of delivering physical and digital library services each year. In value for money terms, a library service that operates to minimise the inputs required is described as economic in its use of resources.

- **Processes** – the approach that your library service takes in using its available financial and staffing resources to deliver a customer service, for example the chosen delivery model. In value for money terms, a library service which makes best use of the inputs it has available in delivering high quality processes is described as efficient in its use of resources.

- **Outputs** – the library services that are delivered as a result of the inputs and processes of the council, for example the number of customers accessing digital library services each year.

- **Outcomes** – the improvements in the quality of life experienced by those in the community as a result of the outputs delivered by the library service, for example the number of customers who develop new skills as a result of the support provided by libraries. In value for money terms, a library service which delivers a high volume of quality outputs and/or outcomes is described as **effective** in its use of resources.

The monitoring of economy, efficiency and effectiveness is of crucial importance for councillors. If your library service is uneconomic or inefficient, there is a risk that it will waste some scarce resources. However, if an economic and efficient library service is ineffective, it risks wasting all council resources. Your local community wants economic and efficient services, but it wants effective library services even more. That is the prime reason why your local library strategy needs to be focused clearly on delivering outcomes.

Effective scrutiny of public library services

In their stewardship role, all councillors should be motivated to monitor the performance of their local library service. Portfolio holders or other decision makers will have a particular desire to ensure that their agreed library strategy is being delivered as expected.

Outside of this, it is also important that those councillors who sit on the scrutiny committee (or similar) play an active part in monitoring the performance of the library service. This can be done in a variety of ways, including:

- overseeing, challenging and holding to account those responsible for planning and delivering local library services

- articulating community views during any scrutiny of library services

- actively monitoring the performance of the library service and contributing to plans to improve services and the delivery of outcomes for residents

- speaking freely as advocates for their area to influence council and partner decisions on the delivery of library services

- keeping in touch with constituents and identifying issues, complaints and concerns which may warrant further or wider scrutiny of library services.

Scrutiny can play a major role in improving performance, delivering efficiencies and demonstrating value for money. This will be particularly important if your council is undertaking a significant transformation of its library service, introducing new delivery mechanisms or developing new partnerships (see text box).

The effective scrutiny of library partnerships

Enhancing the democratic leadership of library partnerships

Widening the understanding and engagement of elected councillors with partnership work.

Bringing knowledge of local issues and communities to service providers involved in partnerships.

Holding the leadership of library partnerships to account.

Helping to build, not undermine, effective partnership work

Using scrutiny projects to bring partners together to find new ways of working collaboratively.

Building alliances with the council executive and other stakeholders to gain support for improvements.

Adding value

Working towards positive recommendations and improvements in library services.

Focusing on work that only scrutiny can do, rather than duplicating the work of other regulators.

Improving the performance of partnerships

Embedding performance monitoring into the working culture of the library service.

Getting to the 'heart of the matter', for example understanding what is behind the performance statistics.

Widening the conversation

Using scrutiny to engage local people in the planning and delivery of library services.

Hearing a wider range of voices and speaking up for library customers who may be 'hard to reach'.

Additional guidance and support

Digital resources

Strategic direction

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Libraries Shaping the Future:
Good Practice Toolkit
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-shaping-the-future-good-practice-toolkit

Alternative Delivery Models toolkit
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-alternative-delivery-models-toolkit

Libraries as a statutory service
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service

Income generation

Income Generation for Public Libraries:
A Practical Guide for Library Service Commissioners and Providers in England
http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries-Feb-2017.pdf

Enabling Enterprise in Libraries
http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Locality-Enabling-Enterprise-in-Libraries.pdf

Community engagement

New Conversations: LGA Guide to Engagement
www.local.gov.uk/new-conversations-lga-guide-engagement

Empowering communities: Making the most of local assets – A councillors' guide
http://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/empowering-communities-ma-9fe.pdf

Community Managed Libraries:
Good Practice Toolkit
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit#community-library-models-1

Community Action Toolkit
https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/community-action

Our offer of support

You can keep up to date with the LGA's work on library services by signing up to our monthly culture, tourism and sport e-bulletin:
www.local.gov.uk/about/news/e-bulletins

The LGA improvement offer for culture, tourism and sport can be found at:
www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/culture-and-sport-improvement

Policy updates, consultation responses, and research can be found at:
www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport

Case studies can be found at:
www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/good-practice-culture

For more information please email:
cts@local.gov.uk

Other support

The Libraries Task Force has been set up to enable the delivery of the recommendations from the Independent Library Report for England.[8] To build upon and add value to existing good practice, partnerships and other activities already supporting public libraries. And to create a strong narrative about the contribution public libraries make to society and to local communities, promoting libraries to national and local government and to potential funders.

The Taskforce's membership includes the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Society of Chief Librarians, CILIP – the UK's library and information association, councils and others.

www.gov.uk/government/groups
libraries-taskforce

librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/

Arts Council England is the development agency for libraries in England. Their website contains a wealth of information and resources about the impact of libraries, as well as their support offer for them.
www.artscouncil.org.uk/new-reports-demonstrate-libraries'-impact-communities

To access the website of the Society of Chief Librarians visit:
www.goscl.com

For more information about professional librarians visit:
www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/professional-knowledge-skills-base

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8   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england

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