Leicestershire County Council

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 SEPTEMBER 2019

NEXT STEPS IN LIBRARY SERVICES PROVISION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out progress with library services and to provide an opportunity for the Committee to comment on options in shaping the future direction of the service as part of its forthcoming strategy refresh.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. In September 2014, the Cabinet approved a remodelling of the library service based on the following elements as being compliant with the County Council's statutory obligation under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service:

   - 16 major market town and shopping centre libraries funded by the County Council;
   - A support service enabling local communities to run their local library;
   - An online library service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to those with access to the internet;
   - A mobile library service providing a regular library service to most villages without a static library.

3. This model includes long-standing subsidiary services including the Home Library Service that is delivered via a network of local volunteers and managed internally, and the Prison Library Service which serves HMP Gartree and is resourced by the prison authority.

Progress

4. Since 2014 the library service has responded positively and innovatively to a challenging financial landscape and has sustained services by:

   - Transferring 33 rural libraries to local communities to sustain rural services;
   - Procuring a new Library Management System (LMS) in 2015 enabling the service to better control its book stock;
   - Introducing SMART self-access technology to 14 of its larger libraries in 2019 to expand public access;
   - Growth of an online offer to enable people to loan books and access information online.

5. Progress on the transfer of rural libraries to community management was reported to the Cabinet in July 2018. The report detailed how each Community Managed Library (CML) had developed different local offers depending upon need. These have ranged from working with health centres to enable stroke and disability groups to meet regularly, to enabling book groups, knit and stitch groups and pre-school story times to be held in the library.

6. The introduction of SMART Libraries became operational in April 2019 across 14 of the largest council funded libraries. This has enabled an additional 30 hours of public access time to be introduced and enabled the service to reintroduce opening hours lost in the 2014 remodelling as well as reducing operational staffing costs. Members of the public are now able to access libraries without staff presence and use the library to borrow books, use IT, and meet in the community space that the library offers. Staffed hours have been designed to meet the needs of those who may not choose to or cannot access the self-access hours.

7. There has been positive growth in access to online services as the service has sought to enable customers to loan books digitally and access information resources which previously would have been contained in traditional reference libraries. E-loans have shown an ongoing upward trend with a 70% increase in 2018-19 compared to the previous year. Whilst this still represents a small percentage of overall physical loans it is to be welcomed and encouraged as traditional loans decline.

8. The service has invested in specialist software to enable it to monitor better the performance of stock across the County. This helps to ensure that book resources are allocated to the right library at the right time and so, maximise their loan potential.

Performance Benchmarking and 2018/19 end of year update

Benchmarking analysis

9. CIPFA benchmarking analysis uses the latest available published data in spring 2019 which is largely 2017/18 data. The analysis uses nine library service indicators. Leicestershire's performance is compared to other two-tier County Councils.

10. The first chart set out within Appendix A shows overall performance compared to expenditure per head on library services. The vertical axis shows the rank of performance, whilst the horizontal axis shows the rank of net expenditure per head of population. Authorities in the top right quadrant are high performing and low spending. The table below shows Leicestershire's overall rank for performance and expenditure:

Theme	Performance rank of 27 (1 is highest performing)	Net expenditure rank of 27 (27 is lowest spending)
Libraries	26	12

11. The second chart within Appendix A lists the indicators used for the analysis together with the comparative quartile that Leicestershire's performance falls into. The first quartile is defined as performance that falls within the top 25% of two-tier counties. The fourth quartile is defined as performance that falls within the bottom 25% of two-tier counties.

12. Performance benchmarking is set across a back drop of declining library usage across the country. In addition, although CIPFA recording guidance has attempted to reflect change, there continues to be variance in how it is interpreted locally. An example of this is the metric of support services as a percentage of revenue (17-18 actuals). This shows Leicestershire's support costs at 31% of revenue expenditure against a neighbour average of 15%. If Leicestershire could achieve the neighbour average for support costs, it would rank overall as the third lowest County Council in terms of spend per head.

13. Leicestershire has the second lowest total book stock per 1,000 population against its comparators, although strategic investment in children's books has resulted in higher loans than average. As noted in paragraph 6 above, electronic loans have increased significantly. Other areas where performance is relatively poorer than comparable authorities, such as book loans and library visits, will be influenced by having the lowest total staff numbers per 1,000 population and reduced opening hours (although SMART libraries will improve this position).

2018/19 end of year update

14. Performance has been broadly stable compared to the previous year despite temporary library closures for SMART library adaptations. There has continued to be a declining trend in library visits, although there has been an increase in the numbers of loans. The service has a positive track record of using volunteers (over 9,000 hours in larger libraries and excluding CMLs).

15. It is worth noting that the indicators collated and shared by CIPFA are a more traditional set of measures and do not reflect more innovative use of our facilities, particularly the qualitative impact of the services as illustrated by two case studies set out below:

Qualitative Case Study 1: Volunteering

Z came to the service as a Summer Reading Challenge Volunteer in 2017 after sitting her GCSEs. Z did not class herself as academic and was unsure of her future path. She loved children but lacked confidence and knew she wouldn't get the grades to continue to A-levels so was facing big changes moving to a new college in the autumn. After a couple of weeks as a library volunteer Z's mum remarked how much happier Z was now. Z was a natural with the children, fitted in brilliantly with the team and was very hard working. She turned out to be one of the best volunteers we have ever had, and it was a pleasure to watch her grow in ability and confidence.

Z started a childcare course at College in the autumn and returned to volunteer in 2018, this time taking a mentoring role to new volunteers. She then secured an apprentice role at a local nursery where she now works. This is what Z says.

"Being a volunteer for the Summer Reading Challenge was one of the best things I did. I was a shy person a few years ago but volunteering two years in a row for this has made me a chatty and more confident person. It's such an amazing experience and a chance to not only improve your communication skills but also socialisation skills. Thanks to the Summer Reading Challenge I got the confidence to follow my heart with what I wanted to do when I was older and now I'm doing my dream job!"

Qualitative Case Study 2: Intergenerational Wriggly Readers

Intergenerational Wriggly Readers brings children and older members of the community together through stories. Many of the older people live in residential homes and their activities are centred on the home. Having the activity in the library is a very important aspect for many people as it gives them the chance to socialise and interact away from the residential home.

"it's nice to get out and remember that the outside exists." Jan 2019.

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16. Libraries have strong community links with a range of stakeholders, including schools, health centres, and voluntary groups. Libraries work with these to offer the community space to host dementia cafés, Knit and Natter groups, reading groups and respond to national initiatives such as mental health days and activities that promote digital inclusion, for example, code clubs for young people. Activities like these enable people to stay connected and engaged with their community and contribute to the promotion of good general mental health and wellbeing.

Moving Forward

17. To inform future direction, the service has undertaken a wider high-level review of national library related performance than that reported by CIPFA. Whilst including CIPFA, it has also explored the national context of book lending and purchasing; public library statistics; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport Taking Part survey; Publishers Association; Library and Information Statistics Unit, Loughborough University and the Booksellers Association. General findings were as follows:

   a) National library use

   - As noted in this report there is evidence of national decline in library use and library book funds;
   - In 2017/18, 32.7% of adults had used a public library service in their own time or for voluntary work in the 12 months since this data was collected. This is similar to the previous year (34.0%, 2016/17);
   - In 2017/18, 58.8% of children aged 5-10 had visited a library outside of school in the last 12 months, a similar proportion to 2016/17 (60.8%);
   - In 2017/18, 71.7% of 11-15-year olds had visited a library in the last 12 months. This is a similar proportion to 69.9% in 2016/17;
   - Children's authors represented 13 out of the top 20 borrowed authors in 2016-16;
   - People are more likely to use libraries if they have children or used a library as a child;
   - The biggest reason for using a library was to encourage children to read;
   - The biggest reason for not using a library was lack of spare time or lack of need;
   - Public library service use in the 12 months prior to the 2017/18 survey was significantly lower for men (27.0%) than women (38.1%);
   - Unlike other cultural sectors, public library use by people in the Black and Asian ethnic groups is significantly higher than for people in the White ethnic group.

b) Book purchasing

- UK consumers spent 6% more on books in 2016 than in the previous year, with young generations of consumers fueling the growth;
- Bookshops retained largest share of book sales in volume terms at 42%, followed by e-tailers, which increased by 1 percentage point to 32%. In terms of value bookshops had a 45% share of the spend in 2016, down from 46% in 2015. E-tailers remained at 34% between the two years;
- 2016 digital book sales accounted for 15% of UK publishers' total digital and physical book sales, down from 17% in 2014 and 2015.

Financial Challenge

18. The Communities and Wellbeing Service is continuing to respond to the financial challenges which the local authority faces in contributing to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Further savings of £1 million are set out in the 2019/20 MTFS and are expected by 2022/23.

19. The net budget for Communities and Wellbeing for 2019-20 is £5.3 million and this will reduce to £4.9 million by 2022/23. This will further reduce library staffing capacity but maintain the current network set out in paragraph 2 above.

20. As an opportunity to lay the foundations for a future service with limited resources, the service needs to meet the challenge of sustaining a service which complies with its statutory obligations whilst reshaping its services to release inward investment to grow areas of its offer and address some of the CIPFA reporting.

Strategic direction

21. Taking the information summarised in this report the service can draw some broad strategic pointers in moving forward and inform choices that may be taken in developing the library service. These are set out in the table below:

Options	Why?	Advantages	Disadvantages
Continue to deliver traditional services.	Libraries are a universal service free at the point of delivery.	Libraries accessible to all.	Reduced resources mean poorer levels of service provision across the board.
Plan for a bolder channel shift from physical loans to e-loans and invest in book stock accordingly, targeting working age adults.	E-loans are a growth area for the service.	Availability of the service 24/7 for people who cannot get to the library in scheduled hours.	E-loans currently represent a small percentage of physical loans
Continue to develop the investment in children's and family related book stock across the physical	Current evidence has suggested that targeted investment in specific stock areas	Libraries become increasingly family friendly.	Other areas of the library offer may decline.

Options	Why?	Advantages	Disadvantages
environment of the library network to enhance the family and children's experience of visiting the physical library.	boosts loans. Evidence suggests that people are more likely to use libraries if they have children.	Opportunity to grow loans in this area.	
Reshape the design of libraries with more focus on becoming family friendly.	Libraries use traditional furniture to set out its offer. More attractive shelving and furniture offers are increasing	Presents an opportunity to make the library more of an informal space to attract families.	Other areas of library use may decline.
Develop a value-based methodology for measuring the impact of libraries as a contributory element of other metrics.	Traditional, volume-based analysis does not measure the impact that libraries have on people's lives Libraries do not have the resources to grow volume	Enables the service to better demonstrate its value when resources are scarce. May lead to opportunities where libraries are commissioned to undertake activities that contribute to areas such as loneliness and wellbeing.	Difficult to measure with the frequencies traditionally associated with volume metrics.
Increase use of volunteers to support library activity.	Builds on existing strong volunteer base.	Volunteering has positive benefits to personal health and wellbeing. Enables local communities to shape library services.	Perception that traditional services are being replaced by volunteers. Demographic challenges to sustaining volunteering levels.

Resource Implications

22. Since April 2012/13, the Communities and Wellbeing Service has implemented changes to deliver £4 million of savings from a mixture of efficiencies and service reductions across the service, a reduction of 43%. Further savings of £1million are set out in the 2019/20 MTFS and are expected by 2022/23.

23. The net budget for 2019-20 is £5.3 million and this will reduce to £4.9 million by 2023. Plans are in place to deliver this saving by 2023.

24. The options outlined in paragraph 21 will present a significant challenge to the service unless it can realise internal investment from its existing resource, or lever in external resource for time limited and special projects. The options are not mutually exclusive but would need prioritising to assist the service in focussing its efforts.

Creating investment opportunities

25. In pursuing the options, set out in paragraph 21, a range of options that would need to be explored more fully have been devised:

   a) A review of the mobile library service. Use of mobile libraries is declining, and a review to reshape this could release between £50,000 - £100,000 to reinvest in the service;

   b) Reduction of the network of County Council funded libraries;

   c) Exploration of the viability of community management of some of the network;

   d) Reconfiguration of targeted libraries as learning centres attracting income from the Adult Learning Service. Income of £165,000 is currently generated through additional classroom space in libraries;

   e) Exploration of investment opportunities that may arise from the work arising from the County Council's Strategic Outcomes Framework. This may lead to targeted commissioned and time limited activity that would build capacity to deliver against wider County Council strategic ambitions, such as decreasing loneliness, improving mental wellbeing and providing targeted information resources;

   f) Increase the amount of SMART library hours across the network.

26. Further work on the viability of these options would be required in order to take an informed decision and would need to take into consideration the statutory responsibilities of the local authority.

Conclusions

27. Leicestershire's library service has been successful in sustaining services whilst meeting the financial challenges that all authorities are facing. It needs now to explore how it can release resource in order to re-invest in services.

Background Papers

Report to Cabinet: 19 September 2014 - Outcome of Consultation on Proposals for Changes in the Delivery of Library Services
https://bit.ly/2TzI1C7

Report to Cabinet: 6 July 2018 – Community Managed Libraries
https://bit.ly/303Nqn7

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

28. None.

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality and Human Rights Implications

29.	Any development that requires significant change to existing services has the potential to differentially impact on people with protected characteristics, for example, children and older people, and would therefore require an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

Appendices

Appendix A – Performance by Theme and Quartile Table - Libraries

Officers to Contact

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Performance by Theme

Leicestershire County Council

Theme
Libraries

Comparator
⦿ Revenue
◯ Deprivation

How to Read This Chart
The chart is divided up into quadrants based upon average rank for all indicators (vertical axis) and net revenue expenditure per head (horizontal axis) for two-tier county councils. Authorities in the top right quadrant are high performing and low spending, while authorities in the bottom left are low performing and high spending. The 'Deprivation' comparator uses local authority 2015 Multiple Deprivation rank.

'Overall Performance' is the rank of average rank for all indicators, while 'LA Core Performance' only includes themes that are related to county council functions;
- Adult Social Care
- Better Care Fund
- Children's Social Care
- Corporate
- Early Years & School Places
- Libraries
- Public Health
- SEND
- Transport & Highways
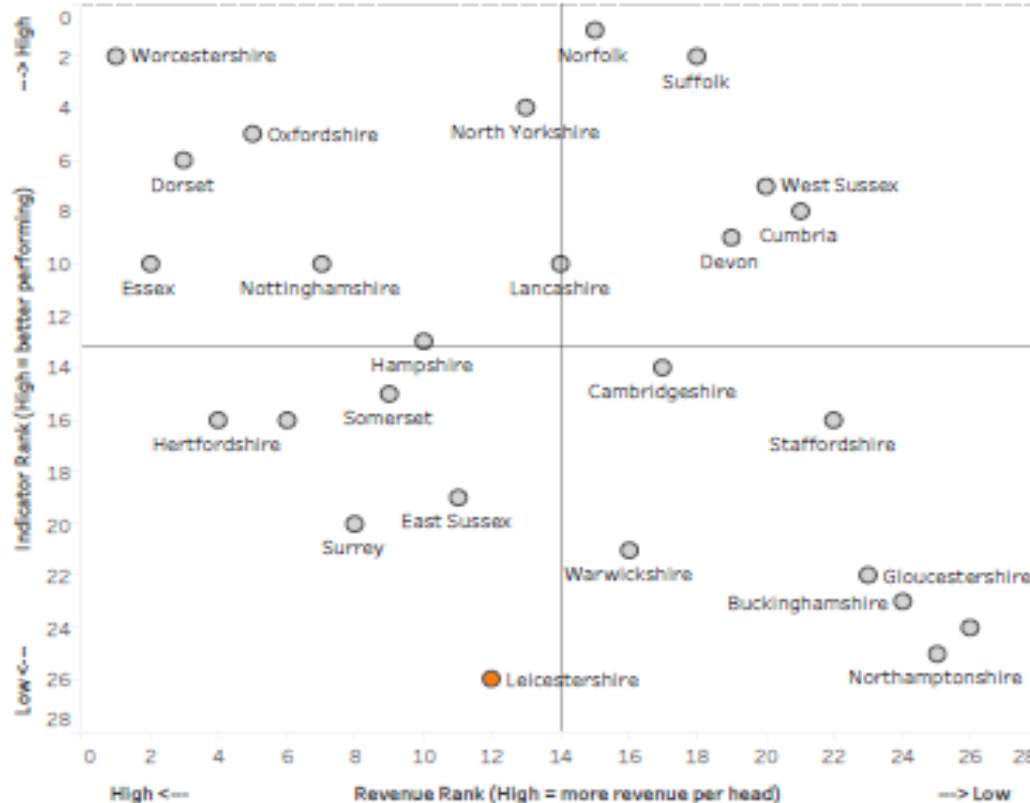
Source: LAIT, ASCOF, Fingertips, various, 2019. Produced by the Business Intelligence Service, Leicestershire County Council, 2019.

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Quartile Table

Libraries		
	Audio, Visual, Electronic and Other Issues per 1,000 Population	3
	Total Number of Electronic Workstations available to Users per 10,000 Population	3
	Number of Volunteer Hours per 10,000 population	4
	Number of Hours Recorded for use of People's Network Terminals per head of popn	4
	Visits for Library Purposes per 1,000 Population	4
	Book Issues per 1,000 Population	4
	Book stock per 1,000 Population	4
	Number of Active Borrowers per 1,000 population	4
	Number of Hours Available for use of People's Network Terminals per head of popn	4