



**ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**22 JANUARY 2024**

**COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Community Managed Libraries (CMLs), the services they offer and the support package made available by the County Council.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The County Council has a statutory obligation to ensure the provision of a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons who live, work or study in the area, as set out in the Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964.
3. Following a comprehensive service review in 2014 the Library Service undertook a detailed consultation and engagement process with 36 communities on the opportunity for local people to run their local library. The response was very positive with 35 communities establishing groups to run their local library, with support from the Council's Library Service, and a full list is set out within the Appendix attached to this report. This closer working with communities and other providers, whilst at the same time sustaining a countywide infrastructure, has contributed to the service meeting both its statutory obligations and budget challenges.
4. On 19 November 2014, the Cabinet agreed inter alia, a delivery model for its library services and a support package for community libraries.
5. A number of reports were subsequently presented to this Committee and the Cabinet as part of the establishment of the CML model across Leicestershire in 2017 and are set out under the Background Papers section of the report.

**Background**

6. There are different management models operating across the CML network. The majority are Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs). A smaller number of CMLs are run by Parish or Town Councils. Two libraries, Mountsorrel and Kirby Muxloe, operate under licence with the County Council as their transfer is not complete.
7. Most CMLs are operated entirely by volunteers with the exception of:

- Mountsorrel and Barrow where the Parish Councils have provided funding for a paid volunteer co-ordinator;
  - Countesthorpe and Braunstone Town which are run by the Parish and Town Councils and have paid library staff.
8. The diversity of management models reflect the diversity of communities across Leicestershire and the individual nature of each library. They offer many of the services that County Council managed libraries do, but operate differently and their strength lies in being able to develop a model that works for their local community and has the ability to make the most of the local assets and opportunities available. The fact there is no “one size fits all” is a strength, but also presents a challenge for the Council in ensuring its support is fair and equitable across the network.

### Key statistics

9. Collectively the CML network provides 598.25 hours of access to library venues per week. On average each CML is open 17 hours per week. The pattern of the opening hours varies from library to library, with the minimum being seven hours per week and the highest of 41.5 per week. In the majority of CMLs this includes some evening opening hours and Saturdays.
10. Between January-December 2023, CMLs issued 305,551 books, which is 22% of the total number of issues made by the Leicestershire Library Service. Of these 180,225 were junior issues (23% of all junior issues). CMLs received 7,857 new joiners during this period, which equates to 2.5% of all new joiners during the period. Whilst there are variations between individual CMLs collectively issues have increased since 2022, as have the number of new joiners.
11. CMLs do not record visit data, as this would require a manual count process.

### Services offered

12. CMLs offer access to a wide range of books, provided by the Leicestershire Library Service with stock rotated across the library network. Library users visiting CMLs can reserve any book held by Leicestershire Libraries and can return books to any Leicestershire Library. Book stock is reviewed periodically to ensure it reflects the interests of each community. CMLs in receipt of Section 106 developer contributions, can, in line with the developer agreement, purchase additional stock through the County Council stock supplier contract.
13. The County Council's network provides library users with free access to public PCs and WIFI, with the same range of digital resources available in County Council managed libraries, which include popular sites such as Ancestry and Find My Past.
14. Access to chargeable printing and photocopying facilities is well utilised by people who need to undertake a range of daily tasks, including job applications and searches, benefit claims, and passport applications.
15. CMLs hold a wide range of events and social activities which are informed by the needs of the local community, the spaces and facilities of each individual library and the skills and experience of library volunteers. These can include hosting school and

nursery visits, activities for children, book clubs, wriggly reader sessions, cafés, rooms for hire and many offer a Warm Space during winter months.

#### Support provided by the County Council

16. Each CML has a support agreement which outlines the support the County Council will provide and the expectations of each CML. The support agreement varies slightly depending on the individual arrangements for each library, but covers ICT support; free loan of book stock; reservations; professional library support; access to operational support by email or phone (Library Hub); van delivery service; access to Section 106 funding (developer contributions) in line with any relevant agreement.
17. The majority of these support agreements have been updated during 2023, with 27 out of the 35 completed to date. The updates are relatively minor and reflect the end of the tapered grant funding and changes to the subsidy rules, following the UK leaving the EU.
18. Each CML is allocated a named Community Managed Library Support Officer (CMLSO) who they work with on a regular basis. The CMLSOs are experienced library officers, able to offer a range of support and advice to groups. They sit within the Library Operations Team and their role complements the Council's asset-based approach enabling collaboration with communities and supporting voluntary and community sector groups to deliver effective and relevant services to their communities. They are the key liaison between the County Council and CMLs and external partners.
19. Their role includes advocating for and supporting CML with a wide range of issues including operational matters, policies, recruitment and training of volunteers and trustees, training on library systems, library stock, funding applications, facilitating property issues (where CMLs are in Council owned buildings) and signposting to further support through organisations like Voluntary Action Leicestershire, Rural Communities Council and the Community Managed Libraries Peer Network. CMLSOs maintain regular contact with their CMLs, in person, via phone or email, on a weekly or sometimes daily basis.
20. Further support and oversight is provided by the relevant Principal Managers and frontline staff in libraries who facilitate the Library Hub. CMLs also receive support from the Council's Communities Team, Property, Legal and Transport services.
21. CMLSO and the relevant Principal Manager, hold an annual review meeting with each CML. This is an opportunity to reflect on successes and challenges, provide an overview of performance and activities, review the business plan, including financial accounts and consider future plans. This allows the CML and officers to work together to identify any support needed, potential future challenges and celebrate success.
22. There are dedicated 'hubs' within three of the Council's Libraries (Hinckley, Loughborough and Wigston) that provide operational support Monday-Saturday to all the CMLs.

23. Primary stock for the CMLs is provided by the County Council under the instructions of the Library Resources team of professional Librarians. Stock rotation is undertaken and stock delivered round the County by the transport team.

### Case studies

24. There are many success stories amongst the network of 35 CMLs and the fact that all 35 CML have continued to deliver for their communities, despite the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis should be acknowledged as a success. The role of the CML Support Officers and the CML network meetings, ensure best practice is shared across the network and enable CMLs to offer support and advice to each other. Below are two brief cases studies which illustrate the impact and value of CMLs to their local communities.

#### *Market Bosworth CML*

25. Market Bosworth CML is a CIO, with a board of 12 trustees and 37 volunteers. The library is in a central location in this busy market town adjacent to the local secondary school. It offers a range of activities, from a book club to short mat bowls and story and rhyme sessions. In November 2023, the group received the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This prestigious award is equivalent to an MBE and is the highest award that can be given to local voluntary groups. Market Bosworth is currently the only library in the UK to hold the award. In 2024 there will be a presentation at the library by the Lord Lieutenant and two representatives from the library will attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

#### *Ratby CML*

26. Ratby CML is a CIO and again located in the centre of the village, opposite the primary school. It offers a range of activities from wiggly readers, to chair yoga and bingo. It also has a very popular café, which provides an important source of income. In 2022 the group, struggling with the impact of the national pandemic and increasing utility costs, found themselves in an unsustainable financial position. They reluctantly contacted the Library Service Officers to advise them of their intention to tender their notice to cease operating. The group subsequently worked with Council officers and representatives from Voluntary Action LeicesterShire to explore options to remedy the situation. Community support was galvanised which included the local pub adding an optional £1 to every meal bill. Over a period of four months and with much hard work, the trustees were able to return the group to a sustainable position and retracted their notice to close. The library continues to thrive.

### **Resource Implications**

27. The total budget for the Library Service in 2023/24 was £3,156,615. This covers all costs associated with the 16 County Council managed libraries, a mobile library service, prison library (HMP Gartree), support for 35 community managed libraries, all book-stock and library management systems.
28. When the CMLs were first established, in order to support these groups to become established and sustainable, the County Council offered tapered grant funding for the first five years. In the main all grant funding has now ceased with exceptions outlined below:

- Braunstone Town CML receive c.£1,250 per annum for service charge linked to the lease arrangement, until 2029;
  - Bottesford CML receive £4,000 per annum until 2027, linked to the head lease;
  - Kirby Muxloe receive £1,430 linked to the lease.
29. All 35 CMLs benefit from the support package outlined in paragraphs 16-23, which includes a range of direct and indirect costs funded from the core Library Service budget and some wider County Council services such as Property, Legal and ICT.
  30. Direct staffing costs associated with CML support are c. £200,000 per annum. This includes three full time equivalent CML Support Officers and equivalent to three full time equivalent Library Support Assistants to provide the support hub. There are additional indirect officer costs relating to time spent by the Library Service team supporting annual reviews, stock management and providing professional advice which equates to a further £50,000 per annum.
  31. Approximately £90,000 was allocated to book-stock in CMLs, which equates to 21% of the total Library Service book fund.
  32. Additional costs are incurred by corporate property maintenance budgets where the County Council retain lease or licence responsibilities for repairs, maintenance, utilities. These vary year on year, but based on previous years range from £20,000-£30,000 per annum.
  33. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Conclusions**

34. CMLs have become established community assets and offer Leicestershire residents access to valued library resources in their local communities. Most have been able to benefit from local support to develop their offer to best meet the needs of their local communities and maximise the assets available to them. As a result every CML is distinct and there is no single model.
35. Ensuring an effective and supportive relationship between each CML and Leicestershire Library Service will continue to be important to the future sustainability of CMLs.

### **Background papers**

Report to the Cabinet, 5 March 2014 - Consultation on Proposals for Changes in the Delivery of Community Library Services –

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=3988>

Report to the Cabinet, 19 September 2014 - Outcome of Consultation on Proposals for Changes in the Delivery of Library Services

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=4190>

Reports to the Cabinet - Future Strategy for the Delivery of Library Services

19 November 2014 – <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=3995>

- 16 March 2015 – <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=4360>  
11 May 2015 – <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=4361>  
16 June 2015 – <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=4228>  
7 October 2015 – <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=4504>  
19 April 2016 - <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=4601>

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

36. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the County Council.

### **Equality Implications**

37. There are no direct equality implications arising from this report, but it is of note that the CMLs are likely to contribute to the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty to have due regard to the objectives of eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

### **Human Rights Implications**

38. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Appendix**

List of Community Managed Libraries

### **Officer(s) to Contact**

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