

# APPENDIX B

## Luton Council Library Strategy DRAFT

### Introduction

Our Library Strategy sets out our aspiration and vision for a library service that is sustainable and relevant to the residents of Luton. Whilst we recognise that Libraries are an invaluable community service providing access to learning, information and culture for all, the landscape for libraries has changed dramatically in the last ten years.

Libraries have a key role to play in enabling Luton Borough Council to deliver on its vision for Luton in 2040: a vibrant town built on fairness, where people live good lives and achieve their aspirations, everyone will be able to achieve their potential and inequality will be reduced, a town where no one lives in poverty.

Ensuring no one in Luton is living in poverty by 2040 is a bold ambition, but it's something we are absolutely determined to achieve. We see the role of libraries and other community assets as key to achieving this ambition. The strategic alignment of the Council's community assets would enable the development of a unique configuration of services that best reflects and responds to local need, enabling: improvements in population health and wellbeing; reduction in health inequalities; empowered and engaged communities; reduce social isolation; and transform neighbourhoods for the better.

This strategy will be the driver for developing the service to ensure relevance in a digital world in a context of reducing budgets, increased partnerships, shared services and buildings and consortium working. It will ensure that there is a clear transformation of the library service across the town to ensure that Luton Borough Council can deliver a high quality library service that is sustainable into the future and remains relevant to the diverse and changing needs of Luton residents. In developing this strategy, the Council has considered its statutory obligations and the contribution that libraries can make to wider Council priorities, specifically the Councils vision for 2040 and priorities:

- Empowered families and communities;
- Reduced health inequalities; and
- School to employment pathways.

An independent inclusive growth commission has already provided valuable recommendations which has shaped thinking on how Luton will become an inclusive, modern, and aspirational place which recognises the value of our young people and diverse population. Libraries are recognised nationally as providing a significant role to communities in delivering a broad range of outcomes, including increasing wellbeing, literacy targets and community cohesion. In addition, their role as a service located within communities provides a rich selection of resources and materials locally and can offer a venue that facilitates a social space, events and shared working in creative and innovative ways. Libraries are uniquely situated, as a trusted and valued service, to engage with local communities in responding to changing needs and neighbourhood priorities.

The Library strategy has also been further informed by Harnessing Momentum: A Strategic Vision for the Arts, Cultural and Creative Industries in Luton 2017-2027.

### Purpose of Service

The purpose of our library service is improve access to knowledge, information and public spaces through engagement with partners and communities to build an inclusive town.

The service exists to:

- Provide access for all to quality resources; knowledgeable and people-focused staff and volunteers; and

- a welcoming library space;
- Maximise value from library and community assets and resources; and
- Maintain a sustainable financial position.

Luton Council's principal objective is to maintain the quality of the library service through a model that is best able to achieve this in both the short and the long term.

### **Our Statutory Duty**

Luton Council has a statutory responsibility (legal duty) to provide a local library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act requires that the Local Authority provide a library service that is 'comprehensive and efficient'.

There are no national standards for library provision, it is for local decision to how the library service best meets this requirement practically, including how many libraries there are, where they are, when they are open, and what each one offers. As a result, library services across the country are not all the same. Services are shaped by factors such as local policy, customer need and, in some cases, historical developments.

In formulating the library strategy the Council must also comply with the public sector equality duty (section 149 of the Equality Act). This requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; the relevant protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership.

### **How does our strategy compare to what is happening nationally?**

In 2010, the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals published guidance for local councils which said that a good public library service would deliver:

"A positive future for children and young people; A fulfilling life for older people; Strong, safe and sustainable communities; Promotion of local identity and community pride Learning; skills and workforce development; Health improvements and wellbeing; Equality, community cohesion and social justice; and Economic regeneration."

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021, published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in December 2016, and endorsed by the Local Government Association, sets out a vision for public library services in England. The document challenges local authorities to "explore alternative forms of delivery and financing for library services before making any reductions in library services", and sets out the current context for libraries as a nationally mandated service delivered locally, to local priorities.

Libraries Connected (formerly the Society of Chief Librarians) also produced and launched the universal offers for public libraries in 2013. These were reviewed with the public library sector and stakeholders in 2019 and re-launched as a streamlined and consistent framework with the mission of "Connecting communities, improving wellbeing and promoting equality through learning, literacy and cultural participation" with the 4 key themes of:

- Reading – engage, imagine, discover;
- Information and digital – inform, inspire, innovate;
- Health and wellbeing – healthier, happier, connected; and

- Culture and creativity – explore, create, participate

In developing this strategy, the Council has considered its statutory obligations, the universal offer and the contribution that libraries can make to Council priorities. To support us in identifying what local people need from the library service and understand how we can deliver our statutory duty of a ‘comprehensive and efficient library service’ a survey was designed to capture the views of both users and non-users (full analysis available as Appendix A). This Strategy demonstrates a commitment to the delivery of a broad range of modern, affordable library services to meet people’s needs in reading, accessing information, learning, literacy, health and wellbeing, work and leisure.

Our library service will:

- Outreach and engage with community members and organisations to ensure Luton’s library offer adapts to meet local needs;
- enable all that live, work and study in Luton to access knowledge, information and cultural resources for themselves, and provide support for those who may need more help;
- provide safe spaces (both physical and virtual) where anyone can go, without judgement, to read, to borrow, to learn, and to access information and online resources; and
- enrich communities by fostering local culture and heritage, and provide opportunities for citizens to participate actively in community life.

### **Strategic Vision for Libraries 2020-2025**

Our vision is to create a modern Library Service at the heart of the community that is inclusive, efficient, safe and accessible, and meets the needs of all who live, work or study in Luton. Our service will be responsive, relevant, sustainable, and support residents to reach their potential.

“A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life-raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen instead” Caitlin Moran columnist and author (‘Moranthology’, 2012).

Ambition statement: By 2025 Luton will have an inspiring library service shaped by the community where libraries are an integral part of a wider community hub; a place for people to meet/gather; a place for learning/self-improvement; and a place for the promotion of health and wellbeing, and seen as ‘much more than just a library’.

### **Our Strategic Priorities**

**Priority 1:** Promoting Lifelong Learning for all

#### **Delivering on this strategic priority:**

Libraries provide public access to resources, information, and knowledge. Therefore, the library service has a pivotal role to play in the delivery and development of future systems of lifelong learning. Libraries offer guidance and training in how to search and use this information, and rate the quality of information sources. The service also supports employees and volunteers to develop new skills.

The library service will continue to work closely with education services, schools, colleges and the university to contribute to children’s literacy, school-readiness, and lifelong learning and development. Access to books and

the promotion of reading has a significant effect on children's academic skills as well as their mental health and wellbeing. The Library service will continue to inspire children from their earliest years to discover a love of reading and to learn and develop. This includes free Bookstart packs for babies, toddlers and school-starters, work with schools, Summer Reading Challenge, Rhyme times, story times, clubs and activities for children as well as books for all ages, dedicated study zones and online resources.

The library service will ensure diversity in the materials offered. The library service recognises the importance of library users 'seeing themselves' in the materials offered, through character representation in fiction, wider representation in non-fiction and linguistic representation in terms of the materials offered.

The library service will adapt to new demands, and help people to access library services and materials, signpost services offered by partners, and explore working in different ways as the library service evolves.

**Target Outcomes:**

- Encourage library users of all ages to become literate in all forms of contemporary communication;
- Library services to work closely with education services and schools, colleges and the university to contribute to children's literacy, school-readiness and lifelong learning and development;
- Engage with community partners to develop and deliver various traditional & non-traditional literacy programs;
- Identify new ways our collections, programs and services can assist with life-long literacy and discovery;
- Continue to build diverse collections to support programming and services, ensuring there is a diverse offering of materials, including dual-language picture books;
- Further develop partnerships that support people into employment;
- Develop computer literacy skills, supporting entrepreneurs and assist in developing financial literacy;
- Offer core courses, learning and e-learning opportunities in libraries;
- Provide technology and access to resources that support people in self-study; and
- Engage with local partners to reduce levels of digital exclusion and disadvantage.

**Priority 2:** Building community through outreach, programmes & partnerships.

**Delivering on this strategic priority:**

The library service plays an important role in community development, as places to meet or through outreach work in communities. The Library service will strengthen its programme of outreach, providing library services and activities where they are most needed, including schools, and other community venues. The service will reach new communities, increasing service usage and bringing in new customers through outreach, marketing and by providing a service that is appealing and relevant to them.

**Target Outcomes:**

- Ensure that the service develops and delivers innovative and effective outreach programmes, based on identified needs;
- Identify and engage with community groups and partners to develop innovative and effective programs, collections, and services;
- Build the library's profile and participate in neighbourhood and community-wide events;
- Enhance the promotion of activities that take place in libraries that support people looking for employment and/or progression in their careers;
- Build on existing strong partnerships to ensure libraries are used by multiple agencies to become community hubs for a number of quality service offers; and
- Improve accessibility and strengthen community resources and assets by extending the availability of the building outside staffed hours.

**Priority 3:** Supporting and enabling health and wellbeing.

### **Delivering on this strategic priority:**

Changes in local needs means that library services have to evolve and adapt. As well as being a source of information, lender of books, and other learning materials, libraries have an important role to play in the prevention of ill-health, and promotion of health and wellbeing. Libraries provide a safe space where people can access or find out about other services, meet others and socialise or simply spend time.

### **Target Outcomes:**

- Promote mental and physical wellbeing by connecting people with knowledge, opportunities, services and with each other;
- Build relationships with partners to help deliver health and wellbeing initiatives to Luton's diverse communities;
- Improve the library environment whilst offering a venue that is universally accessible and free at the point of access which provides a place of safety and companionship for people who have a sense of isolation;
- Improve and promote a wide cultural programme and social inclusion, increasing digital inclusion;
- Ensure that vulnerable and isolated customers who are unable to visit the local library in person are still able to access library services; reviewing current outreach services and exploring new delivery models to improve access for these customers, making greater use of developing technologies and home delivery solutions; and
- Contribute to the public health agenda, particularly in the areas of physical and emotional wellbeing.

**Priority 4:** Driving sustainable economic growth through modernisation of the service and finding innovative ways to improve the offer and save money.

### **Delivering on this strategic priority:**

Despite the financial challenges the Council faces, we are determined to continue to transform how the library service operates. Within the context of significant reductions in public spending it has been recognised that libraries will need to contribute to local government savings targets by becoming financially efficient and affordable based on community needs. We need to target investment towards modernising the service to meet the future needs of residents. While we cannot speculate on the number or locations of libraries in the future, we can guarantee a quality, town wide service that is responsive, modern, relevant and sustainable in a changing world where its value to residents is acknowledged; where the service is the best it can be for all.

### **Target Outcomes:**

- Ensure the service is run efficiently and provides value for money;
- Use new technology such as self-service and e-books;
- Create a seamless user experience through the integration of our digital and physical spaces;
- Share library buildings to provide other services that people want locally, creating community hubs;
- Invest in technology to improve library operation and services; and
- Investigate innovative and alternative service delivery models.

### **What will success look like?**

Our Vision and Strategic Priorities provide a clear direction for the future delivery of the Library Service over the next five years, and supports the Council's overarching priority of eradicating poverty. Throughout our journey we will regularly review our outcomes and progress made against them.

We will consider this strategy to have achieved our ambition for libraries if:

- Overall use of library services, whether online or in person, increases;
- The service is economic, efficient, effective and sustainable;
- The service is reaching new communities and bringing in new customers;
- The service is making a positive contribution to improving outcomes and opportunities for citizens; and
- The service is supporting and contributing to the wider strategic priorities of the council.

This strategy will be kept under review during its lifetime to ensure that we continue to monitor and evaluate our ambition.

**List of Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Summary of consultation

Appendix 2 – Overview of Existing Provision

## Appendix 1 – Summary of consultation



Appendix A - Survey  
Summary v0.1.docx

## **Appendix 2: Overview of Existing Provision**

Libraries offer a wide range of services for all ages, including: safe and welcoming spaces; quality book stocks for all ages (including different languages); homework help; activities to encourage reading and cultural engagement; information for local studies; access to a PC and free online resources (including Wi-Fi); informal learning; home library service; membership; concessions; signposting; and functional support such as photocopying. Libraries also engage with partners to deliver cross-cutting objectives through different programmes and projects.

### **Libraries**

There are six static libraries in Luton, which offer the full range of core services, and three Library Access Points, which provide access to a collection of books:

- Luton Central Library, St. George's Square, LUTON, LU1 2NG;
- Leagrave Library, Marsh Road, LUTON, LU3 2N;
- Marsh Farm Library, Lea Manor High School, Northwell Drive, LUTON, LU3 3TL;
- Lewsey Library, Landrace Road, Luton, LU4 0SW;
- Stopsley Library, Hitchin Road, Luton, LU2 7UG; and
- Bury Park Library, Bury Park Community Centre, 161 Dunstable Road, Luton, LU1 1BW.
- Library access points:
  - Hockwell Ring Community Centre
  - Chaul End Community Centre
  - Farley Community Centre

In addition, a home library service and a range of virtual resources are also available for Luton residents. Luton Central Library is the headquarters for the service and offers the main local studies collections for Luton.

### **Library core service**

- Books in standard and large print;
- Audio books and e-Audio books;
- Music and films in appropriate formats;
- Newspapers and magazines in print and e-format;
- Books and newspapers in a range of community languages;
- Computer and internet access through the public library computers;
- Free Wi-Fi at all libraries (not currently available at Marsh Farm Library);
- Access to online services and resources;
- Bookstart Rhyme Time and Homework Help;
- Study space and quiet areas; and
- Events and activities to support reading and literacy.

All libraries participate in the national Summer Reading Challenge and support other programmes, such as those set out in the Universal Offers Calendar.<sup>1</sup>

**Library Access Points core services**

- Books in standard and large print; and
- Free Wi-Fi.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/resource/universal-library-offers-calendar-2020>