

Report For:	Executive	Item No: 0
Date:	29 June 2020	
Report of:	Lucy Hubber	
Report Author:	Matthew Hudson	
NOT FOR PUBLICATION Exempt information falling within paragraph(s).... Of part 1 of schedule 12a to the local government act 1972 <i>For Executive – private: delete if not appropriate</i>		

Subject:	Library Strategy	
Lead Executive Member(s):	Cllr Sian Timoney	
Wards Affected:	All	
Consultations:	Councillors	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Scrutiny	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Stakeholders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Others	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommendations

1. To adopt the modern library strategy (at Appendix A), which has been developed in consultation with local people and focuses on:
 - a. aligning the Library offer with strong outcomes to benefit communities;
 - b. providing sustainable and safe warm spaces for communities to learn and grow;
 - c. enhance and increase the digital offer;
 - d. co-locating library services with partner organisations so several services to be accessed in one visit;
 - e. increasing the use of trained volunteers;
 - f. replacing poorly used library collections; and
 - g. seeking investment in libraries to instil civic pride through a modern and vibrant offer.

Background

2. Luton Borough Council's 2040 Luton strategy envisions that people, communities and organisations of Luton work together to realise a town built on fairness; providing opportunities for all residents to reach their full potential and achieve a good quality of life.
3. Luton 2040 aspires for Luton to be a sustainable, resilient and inspiring place, where communities work together to ensure no one lives in poverty.
4. The reduction in local government funding presents significant challenges for all public bodies and both statutory and non-statutory services are now subject to increasing scrutiny and review. Library services are not immune from this as the Council considers how to meet its statutory responsibilities in the context of significant reductions in public spending.
5. Locally and nationally, library services are facing challenges to many of its traditional functions. In the context of significant reductions in public spending at Government level that have been exacerbated by the catastrophic implications of COVID-19, the Council cannot afford to spend as much on its library service as it has in the past.

6. This Strategy will be the driver for developing the service to ensure relevance in a digital world, in a context of smaller budgets, increased partnerships, shared services and buildings and consortium working.
7. Luton Borough 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'. It is for local decision 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. Provided that:
 - a. Facilities for the borrowing of books and other materials are made available to any persons whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full time education within that area;
 - b. Keeping adequate stocks available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements of both adults and children;
 - c. Encourage both adults and children to make use of the Library Service, and of providing advice as to its making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it;
 - d. Of securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such as and any authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full cooperation between persons engaged in carrying out those functions; and
 - e. The law makes it clear that councils cannot charge people for library services that make up part of their statutory provision.
8. Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021, published by the DCMS in December 2016 and endorsed by the Local Government Association, sets out a vision for public library services in England.
9. 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:
 - a. *"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."*
10. To support the development of the Strategy and to help identify what local people need, and to understand how Luton Council can deliver its statutory duty of a 'comprehensive and

efficient library service', a survey was designed to capture the views of both users and non-users. The consultation responses are present at appendix C, and the identified needs/demands for change to the Library Service have been summarised below:

- a. aligning the Library offer with strong outcomes to benefit communities;
- b. providing sustainable and safe warm spaces for communities to learn and grow;
- c. enhance and increase the digital offer;
- d. co-locating library services with partner organisations so several services to be accessed in one visit;
- e. increasing the use of trained volunteers;
- f. replacing poorly used library collections; and
- g. seeking investment in libraries to instil civic pride through a modern and vibrant offer.

The Current Position

11. The Council has not described or characterised a 'comprehensive and efficient' service at any point. However in previous option appraisals Luton Central Library has consistently featured to retain and it could reasonably be concluded that it is fundamental to meeting any test.
12. The draft Library Strategy sets out the challenges, considerations and direction of travel over the next five years that will ensure Luton's Library Service is robust, sustainable and relevant to the diverse and changing needs of people who live, work or study in Luton.
13. The draft strategy demonstrates a commitment to the delivery of a broad range of modern, affordable library services to meet needs in reading, accessing information, learning, literacy, health and wellbeing, business and leisure.
14. The implications of COVID-19 mean that user interactions and requirements of the library service are likely to change. The strategy provides the flexibility and opportunity to allow the library service to respond appropriately to emerging needs.

Goals and Objectives

15. To define what "comprehensive and efficient" library service looks like for Luton's residents and those who work or study here; and
16. 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.

Proposal

17. The strategy considers opportunities for both efficiencies and where possible investment, such as the rationalisation or strategic alignment of community services, and investment to maintain and, where possible, enhance the current service offer.
18. The draft strategy covers four main outcomes:

- a. Promoting lifelong learning for all;
- b. Building community through outreach, programmes and partnerships;
- c. Supporting and enabling health and wellbeing; and
- d. Driving sustainable economic growth through modernisation of the service and finding innovative ways to improve the offer and save money.

19. This strategy will be kept under review during its lifetime to ensure delivery of the strategy is monitored, and to allow for re-evaluation of the ambition and focus.

Key Risks

20. Significant reductions in public spending, notwithstanding the implications of COVID-19, means that libraries will need to become more efficient to contribute to local government savings targets, becoming financially efficient and affordable based on community needs and modernised to meet the future needs of residents.
21. Libraries are incredibly important, and it is important that the Council engage fully with communities around proposals for rationalisation or transformation of the Library Service, and that they are consulted widely, allowing reasonable time for communities to develop alternative or complementary proposals.

Consultations

22. To understand the views of Luton residents (library user and non-user) on usage and satisfaction of the current provision, as well as to establish preferences and priority areas for future library service provision, data was collected via a questionnaire available through the Council's consultation portal (hard copies were made available through the libraries). The consultation was run for eight weeks in autumn 2019. The questionnaires asked for quantitative data through fixed response questions, supported by qualitative feedback through free text boxes.

Alternative options considered and rejected (please specify)

23. NA

Appendices Attached

24. Appendix A – Library Strategy
25. Appendix B - Integrated Impact Assessment
26. Appendix C – Consultation Report

Background Papers

27. None

IMPLICATIONS

For Executive Reports:

- All grey boxes must be completed
- All statements must be cleared by an appropriate officer

For CLMT Reports:

- Only the dark grey boxes must be completed
- Clearance is not required

Legal	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
Duties to provide are referred to in the body of the report	Steven Sparshott, Senior Solicitor	2 June 2020

Finance	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
Due to of reduction in revenue support grant from the Central Government and also C-19, the Council has a budget gap of £22m which means all the services in the Council will need to be reviewed to ensure that efficiencies can be achieved. Financial implications of any emerging projects relating to the strategy will require in-depth finance scrutiny on a case by case basis and separate reports will need to be approved by the Exec with all the financial implications.	Atif Iqbal (Finance Business Partner)	12 June 2020

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) – Key Points		
Equalities / Cohesion / Inclusion (Social Justice)	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
Implications relating to any proposal around rationalisation, reduction or transfer of services will need to be reviewed. The IIA has identified a positive impact for young people but a negative impact for the elderly. Library staff and volunteers will be negatively impacted by the relocation or closure of library sites	Maureen Drummond, Interim Equalities Manager	5 June 2020
Environment	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
No direct implications, however, there is the potential for both positive and negative implications. The strategy will need to consider the environmental implications and, where appropriate, ways to mitigate any negative impacts as part of its consideration of future decisions.	Katarzyna Wysocka, Team Manager Sustainable Development and Transport	11 June 2020
Health	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
The new strategy provides opportunities that would have positive implications for health and wellbeing.	Sally Cartwright, Service Director Healthcare	10 June 2020

Community Safety	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
Staffing	Clearance Agreed By	Dated
Other	Clearance Agreed By	Dated