Essex County Council

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

11:00	Thursday, 10 March 2022	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

For information about the meeting please ask for:
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		Pages
*	**Members of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee have also been invited to attend and participate in the discussion on agenda item 4.**	
**	**Private Pre-Meeting for PAF Members** Please note that there will be a virtual private pre-meeting for members at 4.00pm on Wednesday 9 March.	
1	**Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**	**5 - 5**
2	**Minutes: 3 February 2022** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2022 and consider matters arising.	**6 - 14**

3	**Questions from the Public** A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. Please note that members of the public wishing to ask a question must email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk by noon on the day before the meeting (Wednesday 9 March 2022) and that questions must relate to an item on the agenda for the meeting.	
4	**Briefing on the consultation and development of the new library plan: Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026**	**15 - 22**
4.1	**Appendix 1: Draft plan and surveys used during the consultation**	
a	**Appendix 1 Everyone's Library Service - Draft plan for consultation**	**23 - 42**
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4.2	**Appendix 2: Consultation Analysis report**	
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4.3	**Appendix 3: Summary of engagement with other organisations**	**139 - 141**
4.4	**Appendix 4: Proposed Changes Report**	**142 - 143**
5	**Work Programme**	**144 - 147**
6	**Date of Next Meeting** To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 14 April 2022, in County Hall.	
7	**Urgent Business** To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.	

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

8 Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Agenda item 1

Committee: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership (Quorum: 4)

Councillor R Gooding	Chairman
Councillor S Barker	
Councillor L Bowers-Flint	
Councillor M Durham	
Councillor J Fleming	
Councillor M Goldman	
Councillor C Guglielmi	Vice-Chairman
Councillor J Lumley	
Councillor P May	Vice-Chairman
Councillor A McGurran	
Councillor R Playle	
Councillor L Shaw	
Councillor W Stamp	
Councillor A Wiles	

Non-elected Members
Christine Martin (St John Payne Roman Catholic School - Catholic diocese representative)

Co-opted educational representative members may advise and vote on all matters relating to children's services in schools. Two places are available for church Diocesan representatives. Two further places are available for parent governors at maintained schools in Essex (one primary and one secondary school). To date one representative is in place as above. A review of representation is underway.

Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.00am on Thursday, 03 February 2022 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford.

Present:
County Councillors:
R Gooding (Chairman)
S Barker
L Bowers-Flint
M Durham
M Goldman
C Guglielmi (Vice Chairman)
J Henry (substitute)
P May (Vice Chairman)
A McGurran
R Playle
L Shaw
W Stamp

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer and Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer were also present.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Fleming (for whom Councillor Henry substituted), Councillor Wiles and Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the public

There were none.

4. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2021 Update

The Committee considered report PAF/01/2022 comprising of a further update on the development of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy.

The following people from Essex County Council attended the meeting to introduce the item, deliver a presentation and respond to questions:

Councillor Andrew Sheldon – Deputy Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability,
Alex Abercrombi – Education Delivery Manager,
Helen Wall – SEND Strategy Lead: Participation and Inclusion.

The presentation provided information on the actions that had been taken since the last meeting when the Strategy was presented to the Committee, which included further engagement with partners and families, work with the Essex Family Forum, ensuring the delivery plan had specific metrics for each measure and that the report had clear alignment with the Ofsted/CQC outcomes from the 2019 inspection.

Early identification and early support were a top priority identified from the public engagement in 2019. Since then, new guidance training had been released for the workforce across education, health and social care relating to identification and support for children and young people with SEND. The delivery plan set out the new Inclusion Framework which was a process and a toolkit for schools and settings to support accurate proactive early identification of need for children and young people.

After the presentation, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

(i) There had been further engagement with parents and main feedback was to include children and young people more and not just parents. The first strand within the Strategy was ‘My Voice, My Choice’ which ensures that every child and young person’s views were listened to.

(ii) Following the survey taken place between March and May 2019, young people put together a Children and Young People’s POET challenge, this included their three priorities. A video was presented at the SEND Governance Board and to headteachers at a conference where they were asked to make a pledge, the young people were then to contact them to ask what difference had been made and report back through their networks with young people, the survey would then be repeated.

(iii) Post 16 opportunities for young people was in the fifth strand of ‘My Life, My Opportunities’. There was an employment team working with local businesses and employers to help prepare children and young people for work.

(iv) Work was taking place on the new Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP). There would be input at the point of implementation to ensure the plan could be delivered effectively for children/young people. There was a system of moderation and quality assurance which was being held jointly by education, health and social care and partners from schools and families.

(v) Members challenged how the Strategy was going to be implemented, how it was going to make a difference to families and young people and how this would be monitored.

(vi) A virtual Graffiti Wall was open all hours for families to share their experiences.

(vii) There was an Ordinarily Available Offer which ensured that there was the same high-quality offer in every early year's setting, school and college across Essex. Schools that believed they were doing well at inclusion had been asked to come forward as well as schools that were finding it a challenge. Early adopters would work with Essex for six months to set the standard and then it would be rolled out fully to other schools.

(viii) The Inclusion Framework had been piloted mainly in mid-Essex and small pilots in the north-east, west and south of the count6y and it was currently being formally evaluated before it was rolled out more widely.

(ix) The Essex Headteacher Roundtable had grown in membership and shared best practice and learning and helped drive inclusiveness.

(x) Children were finding it difficult to make the transition back to school since the pandemic and it was important to recognise the trauma that a lot of families had experienced. Strategies and support were to be put in place that enabled children and families to make that transition back to school feel safe again.

(xi) Some Members raised concerns regarding the lack of provision in the Dengie area and the long journey times a lot of young people had had to endure as a result. As well as building specialist provision, evaluation of the use of enhanced provisions in more mainstream schools was taking place.

(xii) There was a new Essex Local Offer platform to be put in place which would be a one-stop shop where families could go for information. There was funding for a content writer which meant that information would be written in a way that should be accessible to every young person and family. In July 2022 further details would be provided.

(xiii) Information leaflets were suggested. The Essex Family Forum was looking into what would work as a resource to support schools to give to families that would point them to the Essex Local Offer.

Conclusion:

Members encouraged further clarity on the links and golden threads between different corporate strategies within the portfolio.

It was **agreed:**

(i) That there would be a further update to the Committee as the Strategy developed into implementation.
(ii) To report back on the ongoing evaluation between investing in specialist schools and where/when to incorporate into mainstream and more detail on relevant aspects of planned capital programme.
(iii) That a brief written response be provided on how climate considerations were to be incorporated in the approach to home to school transport in future.
(iv) Further information would be circulated on the Young People's POET challenge, how families can share their views with the independent parent carer network for Essex through a virtual graffiti wall, and the newsletter for families.

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

5. Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-2027

The Committee considered report PAF/02/22 comprising of a further update on the development of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-27. The following people from Essex County Council attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

Councillor Beverley Egan – Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years;
Carolyn Terry – EYCC Sufficiency and Sustainability Manager.

The new Early Years and Childcare Strategy had been officially launched and set out the commitments to improve outcomes for young children and ensure every child in Essex got the best start to life. The presentation included a summary of the visions and aims, key priorities for Year One of the new Strategy, the delivery plan, further information of the Word Gap and summary of the analysis of feedback from surveys and consultations that had been undertaken.

Following the presentation, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

i) The priority for the coming year was to ensure that there were effective systems in place to help identify, as early as possible,

those children that needed most help and to track their progress with a main focus on disadvantaged 2 year-olds identified as eligible to access a funded childcare place. These children would then be a core cohort t focus early language and communication development to help close the Word Gap outcomes.

ii) Good nutrition, the use of cutlery and toilet training was important in terms of child development. These aspects were covered as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Essex Child Family Wellbeing Service also supported families regarding nutrition and toilet training and there was a School Readiness Pathway in place with the Essex Child Family Wellbeing Service.

iii) In the survey two thirds of respondents were aware of the tax-free childcare allowance but less than a third were using it. It was expected that this would improve with more information on eligibility being provided to parents.

iv) The Free Early Education Entitlement Funding was provided by the Department of Education based on participation levels derived from local census data.

v) All of Essex's Extended Free Entitlement was paid at a set rate of £4.30 an hour for each child so there was no discrepancy between areas.

vi) During the pandemic all possible information regarding covid support grants was given to providers and guidance on what they could access. Local councils were also contacted to encourage early years' settings to access the grant funding. A team of business management consultants worked with early years settings to help them look at other grants that were also available, with an advance for the Free Early Education Entitlement Funding also an option to help with cash flow.

vii) There were big ambitions for the Charter including creating accredited modules for childcare providers to undertake and get quality accreditation and this included a module on the environment.

viii) A high percentage of early years' settings in Essex were judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. When a setting fell into 'required improvement' or 'inadequate' there were quadrant teams to support those settings. If they were unable to improve then the Free Education Entitlement Funding could be taken away.

ix) As part of the Essex Child Family Wellbeing Service there was a new-born visit as part of a handover from midwives to Health Visitors. A six-to-eight-week check took place and further 1 year

and 2 year checks. The checks helped to see whether parents required any targeted support.

x) Funding had been received across Burnham North, Burnham South and Burnham West to create new early years' places.

Conclusion:

It was **agreed:**

(i) I Can Do advice to be distributed.
(ii) Further information to be provided on the rates of school readiness.
(iii) To include in the next update, some further information on the consideration of the environmental impact of Early Years' settings and work planned with providers on this.
(iv) A further update to be scheduled to review progress.

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

6. Domestic Abuse Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/03/22 comprising of the one-off meeting convened in the form of a whole-committee Task and Finish Group looking at information available to local members to help them signpost services. Members discussed raising the profile of the report.

7. Work Programme

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/04/22 comprising the work programme for the committee.

8. Future Meeting Dates

The Committee considered and agreed report PAF/05/22 comprising of future meeting dates for the Committee.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 10 March 2022.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.30pm.

MATTERS ARISING (page 1 of 3)

Date	Agenda item	Action	Status
3 February 2022	SEND Strategy	That there would be a further update to the Committee as the Strategy developed into implementation.	To be scheduled into Work Programme in consultation with officers
		To report back on the ongoing evaluation between investing in specialist schools and where/when to incorporate into mainstream and more detail on relevant aspects of planned capital programme;	TBC
		That a brief written response be provided on how climate considerations were to be incorporated in the approach to home to school transport in future.	TBC
		Further information would be circulated on the Young People's POET challenge, how families can share their views with the independent parent carer network for Essex through a virtual graffiti wall, and the newsletter for families.	Links provided as follows: http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/yp-poet/ https://essexfamilyforum.org/parent-surveys-and-feedback/virtual-graffiti-wall/
3 February 2022	Early Years' and Childcare Strategy	I Can Do advice to be distributed.	TBC
		Further information to be provided on the rates of school readiness	TBC
		A further update to be scheduled to review progress.	TBC

		To include in the next update, some further information on the consideration of the environmental impact of Early Years' settings and work planned with providers on this.	TBC
9 December 2021	Adult Social Care and Health portfolio priorities	Further detail on the Multi-Disciplinary Team project operating in Tendring to be provided	Separate process underway with local Tendring members - TBC
9 December 2021	Adult Social Care and Health portfolio priorities	Officers would doublecheck that training on cooking skills and recipes aligned with the typical content of food bank programmes	TBC
9 December 2021	Adult Social Care and Health portfolio priorities	That a more detailed update on carers would be brought to a future meeting	To be scheduled
9 December 2021	Adult Social Care and Health portfolio priorities	Further information to be provided about information and support available for and targeted at grandparents who had caring duties.	To be included in the above more detailed carers update.
9 December 2021	Adult Social Care and Health portfolio priorities	Officers would follow-up with Councillor Fleming on the Maldon Day Centre respite care local practice to ascertain if it could be developed elsewhere	Cllr Fleming to confirm.
9 December 2021	Adult Social Care and Health portfolio priorities	Further information to be provided on 'Houses for Life' and closer collaboration and sharing information with Districts on local needs and addressing geographical differences.	To be scheduled for a future meeting – probably April or May 2022 meeting.
10 November 2021	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2021 Update	Suggestions made for changes to draft Strategy (rationale, reference to CQC/OFSTED inspection, metrics, promote further partnership working, community transport options).	To be incorporated into revised draft scheduled to return to the Committee in February 2021

Date	Agenda item	Action	Status
14 October 2021	Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022	Delivery plan/timetable and significant milestones, further information and analysis of the Word Gap with Essex context and the feedback from the various surveys and consultations, and the numbers accessing funded places and breakdown including disadvantaged children;	To be incorporated into further update scheduled for February 2022
14 October 2021	Home Education and Children Missing Education	Further update once a response was received to ECC's submission to the Education Select Committee and Government and/or when the Cross-Party Working Group had any further aspects to report or consult the Committee on	Further update to be scheduled – Date TBC
14 October 2021	Domestic Abuse	Chairman and Lead Officer to discuss potential Task and Finish Group activity and requests for further information; Information to be re-sent to food banks in good time before Christmas;	Focus of a Task and Finish Group agreed to look at information available for local members to help signposting to services.

Reference number: PAF/06/22

Report title: Briefing on the consultation and development of the new library plan: Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee (with members from the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee also attending and participating)	
Report author: Councillor Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance	
Date: 10 March 2022	**For:** Consideration
Enquiries to: Juliet Pirez, Head of Libraries (email: Juliet.Pirez@essex.gov.uk)	
County Divisions affected: All	

1. Everyone's Essex

1.1. This paper provides an update for the Scrutiny Committees on:

- The consultation and engagement process with Essex residents and key stakeholders on the draft plan for Essex libraries: **Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026**,
- The outcomes of the consultation, and
- The next steps to finalise and adopt the plan and prepare for delivery.

1.2. This new library plan will enable us to deliver a service that is modern, vibrant, and sustainable. The plan is underpinned by the themes of equality of opportunity, empowering communities, harnessing technology, enhancing resources, and contributing to the wider ambitions of Essex County Council (ECC) for its residents. It commits to keeping all 74 libraries open with investment in training and the upskilling of library staff.

1.3. We have consulted on the Plan to test the appetite for our commitments and to gather feedback.

1.4. The consultation analysis report shows that Essex residents and organisations give their broad support to the Plan. Key internal and external stakeholders have given broad approval and helpful feedback.

2. Background

2.1. As part of the Everyone's Essex Plan that has been adopted by the new administration, a refreshed Libraries' strategy has been developed, which covers a range of agendas, but with a specific focus on Levelling Up and Climate Change.

2.2. In September 2021, we drafted ideas for what a new plan would look like. The Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member engaged with stakeholders and held a public webinar, where she outlined the direction of the draft plan, ahead of it going out to consultation.

2.3. An 8–week public consultation was launched on 26 November 2021 and closed on 21 January 2022. This included an extra 2 weeks to the standard 6-week consultation, recognising that this covered the Christmas festive period.

2.4. For reference, the draft plan and surveys used during the consultation are in Appendix 1.

3. Consultation and engagement process

3.1. The consultation opened at 1pm on 26 November 2021. Starting at 9am, a comprehensive communications cascade was launched for employees, ECC leadership, politicians and local authorities across Essex in all tiers, ECC and library partners, national and regional bodies. A comprehensive public communications campaign was also launched, which targeted key audiences in order to achieve a broad representative range of responses. (More on this further in the report.)

3.2. The principal way to read the plan and complete the survey was online. Library staff were encouraged to help anyone in a library setting who needed support to do this. There was also a process in place to provide hard copies and alternate formats. This approach is consistent with other ECC consultations and balances several factors including the increased digital skills of our residents, environmental concerns, accuracy of recording, and administrative efficiency.

3.3. The draft plan and survey were promoted extensively throughout the county, targeting both new and existing users from across Essex to get a breadth of replies. With reduced footfall in town centres and villages due to the pandemic, as well as the rise in social media access, our strategy was a mix of digital communication, traditional channels, and hard copy local displays, and working with partners. This balance helped to address environmental concerns about large volumes of print and paper waste. Using digital channels is much more effective in focusing in on areas and groups where we want to increase awareness and engagement.

3.4. Social media was key to reaching younger populations and hard to reach groups. We proactively used the demographic data received during the consultation to target promotion to specific areas, age groups and organisations, for example Mums groups, Community groups and Business groups. We reached more than 200,000 people through posts on our ECC and Essex Libraries social media channels as well as through a Facebook advertising campaign.

3.5. We sent out information to every school in Essex and reached out to both Essex Universities. We engaged directly with key groups including Young Essex Assembly, Epping Youth Forum, faith leaders, library clubs and groups, partners and groups who use library spaces, library employees and volunteers, and wider ECC employees.

3.6. Library staff went out to town centres and schools, engaging directly with residents about the plan and survey using information displays and handing out postcards with information about the consultation to encourage participation.

3.7. To extend the reach we asked partners to use their networks, for example:

- Essex districts, boroughs, city, towns and parish councils
- Essex Youth Service and Essex Young Assembly group
- Facebook community groups and Essex is United
- Local and national groups like the Rural Community Council Essex, Essex Rural Partnership and the Arts Council.

3.8. We communicated directly to around 80,000 residents through our e-newsletters, this includes approximately 40,000 library users. The consultation also featured on the ECC Homepage which gets on average 37,000 visitors a month. It has also been on the Essex Libraries website and all our social media channels.

3.9. Offline we engaged with local, regional and national press generating coverage in many local newspapers and on local radio stations via interviews, which presented the opportunity to talk more about the consultation. Posters and popup banners were displayed in libraries and other community venues.

3.10. There was additional direct engagement through meetings with national and regional bodies including Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Libraries Connected, and The National Literacy Trust

4. Outcomes of the consultation

4.1. A total of 2,213 survey responses were analysed by an independent external company. The breakdown was:

- 2,185 individual survey responses of which 167 were paper copies and 86 online Easy Read responses
- 28 online Group responses
- Blank submissions were not included in the analysis.

This compares well with other recent ECC consultations.

4.2. The analysis showed very good support for the proposals in the Plan, with many showing strong agreement. People were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each one or if they neither agreed nor disagreed. They were also given the opportunity to provide comments on each of the three high-level aims in their own words and these were grouped into themes. The next three paragraphs give more detail in relation to each pillar of the plan.

4.3. *Library Service and Literacy:*

- There was at least 90% agreement from individual respondents with the aims to support children to be school-ready and develop their reading skills, keep stock and resources up to date, help adults improve their literacy, ensure staff have the right skills, and provide books and resources in formats that meet changing need. Strength of agreement (i.e. proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for these aims is also very high.
- Support to deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities and to get more residents involved in shaping the service is also high at over 80%
- The aims to explore new opportunities to generate additional income, and new roles and opportunities for volunteers scored around 70% agreement.
- 638 individuals made comments about the aims for Library Services and Literacy. The most common theme from 25% of those making comments, is that well trained staff are critical to the library service, with 18% noting that volunteers should be in addition to paid staff rather than replace them. 14% of the 638 who made a comment (equating to 89 individuals) also wanted to flag a concern that digital alternatives should not replace physical books.
- Responses from groups aligned broadly with the individual responses. The aims to keep stock up to date and provide alternative formats, and to support children to be school-ready and develop their reading skills had 100% agreement.

4.4. *Communications and Infrastructure:*

- Developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement and improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences were the best supported aims by individual respondents with at least 83% agreement.
- Improvements to buildings, including reducing our carbon footprint, and improving engagement with the staff gained 75% agreement and had strong support.
- Aims with agreement of 60% and above were:
    - Roll out better mobile technology for staff and volunteers
    - Update printing services on offer to customers
    - Launch a new online library platform.

  A significant proportion neither agreed nor disagreed with these aims, possibly because of perceived relevance.
- 485 individuals made comments in this section. The most common theme from 21 % of those making comments in this section was the need to promote the library service better and improve communication. 13% noted having well trained staff who were proficient in Tech support. And, consistent with comments under the first pillar, 11% of the 485 (equating to 53 individuals) commented on retaining physical books alongside electronic alternatives.
- Group responses were broadly aligned although there was less agreement for building improvements, with a significant proportion neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

4.5. *Supporting Communities and Levelling Up*:

- At least 85% of individual respondents agreed with the aims to help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connect residents with other services, expand outreach services, and provide employability support. 80% agreed with supporting residents with their health and wellbeing.
- The proposal to explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities had 50% agreement. A significant proportion (31%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this aim. Individuals also put forward ideas for activities which could be chargeable including arts and crafts, exhibitions, writing workshops, and talks by authors.
- 379 individuals commented on this pillar. The most common theme from 22 % of those making comments here was concern about moving outside the core offering and getting involved in services which are provided elsewhere. 14% thought all services should be free. And 12% suggested the library could act as a community hub or for socialisation.
- Reducing digital exclusion and improving digital skills scored 100% support from the groups who responded.

4.6. Feedback from the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), The National Literacy Trust (NLT), and Libraries Connected (LC) was positive.

- NLT felt it was a very positive message. They particularly supported links to levelling up and the ambitions around partnerships.
- DCMS noted the ambitions to do more in the digital space.
- LC were pleased to see infrastructure and a focus on the environment.
- All organisations gave pointers to help Essex Libraries make the implementation of the plan successful and were pleased to be engaged as part of our consultation.

4.7. The full Consultation Analysis report and the Summary of engagement from other organisations can be found in Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

5. Next steps to finalise and adopt the plan, and prepare for delivery

5.1. The insight and analysis from the consultation tell us where individuals feel most passionately about the ambitions and proposals. This has helped us to prioritise the ambitions for the library service. We propose some changes to emphasise and clarify what the public have told us is important to them.

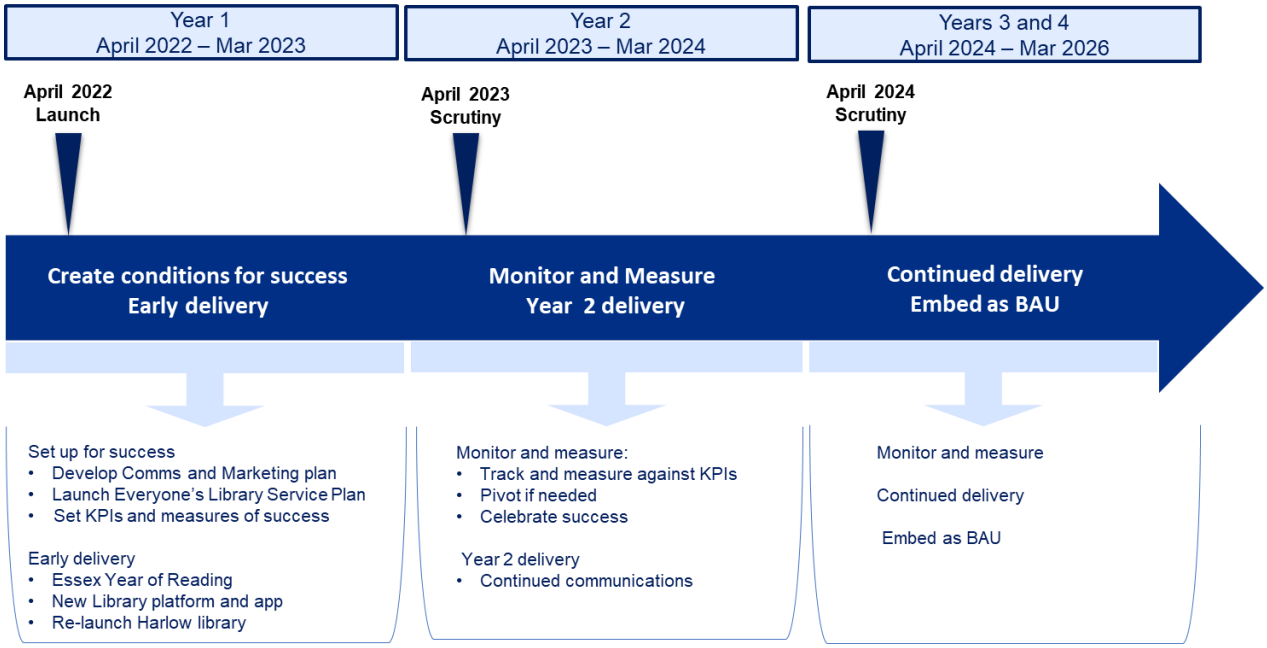
- The public have reiterated how important hard copy book stock is for them – an ambition we have always supported. We will make it clearer in the Plan that our ambition to keep our stock up to date and appealing includes hard copy as much as electronic resources.
- Outreach, communications and involvement of our communities in shaping the service will be given more prominence in our plan and we will specifically look at how we can localise communications and adverts of library events.

- Our skilled paid workforce are as important to the public as they are to us and we will reflect this more clearly. Volunteers support the work of the service allowing us to do more, as they work alongside our paid for staff. The Plan will emphasise the important link between the two.
- We will give more context as to why charging is required for some new activities and assurance how they could run alongside and complement free activities. Hosting these activities could enable us to provide an enhanced offer, service or experience to appeal to our existing customers, new users and to raise awareness of libraries as a potential partner and venue for other organisations. We are keen to drive up use of library buildings and increase footfall, which we hope will encourage greater use of library facilities.

5.2. Full details are in the Proposed Changes Report in Appendix 4.

5.3. Following any final feedback from the Scrutiny Committees we will amend the plan in line with the proposed changes and seek Cabinet approval to adopt the plan on 19th April 2022. The timeline is in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Timeline for Everyone's Library Service 2022 - 2026



5.4. Where initiatives in the plan require additional funding or governance, we will work through the appropriate governance channels.

5.5. As part of adopting the new plan we would seek to close the previous strategy, during which some significant achievements were delivered e.g., the Library Management System.

6. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

6.1. The principles, themes and commitments of Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021 to 2025 are woven through Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026.

6.1.1. With the focus on literacy for all age groups, whether to encourage reading for pleasure or as part of skills development, this plan supports ECC's ambitions to tackle education inequalities - a driver in levelling up the economy and outcomes for families. As an example, we commit to work with early years providers, parents, schools, charities, and the Essex Education Task Force to support children to be school ready, and every library will have a Literacy Corner to support outreach work, by the end of June.

6.1.2. Through a programme of refurbishment, optimising the use of technology for staff and residents, and developing initiatives to reduce waste, the plan will contribute to the commitments to Net Zero and minimising waste.

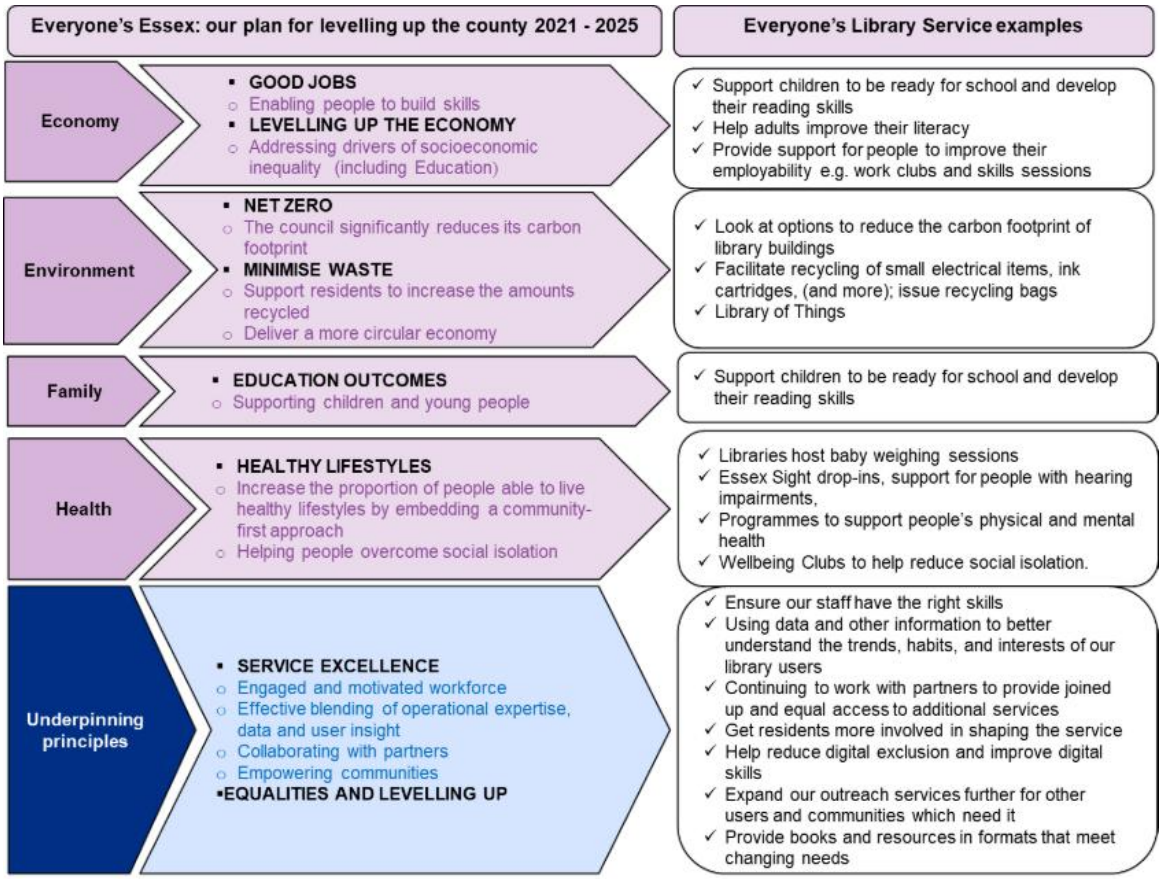
6.1.3. By engaging with residents and communities to shape the service and events, working in partnership with other organisations, and continuing our outreach services, we can help to reduce social isolation and contribute to the wider health commitments.

6.1.4. Service excellence is written into the plan, equipping the workforce with technology and skills for the future, while also developing further volunteering opportunities. We will also use data and insight to better understand how we can enhance services for library users and make more use of digital platforms for marketing and outreach.

6.2. Supporting ECC's climate change objectives features in the Plan. Any planned new builds or refurbishments will take account of environmental issues in the design and materials, for example through maximizing the use of natural light or using LED lighting and exploring environmentally friendly options for heating and air cooling, like solar panels and LED lighting e.g. Shenfield Library.

6.3. The Plan also aims to help residents address climate change by identifying opportunities and resources to educate and inform and continuing to develop waste reduction activities. Libraries are distribution and collection points for recycling bags, batteries, ink cartridges, and care equipment. The "Library of Things" promotes borrowing seldom-used household and garden items, rather than buying new and is part of the Circular Economy project. Figure 2 shows some examples of where these links are made.

6.4. *Figure 2: Everyone's Essex and links to Everyone's Library Service*



7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: Draft plan and surveys used during the consultation
   a. Everyone's Library Service – Draft plan for consultation
   b. Everyone's Library Service – Individuals
   c. Everyone's Library Service – Groups & Organisations

7.2. Appendix 2: Consultation Analysis report
   a. Consultation Analysis – Everyone's Library Service Word
   b. Consultation Analysis Report – Everyone's Library Service Ppt

7.3. Appendix 3: Summary of engagement from other organisations

7.4. Appendix 4: Proposed Changes Report

Everyone's Library Service

2022-2026

Essex County Council

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Opening Statement

Councillor Louise McKinlay

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

I am passionate about our Library Service and believe that it has a vital and important role to play in improving the lives of our residents.

Libraries need to be at the heart of our communities – great libraries are welcoming and inviting, they provide spaces for people to study, to learn, to attend creative clubs, to meet authors, to play. They enable access to a wide range of books, e-books, graphic novels, and podcasts. They support people of all ages who are seeking work by providing access to IT facilities and through volunteering schemes to develop their skills and enhance their CV. They are places where you can learn about your local area, research your family history and access other complementary services. They are places where young children can prepare for attending school, where students can find a quiet space and where residents can access lifelong learning opportunities. Our well trained and experienced staff help you access the services you need. This is my vision for Essex Libraries. We do much of the above already, but through adopting this plan, we are going to do even more, and we are going to do it better.

Essex is fortunate to have one of the largest library services in the country, with 74 libraries, a home library service, and an ever-expanding fleet of mobile libraries. Due to our wide reach, we can connect to and support every community

across the county and enhance their lives. Therefore, we are committed to keeping all Essex County Council libraries open and delivering a high-quality service across all our locations.

When the country was in lockdown, our libraries adapted to continue operating under very challenging circumstances and became a lifeline for many people. This has taught us a lot about what is possible, from transitioning to delivering services in different ways, to rethinking how we use under-utilised space in our buildings and facilities across the county.

However, we don't want just to rebuild to where we were before the pandemic, we want to go further and design a service that we can be very proud of. One which is modern, vibrant, and sustainable. I want us to seize opportunities that can improve the different parts of our county for Essex residents.

This plan sets our high-level aims for the service and the areas that we will be working on over the next four years. These are:

1. **Library Service and Literacy**
2. **Infrastructure and Communications**
3. **Supporting our communities and Levelling Up**

To ensure we can achieve our aims, we will be developing costed and evaluated proposals for all activities that support the delivery of this plan. We will be exploring ways we can work together with other organisations with similar aims. Most importantly we will engage and work with our users and the wider community to develop further the services on offer.

What will be different for our residents?

By the end of this plan, we will be...

Supporting children and adults to improve their literacy

Encouraging people to enjoy reading for pleasure

Increasing the range and diversity of online resources

Introducing relevant and exciting events and activities that will engage and inspire new and existing library service users

Developing further our volunteering opportunities to expand the additional services we can offer through our libraries

Benefitting from a programme of refurbishments to libraries across the county

Making use of our updated Digital and IT services to improve the customer experience

Continuing to work with partners to provide joined up and equal access to additional services

Forwarding the Levelling Up agenda by targeting new and existing resources to specific areas in order to support families and communities

Providing support and skills to residents to help them achieve their aspirations regardless of where they live

Delivering further local and national initiatives and programmes to encourage residents to get reading, e.g., Essex's Year of Reading

Using data and other information to better understand the trends, habits, and interests of our library users

Ensuring marketing of our services is dynamic and engaging using relevant platforms e.g., Instagram

Identifying opportunities to use the library service to help educate and inform on global subjects such as climate change

Engaging with residents as we shape the service and encourage local promotion of events

Introduction

The Library Service has a significant role in the community, providing access to reading, training, digital skills, trusted information, and cultural experiences to people at every stage of their lives.

This plan is about improving and promoting the opportunities that the library service can offer and placing it at the heart of the community.

Having a library is a promise to residents that they can access materials from an early age that support developing their reading skills and literacy right through to adulthood

The library service aims to be relevant to people from birth to retirement. Libraries are places people in Essex should feel excited, happy, and safe to go to whether to read, use a computer, find information or to avoid isolation. We want the service to be valued and well used.

We provide support to families so that they can use and enjoy the library service at key stages in their lives - from babies and toddlers coming to our Rhymetimes, to school children joining the Summer Reading Challenge: students studying in libraries, and to our older residents who may need help with modern digital technology or to those attending one of the many activities in libraries.

Through our mobile and home library offer and community outreach programmes we also improve access for people at risk of being socially isolated, residents with long term conditions or disabilities, communities which are hard to reach, and people who might find it difficult to visit a library.

All residents should know about and feel able to use our comprehensive online library service to reserve items and access our dynamic and exciting e-books, journals, and other resources, and take part in our new online groups and activities.

Our staff and volunteers should feel valued and supported and we will continue to invest in staff development so that they are equipped to deliver the best possible service to our residents.

Chapter 1

Library Services and Literacy

The enjoyment of reading is at the core of the services and activities on offer through our libraries, and we need to support and help those who are not confident when it comes to reading and literacy.

It is estimated that around 16% of adults[1] in England have "very poor literacy skills" whilst the UK government estimates that a further 10% of adults[2] have a condition such as dyslexia. Mencap also estimates that at least a further 2% of adults and 2.5% percent of children have some form of learning disability. For both children and adults these issues can have a serious impact on their self-esteem as well as their ability to access information that can have a serious impact on their life chances such as finding job or support for their health.

The library service will build people's confidence in reading and writing by providing a safe and comfortable space where people can develop their literacy skills. The Service will focus on expanding opportunities to work with people who would benefit from additional support.

Libraries are inclusive and open to all. They provide free access to books and other reading materials, IT, events, and activities that inspire people to engage with reading and information as well as enjoy reading for pleasure. Libraries are knowledge hubs and support residents to connect with other services and organisations.

"Lovely displays particularly in the children's library"

Library customer

1 Adult Literacy Trust https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/adult-literacy/
2 UK Government https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-disabilities-and-impairments-user-profiles/simone-dyslexic-user

To deliver a high-quality service to our residents, our libraries will:

ABC Support children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills

We will work with early years providers, parents, schools, charities, and the Essex Education Task Force to support children to be school ready, develop their literacy skills, support education catch-up and continue to provide a safe space for young people to study and learn outside of the classroom.

Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life

The library service is there for everyone, that's why we are partnering with a range of organisations, which support adults to improve their literacy skills for their everyday lives. This can have a positive impact on job opportunities, aspirations, and independence.

Deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities

The library service already runs a wide range of events and activities to encourage residents of all ages to enjoy reading and use the huge variety of services on offer. We will work with local partners and volunteers to develop a new programme of events and activities for all ages, to ensure that our current and future library users can develop a lifelong love of reading and use of the library service.

Provide books and resources in formats that meet changing needs

Our online collections and resources like Find My Past and Ancestry as well as our wide range of e-books, newspapers and magazines proved extremely popular during lockdown, and we need to respond to this change in customer borrowing patterns. We will continue to provide access to a wide and rich range of hard copy books, special local collections, large print formats and audio books. We are, also, now part of The Libraries Consortium, providing Essex residents with access to an additional 6 million items of stock.

Keep our stock and resources up to date and appealing

We will continue to develop and use a variety of methods to provide us with in-depth information about our stock management choices including: our own system data on users' borrowing choices and preferences, information from our suppliers, market analysis on national reading trends, alongside direct engagement, and feedback from residents.

Get residents more involved in shaping the service

Library users are at the heart of the service. So it is important that the service we are offering reflects the diverse interests and needs of our residents. We will look at new ways for residents to share their views and get involved in helping to shape the service, help inform the stock and titles on offer, and provide regular feedback and input.

Ensure that our staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible service

As the service continues to evolve, it is essential that our staff have the skills needed to deliver a high-quality service. We will explore new ways to develop staff to ensure they have the right technical skills and service knowledge, can promote, and upsell the service, and are flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of our customers.

Explore new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service

Volunteers are an essential and valued part of the library service in Essex, helping and supporting our paid staff in the delivery of everyday activities and special events throughout the year. We want this to continue and we will seek to recruit people from the community with different life skills and experiences, so they can help our team to develop new offers and services to our communities.

Explore new opportunities to generate additional income

Additional income supports the service and enables us to invest in new facilities and initiatives for our communities. We will continue to look for opportunities to bring in extra income that can be used to deliver more services to our residents. This will be in addition to our core offer and will be developed with input from local residents and organisations.

Essex Libraries - Getting children reading

Grandparent and member of Frinton library.

Introducing children to books at an early age can have a big impact on their development.

All our libraries provide a wide range of resources to support your child’s development from picture books which they will love, and board books especially designed for little hands to hold. Children learn best when they are having fun, that’s why we also offer a range of fun group activities for children and their families such as our Baby and Toddler Rhymetimes, Story Time sessions, and family reading activities. Following on from the pandemic we have resumed in-person activities but have also kept some of our activities online for families who might find it harder to attend in person.

Thank you to our library volunteers

(The final version of the plan will include photos and special thanks to our library volunteers)

Chapter 2

Infrastructure & Communications

Our physical library spaces are a vital part of how we deliver library services, and we are committed to the continued operation of the 74 libraries across the county. We will plan our physical spaces to ensure they are high quality, welcoming and as inclusive as possible and reflect the needs of all our residents.

We will think differently about how we work with other organisations to support our communities on wider issues. We will develop flexible library spaces that are able to accommodate complementary and value adding services for the community in which they are based. We will also consider when it may be beneficial to relocate to a new building entirely.

Our four main libraries are Chelmsford, Harlow, Basildon, and Colchester and these will continue to be our flagship libraries. We will develop a plan to focus on these and the other libraries across the county to ensure that as many communities as possible benefit from improvements to the libraries local to them.

We will consider whether our libraries are in the right locations for our residents today and in the future. We will engage with housing developments and growth areas across the county to ensure support and contributions for a library service is considered for these new communities.

"Good stock of books and a very good request service"

Library customer

Our technology and digital infrastructure are key components of how we deliver a modern library service. From free access to computers and IT in our libraries to the new digital offer, we recognise the importance in developing this aspect of our library service. As society becomes ever more digital, poor internet and Wi-Fi connection is no longer acceptable, and stable, fast access is essential for ensuring real benefits for work, education, and communication. We have already begun a Wi-Fi improvement programme across all libraries, and we will continue to improve our technological offer, such as providing more mobile devices for our residents and staff to use, along with improved printing facilities.

Finally, we are developing our ability to deliver professional, targeted, marketing campaigns to a range of audiences. Our communications will be dynamic and creative with a local focus promoting the service offer to existing users, new audiences, and the wider community.

To improve our infrastructure & communications, we will:

Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings

We will develop a planned programme of building improvements that will consider upgrade and cosmetic improvements, how spaces are currently used, opportunities to use these spaces differently, and the potential to use our buildings to generate additional income.

Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings

In line with our commitments to become a net-zero organisation we will look at the energy efficiency and the environmental impact of our library buildings and work with other parts of the organisation and our partners to develop a long-term plan for environmentally sustainable libraries.

Develop our mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement

We will consider how we can use our library vehicles differently (including our new smaller ones) to support a wider range of services and activities in the community including promoting health and wellbeing initiatives, adult skills, and looking at how we can connect with other priorities such as the holiday camp scheme.

Launch a new online library platform

We will plan our digital offer to ensure it is high quality, welcoming and inclusive. Our new library platform will further enhance our digital library service through a more user-friendly interface, and enhanced functionality such as online bookings for special events and activities. The platform will also provide a more personalised service including bespoke recommendations based on borrowing habits.

Update our printing services on offer to customers

We will introduce Wi-Fi and self-service printing to develop services to support library customers and reduce the need for expensive, non-eco-friendly home printing.

Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers

We will provide fast, reliable, and adaptive mobile technology to support staff and volunteers out in the community who are working with vulnerable and isolated residents. We will also provide access to new technology for colleagues who are working in our library buildings so they can interact with and support customers away from desk spaces.

"Helpful catalogue so I can find the books I want"

Library customer

Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences

We will develop a communications strategy that will improve engagement and two-way communication between the service and our users; promote the range of services and activities on offer through the library service and at different locations; ensure we highlight the right local events and promotions to local people; and help us target our communications at different groups and communities at appropriate times and encourage them to participate in library events and join their local library.

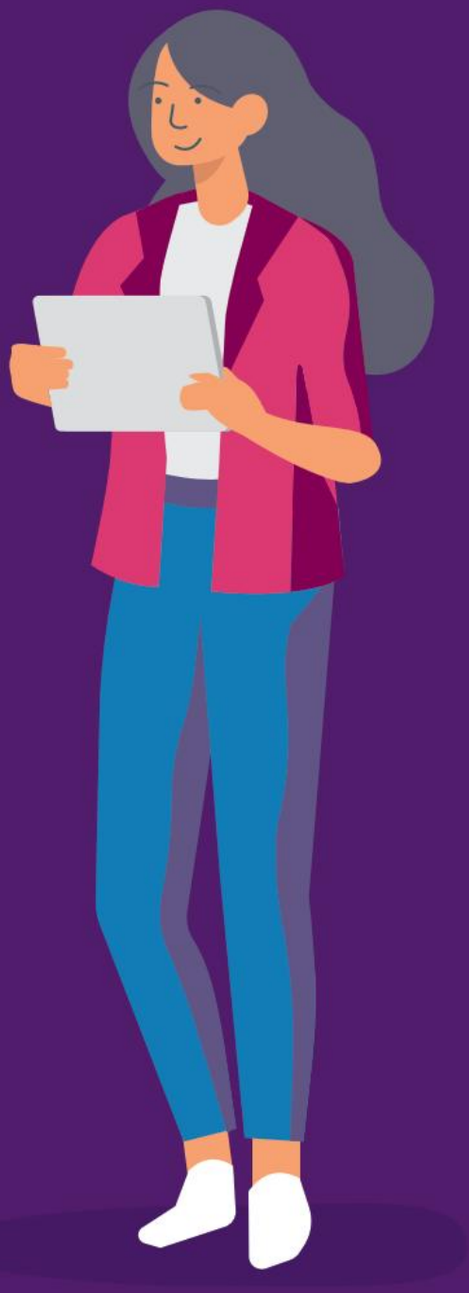
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers

With a workforce that is spread across the county, working face-to-face with customers and out on the library floor, keeping people informed about what is happening across the service or the wider organisation can be a challenge. We will explore ways to improve our communications and engagement with staff and volunteers looking at practical tools and as well as working practices needed to deliver this.

Essex Libraries - Skills for the future

Our libraries offer a range of services and activities to help our residents develop new skills from job-seeking skills, computer literacy and coding to creative writing.

Our Work Clubs provide computers, software and technical support for jobseekers who need help to access and use online job seeking resources and signpost them to other sources of advice and support. Our Code Clubs are a volunteer led service for young people interested in creating digital content not only learning to programme, but also learning about computational thinking, problem solving, planning, designing and collaboration. Through the funding available from our Levelling Up Programme, we will be looking at how we can further expand the targeted skills support on offer to help more residents and communities to access and develop the skills they need.



"I enjoy working as a volunteer because I like helping the customers and interacting with people"

Galina, Volunteer at Braintree Library

Chapter 3

"The return of the Knit and Natter group has put a smile on many people's faces"

Sharon, group organiser

Supporting Communities and Levelling Up

We believe that the library service is more than just a place to borrow books, it is a service which brings people together to interact with other members of their community, fosters culture and creativity, helps people to learn and develop lifelong skills, provides resources to help people improve their health and wellbeing, and provides a place where residents come to access information and support from a range of other organisations.

Our library service provides residents with access to additional services like baby weighing sessions, Essex Sight drop-ins, support for people with hearing impairments, programmes to support people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, and clubs to help reduce social isolation. We work with partners and volunteers to run work clubs to help residents to search for jobs and skills sessions to help people to improve their employability. We offer digital skills courses for people who lack the knowledge or confidence to get online, and coding clubs for young people with an interest in IT development. Through the new plan for libraries, we aim to develop this further and carve out opportunities to provide additional support to our vulnerable communities and those residents in need of extra help.

Essex libraries also are helping to address climate change and the environmental impacts of our daily lives. The Essex "Library of Things" pilot enables residents to borrow household items such as tools or small appliances instead of purchasing them for a single use. We issue recycling bags on behalf of local councils and litter picking kits as part of our work with Love Essex. We also facilitate recycling of small electrical items and soon will include ink cartridge recycling points across our sites. As we develop our action on climate change, we will seek to ensure the library service plays its part in supporting both the council and local communities in making a difference.

Our library service will play a crucial role in helping to support our communities to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, and as part of our ambition to level up the county and increase opportunities across Essex. From improving access to a quality education, training, and employment to better health and wellbeing for our families, our libraries can help achieve our ambitious goals for the county.

"Very helpful staff"

Library customer

"Will go the extra mile to give a good service"

Library customer

To support our communities to level up our libraries will:

Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities which need it

Although most of our customers access our library services through our physical sites, there are many who are unable to visit us in person for several reasons. We will expand our range of additional outreach activities in the community from our mobile library service, and the home library service, and consider new ways to support those hardest to reach and with the greatest need.

Provide support for people to improve their employability

We will work with partners including Adult Community Learning, business groups, and community organisations to expand our existing employment support programmes and explore new ways that our libraries can be used to help adults gain new skills and improve their employability, launch their careers or to help them back into employment.

Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing

Through our range of books and other resources, together with activities already on offer, the library service will work with partners to look at the additional support for residents that can be offered to improve their health and wellbeing, particularly on issues of mental health and social isolation.

Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills

We will use our libraries to narrow the divide between those who have access to and can use new technology and those who do not. We will explore opportunities to increase training on technology for Essex residents to develop new skills and access services and information online. We can also help to reach those hard to access communities by developing our outreach programme – taking the library service and the digital experience out to the community.

Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives

We will continue to develop partnerships that provide our customers with access to support services that can have a positive impact on their lives such as the Citizens Advice. We will also engage with external partners such as The Literacy Trust, The Arts Council, and Libraries Connected to deliver exciting projects to encourage people to read and enjoy storytelling and the arts.

Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities

Libraries already offer a range of activities outside the core service. These include activities and services such as holiday activities for children and young people. We will explore options for broadening these activities possibly by running chargeable activities alongside the free of charge activities already on offer. We are not proposing to charge for the activities we currently provide. We will also explore the interest from other age groups for the provision of chargeable activity sessions such as arts and crafts to increase the use of our libraries by the local community.

"Good resources for studying and research"

Library customer

Essex Libraries - Reducing Social Isolation

> “I have been feeling very isolated during lockdown and almost forgotten how to talk to people, so this is a lovely icebreaker as a great opening for conversation.”

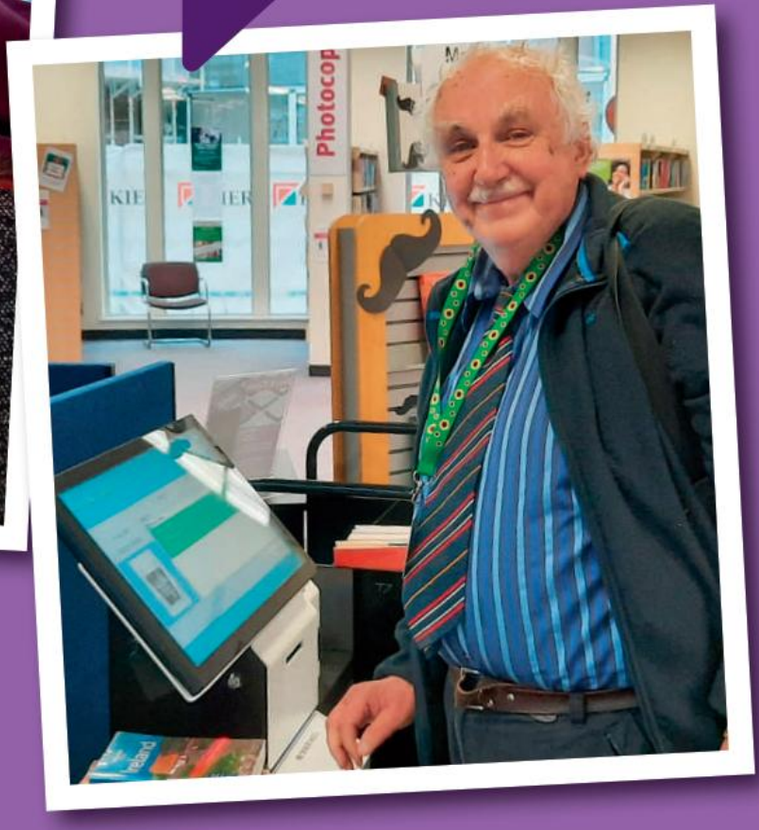
Reading Friend participant.

Delivered in partnership with national charity The Reading Agency, the Reading Friends scheme aims to tackle life’s big challenges, such as loneliness and isolation, through the power of reading.

The scheme brings people together with trained volunteers over the phone, as part of an online group or in person at one of our libraries using books, magazines, newspapers, or anything else - to start chatting, share stories and build social connections between people who are vulnerable, isolated and at risk of loneliness, especially those most affected by the pandemic.

“Helpful opening times”

Library customer



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Essex Libraries Service

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The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

Published November 2021

Essex County Council

Individual Questionnaire

Everyone's Library Service

2022-2026 consultation

Essex County Council

Overview

The world has changed significantly in the last few years, particularly during the pandemic.

With a new administration and new plan for Essex in place, ECC is evolving its vision for Essex Libraries to provide a service that is modern, vibrant, and sustainable; one which our residents can be proud of.

We want people to get involved and have their say about our draft Library Plan (www.essex.gov.uk/everyoneslibrary) and the things we will be working on over the next four years.

These centre around three key aims:

1. Library Service and Literacy
2. Infrastructure & Communications
3. Supporting our communities and levelling up

You have until 21 January 2022 to reply to this online survey.

Alternatively:

- Ask at your local library for help to complete this survey online
- Complete the survey by phone on 0345 603 7633, or
- Ask for a large print, Easy Read, or paper version to be sent to you. Please call 0345 603 7633

All feedback will be gathered by an independent company. This will help inform the final plan. We expect to decide on the final plan in Spring 2022.

Data protection

Essex County Council fully complies with information legislation. If you would like the full details of how we use personal data, and the rights you have about its use, please go to www.essex.gov.uk/privacy-community or call 03457 430430.

Section 1

1. Are you responding as an:

- [ ] Individual
- [ ] Group or organisation

If you are under the age of 11, please ensure you have your parent/carer's permission to take part in this consultation:

Parent/Carer Name:

.....

Signed:

.....

If you are responding as a group or organisation, please complete our consultation for organisations (https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/rci/library-survey-groups).

2. Have you used any of Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online?

- [ ] Yes, in the last six months
- [ ] Yes, in the last year
- [ ] Yes, in the last two years
- [ ] No, not for at least two years

3. Are you aware of the following library services? Please tick all that apply.

- [ ] Borrowing books
- [ ] Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio Books
- [ ] My Library app
- [ ] E-resources such as Find My Past, Ancestry, Driving Test Theory Pro
- [ ] Special collections (e.g. jazz archives, local history)
- [ ] Mobile library
- [ ] Home library service
- [ ] Reading newspapers
- [ ] Public computers
- [ ] Printing
- [ ] Library WIFI using own devices such as laptop or mobile phone
- [ ] Health and Wellbeing services, including health visits and Children's Services
- [ ] Baby, toddler, or children's activities
- [ ] Community activities e.g., charity or voluntary groups
- [ ] Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter etc
- [ ] Applying for jobs
- [ ] Applying for benefits
- [ ] Space for working
- [ ] Space for studying
- [ ] Recycling services

Section 1

4. Have you ever used the library service for any of the following? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Borrowing books
- ☐ Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio Books
- ☐ My Library app
- ☐ E-resources such as Find My Past, Ancestry, Driving Test Theory Pro
- ☐ Special collections (e.g. jazz archives, local history)
- ☐ Mobile library
- ☐ Home library service
- ☐ Reading newspapers
- ☐ Public computers
- ☐ Printing
- ☐ Library WIFI using own devices such as laptop or mobile phone
- ☐ Health and Wellbeing services, including health visits and Children's Services
- ☐ Baby, toddler, or children's activities
- ☐ Community activities e.g., charity or voluntary groups
- ☐ Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter etc
- ☐ Applying for jobs
- ☐ Applying for benefits
- ☐ Space for working
- ☐ Space for studying
- ☐ Recycling services
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

Section 1

5. Only answer this question if you responded 'no, not for at least two years' to question 2. - If you do not currently use Essex Library Services, what are the reasons for this? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ I don't need the library service
- ☐ I don't have time
- ☐ I have a health problem or disability
- ☐ I don't feel safe in libraries due to Covid-19
- ☐ They are difficult to get to
- ☐ I don't know what is available
- ☐ I would feel out of place
- ☐ The services available do not meet my needs
- ☐ The opening hours are inconvenient
- ☐ None of these
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

6. Please tell us what impact the library service has had on your life, if any?

Section 2

In this section you can have your say about our three key aims:

1. Library Service and Literacy
2. Infrastructure & Communications
3. Supporting our communities and levelling up

Please read our full plan 'Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026' (https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/everyones-library-service/) for more information about each of these aims.

Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with the proposed aims by ticking the boxes below.

7. Aim one: Library Services and Literacy

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Support children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills					
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life					
Deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities					
Provide books and resources in formats that meet changing needs					
Keep our stock and resources up to date and appealing					
Get residents more involved in shaping the service					
Ensure that our staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible service					
Explore new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service					
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income					

Section 2

8. Do you have any other comments related to Aim one?

9. Aim two: Infrastructure & Communications

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings					
Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings					
Develop our mobile library offer to support our service outreach and community engagement					
Launch a new online library platform					
Update our printing services on offer to customers					
Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers					
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences					
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers					

Section 2

10. Do you have any other comments related to Aim two?

11. Aim three: Supporting Communities and Levelling Up

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it					
Provide support for people to improve their employability					
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing					
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills					
Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives					
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities					

Section 2

12. If you support the provision of chargeable activities (alongside existing free activities), which chargeable activities would you like to see, if any?

13. Do you have any other comments related to Aim three?

14. Do you have any other comments related to the plan for Essex Libraries?

Section 3

15. What would you like to see from Essex Libraries in the future?

Section 4

Thank you for answering the questions so far. This will help us develop our Library Plan. In this final section we ask you to let us know a bit more about you, so we understand who we are hearing from.

All responses are anonymous and your answers will be kept completely confidential. It is voluntary to disclose this information. If you choose not to answer these questions, it will not affect your participation.

16. Which Essex district, city or borough do you live in?

- ☐ Basildon
- ☐ Braintree
- ☐ Brentwood
- ☐ Castle Point
- ☐ Chelmsford
- ☐ Colchester
- ☐ Epping Forest
- ☐ Harlow
- ☐ Maldon
- ☐ Rochford
- ☐ Tendring
- ☐ Uttlesford
- ☐ Southend
- ☐ Thurrock
- ☐ I live in another neighbouring county (please state)

- ☐ Other (please state)

- ☐ Prefer not to say

17. Which age group do you belong to?

- ☐ Under 16
- ☐ 16-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

18. To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (option to state below)

- ☐ Prefer not to say

Section 4

19. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ White British
- ☐ White Irish
- ☐ White Other
- ☐ Gypsy / Roma
- ☐ Traveller of Irish Heritage
- ☐ Black or Black British African
- ☐ Black or Black British Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed White/Black African
- ☐ Mixed White/Black Caribbean
- ☐ Black Other
- ☐ Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- ☐ Asian or Asian British Indian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British Other
- ☐ Mixed White/Asian
- ☐ Asian Other
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Mixed Other
- ☐ Not Known
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other, please specify

20. Do you consider yourself to have a health condition, disability or impairment? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ No impairment
- ☐ Hearing impairment/deaf
- ☐ Visual impairment/blind
- ☐ Deafblind
- ☐ Mental health needs
- ☐ Drug or alcohol addiction
- ☐ Physical impairment
- ☐ Learning difficulties/disabilities
- ☐ Autism spectrum disorder
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (please specify

Section 4

21. What is your current employment status? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Employed on flexible/zero hours contract
- ☐ In full-time education or training (e.g. college, university, apprenticeship)
- ☐ Not currently employed
- ☐ Volunteering
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (please specify)

22. Are you a parent/carer of dependent children? (Aged under 18 or up to 25 with additional needs)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

23. Do you have any caring responsibilities (either paid or unpaid) not including childcare – e.g. for a friend or elderly relative?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views with us.

Please return this survey in the envelope provided by Friday 21 January 2022.

All responses will be analysed by an independent company. This will help inform the final plan. We will share the results with you and we expect to decide on the final plan in Spring 2022

For more information about Essex Libraries, please visit: **libraries.essex.gov.uk**

Essex County Council

Groups & Organisations Questionnaire

Everyone's Library Service

2022-2026 consultation

Essex County Council

Overview

The world has changed significantly in the last few years, particularly during the pandemic.

With a new administration and new plan for Essex in place, ECC is evolving its vision for Essex Libraries to provide a service that is modern, vibrant, and sustainable; one which our residents can be proud of.

We want people to get involved and have their say about our draft Library Plan (www.essex.gov.uk/everyoneslibrary) and the things we will be working on over the next four years. These centre around three key aims:

1. Library Service and Literacy
2. Infrastructure & Communications
3. Supporting our communities and levelling up

You have until 21 January 2022 to reply to this online survey.

Alternatively:

- Ask at your local library for help to complete this survey online
- Complete the survey by phone on 0345 603 7633, or
- Ask for a large print, Easy Read, or paper version to be sent to you. Please call 0345 603 7633

All feedback will be gathered by an independent company. This will help inform the final plan. We expect to decide on the final plan in Spring 2022.

Data protection

Essex County Council fully complies with information legislation. If you would like the full details of how we use personal data, and the rights you have about its use, please go to www.essex.gov.uk/privacy-community or call 03457 430430.

Section 1

1. Are you responding as an:

- [ ] Individual
- [ ] Group or organisation

If you are responding as an individual, please complete our consultation for Essex residents (https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/rci/libraries-survey).

2. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please select which organisation type:

- [ ] Town or parish council
- [ ] Registered charity
- [ ] Community group
- [ ] Other public body
- [ ] Private business

3. Does your organisation primarily work with or represent people from any of these groups? Please tick all that apply.

- [ ] Older people
- [ ] Children/young people
- [ ] Disabled people
- [ ] Transgender people
- [ ] Pregnant women and new mothers
- [ ] Black and ethnic minority people
- [ ] Religious or faith communities
- [ ] Women
- [ ] Men
- [ ] Lesbian, gay or bisexual people

4. Which district(s), borough(s) or city does your organisation cover? Please tick all that apply

- [ ] Basildon
- [ ] Braintree
- [ ] Brentwood
- [ ] Castle Point
- [ ] Chelmsford
- [ ] Colchester
- [ ] Epping Forest
- [ ] Harlow
- [ ] Maldon
- [ ] Rochford
- [ ] Tendring
- [ ] Uttlesford
- [ ] Southend
- [ ] Thurrock
- [ ] Another neighbouring county (please state)

- [ ] Prefer not to say
- [ ] Other (please state)

Section 1

5. What is the name of your organisation?

6. Please provide an email address for your organisation:

7. Does your organisation currently do any of the following? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Share a library building
- ☐ Use space in a library for regular service delivery/activities
- ☐ Use space in a library for occasional service delivery/activities
- ☐ Provide space in your building to ECC for an ECC-run library or library activities

Section 2

In this section you can have your say about our three key aims:

1. Library Service and Literacy
2. Infrastructure & Communications
3. Supporting our communities and levelling up

Please read our full plan 'Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026' for more information about each of these aims.

Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with the proposed aims.

8. Aim one: Library Services and Literacy

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Support children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills					
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life					
Deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities					
Provide books and resources in formats that meet changing needs					
Keep our stock and resources up to date and appealing					
Get residents more involved in shaping the service					
Ensure that our staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible service					
Explore new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service					
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income					

Section 2

9. Do you have any other comments related to Aim one?

10. Aim two: Infrastructure & Communications

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings					
Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings					
Develop our mobile library offer to support our service outreach and community engagement					
Launch a new online library platform					
Update our printing services on offer to customers					
Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers					
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences					
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers					

Section 2

11. Do you have any other comments related to Aim two?

12. Aim three: Supporting Communities and Levelling Up

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it					
Provide support for people to improve their employability					
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing					
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills					
Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives					
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities					

Section 2

13. If you support the provision of chargeable activities (alongside existing free activities), which chargeable activities would you like to see, if any?

14. Do you have any other comments related to Aim three?

15. Do you have any other comments related to the plan for Essex Libraries?

Section 3

What would your organisation like to see from Essex Libraries in the future?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views with us.

Please return this survey in the envelope provided by Friday 21 January 2022.

All responses will be analysed by an independent company. This will help inform the final plan. We will share the results with you and we expect to decide on the final plan in Spring 2022.

For more information about Essex Libraries, please visit: **libraries.essex.gov.uk**

Essex County Council

Essex County Council

Essex County Council Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026 consultation summary report

Prepared by Lake Market Research

February 2022

Background and Methodology

Background and aim of consultation:

- Essex County Council is the second largest library authority in the country, serving a population of nearly 1.5 million residents across a network of 74 libraries, two mobile library vehicles, an online e-library service, and a home library delivery service provided by volunteers to residents who cannot access onsite or mobile services:
- With a new administration and new Plan for Essex in place, Essex County Council are refocussing their vision and plans for the future of Library services. This plan sets out high-level aims for the service and the areas the service will be working on over the next four years:
    - Library Service and Literacy
    - Infrastructure and Communications
    - Supporting communities and Levelling Up
- Essex County Council launched a consultation with the aim of seeking views from Essex residents, library service users and organisations about the draft plan and areas of focus

Methodology:

- The consultation was hosted on Essex County Council's consultation portal for 8 weeks from 26th November 2020 to 21st January 2022.
- The consultation was publicised through a range of channels, including ECC and Essex Libraries social media channels and websites, resident and library newsletters Essex is Green social media channels, local, regional and national press.

Point to note:

- 2,213 responses were received via the consultation questionnaire - 2,185 from individuals and 28 from organisations. 7 emails were received and reviewed by this report's author.
- Please note that participation in consultations are self-selecting and this needs to be considered when interpreting responses.
- Responses to consultations do not wholly represent the wider Essex population and is reliant on awareness and propensity to take part based on the topic and interest.
- Essex County Council were responsible for the design, promotion and collection of the consultation responses. Lake Market Research were appointed to conduct an independent analysis of feedback.

Profile of respondents taking part

- The tables on the right depict the demographic profile of Individual respondents against the active profile of Essex library users[1]. The proportion who left these questions blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information has been included as applicable.
- The vast majority of the respondents completed the survey as 'a resident from Essex'.
- The consultation achieved representation across demographic groups and districts.

	Total	Library user %
Male	24%	32%
Female	70%	53%
Non-binary	0%	0%
Prefer not to say / blank	5%	14%
Under 16	1%	-
16-24	2%	10%
25-34	7%	14%
35-44	14%	19%
45-54	15%	14%
55-64	21%	14%
65 & over	37%	31%
Prefer not to say / blank	4%	3%

	Total	Library user %
Basildon	7%	13%
Braintree	11%	10%
Brentwood	6%	6%
Castle Point	5%	5%
Chelmsford	15%	14%
Colchester	17%	14%
Epping Forest	6%	8%
Harlow	3%	6%
Maldon	4%	4%
Rochford	5%	6%
Tendring	10%	9%
Uttlesford	5%	6%

- 28 organisations responded to the consultation: 12 from community groups, 10 from town or parish councils, 4 from other public bodies, 1 from a registered charity and 1 did not disclose the type of organisation they represent.

1) Based on profile of active library users (177,726 – used library card within the last year). District is based on home location selected at the point of joining the library.

Executive Summary

Library services have a significant impact on the lives of those responding to the consultation. A number of benefits are highlighted including access to books, fostering reading / enjoyment of reading, a service for the family / all generations, mental health benefits and access to free material that some couldn't afford otherwise.

Overall agreement is particularly strong for five of the aim one areas with a significant proportion strongly agreeing with these aims. Agreement with exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers is markedly lower amongst individuals responding and new opportunities to generate additional income is markedly lower amongst individuals and organisations responding.

Overall agreement is high for five of the aim two areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas. Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas e.g. printing services offer and new online library platform, amongst individuals and organisations responding.

Overall agreement is high for five of the aim three areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas amongst individuals. Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside existing free activities is markedly lower amongst individuals and organisations.

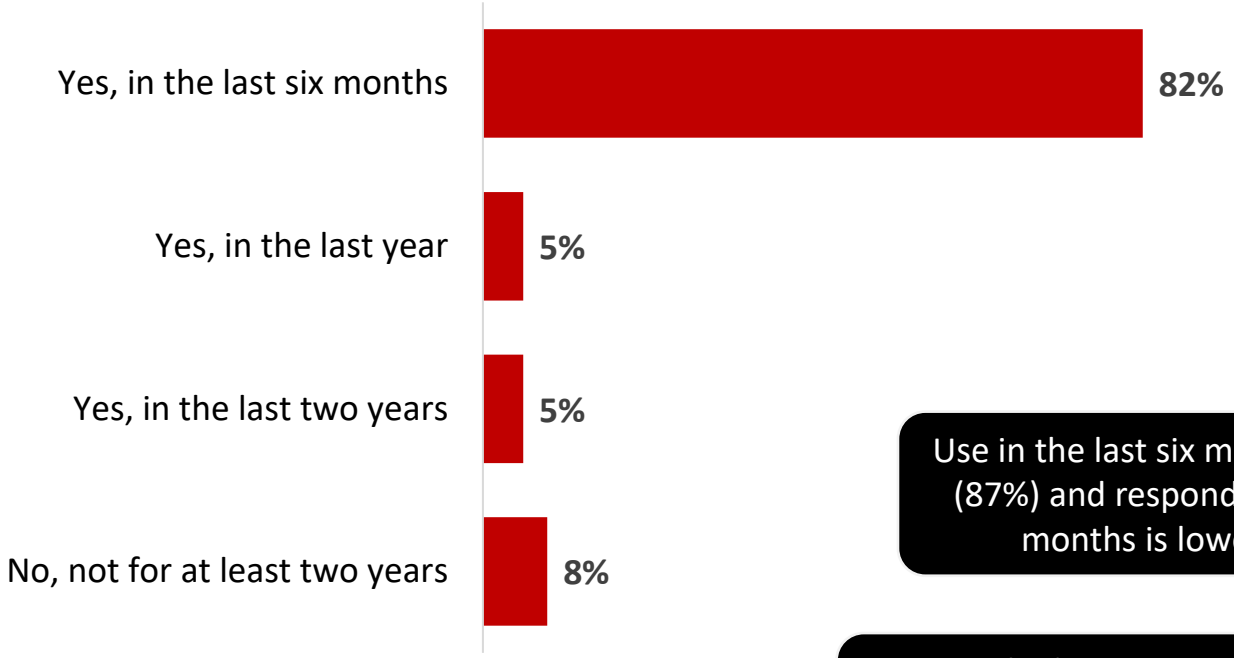
Essex County Council

Usage and familiarity with library services

Recency of library use

- The vast majority (92%) of those responding to the consultation have used Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online in the last two years. 82% have used Essex's library facilities in the last six months.
- Only 8% of those responding to the consultation indicated they have not used Essex's library services for at least two years.

Have you used any of Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online?



Supporting data table	%
Yes, in the last six months	82%
Yes, in the last year	5%
Yes, in the last two years	5%
No, not for at least two years	8%

Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents aged 35-44 (87%) and respondents aged 65 and over (84%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents aged 45-54 (76%).

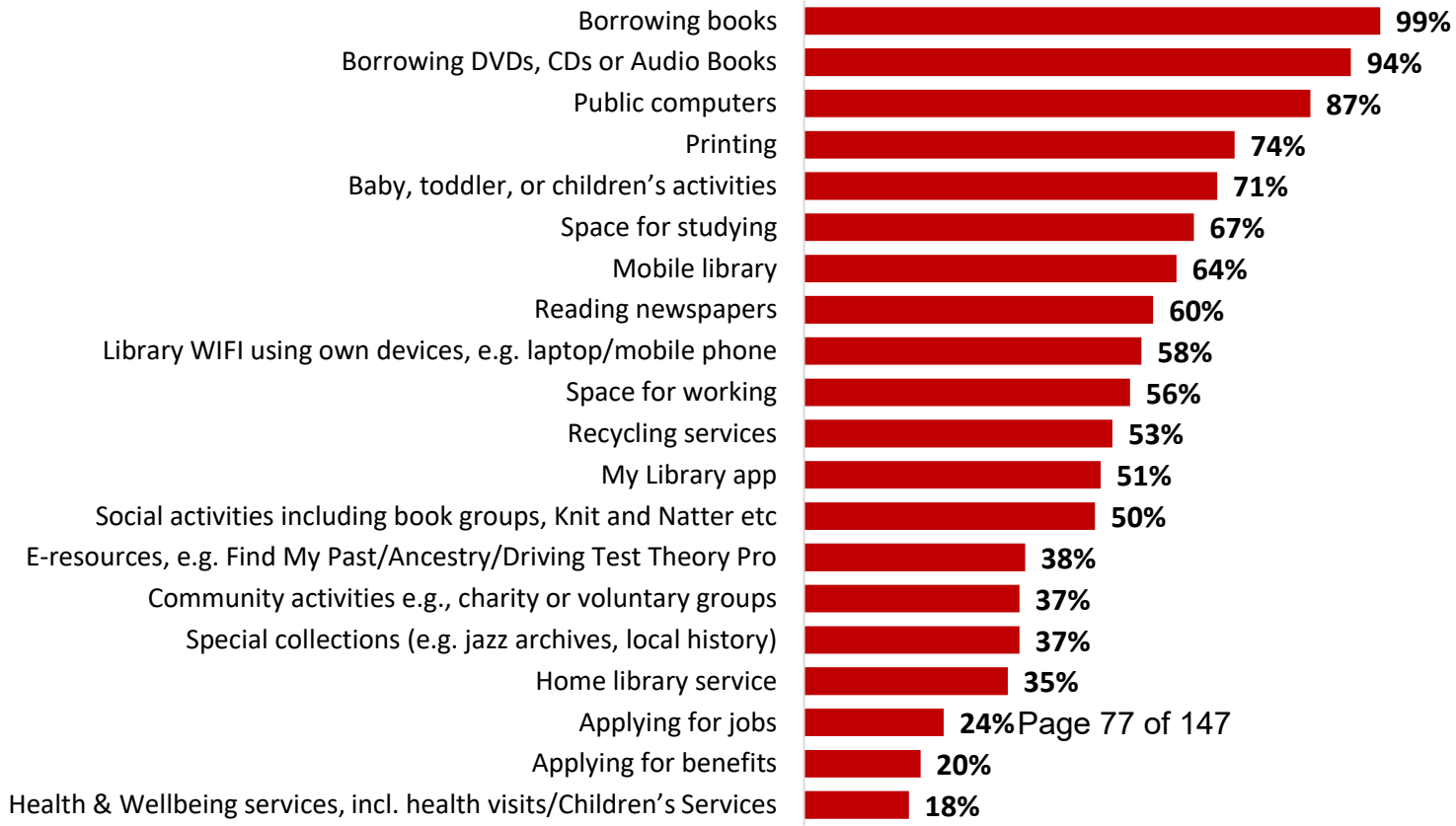
Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents who are employed part time (84%) and respondents who are retired (85%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents who are employed full time (73%).

Base: all Individuals answering (2,185)

Individual awareness of library services

- As expected, the vast majority are aware of book borrowing (99%) and DVD, CD or audio book borrowing (94%). Awareness of accessing technology through use of public computers (87%) or printing (74%) is also high.
- Just over two thirds (67%) are aware of the service providing space for studying and 56% are aware of space for working. Claimed awareness of outreach services is mixed with 64% aware of the mobile library service and 35% aware of the home library service.
- Awareness of community activities and health and wellbeing services are comparatively lower at 37% and 18% respectively.

Are you aware of the following library services?



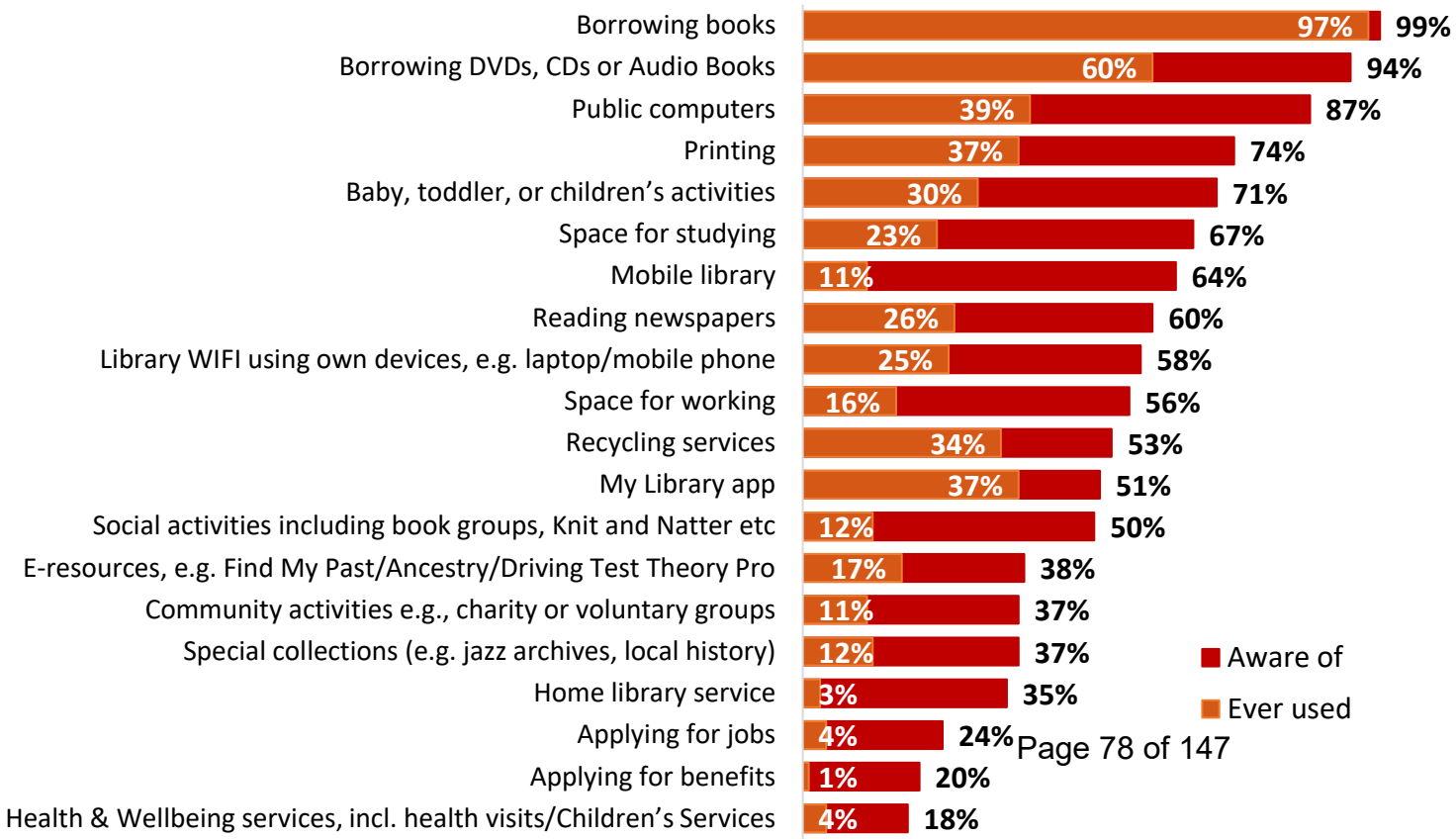
Base: all Individuals answering (2,184)

Supporting data table	%
Borrowing books	99%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio books	94%
Public computers	87%
Printing	74%
Baby, toddler or children's activities	71%
Space for studying	67%
Mobile library	64%
Reading newspapers	60%
Library WIFI using own devices	58%
Space for working	56%
Recycling services	53%
My Library app	51%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter	50%
E-resources, e.g. Find My Past / Ancestry / Driving Test Theory Pro	38%
Community activities, e.g. charity or voluntary groups	37%
Special collections	37%
Home library service	35%
Applying for jobs	25%
Applying for benefits	20%
Health and Wellbeing services	18%

Individual use of library services

- As expected, the vast majority have borrowed books from the library (97%). 60% have borrowed DVDs, CDs or audio books before.
- Over a third have used public computers (39%), printing (37%), the 'My Library app' (37%) and recycling services (34%). Around a quarter have used the facilities for reading newspapers (26%) and the library Wi-Fi for use on respondents' own devices (25%).
- Claimed use of the outreach services is comparatively low at 11% for the mobile library service and 3% for the home library service.

Have you ever used the library service for any of the following?



Base: all Individuals answering (2,170)

Supporting data table	Aware	Use
Borrowing books	99%	97%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio books	94%	60%
Public computers	87%	39%
Printing	74%	37%
Baby, toddler or children's activities	71%	30%
Space for studying	67%	23%
Mobile library	64%	11%
Reading newspapers	60%	26%
Library WIFI using own devices	58%	25%
Space for working	56%	16%
Recycling services	53%	34%
My Library app	51%	37%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter	50%	12%
E-resources, e.g. Find My Past / Ancestry / Driving Test Theory Pro	38%	17%
Community activities, e.g. charity or voluntary groups	37%	11%
Special collections	37%	12%
Home library service	35%	3%
Applying for jobs	25%	4%
Applying for benefits	20%	1%
Health and Wellbeing services	18%	4%

Individuals comments on perceived impact of library service on life

- Access to books is the most common theme (60%); supported by 28% also referencing reading as being crucial / enjoyable and the service fosters reading. Being able to use the service as a family, either currently or in previous years, and the fond memories held are common with 41% commenting.
- One in five believe the services offers mental health benefits and 18% believe it offers access to free material that some couldn't afford to access otherwise.

Individuals comments on impact of library service, coded into key themes	%
Provides access to books	60%
Used as a child / take my children / grandchildren	41%
Lost without library / big part of life / rely on it / value / use regularly	36%
Reading is crucial / enjoyable / read a lot / fosters reading	28%
Free access / could not afford it otherwise	24%
Activities / groups / meetings	23%
Improves mental health / sanity / lifeline / isolation / socialising	20%
Provides access to other resources / ability to research	18%
Provides access to wide ranging material / new subjects / genres / authors	17%
Place to work / study	15%
Access to audiobooks / eBooks / CDs / DVDs	14%
Helpful / useful / accessible resource / service	13%
Welcoming / warm / comfortable / quiet / safe / pleasant surroundings	11%
Can reserve books online / collect books / drop-off & collections points	11%
Community asset	11%
IT / printing / photocopying / Wi-Fi / are essential	10%
Staff are friendly / helpful	10%
Expand knowledge / learn / educate / access to other genres / authors	10%
Used all my life	10%
Helped me through the pandemic / lockdown	9%
Work for / worked for / volunteer for library service	5%
Access to newspapers / magazines - physical / online / on app	5%
Somewhere to read	4%

Please note - 87% of Consultees answered this question

Libraries are the only place where anyone can go, regardless of socioeconomic background and be able to access all these amazing free services and are an essential part of our community, I attended rhyme time sessions with both my children and it was invaluable for meeting other parents when I may have otherwise felt isolated in my local area. We visit regularly as a family to take out books and love that the principle of libraries reduces waste and encourages a love of books and reading.

I access/use library services most days. Most commonly, I request and borrow physical books from the library and audio books from the online service. As a full time carer, these are resources I would not have the money to purchase and would therefore not have access to. Alongside the resources I borrow from the library I also use the library space on a regular basis for teaching my son (who has additional needs and is partially home schooled). The library provides us with a space away from the home environment to complete his learning tasks. Without this dedicated space, educating him would be a much greater challenge as the home environment affords many more distractions for us both.

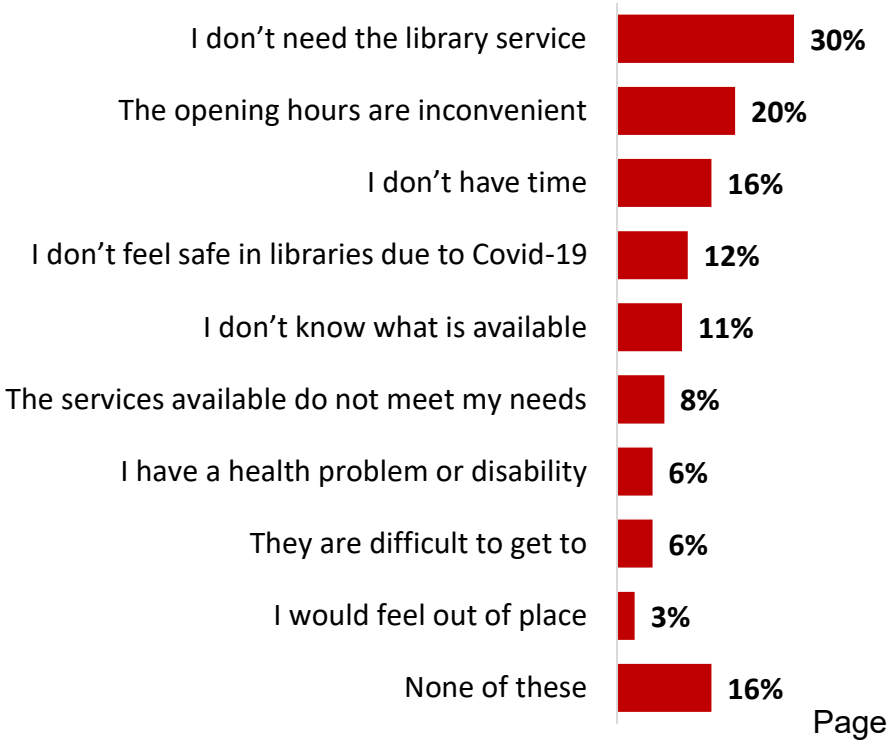
It is an integral part of our lives as a family. We visit the library often to borrow books (every three weeks or more often). We use the online resources daily especially the borrowbox and press reader apps. Our daughter has enjoyed the rhyme time sessions and one off craft events held in the library. The staff are wonderful, so friendly and helpful and we would be lost without our local library.

Base: all Individuals answering (1,892)

Reasons for not currently using library services

- The most common reason for not using Essex Library Service is simply not having a need to (30%), followed by a perception of inconvenient opening hours (20%) and not having the time to use them (16%).
- 11% of those not using the services are unsure of what is available.

If you do not currently use Essex Library Services, what are the reasons for this?



Supporting data table	%
I don't need the library service	30%
The opening hours are inconvenient	20%
I don't have time	16%
I don't feel safe in libraries due to Covid-19	12%
I don't know what is available	11%
The services available do not meet my needs	8%
I have a health problem or disability	6%
They are difficult to get to	6%
I would feel out of place	3%
None of these	16%

Base: all Individuals answering (174)

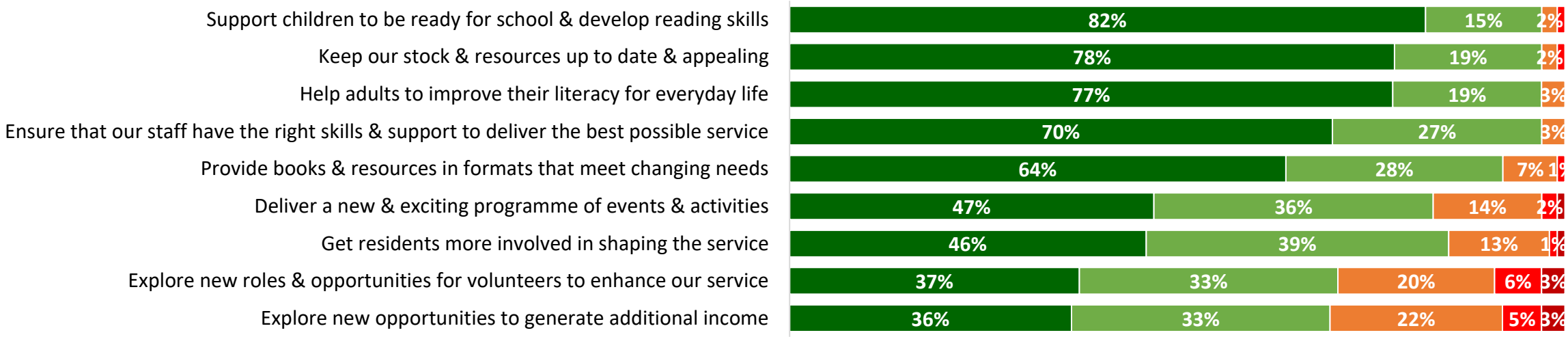
Essex County Council

Individuals overall opinion of key aims put forward

Individuals support for Aim One areas – Library Service and Literacy

- Overall agreement is particularly strong for five of the aim one areas with a significant proportion strongly agreeing with these aims.
- Agreement with exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers and new opportunities to generate additional income is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Support children to be ready for school & develop reading skills	82%	15%	2%	1%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	78%	19%	2%	1%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	77%	19%	3%	0%	0%
Ensure our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	64%	28%	7%	1%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	47%	36%	14%	2%	1%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	46%	39%	13%	1%	1%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance service	37%	33%	20%	6%	3%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	36%	33%	22%	5%	3%

Base: all Individuals answering (2,175)

Individuals comments on Aim One areas – Library Service and Literacy

- The most common theme noted is that fully well trained and paid staff are critical to the library service (25%) and volunteers should be in addition to these staff and not replacing them (18%). Some are also concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (14%) and the importance of improving the range of books / investing in physical book stock (13%).
- Consistent with the comparably lower proportion of respondents agreeing, 12% of those providing a comment referenced the service should not be focusing on income generation and 10% indicated they do not support charging for services.

Individuals comments on Aim One areas, coded into key themes	**%**
Fully well trained & paid staff are critical to the service	25%
Volunteers should not replace trained staff only be in addition to	18%
Concerned about loss of physical books to eBooks / digital alternatives	14%
Improve range of books / invest in books / maintain if not improve book stock	13%
Children's literacy / education is so important / support library involvement / links to schools	12%
Should not focus on income generation but providing a core service	12%
Charging for services is not welcome / free service for all / priority should be a free service	10%
Support aim one areas (non-specific)	9%
Support some chargeable services / activities / with caveats / proceed with caution	8%
More events / groups / clubs / socialising	8%
Library is crucial to all / community / benefits all	7%
Support volunteers in addition to staff	7%
Suggestion for service / event / group / activity	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / seems complex	6%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services	5%
Changes should not negatively affect current service levels	4%
Evolve to community hub / provide access to other services	4%
Service should be inclusive / not just about books	4%
Adults' literacy / education is so important / support library involvement	4%
Focus on providing books / core service / fostering reading / not involved in anything else	3%

Please note - 29% of Consultees answered this question

Trained librarians are essential in the delivery of Library services and literacy. There must never be any kind of reliance on volunteers to do this, though of course volunteers should be encouraged to help.

I can see the appeal to the library of exploring new opportunities to generate income, but this needs a lot of thought - you could risk making people who can't afford these services feel excluded, feel the library is not for them or not access services which are free to use because they are worried there could be a fee.

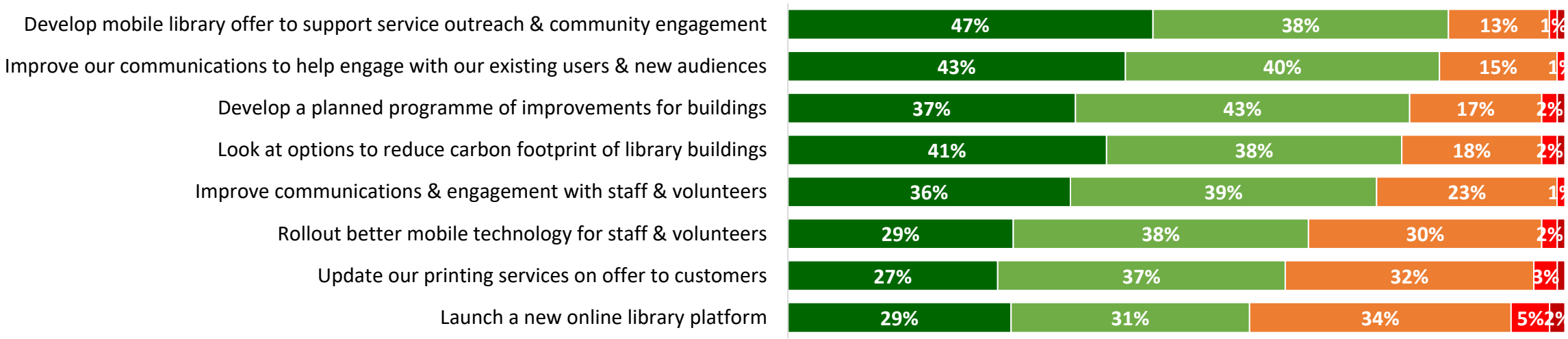
A very careful balance probably needs to be made between providing invaluable services, resources and generating further income, whilst keeping costs down as I think a huge proportion of the population are struggling on very low incomes and the struggle may become even harder and possibly much sooner rather than later. Pressure to deliver only in those areas, distracts staff from core business and discourages people from visiting.

Base: all Individuals answering (638)

Individuals support for Aim Two areas – Infrastructure and Communications

- Overall agreement is high for five of the aim two areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas.
- Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas e.g. printing services offer and new online library platform.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Develop mobile library offer to support service outreach & community engagement	47%	38%	13%	1%	1%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users & new audiences	43%	40%	15%	1%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for building	37%	43%	17%	2%	1%
Look at options to reduce carbon footprint of library buildings	41%	38%	18%	2%	1%
Improve communications & engagement with staff & volunteers	36%	39%	23%	1%	0%
Rollout better mobile technology for staff & volunteers	29%	38%	30%	2%	1%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	27%	37%	32%	3%	1%
Launch a new online library platform	29%	31%	34%	5%	2%

Base: all Individuals answering (2,159)

Individuals comments on Aim Two areas – Infrastructure and Communications

- The most common theme references communication / promotion of the service is needed and communications should be improved (21%). Some are concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (11%) and ensuring any changes are not to the detriment of the service as it stands currently (11%).
- Whilst a proportion put forward concerns with regards to technology, suggestions are made to improve dated IT systems (9%), more / improved IT facilities within libraries (8%) and better technology / platforms to access online services remotely (8%).

Individuals comments on Aim Two areas, coded into key themes	%
Communication / promotion / awareness of library service / improve content of comms	21%
Well trained / friendly / professional staff - proficient in tech support	13%
Retain if not expand book stock / invest in physical books / do not replace with digital alternatives	11%
Ensure changes are not to the detriment of service / space	11%
Buildings need updating / improving / better facilities / accessible	10%
Use of technology should not replace staff / reduce personal contact / supplement current service only / should not be an online service only	10%
Already have online platforms available / apps / are others needed / happy with current platforms	10%
Investment / improvement in mobile libraries / must not replace physical libraries	9%
Suggested improvements to current IT systems / systems are dated	9%
More / improved IT facilities within libraries / Wi-Fi / air printing / issues with IT	8%
In need of better technology / platforms to access online catalogue / online services remotely	8%
Buildings should be welcoming / provide a quiet space for reading/study / comfortable chairs	7%
Service must be fully inclusive - elderly / disabled - not everyone uses technology	7%
Support aim two areas (non-specific)	6%
Physical libraries important for community	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	6%
Can't comment on certain issues / don't understand some of the terms used	5%
Improved printing service not needed / contradicts carbon footprint reduction	4%
Carbon footprint reduction is a worthy aim	4%
No improvement to buildings necessary / not a priority	4%
Communication is adequate	4%
Where is funding coming from / sounds costly / how much will this cost	4%

Please note - 22% of Consultees answered this question

Promotion of services is all within the library and its own social media so most people don't know what is on offer. Events and activities should be promoted externally on village social media pages.

The online, app and e-book offer is really important in the modern world and the library has made great strides forward on this front in recent years. It's important to build upon this and continue to increase the e-book offer and keep it up to date. It would also be great for many if library e-books could be compatible with Kindle, the most popular e-reader, though I appreciate this is a wider issue than within Essex libraries.

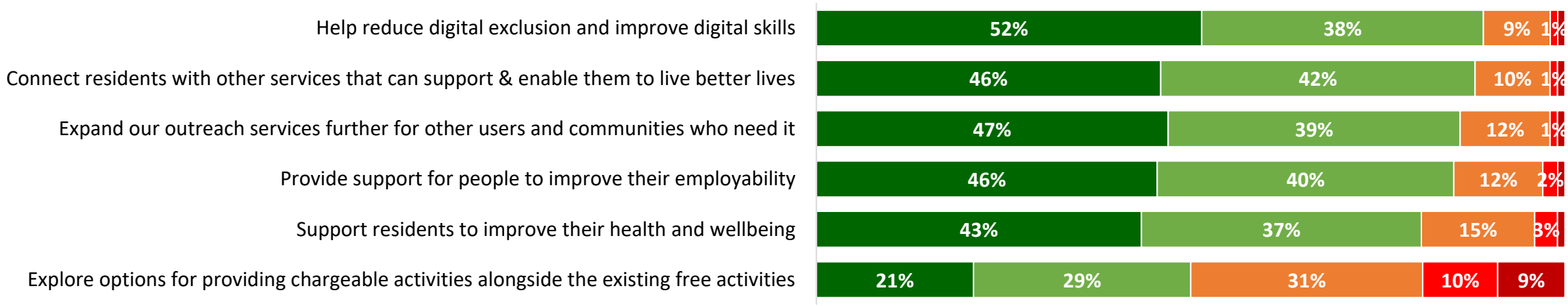
Buildings should be inviting and accessible for all; children, those with disability mental, physical and sensory. The community need to know what the library has to offer. Outreach on social media can be improved. I feel the existing online library platform is underused. People won't use it if they do not know it exists!

Base: all Individuals answering (485)

Individuals support for Aim Three Areas – Supporting Communities and Levelling up

- Overall agreement is high for five of the aim three areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas.
- Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside existing free activities is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills	52%	38%	9%	1%	1%
Connect residents with other services that can support & enable them to live better lives	46%	42%	10%	1%	1%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	47%	39%	12%	1%	1%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	46%	40%	12%	2%	1%
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing	43%	37%	15%	3%	1%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	31%	10%	9%

Base: all Individuals answering (2,159)

Individuals comments on Aim Three areas – Supporting Communities and Levelling up

- Over one in five (22%) of those providing a comment noted a preference for the service to stick to the core offering and not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere. 14% of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 11% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.
- Some noted the library service could act as a community hub / encourage socialisation (12%) and a hub for health / outreach (8%).

Individuals comments on Aim Three areas, coded into key themes	**%**
Should stick to core services / not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere	22%
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	14%
Could act as a community hub / socialisation	12%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	11%
Changes must not compromise book stocks / opening hours / staffing levels / space / service	9%
Hub for health / other services / outreach	8%
Support this aim	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	8%
Provide activities / groups / clubs / events	7%
Staff should focus on library service / too much for them to do if services expanded	7%
Services must be promoted / advertised / attract new users	6%
Some chargeable services could be beneficial / acceptable / must be cautious	6%
Staff must be appropriately trained	6%
IT support/training / equipment / online functionality required	6%
Chargeable services should be in addition to free services / not compromise free services	5%
Do not turn libraries into an online service only / do not replace physical books	4%
Space could be rented out / space for activities	4%
Could signpost services / provide information but nothing further	4%
Should not be commercialised / not a money-making operation	3%

Please note - 17% of Consultees answered this question

In expanding library services, it is essential not to lose sight of the primary purpose of a library - to provide books to borrow and the range of available books could be expanded – i.e. more books .

I think libraries can be key to bringing communities together, and organisations should be able to utilise library spaces and rent them after closing hours (gets people into the building who might not otherwise and could encourage them to use libraries more often in the future).

Often libraries are in the centre of town, accessible, visible and with working hours opening times. There is an important and valuable role for libraries to play in acting as a connector and referrer of people to other community-based services to support health wellbeing, employability and so on.

Base: all Individuals answering (379)

Individuals comments on chargeable areas they would like to see

- Just under one in five (18%) of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 9% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.
- Of those that put forward ideas for potential chargeable services, the most common are arts & crafts / artist exhibitions (16%), talks by authors / writing workshops (13%), café / refreshment provision (12%) and activities for children / teenagers / including after school / school holiday specific activities (12%).

Please note - 32% of Consultees answered this question

Chargeable activities individuals would like to see, coded into key themes	%
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	18%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	9%
Arts & crafts / artist exhibitions	16%
Prepared to pay / charge must be reasonable / if to cover costs / donations	14%
Talks by authors / writing workshops	13%
Café / refreshment provision	12%
Activities for children / teenagers / including after school/school holidays	12%
Workshops / courses / learning / talks / lectures	11%
Printing / photocopying / computer use / IT support	11%
Renting out space / providing space for groups / meetings / activities	10%
Only charge for additional services / core services must be free	8%
Drama / music / film / photography	8%
Host clubs / community groups / meetings / social groups	7%
Out of hours use	6%
Collaborate with / provide space for commercial services – banks, post office, solicitors / council	6%

Chargeable activities individuals would like to see, coded into key themes	%
Chargeable activities cannot take precedence over core services / detract from core services	5%
Some charging for services is needed (non-specific)	5%
Games (board & computer) / jigsaws / toys / DVDs	4%
More information required / examples	4%
Book clubs / reading groups / recommendations	4%
Act as community hubs	4%
Health services / mental health / wellbeing	4%
Baby / toddler groups	3%
Life skills / numeracy / literacy skills / CV writing / employability	3%
History / geology / ancestry	3%
Adult education / support for students	3%
Learning a language / sign language	3%
Small contribution to running costs / charge for inter-library lending / more for late fees	3%

Base: all Individuals answering (709)

Significant differences in agreement with aims by age

- A higher proportion of respondents aged 55 & over strongly agree with four of the aim one statements (supporting children, keep up to date / appealing stock resources, improving adult literacy and staff skilling). A higher proportion of respondents aged 25-44 strongly agree with delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities.
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 55 & over support mobile library service development and a higher proportion of respondents aged 25-34 strongly agree with launching a new online platform.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?

AIM ONE – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY	Aged 25-34	Aged 35-44	Aged 45-54	Aged 55-64	Aged 65+
% strongly agreeing with aim to support children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills	76%	81%	83%	84%	85%
% strongly agreeing with aim to keep stock resources up to date and appealing	72%	78%	80%	79%	82%
% strongly agreeing with aim to help adults improve their literacy for everyday life	70%	74%	77%	80%	81%
% strongly agreeing with aim to ensure staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible services	59%	67%	73%	71%	72%
% strongly agreeing with aim to deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities	54%	58%	48%	49%	42%

AIM TWO – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS	Aged 25-34	Aged 35-44	Aged 45-54	Aged 55-64	Aged 65+
% overall support for developing the mobile library service to support service outreach and community engagement	83%	78%	83%	89%	87%
% strongly agreeing with aim for launching a new online library platform	41%	27%	33%	30%	25%

% significantly higher response than other age groups

Significant differences in agreement with aims by district

- Differences in response are particularly evident from respondents living in Basildon and Harlow. A higher proportion of Basildon residents support four of the aim one areas and two of the aim two areas.
- A higher proportion of Harlow residents support four of the aim two areas.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?

AIM ONE – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY	Basildon	Castle Point	Colchester	Harlow	Tendring
% overall support for providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs	97%	94%	89%	91%	92%
% overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities	90%	85%	80%	86%	85%
% overall support for exploring new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service	79%	78%	65%	70%	67%
% overall support for exploring new opportunities to generate additional income	79%	71%	60%	63%	70%

AIM TWO – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS	Basildon	Castle Point	Colchester	Harlow	Tendring
% overall support for developing a planned programme of improvements for buildings	83%	78%	81%	89%	82%
% overall support for improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers	79%	76%	76%	90%	77%
% overall support for rollout of better mobile technology for staff and volunteers	72%	68%	69%	79%	66%
% overall support for updating the printing services on offer to customers	71%	75%	66%	79%	63%
% strongly agreeing with aim for launching a new online library platform	71%	63%	57%	67%	58%

AIM THREE – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND LEVELLING UP	Basildon	Castle Point	Colchester	Harlow	Tendring
% overall support for providing support for people to improve employability	84%	86%	86%	88%	91%
% overall support for exploring options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	54%	56%	41%	51%	52%

% significantly higher response than other districts

% significantly lower response than other districts

Individuals other comments related to the Essex libraries plan

- A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment requested that all current libraries should stay open or were concerned about their local library building closing. In addition, 16% commented on how important the library service is to the community / residents.
- Some reiterated previous comments in terms of a larger range of material / book stock (13%) and fully trained staff and volunteers / having enough staff (12%). 8% requested longer opening hours / opening on additional days.

Other comments related to the plan for Essex libraries, coded into key themes	**%**
Libraries must stay open / concerned about closures of particular libraries	25%
Crucially important for community / vital for residents	16%
Offer a large range of materials / increase book / up-to-date stock	13%
Support plans outlined	13%
Staff & volunteers must be fully trained / polite / friendly / need to make sure of enough staff	12%
Longer opening hours required / open on more days	8%
Must be inclusive / accessible / cater to all	8%
Communication / engagement / promote services / attract new users	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / where is funding coming from	7%
Should be supported / invested in / funded / secured for future	6%
Services to be free / no charging	6%
Important to focus on core library services	6%
Activities / groups / meetings are needed	5%
Service / opening hours / space must be maintained	5%
Used as a community resource / information point for services	5%
Praise for current libraries / staff	5%
In need of upgrade / new facilities / parking / toilets / refreshment provision	4%
Continue to offer IT support / use of equipment / Wi-Fi / online provision	4%
Volunteers should not replace trained / paid staff	4%
Online offer should not replace physical books	4%

Please note - 28% of Consultees answered this question

Libraries should continue to operate and none should be closed down. Not everyone has access to the internet for reading and learning services, and even those who do may not wish to use the internet for this purpose. From a personal point of view, I learn much more easily reading from a book than from a screen.

Make libraries more accessible for all. Utilise libraries for the community, include coffee areas, provision for talks with people of interest. Children's groups, assistance for those with extra needs. Our libraries can be so much more than just borrowing books.

I would hope that libraries will continue to be provided for local people to enable those from a variety of groups to participate and enjoy them. Libraries should be well stocked to encourage usage. The running down of libraries has put many people off visiting at all. Encourage activities that will bring people back to their local library.

Base: all Individuals answering (613)

Individual comments related to the future of Essex libraries

- A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment would like to see a good stock of books / wider / more up to date range of books.
- Other common comments focused on the social aspect of the service and its development – activities / events / opportunities to socialise (17%), more of a community focus / community hub moving forward (17%), engaging / working with schools / children / young people (12%).

What individuals would like to see from Essex libraries in future, coded into key themes	%
Good stock of books / wider range of books / keep up-to-date	25%
Avoid closures / retain current libraries / expand	19%
Activities / events / clubs / opportunities to socialise	17%
More of a community focus / community hub / community engagement moving forward	17%
Longer opening hours / open more days / everyday / out of hours usage	14%
Engaging / working with schools / children / young people / catering for	12%
Friendly / professional fully trained paid staff / not replaced by volunteers	12%
Continuity of current service / maintain existing service / happy with service	12%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services / attract new users	11%
Be inclusive / accessible for all	10%
Welcoming / friendly / quiet / safe environment / for study / reading / working	10%
Support learning / literacy / research / continue to foster reading	8%
Up-to-date resources / info / well stocked (unspecified)	8%
Provision of audiobooks / eBooks / online services / digital resources / keep up-to-date	7%
Provision of IT / printers / Wi-Fi / IT support / some improvement required to IT	6%
Evolving / dynamic up-to-date/improved services / adapting to needs of users / vary by library	6%
Space to use for clubs / groups / meetings / socialising	6%
Improved search / online library system / app / collection/return system	6%
Modern / keep up-to-date buildings with facilities i.e. toilets, parking	4%
Be a free service to all to use	4%
Selected services / collaboration / signposting non-library services	4%
Continual funding / investment / support / fit for future	4%

Please note – 73% of Consultees answered this question

A continued commitment to meeting the diversity of borrowers' needs, i.e. not restricting book stock and other services to those that are useful to the majority but making sure that minority interests are catered for.

I am really happy with the service received so far. We enjoy visiting different libraries around Chelmsford. Perhaps more outdoor reading events in the spring/summer? We attended a lovely event where the library joined forces with Heart and Sole walking group to go for a walk then have a story in the park. Lovely experience had by all. A great way to bring the community together.

A far more dynamic and integrated service which combines a variety of local and community services and which reaches out positively to the community it serves.

Base: all Individuals answering (1,589)

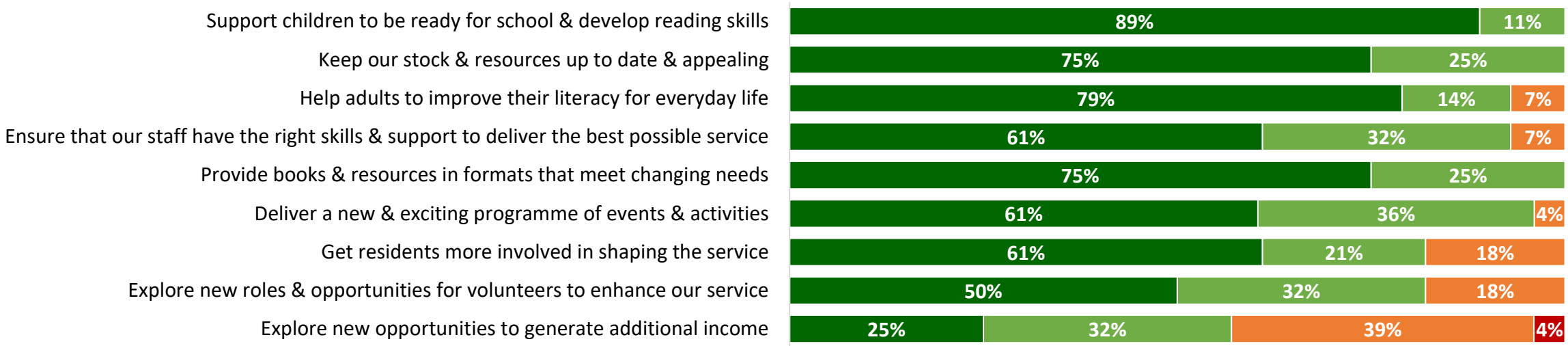
Essex County Council

Organisations overall opinion of key aims put forward

Organisations support for Aim One areas – Library Service and Literacy

- Overall agreement is strong for eight of the aim one areas with a significant proportion strongly agreeing with these aims.
- Agreement with exploration of new opportunities to generate additional income is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Support children to be ready for school & develop reading skills	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	79%	14%	7%	0%	0%
Ensure our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	61%	36%	4%	0%	0%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	61%	21%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance service	50%	32%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	25%	32%	39%	0%	4%

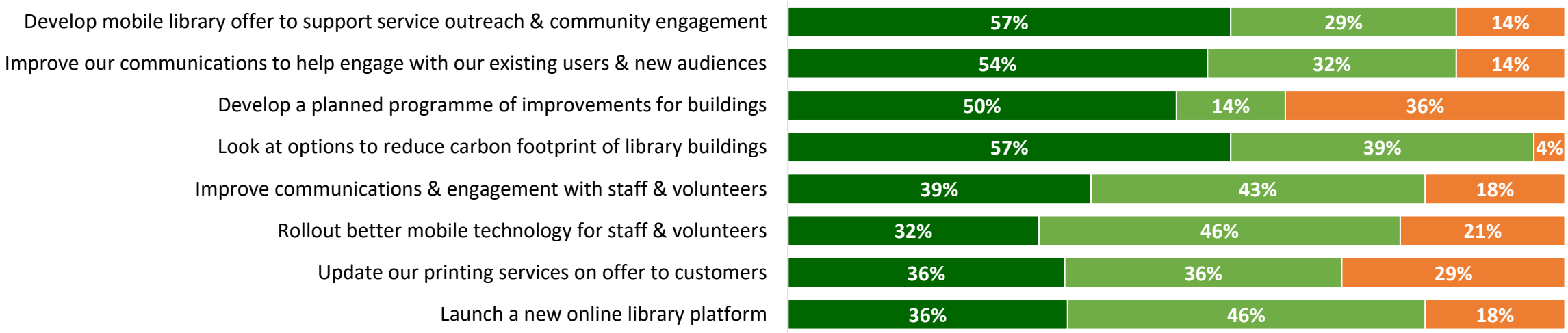
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Base: all Organisations answering (28)

Organisations support for Aim Two areas – Infrastructure and Communications

- Overall agreement is high for all aim two areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas.
- Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas e.g. printing services offer and new online library platform.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Develop mobile library offer to support service outreach & community engagement	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users & new audiences	54%	32%	14%	0%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for building	50%	14%	36%	0%	0%
Look at options to reduce carbon footprint of library buildings	57%	39%	4%	0%	0%
Improve communications & engagement with staff & volunteers	39%	43%	18%	0%	0%
Rollout better mobile technology for staff & volunteers	32%	46%	21%	0%	0%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	36%	36%	29%	0%	0%
Launch a new online library platform	36%	46%	18%	0%	0%

Base: all Organisations answering (28)

Organisations support for Aim Three Areas – Supporting Communities and Levelling up

- Overall agreement is strong for five of the aim three areas. In addition, a significant proportion strongly agree with these aims.
- Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside existing free activities is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims…?

Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Connect residents with other services that can support & enable them to live better lives	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	71%	21%	7%	0%	0%
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	36%	11%	4%

Base: all Organisations answering (28)

This report was produced for Essex County Council

Essex County Council

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
EVERYONE'S LIBRARY SERVICE 2022-2026
CONSULTATION REPORT

PREPARED BY LAKE MARKET RESEARCH

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BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

Essex County Council is the second largest library authority in the country, serving a population of nearly 1.5 million residents across a network of 74 libraries, two mobile library vehicles, an online e-library service, and a home library delivery service provided by volunteers to residents who cannot access onsite or mobile services.

In 2019-20 (the last year unaffected by pandemic restrictions), the library service had 226,000 active users, 4.3 million visits, 3.9 million loans, and over 400,000 e-resources were borrowed. The service provides free internet access to users through computers and public Wi-Fi; free access to a range of online learning tools and a range of local studies resources and special collections available at different sites across the county. The service also runs a range of in-person and online activities for all age groups as well as activities to help people develop new skills, improve their health and wellbeing, connect with others in their community and reduce social isolation.

The world has changed significantly in the last 18 months. With a new administration and new Plan for Essex in place, Essex County Council are refocussing their vision and plans for the future of Library services. This plan sets out high-level aims for the service and the areas the service will be working on over the next four years:

- Library Service and Literacy
- Infrastructure and Communications
- Supporting communities and Levelling Up

Essex County Council launched a consultation with the aim of seeking views from Essex residents, library service users and organisations about the draft plan and the areas of focus for the next four years.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation was hosted on Essex County Council's consultation portal for 8 weeks from 26th November 2020 to 21st January 2022. The library survey was publicised extensively across the county.

Social media activity reached hundreds of thousands of local people through posts on ECC and Essex Libraries social media channels as well as a Facebook advertising campaign. The survey was also prominent on both the ECC and Essex Libraries websites and social media channels throughout.

The draft plan and survey were also shared directly with residents through resident and library newsletters. Prior and throughout the consultation, engagement was carried out with local, regional and national press, generating coverage in many local newspapers and on local radio stations.

Posters, popup banners and postcards have been displayed in libraries and staff have also been encouraging residents to give their thoughts on the plan. A number of groups have also been engaged with directly including the Young Essex Assembly, schools, faith leaders, as well as library clubs and groups.

POINTS TO NOTE

RESPONSE

- 2,213 responses were received via the consultation questionnaire - 2,185 from individuals and 28 responses from organisations. 7 emails were received to the consultation inbox and have been reviewed by this report's author.

- Please note that participation in consultations is self-selecting and this needs to be considered when interpreting responses.
- Responses to consultations do not wholly represent the wider Essex population and are reliant on awareness and propensity to take part based on the topic and interest.
- The majority of individual respondents are users of library services and indicated they have used library services in the last six months.

ANALYSIS

- Essex County Council were responsible for the design, promotion and collection of the consultation responses. Lake Market Research were appointed to conduct an independent analysis of feedback.
- All survey results are presented as percentages. Each chart title details the number of valid responses received to each question. Respondents could choose which questions they answered so the base size for each question will vary.
- The questionnaire contained a mix of single and multiple choice questioning. Where percentages for single choice questions do not sum to 100%, this is the result of computer rounding for each response code as percentages are displayed as whole numbers The report notes where respondents were given the option of providing more than one answer.
- It should be remembered that a sample, and not the entire population of the County, has taken part in this consultation. As a result, all findings are subject to sampling tolerances, which means not all differences are statistically significant. In our analysis we have checked for statistical significance in the percentages for all questions between all demographic subgroups of respondents. Any demographic differences have been analysed using appropriate statistical means to check for statistical significance by comparing percentages and also taking into account the base sizes for each subgroup. Where there are significant differences in response between demographic subgroups, the report includes commentary to this effect. Statistical significance has been conducted at 95% confidence.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INDIVIDUALS RESPONDING

The tables below depict the demographic profile of respondents against the Essex population[1] and the profile of library service users[2] (where comparable data is available). The proportion who left these questions blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information has been included as applicable. Consistent with the ECC library user profile, a higher proportion of female residents took part in the consultation. The consultation received a higher proportion of responses from residents aged 55 & over compared to the ECC library user profile.

GENDER	Consultation Total %	Essex population %	Library user profile %
Male	24%	49%	32%
Female	70%	51%	53%
Non-binary/prefer to self-describe	0%	-	-
Prefer not to say / blank	5%	-	14%

[1] Based on 2020 population estimates for Essex County Council (excluding Southend and Thurrock). Age proportions have been recalculated to exclude those aged under 16.

[2] Based on profile of active library users (177,726 – used library card within the last year). District is based on home location selected at the point of joining the library.

AGE	Consultation Total %	Essex population %	Library user profile %
Under 16	1%	-	-
16-24	2%	12%	10%
25-34	7%	15%	14%
35-44	14%	15%	19%
45-54	15%	17%	14%
55-64	21%	15%	14%
65 & over	37%	26%	31%
Prefer not to say / blank	4%	-	3%

DISTRICT	Consultation Total %	Essex population %	Library user profile %
Basildon	7%	13%	13%
Braintree	11%	10%	10%
Brentwood	6%	5%	6%
Castle Point	5%	6%	5%
Chelmsford	15%	12%	14%
Colchester	17%	13%	14%
Epping Forest	6%	9%	8%
Harlow	3%	6%	6%
Maldon	4%	4%	4%
Rochford	5%	6%	6%
Tendring	10%	10%	9%
Uttlesford	5%	6%	6%
Southend	2%	-	-
Thurrock	0.4%	-	-
Another neighbouring county / other	2%	N/A	N/A
Prefer not to say / blank	2%	.	-

ETHNICITY	Consultation Total %	Essex population %
White British	86%	91%
White Irish	1%	1%
White other background	4%	3%
Mixed / multiple ethnic group	1.1%	1%
Asian / Asian British	0.9%	3%
Black / Black British	0.1%	1%
Other ethnic group	0.8%	<0.5%
Prefer not to say / blank	6%	-

WORKING STATUS	Consultation Total %
Employed full-time	23%
Employed part-time	16%
Self-employed	6%
Employed on flexible/zero hours contract	1%
In full-time education or training (e.g. college, university, apprenticeship)	2%
Not currently employed	5%
Volunteering	6%
Retired	40%
Other	3%
Prefer not to say / blank	5%

DISABILITY / IMPAIRMENT	Consultation Total %
No impairment	71%
Physical impairment	7%
Hearing impairment / deaf	5%
Mental health needs	3%
Visual impairment / blind	2%
Autism spectrum disorder	1%
Learning difficulties / disabilities	1%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say / blank	12%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2,185 respondents took part in the consultation as an individual. 28 organisations also took part in the consultation. There is significant alignment in response to the aims outlined amongst both groups.

- The vast majority of individual consultees responding are library users and have used library services in the last six months. This should be considered when interpreting responses.

- Library services have a significant impact on the lives of those responding to the consultation. As well as access to books (noted by 60% of those commenting), 28% reference reading as being crucial / enjoyable and that the service fosters reading. The ability to use the service as a family, either currently or in previous years, and the fond memories held is also evident with 41% commenting. 20% note the service offers mental health benefits and 24% note the service allows access free material that some couldn't afford to access in other ways.

AIM ONE

- Overall agreement with the sub areas of Aim One is strong in relation to supporting children to be ready for school and developing their reading skills, keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing, helping adults to improve their literacy, ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best service and providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs.

- Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities and getting more residents involved in shaping the service is also high but the proportion strongly agreeing with this aim is comparatively lower – likely as a result of the exact nature of these initiatives being unknown.

- Agreement with the aims concerning exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers and new opportunities to generate income are comparatively lower than the other Aim One.

AIM TWO

- Overall agreement with the sub areas of Aim Two is high in relation to developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement, improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences, developing a planned programme of buildings improvements, looking at options to reduce the carbon footprint of library buildings and improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers.

- Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas at around two thirds agreeing with the aims of rolling out better mobile technology for staff & volunteers, updating printing services and launching a new online library platform. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with these aims (possibly as a result of perceived relevance).

- Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities and getting more residents involved in shaping the service is also high but the proportion strongly agreeing with this aim is comparatively lower to other areas (likely as a result of the exact nature of these initiatives being unknown).

AIM THREE

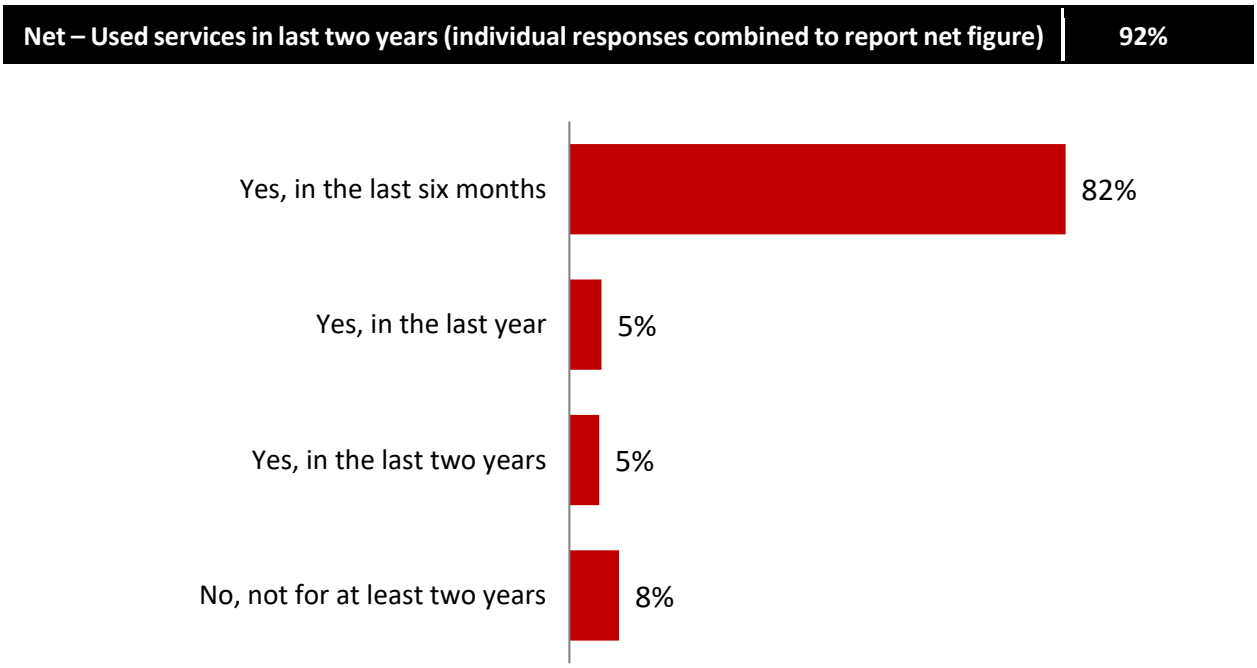
- Overall agreement with the sub areas of Aim Three is high in relation to helping reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connecting residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives, expanding outreach services further for other users and communities that need it, providing support for people to improve their employability and supporting residents to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities is considerably lower than the other Aim Three areas at 50%. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this aim (31%). 19% disagreed with this aim.

INDIVIDUALS - USAGE & FAMILIARITY WITH LIBRARY SERVICES

RECENCY OF LIBRARY SERVICE USE

The vast majority (92%) of those responding to the consultation have used Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online in the last two years. 82% have used Essex's library facilities in the last six months. Only 8% of those responding to the consultation indicated they have not used Essex's library services for at least two years.

Have you used any of Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online? *Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,185), single response question*



Supporting data table	
Net – Used in last two years	92%
Yes, in the last six months	82%
Yes, in the last year	5%
Yes, in the last two years	5%
No, not for at least two years	8%

Whilst the majority of respondents across all demographic groups have used library services in the last six months, some significant differences were observed:

- Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents aged 35-44 (87%) and respondents aged 65 and over (84%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents aged 45-54 (76%).
- Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents who are employed part time (84%) and respondents who are retired (85%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents who are employed full time (73%).

INDIVIDUAL AWARENESS OF LIBRARY SERVICES

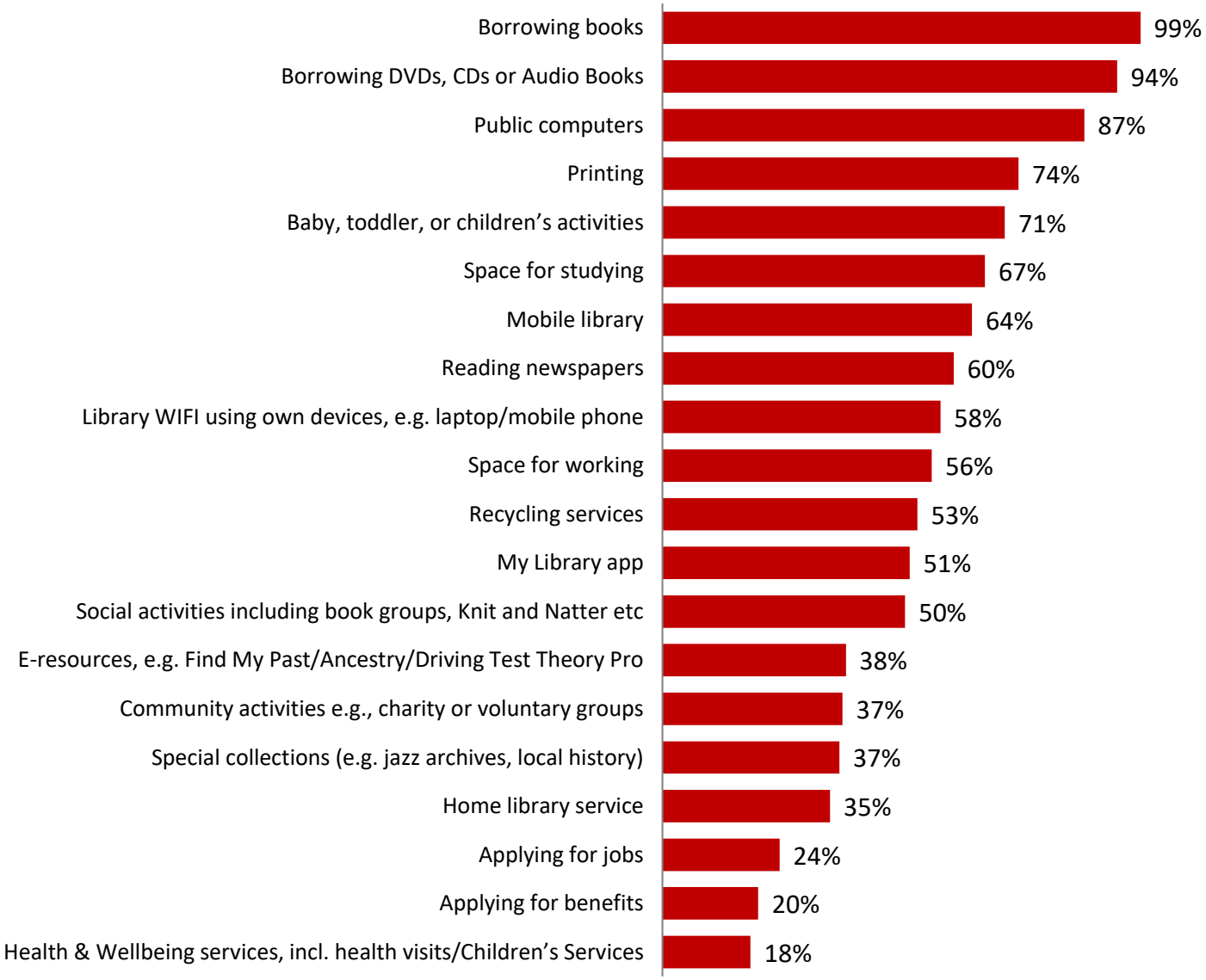
As expected, the vast majority of those responding to the consultation are aware of book borrowing (99%) and DVD, CD or audio book borrowing (94%) from the library service. Awareness of accessing technology either through use of public computers (87%) or printing (74%) is also high. Whilst access to library Wi-Fi using respondents own devices is lower at 58%.

Just over two thirds (67%) are aware of the service providing space for studying, whilst awareness of space for working is lower at 56%.

Claimed awareness of outreach services is mixed with 64% aware of the mobile library service and 35% aware of the home library service.

Awareness of community activities and health and wellbeing services are comparatively lower at 37% and 18% respectively.

Are you aware of the following library services? *Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,184), multi response question*



Supporting data table	
Borrowing books	99%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio Books	94%
Public computers	87%
Printing	74%
Baby, toddler, or children's activities	71%
Space for studying	67%
Mobile library	64%
Reading newspapers	60%
Library WIFI using own devices such as laptop or mobile phone	58%
Space for working	56%
Recycling services	53%
My Library app	51%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter etc	50%
E-resources such as Find My Past, Ancestry, Driving Test Theory Pro	38%
Community activities e.g., charity or voluntary groups	37%
Special collections (e.g. jazz archives, local history)	37%
Home library service	35%
Applying for jobs	24%
Applying for benefits	20%
Health and Wellbeing services, including health visits and Children's Services	18%

A likely reflection of varying service provision across Essex, there are significant variations in awareness of specific services by district:

- Awareness of the Mobile Library service is higher amongst respondents who live in Braintree (72%), Maldon (71%), Uttlesford (68%), Tendring (67%), Colchester (67%) and Chelmsford (66%).
- Awareness of space for studying (73%) and being able to use the library Wi-Fi using respondents own devices (65%) is higher amongst respondents who live in Chelmsford.
- Awareness of social activities (62%) and community activities (50%) is higher amongst respondents who live in Rochford.
- Awareness of special collections is higher amongst respondents living in Colchester (47%) and Epping Forest (47%).

As expected, awareness of specific services also varies by age:

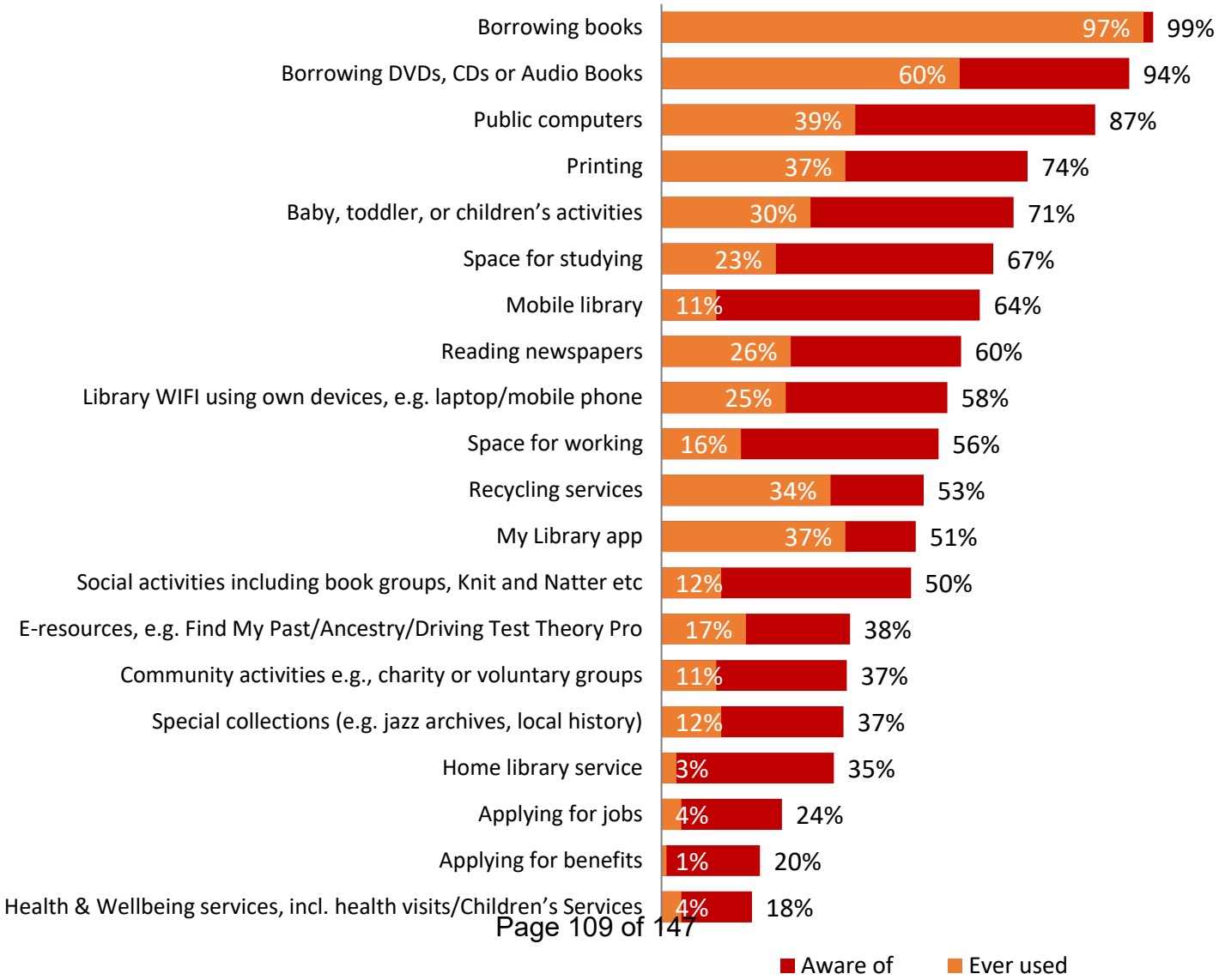
- Awareness of baby, toddler or children's activities is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (79%) and 35-44 (80%).

- Awareness of a number of services are higher amongst respondents aged 55-64 - the mobile library service (70%), reading newspapers (68%),'My Library app' (58%), social activities (54%), special collections (44%) and the Home Library service.
- Awareness of the Mobile Library service, reading newspapers and social activities is also high amongst respondents aged 65 & over (66%, 65% and 54% respectively).
- Awareness of being able to use the library Wi-Fi using residents' own devices is high amongst respondents aged 25-34 (69% and 59% respectively).

INDIVIDUAL USE OF LIBRARY SERVICES

As expected, the vast majority of those responding to the consultation have borrowed books from the library (97%). 60% have borrowed DVDs, CDs or audio books before. Over a third have used public computers (39%), printing (37%), the 'My Library app' (37%) and recycling services (34%). Around a quarter have used the facilities for reading newspapers (26%) and the library Wi-Fi for use on respondents' own devices (25%). Claimed use of the outreach services is comparatively low at 11% for the mobile library service and 3% for the home library service.

Have you ever used the library service for any of the following? *Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,170), multi response question*



Supporting data table	Aware of	Ever used
Borrowing books	99%	97%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio Books	94%	60%
Public computers	87%	39%
Printing	74%	37%
Baby, toddler, or children's activities	71%	30%
Space for studying	67%	23%
Mobile library	64%	11%
Reading newspapers	60%	26%
Library WIFI using own devices such as laptop or mobile phone	58%	25%
Space for working	56%	16%
Recycling services	53%	34%
My Library app	51%	37%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter etc	50%	12%
E-resources such as Find My Past, Ancestry, Driving Test Theory Pro	38%	17%
Community activities e.g., charity or voluntary groups	37%	11%
Special collections (e.g. jazz archives, local history)	37%	12%
Home library service	35%	3%
Applying for jobs	24%	4%
Applying for benefits	20%	1%
Health and Wellbeing services, including health visits and Children's Services	18%	4%

There are some significant variations in use of specific services by district:

- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Castle Point have used printing (56%), facilities to read newspapers (38%) and attending community activities (21%).
- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Colchester have used the public computers (44%) and special collections (21%).
- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Harlow have used the public computers (55%), printing (49%), space for studying (35%) and space for working (27%).

  A higher proportion of respondents who live in Maldon have used the 'My Library app' (47%).
- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Uttlesford have used the e-resources (31%), Mobile Library service (24%), special collections (22%).

There are also significant variations in use of specific services by age:

- Prior use of baby, toddler or children's activities is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (41%), 35-44 (62%) and 45-54 (41%).

- Prior use of borrowing DVDs, CD or audio books is higher amongst respondents aged 45-54 (68%) and 55-64 (67%).
- Prior use of facilities to read newspapers is highest amongst respondents aged 55-64 (31%) and respondents aged 65 & over (32%).
- Prior use of the library Wi-Fi for respondents' own devices and the 'My Library app' is high amongst respondents aged 25-34 (41% and 49% respectively).
- Whilst the base size is relatively low (n=32), a higher proportion of respondents aged 16-24 have used space for studying (56%).

COMMENTS ON PERCEIVED IMPACT OF LIBRARY SERVICE ON LIFE FOR INDIVIDUALS

Respondents were asked to detail the impact the library has had on their life in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 87% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

The most common theme referenced is the service providing respondents access to books (60%); a theme supported by 28% also referencing reading as being crucial / enjoyable and that the service fosters reading. Being able to use the service as a family, either currently or in previous years, and the fond memories held are common with 41% commenting.

It is clear from the quantity and range of comments referenced that the service is valued by those using it and is seen as offering mental health benefits (20%), access to free material that some couldn't afford to access in other ways (24%), access to resources (18%) and wide ranging material (17%) as well as a place to work / study (15%).

Please tell us what impact the library service has had on your life, if any? Coded into themes
Base: all answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (87% of Individual respondents - 1,892), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (87%)	
Provides access to books	60%
Used as a child / take my children / grandchildren	41%
Lost without library / big part of life / rely on it / value / use regularly	36%
Reading is crucial / enjoyable / read a lot / fosters reading	28%
Free access / could not afford it otherwise	24%
Activities / groups / meetings	23%
Improves mental health / sanity / lifeline / isolation / socialising	20%
Provides access to other resources / ability to research	18%
Provides access to wide ranging material / new subjects / genres / authors	17%
Place to work / study	15%
Access to audiobooks / eBooks / CDs / DVDs	14%
Helpful / useful / accessible resource / service	13%
Welcoming / warm / comfortable / quiet / safe / pleasant surroundings	11%
Can reserve books online / collect books / drop-off & collections points	11%
Community asset	11%
IT / printing / photocopying / Wi-Fi / are essential	10%
Staff are friendly / helpful	10%
Expand knowledge / learn / educate / access to other genres / authors	10%
Used all my life	10%
Helped me through the pandemic / lockdown	9%

% comments from respondents answering (87%)	
Work for / worked for / volunteer for library service	5%
Access to newspapers / magazines - physical / online / on app	5%
Somewhere to read	4%
A collections point for LFTs / recycling point / collect refuse/recycling sacks	3%
Mobile library is an asset / home delivery service	3%
Better for environment to borrow rather than buy books	1%

Some example comments to support these themes are displayed below:

Libraries are the only place where anyone can go, regardless of socioeconomic background and be able to access all these amazing free services and are an essential part of our community, I attended rhyme time sessions with both my children and it was invaluable for meeting other parents when I may have otherwise felt isolated in my local area. We visit regularly as a family to take out books and love that the principle of libraries reduces waste and encourages a love of books and reading.

It was a life saver as a mother to young children. We didn't have much money and being able to have somewhere free to take them was invaluable, as well as being able to share books that I couldn't afford. It greatly improved my mental health.

It enables me to borrow a wide range of books including audiobooks which I would otherwise not be able to afford. I used to like the cafe in Colchester library as I felt it was supporting people with learning difficulties who worked there but that facility no longer exists. I have sometimes sat in the library for a quiet space.

I access/use library services most days. Most commonly, I request and borrow physical books from the library and audio books from the online service. As a full time carer, these are resources I would not have the money to purchase and would therefore not have access to. Alongside the resources I borrow from the library I also use the library space on a regular basis for teaching my son (who has additional needs and is partially home schooled). The library provides us with a space away from the home environment to complete his learning tasks. Without this dedicated space, educating him would be a much greater challenge as the home environment affords many more distractions for us both.

It is an integral part of our lives as a family . We visit the library often to borrow books (every three weeks or more often). We use the online resources daily especially the borrowbox and press reader apps. Our daughter has enjoyed the rhyme time sessions and one off craft events held in the library. The staff are wonderful, so friendly and helpful and we would be lost without our local library.

There are significant variations in the perceived impact of library services by age and reflect usage patterns:

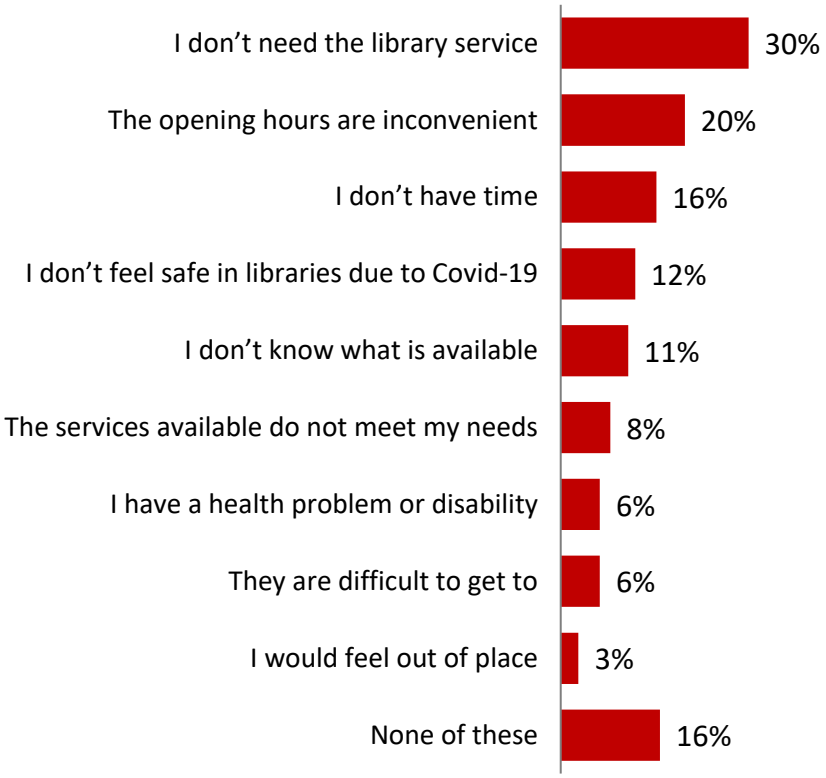
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 referenced use as a child / taking their children / grandchildren (60%, 71% and 49% respectively)
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 35-44 and 45-54 referenced activities / groups / meetings (36% and 29% respectively).
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 35-44 referenced the library plays a big part in their life and would feel lost without the services offered (44%).
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 25-34 referenced use as a place to work or study (24%).
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 65 & over referenced access to other resources / ability to research (24%).

REASONS FOR NOT CURRENTLY USING LIBRARY SERVICES AMONGST INDIVIDUALS

Respondents were asked to select their reasons for not currently using Essex library services from a prompted list. 174 respondents responded to this question; 8% of respondents taking part.

The most common reason for not using Essex Library Service is simply not having a need to (30%), followed by a perception of inconvenient opening hours (20%) and not having the time to use them (16%). 11% of those not using the services are unsure of what is available.

If you do not currently use Essex Library Services, what are the reasons for this?
Base: all Individual respondents answering (174), multi response question



Supporting data table	
I don't need the library service	30%
The opening hours are inconvenient	20%
I don't have time	16%
I don't feel safe in libraries due to Covid-19	12%
I don't know what is available	11%
The services available do not meet my needs	8%
I have a health problem or disability	6%
They are difficult to get to	6%
I would feel out of place	3%
None of these	16%

INDIVIDUALS - OVERALL OPINION OF KEY AIMS PUT FORWARD

The draft 'Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026 plan' sets three high-level aims for the Essex Library service and the areas that the team will be working on over the next four years. These are:

1. Library Service and Literacy
2. Infrastructure and Communications
3. Supporting our communities and Levelling Up

Respondents were presented with the sub level aims within each of these three areas and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each one. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on each of the three high-level aims in their own words.

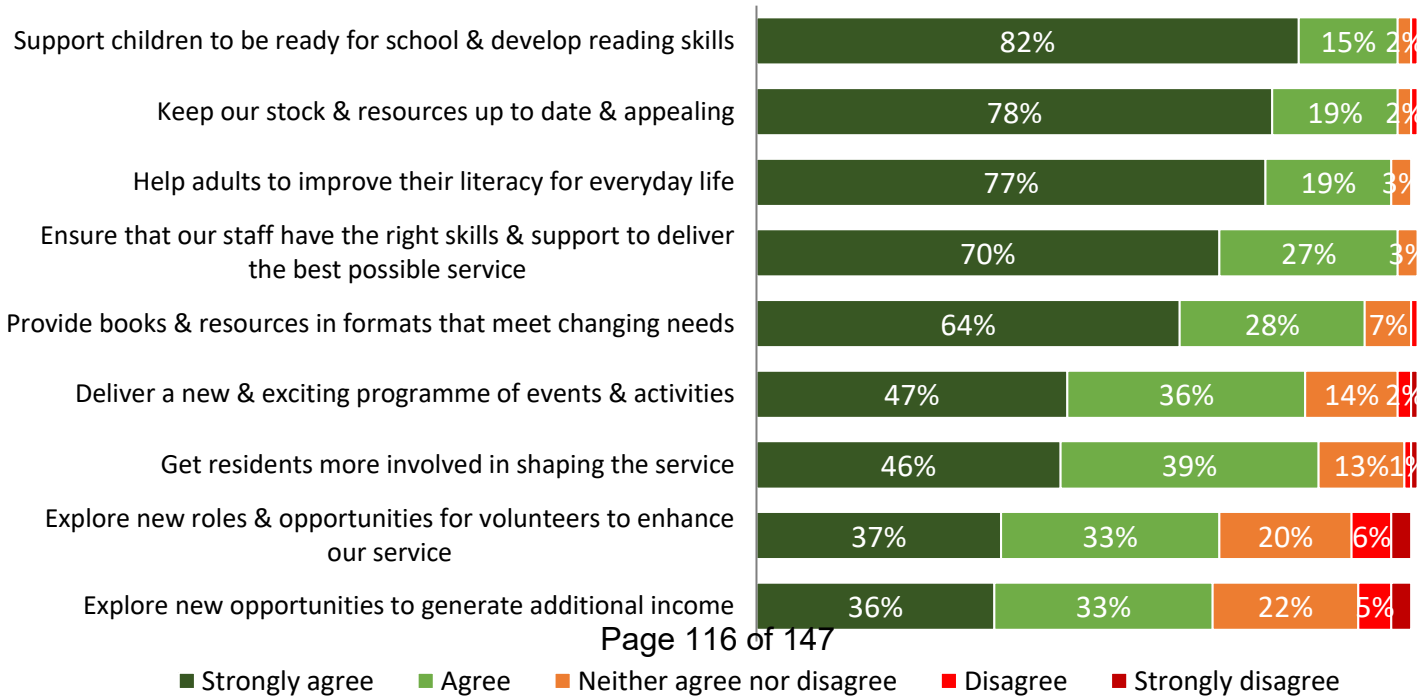
SUPPORT FOR AIM ONE AREAS – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY

Overall agreement is strong in relation to the stated aims of supporting children to be ready for school and developing their reading skills, keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing, helping adults to improve their literacy, ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best service and providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs; all with at least 90% agreement. Strength of agreement (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') with these aims is also very high (64% or above).

Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities and getting more residents involved in shaping the service is high (84% and 85% respectively). However, strength of support is comparatively lower – likely as a result of the exact nature of these initiatives being unknown.

Agreement with the aims concerning exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers and new opportunities to generate income are comparatively lower than the other Aim One areas at 70% and 69% respectively.

***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims*?** *Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,175), single response question for each aim*



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Support children to be ready for school & develop their reading skills	82%	15%	2%	1%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	78%	19%	2%	1%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	77%	19%	3%	0%	0%
Ensure that our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	64%	28%	7%	1%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	47%	36%	14%	2%	%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	46%	39%	13%	1%	1%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service	37%	33%	20%	6%	3%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	36%	33%	22%	5%	3%

There are a few significant variations in support between districts which likely reflect the perceived needs of particular libraries in different areas, and are as follows:

- Overall support for providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs (97%), delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities (90%), exploring new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance the service (79%), and exploring new opportunities to generate additional income is higher amongst respondents living in Basildon.
- Overall support for exploring new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance the service (65%) and exploring new opportunities to generate income (60%) is lower amongst respondents living in Colchester.

There are significant variations in the degree of support for particular aims by age:

- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for supporting children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 55-64 (84%) and aged 65 & over (85%).
- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 45-54 (80%), 55-64 (79%) and aged 65 & over (82%).
- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for helping adults to improve their literacy for everyday life increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 55-64 (80%) and aged 65 & over (81%).

- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible services increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 45-54 (73%), 55-64 (71%) and aged 65 & over (72%).
- Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (91%).

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments they had related to Aim One in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 29% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

The most common theme referenced is the position that fully well trained and paid staff are critical to the library service (25%) and volunteers should be in addition to these staff and not replacing them (18%). Some are also concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (14%) and the importance of improving the range of books / investing in physical book stock (13%).

Consistent with the comparably lower proportion of respondents agreeing, 12% of those providing a comment referenced the service should not be focusing on income generation and 10% indicated they do not support charging for services.

Do you have any other comments related to Aim One? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (29% of respondents - 638), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (29%)	
Fully well trained & paid staff are critical to the service	25%
Volunteers should not replace trained staff only be in addition to	18%
Concerned about loss of physical books to eBooks / digital alternatives	14%
Improve range of books / invest in books / maintain if not improve book stock	13%
Children's literacy / education is so important / support library involvement / links to schools	12%
Should not focus on income generation but providing a core service	12%
Charging for services is not welcome / free service for all / priority should be a free service	10%
Support aim one areas (non-specific)	9%
Support some chargeable services / activities / with caveats / proceed with caution	8%
More events / groups / clubs / socialising	8%
Library is crucial to all / community / benefits all	7%
Support volunteers in addition to staff	7%
Suggestion for service / event / group / activity	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / seems complex	6%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services	5%
Changes should not negatively affect current service levels	4%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (29%)	
Evolve to community hub / provide access to other services	4%
Service should be inclusive / not just about books	4%
Adults' literacy / education is so important / support library involvement	4%
Focus on providing books / core service / fostering reading / not involved in anything else	3%

Trained librarians are essential in the delivery of Library services and literacy. There must never be any kind of reliance on volunteers to do this, though of course volunteers should be encouraged to help.

I would caution relying too much on volunteers who may not be able to commit regularly. I would also not want to see space taken away from core library services for income generation etc.

I can see the appeal to the library of exploring new opportunities to generate income, but this needs a lot of thought - you could risk making people who can't afford these services feel excluded, feel the library is not for them or not access services which are free to use because they are worried there could be a fee.

The library should not be about making money and attempting to introduce commercial aspects adds pressure to deliver only in those areas, distracts staff from core business and discourages people from visiting.

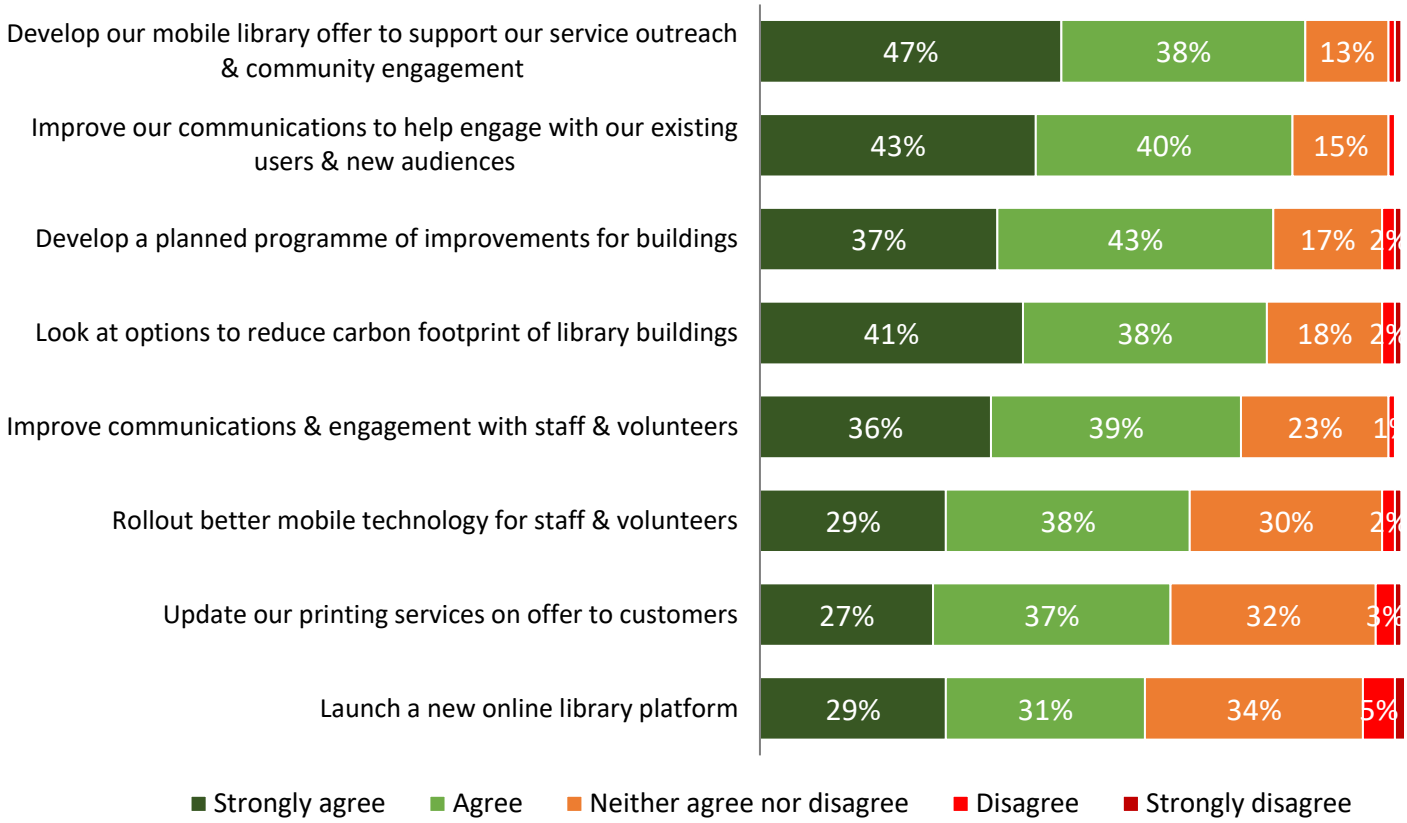
A very careful balance probably needs to be made between providing invaluable services, resources and generating further income, whilst keeping costs down as I think a huge proportion of the population are struggling on very low incomes and the struggle may become even harder and possibly much sooner rather than later. Pressure to deliver only in those areas, distracts staff from core business and discourages people from visiting.

SUPPORT FOR AIM TWO AREAS – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overall agreement is high with the stated aims of developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement, improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences, developing a planned programme of buildings improvements, looking at options to reduce the carbon footprint of library buildings and improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers; all with at least 75% agreement. Strength of agreement (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') with these aims is comparatively lower than observed for the top five areas of Aim One, however, at around four to five in ten.

Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas. 67% agree with rolling out better mobile technology for staff & volunteers, 64% agreeing with updating printing services and 60% agree with launching a new online library platform. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with these aims (possibly as a result of perceived relevance).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims**?** *Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,159), single response question for each aim*



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop our mobile library offer to support our service outreach and community engagement	47%	38%	13%	1%	1%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences	43%	40%	15%	1%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings	37%	43%	17%	2%	1%

Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings	41%	38%	18%	2%	1%
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers	36%	39%	23%	1%	0%
Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers	29%	38%	30%	2%	1%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	27%	37%	32%	3%	1%
Launch a new online library platform	29%	31%	34%	5%	2%

There are significant variations in support by district and likely reflect the perceived needs of particular libraries are as follows:

- Overall support for updating the printing services on offer to customers (71%) and launching a new online library platform (71%) is higher amongst respondents living in Basildon.
- Overall support for updating the printing services on offer to customers (75%) is highest amongst respondents living in Castle Point.
- Overall support for improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers (90%), developing a planned programme of improvements for buildings (89%), updating the printing services on offer to customers (79%) and rollout of better mobile technology for staff and volunteers (79%) is higher amongst respondents living in Harlow.

A few significant variations in the degree of support for particular aims by age:

- Overall support for developing the mobile library service to support service outreach and community engagement is higher amongst respondents aged 55-64 (89%) and 65 & over (87%).
- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for launching a new online library platform is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (41%).

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments they had related to Aim Two in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 22% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

The most common theme referenced supports the areas highlighted within Aim Two and references communication / promotion of the library service is needed and communications should be improved (21%).

Consistent with response to Aim One, some are concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (11%) and ensuring any changes are not to the detriment of the service as it stands currently (11%). Whilst a proportion put forward concerns on technology replacing staff / reducing personal contact (10%) and there already being enough online platforms available (10%), commentary also refers to suggested improvements to dated IT systems (9%), more / improved IT facilities within libraries (8%) and better technology / platforms to access online services remotely (8%).

Do you have any other comments related to Aim Two? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (22% of respondents - 485), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (22%)	
Communication / promotion / awareness of library service / improve content of comms	21%
Well trained / friendly / professional staff - proficient in tech support	13%
Retain if not expand book stock / invest in physical books / do not replace with digital alternatives	11%
Ensure changes are not to the detriment of service / space	11%
Buildings need updating / improving / better facilities / accessible	10%
Use of technology should not replace staff / reduce personal contact / supplement current service only / should not be an online service only	10%
Already have online platforms available / apps / are others needed / happy with current platforms	10%
Investment / improvement in mobile libraries / must not replace physical libraries	9%
Suggested improvements to current IT systems / systems are dated	9%
More / improved IT facilities within libraries / Wi-Fi / air printing / issues with IT	8%
In need of better technology / platforms to access online catalogue / online services remotely	8%
Buildings should be welcoming / provide a quiet space for reading/study / comfortable chairs	7%
Service must be fully inclusive - elderly / disabled - not everyone uses technology	7%
Support aim two areas (non-specific)	6%
Physical libraries important for community	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	6%
Can't comment on certain issues / don't understand some of the terms used	5%
Improved printing service not needed / contradicts carbon footprint reduction	4%
Carbon footprint reduction is a worthy aim	4%
No improvement to buildings necessary / not a priority	4%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (22%)	
Communication is adequate	4%
Where is funding coming from / sounds costly / how much will this cost	4%
Further consultation with stakeholders needed	3%
Meetings / events / groups / facilities for community outreach / services	3%

Of the above the most important is communication of the value of the library services and what is on offer to the residents so that they use the Library.

Promotion of services is all within the library and its own social media so most people don't know what is on offer. Events and activities should be promoted externally on village social media pages.

Whilst I admire the sentiment, this plan is in stark contrast to the previous five year plan. How will these improvements be funded? Is there still an insistence on libraries being self-funding, which simply doesn't work. Has the Community-run libraries plan which has never taken off, despite huge amounts of staff resource in its planning, been abandoned, or will savings be made by replacing staff with volunteers. You only have to look at other library services to see that in most cases volunteer-led libraries are not sustainable.

The online, app and e-book offer is really important in the modern world and the library has made great strides forward on this front in recent years. It's important to build upon this and continue to increase the e-book offer and keep it up to date. It would also be great for many if library e-books could be compatible with Kindle, the most popular e-reader, though I appreciate this is a wider issue than within Essex libraries.

Buildings should be inviting and accessible for all; children, those with disability mental, physical and sensory. The community need to know what the library has to offer. Outreach on social media can be improved. I feel the existing online library platform is underused. People won't use it if they do not know it exists!

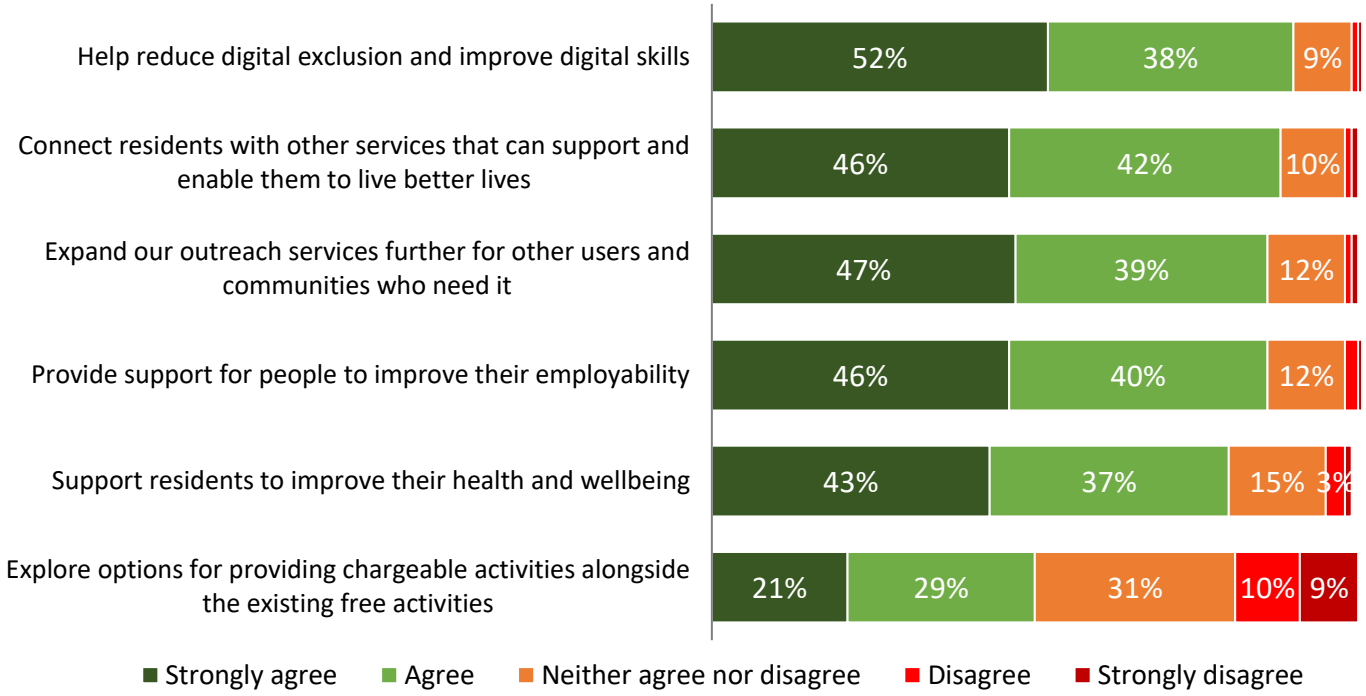
SUPPORT FOR AIM THREE AREAS – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND LEVELLING UP

Overall agreement is high in relation to the stated aims of helping reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connecting residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives, expanding outreach services further for other users and communities that need it and providing support for people to improve their employability; all with at least 85% agreement. Strength of agreement (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') with these aims is comparatively lower than observed for the top five areas of Aim One, however, at between four and five in ten.

Overall agreement for supporting residents to improve their health and wellbeing is high (80%).

Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities is considerably lower than the other Aim Three areas at 50%. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this aim (31%). 19% disagreed with this aim.

***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims*?** *Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,159), single response question for each aim*



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Help reduce digital exclusion & improve digital skills	52%	38%	9%	1%	1%
Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives	46%	42%	10%	1%	1%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	47%	39%	12%	1%	1%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	46%	40%	12%	2%	1%
Support residents to improve their health & wellbeing	43%	37%	15%	3%	1%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	31%	10%	9%

A few significant variations in support by district and likely reflect the needs of particular geographical areas are as follows:

- Overall support for providing support for people to improve their employability is higher amongst respondents living in Tendring (91%) and Harlow (88%).
- Overall support for exploring options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities (41%) is lower amongst respondents living in Colchester.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments they had related to Aim Three in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 17% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

Over one in five (22%) of those providing a comment noted a preference for the service to stick to the core offering and not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere. Consistent with the comparably lower proportion of respondents agreeing, 14% of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 11% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.

Some noted the library service could act as a community hub / encourage socialisation (12%) and a hub for health / outreach (8%).

Do you have any other comments related to Aim Three? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individuals answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (17% of respondents – 379), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (17%)	
Should stick to core services / not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere	22%
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	14%
Could act as a community hub / socialisation	12%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	11%
Changes must not compromise book stocks / opening hours / staffing levels / space / service	9%
Hub for health / other services / outreach	8%
Support this aim	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	8%
Provide activities / groups / clubs / events	7%
Staff should focus on library service / too much for them to do if services expanded	7%
Services must be promoted / advertised / attract new users	6%
Some chargeable services could be beneficial / acceptable / must be cautious	6%
Staff must be appropriately trained	6%
IT support/training / equipment / online functionality required	6%
Chargeable services should be in addition to free services / not compromise free services	5%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (17%)	
Do not turn libraries into an online service only / do not replace physical books	4%
Space could be rented out / space for activities	4%
Could signpost services / provide information but nothing further	4%
Should not be commercialised / not a money-making operation	3%

In expanding library services, it is essential not to lose sight of the primary purpose of a library - to provide books to borrow and the range of available books could be expanded – i.e. more books in the libraries.

On the whole, there are a number of organisations that already support the local community. IAG is a skilled role and we already have a CAB and a local college that can offer these activities. Let these established organisations carry on doing what they are being funded for and allow the library service to do what it does best.

I think libraries can be key to bringing communities together, and organisations should be able to utilise library spaces and rent them after closing hours (gets people into the building who might not otherwise and could encourage them to use libraries more often in the future).

Often libraries are in the centre of town, accessible, visible and with working hours opening times. There is an important and valuable role for libraries to play in acting as a connector and referrer of people to other community-based services to support health wellbeing, employability and so on.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments on chargeable services they would like to see if they supported the provision of chargeable services. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 32% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

Just under one in five (18%) of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 9% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.

Of those that put forward ideas for potential chargeable services, the most common are arts & crafts / artist exhibitions (16%), talks by authors / writing workshops (13%), café / refreshment provision (12%) and activities for children / teenagers / including after school / school holiday specific activities (12%).

If you support the provision of chargeable activities (alongside existing free activities), which chargeable activities would you like to see, if any? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (32% of respondents – 709), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (32%)	
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	18%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	9%
Arts & crafts / artist exhibitions	16%
Prepared to pay / charge must be reasonable / if to cover costs / donations	14%
Talks by authors / writing workshops	13%
Café / refreshment provision	12%
Activities for children / teenagers / including after school/school holidays	12%
Workshops / courses / learning / talks / lectures	11%
Printing / photocopying / computer use / IT support	11%
Renting out space / providing space for groups / meetings / activities	10%
Only charge for additional services / core services must be free	8%
Drama / music / film / photography	8%
Host clubs / community groups / meetings / social groups	7%
Out of hours use	6%
Collaborate with / provide space for commercial services – banks, post office, solicitors / council	6%
Chargeable activities cannot take precedence over core services / detract from core services	5%
Some charging for services is needed (non-specific)	5%
Games (board & computer) / jigsaws / toys / DVDs	4%
More information required / examples	4%
Book clubs / reading groups / recommendations	4%
Act as community hubs	4%
Health services / mental health / wellbeing	4%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (32%)	
Baby / toddler groups	3%
Life skills / numeracy / literacy skills / CV writing / employability	3%
History / geology / ancestry	3%
Adult education / support for students	3%
Learning a language / sign language	3%
Small contribution to running costs / charge for inter-library lending / more for late fees	3%

INDIVIDUALS - FUTURE OF ESSEX LIBRARIES

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback in their own words in relation to:

1. Any other comments related to the plan for Essex Libraries
2. What they would like to see from Essex Libraries in the future

INDIVIDUALS OTHER COMMENTS RELATED TO ESSEX LIBRARIES PLAN

For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 28% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment requested that all current libraries should stay open or were concerned about their local library building closing. In addition, 16% commented on how important the library service is to the community / residents.

Some reiterated previous comments in terms of a larger range of material / book stock (13%) and fully trained staff and volunteers / having enough staff (12%). 8% requested longer opening hours / opening on additional days.

7% highlighted that they would welcome more detail on the plans in terms of implementation and funding.

Do you have any other comments related to the plan for Essex Libraries?
Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (28% of respondents - 613), multi response question

% comments from respondents answering (28%)	
Libraries must stay open / concerned about closures of particular libraries	25%
Crucially important for community / vital for residents	16%
Offer a large range of materials / increase book / up-to-date stock	13%
Support plans outlined	13%
Staff & volunteers must be fully trained / polite / friendly / need to make sure of enough staff	12%
Longer opening hours required / open on more days	8%
Must be inclusive / accessible / cater to all	8%
Communication / engagement / promote services / attract new users	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / where is funding coming from	7%
Should be supported / invested in / funded / secured for future	6%
Services to be free / no charging	6%
Important to focus on core library services	6%
Activities / groups / meetings are needed	5%
Service / opening hours / space must be maintained	5%

% comments from respondents answering (28%)	
Used as a community resource / information point for services	5%
Praise for current libraries / staff	5%
In need of upgrade / new facilities / parking / toilets / refreshment provision	4%
Continue to offer IT support / use of equipment / Wi-Fi / online provision	4%
Volunteers should not replace trained / paid staff	4%
Online offer should not replace physical books	4%
Offer a safe / quiet environment	3%
Awareness of this consultation is poor / criticism of consultation	3%

Please commit to keeping all of Essex's libraries open - they are a lifeline for so many residents.

All existing libraries should be kept as they are, run by Essex County Council with paid staff and no reduction in opening hours or services.

Libraries should continue to operate and none should be closed down. Not everyone has access to the internet for reading and learning services, and even those who do may not wish to use the internet for this purpose. From a personal point of view, I learn much more easily reading from a book than from a screen.

Make libraries more accessible for all. Utilise libraries for the community, include coffee areas, provision for talks with people of interest. Children's groups, assistance for those with extra needs. Our libraries can be so much more than just borrowing books.

I would hope that libraries will continue to be provided for local people to enable those from a variety of groups to participate and enjoy them. Libraries should be well stocked to encourage usage. The running down of libraries has put many people off visiting at all. Encourage activities that will bring people back to their local library.

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS RELATED TO FUTURE OF ESSEX LIBRARIES

For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 73% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

Under one in five (19%) requested that all current libraries should be retained and closures should be avoided. In addition, 12% commented on the importance of the continuity of the current service / maintaining the existing service.

A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment would like to see a good stock of books / wider / more up to date range of books. Other common comments put forward focused on the social aspect of the service and its development – activities / events / opportunities to socialise (17%), more of a community focus / community hub moving forward (17%), engaging / working with schools / children / young people (12%).

What would you like to see from Essex Libraries in the future?
Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (73% of respondents – 1,589), multi response question

% comments from respondents answering (73%)	
Good stock of books / wider range of books / keep up-to-date	25%
Avoid closures / retain current libraries / expand	19%
Activities / events / clubs / opportunities to socialise	17%
More of a community focus / community hub / community engagement moving forward	17%
Longer opening hours / open more days / everyday / out of hours usage	14%
Engaging / working with schools / children / young people / catering for	12%
Friendly / professional fully trained paid staff / not replaced by volunteers	12%
Continuity of current service / maintain existing service / happy with service	12%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services / attract new users	11%
Be inclusive / accessible for all	10%
Welcoming / friendly / quiet / safe environment / for study / reading / working	10%
Support learning / literacy / research / continue to foster reading	8%
Up-to-date resources / info / well stocked (unspecified)	8%
Provision of audiobooks / eBooks / online services / digital resources / keep up-to-date	7%
Provision of IT / printers / Wi-Fi / IT support / some improvement required to IT	6%
Evolving / dynamic up-to-date/improved services / adapting to needs of users / vary by library	6%
Space to use for clubs / groups / meetings / socialising	6%
Improved search / online library system / app / collection/return system	6%
Modern / keep up-to-date buildings with facilities i.e. toilets, parking	4%
Be a free service to all to use	4%

% comments from respondents answering (73%)	
Selected services / collaboration / signposting non-library services	4%
Continual funding / investment / support / fit for future	4%
Integrated / balance of physical & digital resources / keep up-to-date	3%
Focus on core library services / don't get involved in other services nor income generation	3%
Continue / expand mobile libraries / home delivery service	3%
Café / refreshment provision	3%

A continued commitment to meeting the diversity of borrowers' needs, i.e. not restricting book stock and other services to those that are useful to the majority but making sure that minority interests are catered for.

I am really happy with the service received so far. We enjoy visiting different libraries around Chelmsford. Perhaps more outdoor reading events in the spring/summer? We attended a lovely event where the library joined forces with Heart and Sole walking group to go for a walk then have a story in the park. Lovely experience had by all. A great way to bring the community together.

A far more dynamic and integrated service which combines a variety of local and community services and which reaches out positively to the community it serves..

ORGANISATIONS - OVERALL OPINION OF KEY AIMS PUT FORWARD

28 organisations responded to the consultation:

- 12 responded from community groups
- 10 responded from town or parish council
- 4 responded from other public bodies
- 1 responded from a registered charity
- 1 did not disclose the type of organisation they represent

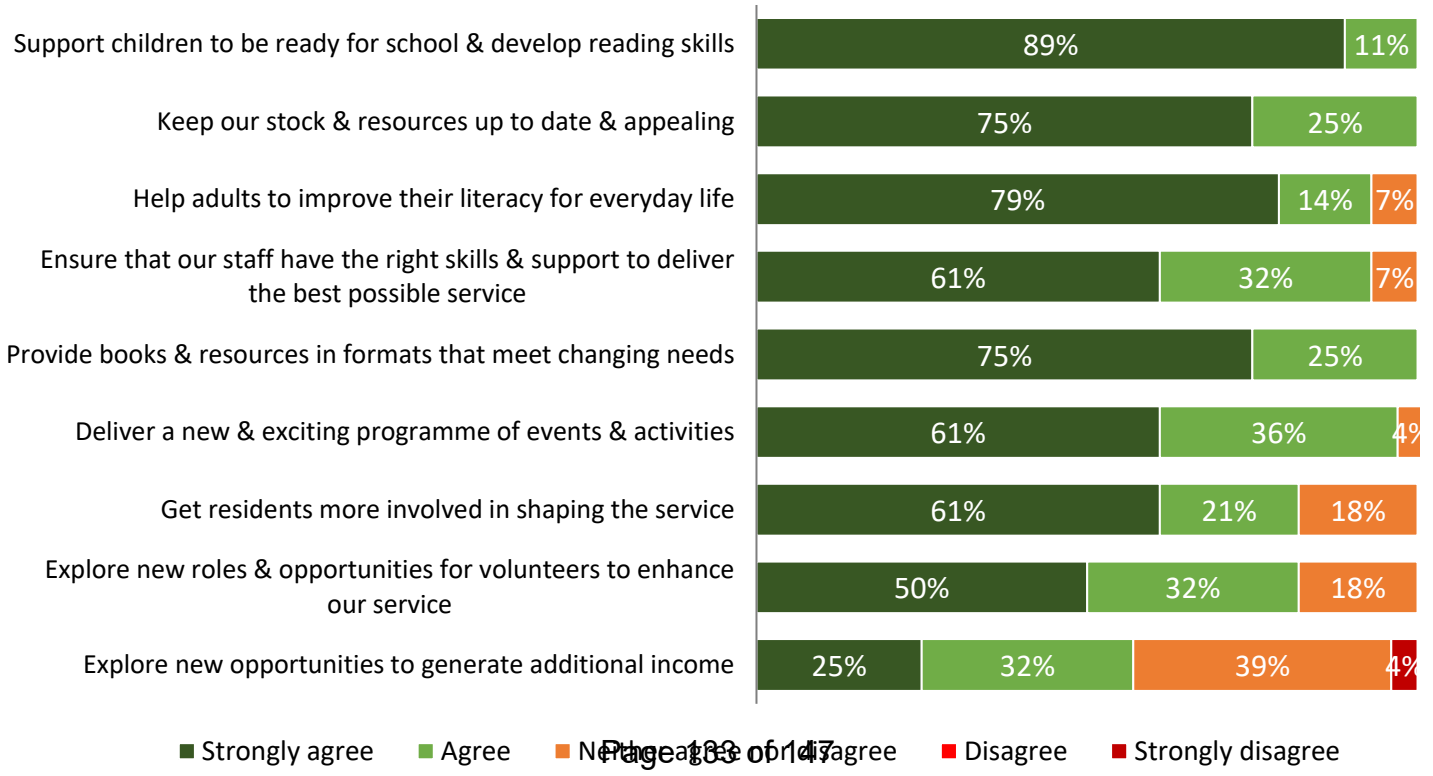
Consistent with the approach for individuals, organisation respondents were presented with the sub level aims within each of the three areas and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each one.

SUPPORT FOR AIM ONE AREAS – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY

Consistent with trends observed amongst individual respondents, overall agreement is strong in relation to the stated aims of supporting children to be ready for school and developing their reading skills, keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing, helping adults to improve their literacy, ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best service and providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs. Agreement is also high for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities.

Also consistent with the trend observed amongst individual respondents, agreement with exploring new opportunities to generate income is comparatively lower than the other Aim One areas. A higher proportion neither agreed nor disagreed with the aim.

***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims*?** *Base: all organisations answering (28)*



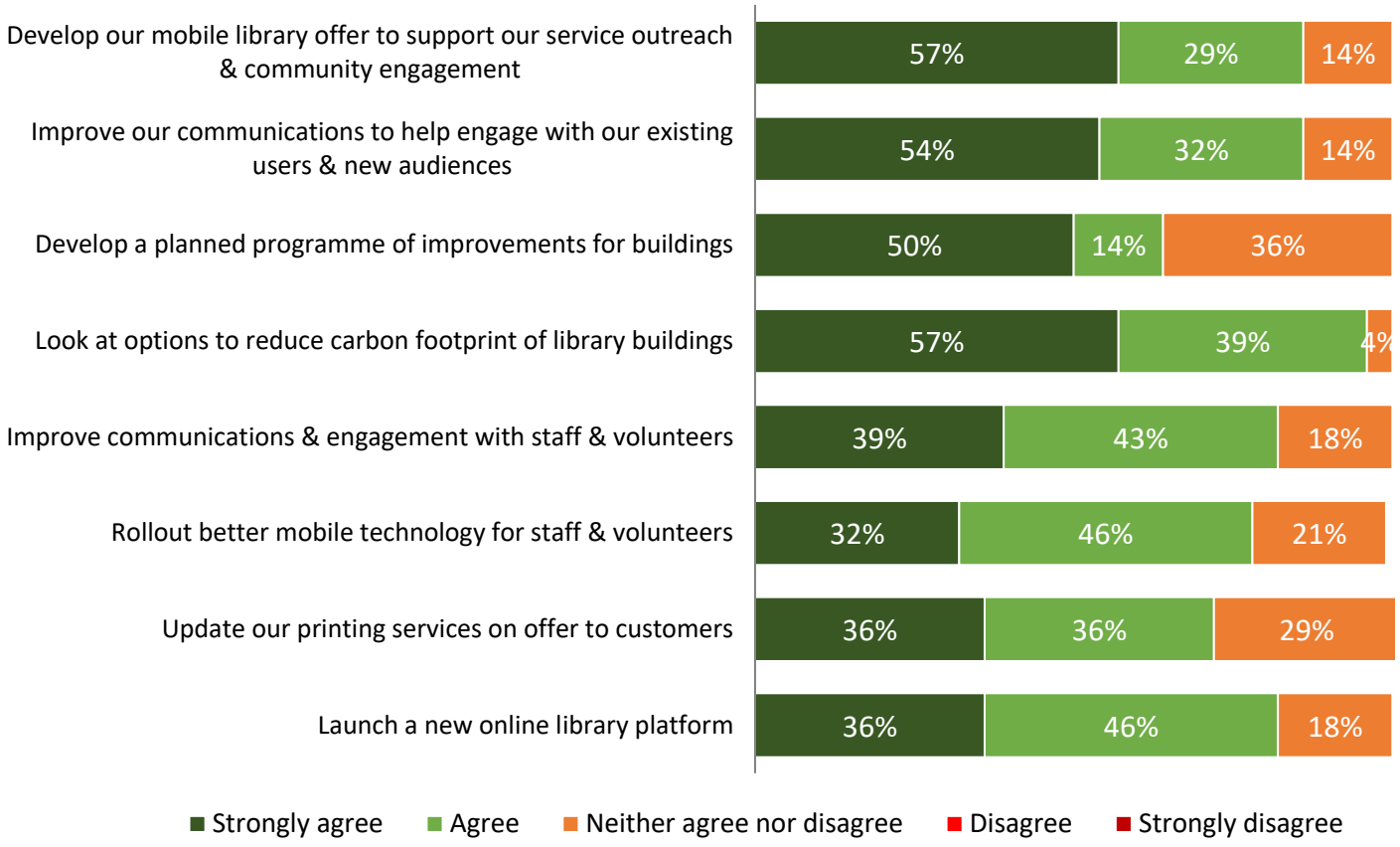
Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Support children to be ready for school & develop their reading skills	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	79%	14%	7%	0%	0%
Ensure that our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	61%	36%	4%	0%	0%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	61%	21%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service	50%	32%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	25%	32%	39%	4%	0%

SUPPORT FOR AIM TWO AREAS – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overall agreement is high with the stated aims of developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement, improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences and looking at options to reduce the carbon footprint of library buildings. In contrast to individual respondents, agreement with developing a planned programme of buildings improvements is lower (with a significant proportion neither agreeing nor disagreeing).

Consistent with trends observed amongst individual respondents, agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas.

***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims*?** *Base: all organisations answering (28)*



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop our mobile library offer to support our service outreach and community engagement	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences	54%	32%	14%	0%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings	50%	14%	36%	0%	0%
Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings	57%	39%	4%	0%	0%
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers	39%	43%	18%	0%	0%

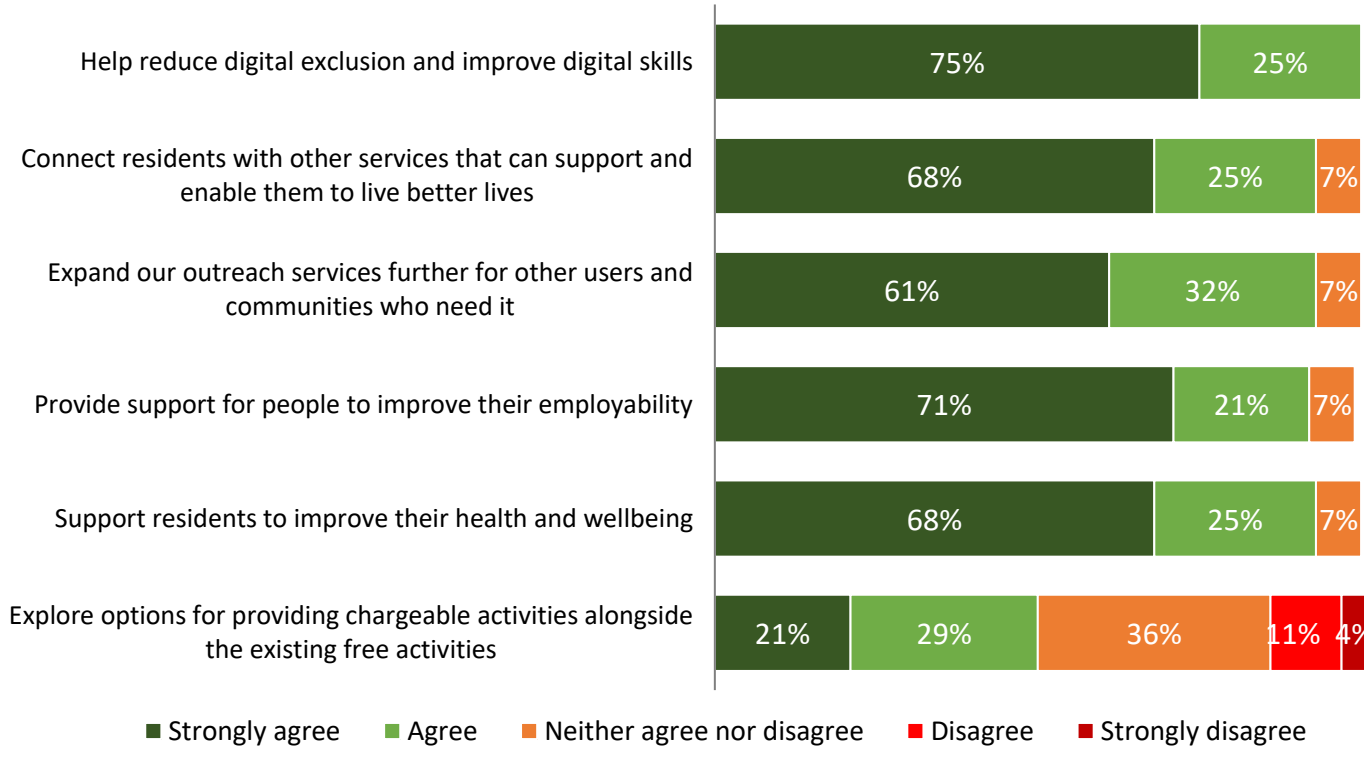
Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers	32%	46%	21%	0%	0%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	36%	36%	29%	0%	0%
Launch a new online library platform	36%	46%	18%	0%	0%

SUPPORT FOR AIM THREE AREAS – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND LEVELLING UP

Overall agreement is strong in relation to the stated aims of helping reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connecting residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives, expanding outreach services further for other users and communities that need it, providing support for people to improve their employability and supporting residents to improve health and wellbeing.

Consistent with individual respondents, agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities is considerably lower than the other Aim Three aims.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? *Base: all organisations answering (28)*



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	71%	21%	7%	0%	0%
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	36%	11%	4%

This report was produced for Essex County Council's Chief Executive's Office

For more information email: research@essex.gov.uk

Appendix 3:Summary of Engagement with other organisations

Number	Date	Name of Organisation	Feedback and suggestions
1	5/1/22	Libraries Connected	• Pleased to see the word "infrastructure" in the report • Approved of the focus on the environment • Acknowledge Essex is a very diverse county - need to target the areas of deprivation • Look at Kirklees Libraries – successful recruitment programme • Seek information from CILIP and Arts Council for information about the environment and how libraries can help
2	6/1/22	DCMS	• Offered to look at Scrutiny papers in role of Critical Friend • Recommended we mention our statutory duty "to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof" in the plan • Interested to see we have digital ambition • Asked how we were targeting digitally excluded non-users as part of the consultation • Interested to hear what we are doing to develop and improve our digital infrastructure • Asked if we would be using Open Data approaches • Suggested we looked at joining the GovWifi network to attract partners and encourage users from government organisations such as MoJ or job centres • Suggested we read the study by TRA re 12 pilots focussed on targeting nonusers • Suggested we refer to front line staff as 'skilled and experienced staff' • Suggested we explored funding that might be available from Government - eg BEIS offers decarbonisation grants via Salix (one of their ALBs) • Community libraries – be explicit – state we are not going to be doing this • Run (a) You Said, We Did session(s)
3	6/1/22	National Literacy Trust	• Recommended we contacted Juniper Education schools library service • Felt the report was an "incredibly positive message" • Good to see mention of levelling up • What is our partnership strategy? What are our ambitions to integrate with public health and schools? There is strong potential to work with partners like these

Number	Date	Name of Organisation	Feedback and suggestions
			• Work with the partnerships ECC already has, those that are already focussed on families • Suggested a strategic steering group to help deliver the plan – including how we measure raising awareness and success with Early Years, formulating outcomes • Link literacy with public health – eg midwives, health visitors, social housing • Link with local business, flag up rhymetimes / literacy activities to workers and business leaders • Promote the library as providing skills for the workforce of the future • Target areas of need, reach out to schools • Have strong measures and targets • Use priority postcodes, prioritise the schools • Evidence school readiness results
4	18/1/22	Epping Youth Council	• Focus is always around Rhymetime and we cater so much for the under 5s those in the teenage bracket get lost • Want to be able to use the adult space – 'we don't want to be surrounded by bright colours and children's images' • In relation to our buildings 'they are not cool and need a face lift need to be fit for purpose' • Someone mentioned that they thought it was really good that some of our libraries have a J9 sign in the window for domestic abuse. Could there be more publicity around the libraries being a safe space for children too. It seems to be an unspoken rule that if you are lost go to the library, could this be more official? • Have good PCs worth using • Hours that suit young people, after school and not shut at 4pm • Promote as one stop shop - where you could get everything done • Incentives – coffee shops, podcasts. Fixed earphones that you could sit and plug in to listen to podcasts or music • Spaces to study – would like zones. • Would like to see events hosted by someone of the same age group • Sofas and spaces to be able to work together • Focus themes – gaming, crafting, home working. Game workshops, digital spaces

Number	Date	Name of Organisation	Feedback and suggestions
5	25/1/22	Young Essex Assembly	• We need a space for students to come together to collaborate on work. Perhaps adopt a scheme of dedicating some time as 'student time' • Extend opening times to 7 or 8 at some times during the week • Allocate more laptops and computers in libraries to allow more kids to do their homework on • Advertise libraries in a way more appealing to young people. Libraries could be a youth hub and a centre of interest. For instance, the Basildon Youth Centre has an LGBT group. It could be promoted to be more a safe space rather than just a place where people come to read books and revise etc. • Have more direct contact with schools, like sending representatives to go to schools, particularly secondary schools • Do an older reading or writing challenge or something similar for secondary school children. Emphasis on reading for pleasure and partnership with Essex Young Assembly • We'd be interested in coffee / tea machines. It's hard to be in the library for a long time without anything to sustain you • Have book clubs so that young people can come and discuss a book and their ideas on it • Encourage support groups, such as for dyslexia, to come in and support people. • Diversify books a bit more • Use Amazon and individual schools lists to gauge what's trending and buy accordingly • Increase the EDI part of libraries

Abbreviations

ALB	Arms-length body
BEIS	Department for Business, Investment and Industrial Strategy
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
TRA	The Reading Agency

Report Title: Everyone's Library Service – Post Consultation Changes
Date: 18.02.2022
Author: Nathan Rowland, Senior Strategy Adviser

Background:
From 26th November 2020 to 21st January 2022 Essex County Council undertook a public consultation on the new draft plan for the Essex Library Service. Overall 2,185 individual responses were received to the consultation via the online consultation portal with a further 28 responses were received on behalf of different organisations (see consultation report for full details and findings).

For every proposal set out in the plan the majority of responses were in agreement with the plan, based on combined totals for those answering "strongly agree" or "agree", followed by those who had no opinion or were unsure. There was however some variation depending on the specific proposal or additional comments and feedback that suggests that some additional clarification may be required in some sections. As such we have put forward a number of suggested changes to reflect the feedback received from members of the public and responding organisations.

Page 5

- **Opening Statement**: Additional text included to reflect some of the key themes coming from consultee responses and comments. New text reads *"Through talking to our residents and partners it is clear that people are passionate about our libraries as a hub for communities to come together and interact, a vital resource for helping residents improve their literacy, and a place to learn new skills to help them level up."*

- **Section 2 heading:** This has been changed to "Communications and Infrastructure" as per changes set out for page 12.

Page 9

- **Keep our book stock and other resources up to date and appealing:** We have added the word "book" and "other" to the title of this item to clarify that this activity will include hard copy book stock not just electronic resources as commented on in some public feedback. We have also simplified some of the other wording to improve readability.

  We have also made this item the fourth item in this section to reflect the high proportion on comments received about the importance of maintaining the book stock across in this and other sections of the consultation.

- **Get residents and communities more involved in shaping the service:** We have updated this item to include reference to communities in the title and the wider text. This is to reflect the feedback from consultees as on the importance of libraries as a community resource.

Page 10

- **Ensure that our staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible service:** We have added the line *"Well trained staff are critical to the service."* To reflect feedback from consultees about the importance of the staff to the customer experience and reinforce our commitment to the library service workforce.

- **Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities:** This item has been moved from page 18 as it is more relevant to the section on services to customers. We have also updated the wording to provide context as to why charging is required for some new activities to include the following new text *"We will explore options for additional chargeable activities that would possibly run alongside and complement free activities. These would be activities which we may consider hosting to provide an enhanced offer, service or experience to our existing customers; to appeal to new users of the service; or to raise awareness of libraries as a potential partner and venue for other organisations."*

Page 12

- **Communications and Infrastructure:** The title of this section has been changed from *"Infrastructure and Communications"* to reflect the importance of communications to customers arising from the consultation. We have also moved text from elsewhere in the introduction accordingly.

Page 13

- **Reordering Items:** The following items have been moved to the front of this section to reflect changes agreed to the title of this section.
    - Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences
    - Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers

- **Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences:** additional reference to engagement added to the text to reflect feedback from consultees about engaging with service users and communities, and requests for communications at a more local level.

Page 18

- **Explore new opportunities to generate additional income:** This has been moved from page 10 due to the focus being on new services to communities and is thus more appropriate in this section.

Other Changes

- **Pages 8, 12 & 16:** "Chapter" has been changed to "Aim" in line with the introduction.

Work Programme

Reference Number: PAF/07/22

Report title: Work Programme	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 10 March 2022	**For:** Discussion and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

1.1 The work programme for the Committee continues to be developed and the current position is outlined below and overleaf.

2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider this report and issues under consideration in the Appendix and any further development or amendments.

3. Background

Work has continued to identify priorities and future agenda items. This has included discussions with Committee Members, Cabinet Members and Officers. This work has reflected the adoption of the Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025 organisation strategy at Council on 12 October 2021.

4. Everyone's Essex

The Committee should take account of the Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025 strategy when considering the work programme and future items. Particular attention should be paid to the strategic ambitions (and associated commitments and performance measures) most relevant to the work of the Committee: 'Health Wellbeing and Independence for All Ages', and 'A Good Place for Children and Families to Grow'. A link to the Strategy is here - Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021 to 2025: Foreword from Kevin Bentley - Essex County Council

5. Update and Next Steps

5.1 See Appendix.

6. Appendix

6.1 Current work programme.

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny - Work Programme as at 10 March 2022

Provisional Date	Topic Title	Lead Contact	Purpose and Target Outcomes	Everyone's Essex Commitments- Relevance to Scrutiny Theme *	Cross-Committee Work
10 March 2022	Libraries – public consultation	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance, and Head of Libraries	To consider feedback received during public consultation on a broader community role	Levelling Up Outcomes, Education Outcomes,	Place Services and EG invited for joint session
14 April 2022	Corporate Parenting Strategy	Cabinet Member and Director Local Delivery (Children and Families)	To consider an early draft of a refreshed strategy and input and influence further development of the draft	Family Resilience and Stability, and Safety	Not applicable
14 April 2022	Essex Children's Safeguarding Board	Independent Chairman, statutory partners and the Board Manager	To consider the report of the activities and focus of the Board.	Family Resilience and Stability, and Safety	Not applicable
12 May 2022 -TBC	Adult Social Care – follow up	Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health /Executive Director, Adult Social Care	To consider current trends and work with market providers to manage an orderly reduction in residential market capacity	Promoting Independence, Healthy Lifestyles	TBC
12 May 2022 -TBC	Carers	Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health /Executive Director, Adult Social Care	Introduction to support available for carers	Carers commitment	Not applicable
12 May 2022 - TBC	Houses for Life	Director Strategy Policy & Integration (People)	See Matters Arising report elsewhere in Agenda pack.	Promoting Independence, Healthy Lifestyles	TBC

Provisional Date	Topic Title	Lead Contact	Purpose and Target Outcomes	Everyone's Essex Commitments Relevance to Scrutiny Theme *	Cross-Committee Work
Spring 2022	Essex Safeguarding Adults Board	Independent Chairman and the Board Manager.	To consider the report of the activities and focus of the Board.	Safety	Not applicable
TBC	Education	Cabinet Member Education Excellence, Skills and Training	Portfolio priorities and development of a Lifelong Learning Strategy	Education Outcomes	Not applicable
TBC	Home Education and Children Missing Education	Cabinet Member Education Excellence, Skills and Training	Further update - may link with item below	Education Outcomes	Not applicable
TBC	Educational Attainment	Cabinet Member Education Excellence, Skills and Training	To consider issues around attainment during and post pandemic – may link with item above.	Education Outcomes	Not applicable
TBC	County Lines and Drug Gangs – follow-up	TBC	Use of funds and the work of the Violence and Vulnerability Unit	Family Resilience and Stability, and Safety	Not applicable
TBC	Domestic Abuse – follow up	Cabinet Member Children's Services and Early Years/ Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy	1. Update on response to new statutory duties; 2. Update Task and Finish Group recommendations	Family Resilience and Stability, and Safety	Not applicable
TBC	Early Years' and Childcare Strategy – follow up	Cabinet Member Children's Services and Early Years and EYCC Sufficiency and Sustainability Manager	To review progress of new strategy.	Family Resilience and Stability, Education	Not applicable

Further issues not scoped or currently being scheduled

Working Families Programme – strategy approved by Full Council in October.
Children in care being placed outside Essex
Backlog in Courts and Justice System - impact on Youth Offending Team, fostering and adoption
Education - academisation - impact, role of Regional Schools Commissioner and the role ECC has in supporting general standards

Possible Task and Finish Group reviews – to be confirmed

Impact of the pandemic on Essex County Council

Suicides in Essex