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Report title: Consultation on Essex Future Library Services Strategy	
Report author: Suzanna Shaw, Director, Customer Services	
Date: 22 November 2018	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Alex Garnett, Head of Customer Communities Optimisation, alex.garnett@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To ask Cabinet to agree to consult on the draft Essex Future Library Services Strategy, for a 12-week period from 29th November 2018 to 20th February 2019.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that the draft strategy and needs assessment appended to this report is publicly consulted on for a 12-week period from 29th November 2018 to 20th February 2019.
- 2.2 That a further report is brought back to the Cabinet in summer 2019 following the consideration of the public comments to approve the final strategy.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 Under section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 the Council is placed under a duty 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'.
- 3.2 Earlier this year the council undertook a public engagement exercise on what the public wants to see from their service. The report describing the outcome of the exercise is at appendix 3.
- 3.3 An assessment of need for library services is presented in appendices 1 and 2, (the draft strategy and supporting needs assessment). These consider what the council should do in order to continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient service meeting the needs of Essex.
- 3.2 The draft strategy is based on an assessment of need for library services across the county and within specific communities and has been guided by priority outcomes informed by the Needs Assessment. The strategy outlines what is required from the service in future and how this can be delivered, by focussing on creating a service that is relevant to people's lives, is fit for the future and is financially sustainable. The draft strategy is considered to be the most appropriate strategy to prioritise resources in order to meet the needs

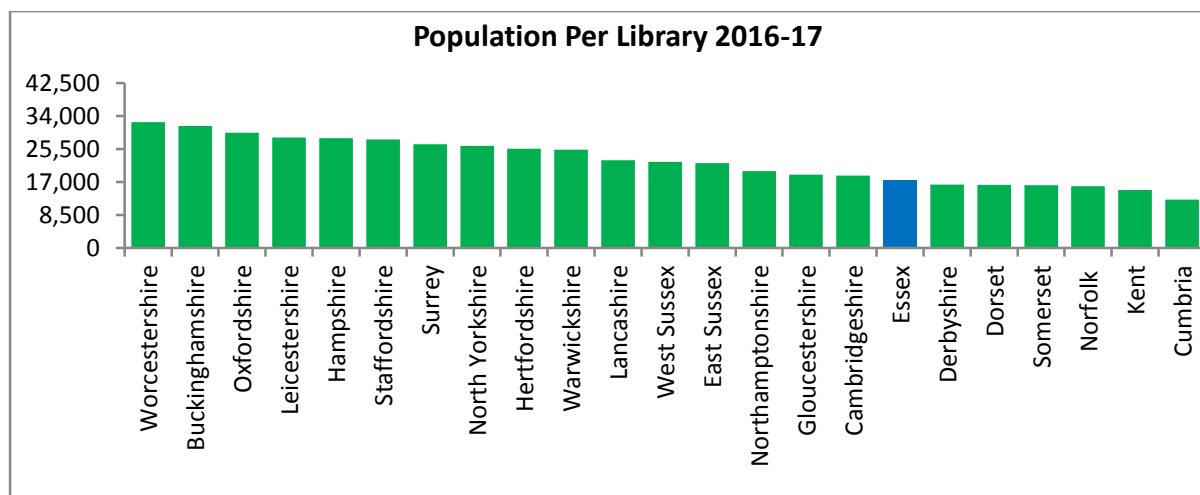
which have been identified at the current time. The draft strategy is attached as appendix 1 to this report and a rationale and needs assessment for the proposed needs-based library service is attached as appendix 2.

- 3.3 The draft strategy has identified the context in which the library service in Essex is operating in terms of reducing demand for traditional library services, the needs of the population of the county and ECC's priority outcomes, as well as the financial challenges facing the authority. This included a consideration of factors which may influence need for library services in the future, such as changes in population and population growth, economic factors, and developments in new technology (which are likely to change the way people access library services in future).
- 3.4 Nationally and in Essex, use of public libraries is falling. Between 2012/13 and 2017/18, loans from Essex library services fell 43% from over 7.1m a year to fewer than 4.1m; use of public network computers fell 22%. Across Great Britain, as shown in benchmarking data collated by the CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) loans fell 27% and the number of active library users fell 21%; net expenditure reduced by 20.2% over the same period. Just 16% of Essex residents, 241,400 people, are 'active users' (people who have used their library card in the last year). Over the same period, online loans of eBooks, eAudio and eMagazines rose by 205% and the increased prevalence of smart phones and mobile devices suggests this demand is likely to continue to rise. ECC wants to be in a position to respond to such changes in customer expectations.
- 3.5 Yet Essex provides more libraries and spend more per head on libraries than comparator authorities. ECC provides 74 public libraries (and two mobile libraries): one for every 17,325 residents compared to the national average of one library for every 22,425 people, as shown in graph 1. There are significant variations across the county. Maldon district has a ratio of 1:16,000 residents; Colchester borough has 1: 28,000 residents.
- 3.6 Essex is the second largest library authority in terms of population and has the fourth highest spend per head of population among comparator county authorities. In 2016/17 Essex spent £11.4m on libraries, £13.25 per head, 28% more than the average of £10.37¹. If ECC had spent at £10.37 per head, that would equate to around £2.8m lower annual cost. The amount Essex spends per active library user is £80 a year, compared to a counties average of £86².

¹ Per capita spend among 27 county library authorities, 2017/18, CFO Insights powered by CIPFA.

² 2017 CIPFA benchmarking survey

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Graph 1: Population per Library in comparator English counties 2016-17

- 3.7 The needs assessment identified areas of need across a broad range of indicators, where the library service would be well placed to help achieve better outcomes for the people of Essex. In addition to providing a core library service offer accessible to residents, by re-prioritising and developing new, more targeted services, we have a key opportunity through the draft strategy to provide a comprehensive service across the county, so that people who want to use it can reasonably access it, whilst creating a library service that residents value and is sustainable into the future.
- 3.8 The draft strategy proposes an overall vision for the service over the five year period as 'a 21st century library service that is inclusive and vibrant, and enables all users to learn, engage and remain connected to their communities'. It is a strategy about books, reading and events, not buildings. It envisages library services sometimes being delivered in different ways and from different places than they are currently, with fewer library buildings and greater use of technology and community spaces, to deliver a service relevant to changing customer needs. Five strategic priorities propose the future focus for delivery of the service. They are:
- putting reading at the heart of what we do
 - creating safe social spaces
 - investing in and supporting our staff and volunteers
 - creating consistently good customer experiences and
 - creating a library service that fits people's lives and is convenient.

Each of the strategic priorities will be delivered through a range of enhanced and new services which are described in the draft strategy. These five strategic priorities are also closely aligned to, and will enable the library service to support the council's overarching priority outcomes of driving sustainable economic growth, providing spaces and resources to help people in Essex to increase their skills and prosper, or through providing safe, welcoming and stimulating spaces for all users to learn, engage and remain connected to their communities.

3.9 The draft strategy therefore proposes that the way in which people access library services would change. The key elements of the draft strategy are as follows:

- a. **An enhanced eLibrary service** - we would continue to expand the range of online services and materials that are offered through the eLibrary, our online library service, and would actively promote the benefits of the eLibrary;
- b. **A focus on outreach** - we would work closely with other ECC services and partners to reach communities and individuals and promote and deliver our offer more closely with other services in different settings, such as community hubs and other community settings;
- c. **Greater community involvement** – inviting volunteers and groups to work with us to deliver future services to promote library use in communities and, where possible, extend opening hours;
- d. **Smart libraries** – we would explore and where viable, incorporate smart use of technology to improve opening hours, access, customer experience and responsiveness to changing needs;
- e. **Fewer but better library spaces** – we would focus our resources on the libraries with the greatest need, allowing us to be more effective on meeting the needs of communities.

The draft strategy identifies potential for creative thinking about the kinds of spaces library services could use and how buildings could be shared with other services or with organisations. For instance, in future people might browse library shelves in a community or arts centre, collect and return books at a local shop or attend a children's Rhymetime session in a village hall. The strategy invites any interested parties to make contact during the consultation period.

3.10 The draft strategy places each current library into one of four tiers. There will be at least one tier 1, 'hub' library, in each district, usually located in the main town where there are good transport links and access to other facilities. Tier 1 libraries will be managed by ECC with volunteer support, provide a core offer and be open for at least 40 hours a week instead of the current 48 - 59 hours a week. Libraries in tier 1 will be in areas of higher population density and usage (which may mean that there would be more than one tier 1 library in a particular district). These libraries have been selected on the basis of local knowledge.

3.11 The draft strategy uses evaluation criteria based on the needs assessment have been used to place the remaining libraries into tier 2, 3 or 4. This evaluation is shown in needs assessment at appendix 2. Five criteria have been used, as shown in table.

* Tier 2 libraries are library services in locations that rank highest on the needs assessment. These libraries will be managed by ECC with volunteer support where possible and will provide a core offer and a range of opening hours, typically between 16 and 32 per week, instead of the current 16 – 50 hours a week.

* Tier 3 libraries are in locations where the council considers that it is not necessary to provide library services in order to meet its statutory duty but where it nonetheless believes there would be benefit in providing library services if suitable arrangements could be made with the community. In these locations ECC would seek community interest in running library services with ECC support and look to identify and have an agreement reached within a period of six months from Cabinet approval of the strategy. If after six months suitable partners cannot be found in some locations, we intend to consult on the future of all those tier 3 libraries where there are no firm plans for them to be run by community or partner organisations. This 6 month period may be extended to up to 12 months if proposals have been received but not agreed - or if we believe that deliverable proposals are likely to be forthcoming during that period. Whilst we hope that community organisations will want to run libraries in this location and we would encourage them to start thinking about plans now, we think we can provide a comprehensive and efficient library service without libraries in these locations. If we cannot find a community organisation and, if the council's financial position remains difficult then closure would be one option we would consider, but that decision may be two years away.

* Tier 4 locations are where the needs assessment identifies that a library service is not required as part of a comprehensive service. These libraries will be closed, although it may be possible for a community library to be run in these places, if we receive a suitable proposal from a community or partner organisation. If a library closes we may continue to provide some library services in the area, such as reading and literacy-related activities in other venues or additional mobile library stops. Enhanced eLibrary and online services and home library services will continue to be available to all.

3.12 Increased use of volunteers may mean we can extend opening hours to reflect the needs of the community. The introduction of smart library technology can further increase the opening hours by enabling card holders to enter and use library services outside of ECC or volunteer staffed hours.

Table 1: Needs assessment evaluation criteria

Criterion	EVALUATION CRITERIA	Weighting of category
Location	Proximity to other libraries. Libraries clustered within two miles, by foot (Google Maps) of each other will be ranked at lower need ³	30%

³ A local library was important to 66% of survey respondents (BMG Research survey for Essex Libraries, 2018) and 63% of Essex library users walk to the library (CIPFA survey of adult users, 2016). Travel distance by car or public transport has not been taken into account

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Criterion	EVALUATION CRITERIA	Weighting of category
Usage	Active users	25%
Population	Libraries per district/borough population size. Based on current figures, not projected growth. Districts with more people per library ranked higher for need	25%
Deprivation	Levels of deprivation around each library (Index of Multiple Deprivation)	15%
Social Isolation (district)	Prevalence of new parents and % of residents over 65 as indicators of higher risk of social isolation ⁴	5%
	Weighted score (100%)	100%

3.13 Table 2 shows the management options and offer at each tier.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
	A comprehensive and efficient service provided by ECC to meet its statutory duty		Not required to meet ECC's statutory duty	
Brief description	Hub libraries, - at least one per district/ borough, may also rent/lease space to other service providers. Location normally in the main town but informed by local knowledge such as proximity to other facilities, transport and population size.	Library services in areas where there is a need for a library, managed by ECC and delivered in partnership with the community or other partners	Library services where no library is needed in order to have a comprehensive and efficient network, but where ECC wishes to support the provision of library services run by a community organisation or other partners with ECC support.	Locations with low evidence of need. A library service in these locations is not required as part of a comprehensive service

⁴ The higher weighting for location takes account of rural isolation. *Social Isolation in Essex*, ECC Strategic Planning & Commissioning, 2013; *Social Isolation & Loneliness: Literature & best practice review, research and recommendations*, ECC Organisational Intelligence [date]; *Social Isolation of Pregnant Mothers and Families with Young Children*, ECC Organisational Intelligence, July 2016

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Management and Support	Managed by ECC as part of our statutory provision of a comprehensive network	Managed by ECC as part of our statutory provision of a comprehensive network and delivered in partnership with the community or other partners	Run by the community or other partners with ECC support. If no suitable offer is received and accepted within a period of six to twelve months from Cabinet approval of the strategy (see para 3.11 above), we intend to re-consult on the future of that library.	Not required as part of a comprehensive library service, although it may be possible for a community library to be run in these places, if a suitable proposal from a community or partner organisation is received
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3.14 Table 3 below places each of the 74 libraries into one of the four tiers, using the criteria described in table 1 above.

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Table 3: Libraries by tier by district

District	Library	Proposed tier	District	Library	Proposed tier
Basildon	Basildon	1	Colchester	Tiptree	3
	Billericay	1		West Mersea	3
	Fryerns	4		Wivenhoe	3
	Laindon	2	Epping Forest	Buckhurst Hill	4
	Pitsea	2		Chigwell	4
	Vange	4		Chipping Ongar	2
	Wickford	1		Debden	4
Braintree	Braintree	1		Epping	2
	Coggeshall	3		Loughton	1
	Earls Colne	3		North Weald	4
	Halstead	2		Waltham Abbey	2
	Hatfield Peverel	4	Harlow	Great Parndon	3
	Kelvedon	4		Harlow	1
	Sible Hedingham	4		Mark Hall	4
	Silver End	4		Old Harlow	2
	Witham	1		Tye Green	4
Brentwood	Brentwood	1	Maldon	Burnham-on-Crouch	2
	Ingatestone	3		Maldon	1
	Shenfield	3		Southminster	4
Castle Point	Canvey Island	1		Wickham Bishops	4
	Great Tarpots	3	Rochford	Great Wakering	4
	Hadleigh	3		Hockley	3
	South Benfleet	3		Hullbridge	4
Chelmsford	Broomfield	4		Rayleigh	1
	Chelmsford	1		Rochford	2
	Danbury	4	Tendring	Brightlingsea	3
	Galleywood	4		Clacton	1
	Great Baddow	2		Frinton	3
	North Melbourne	2		Harwich	2
	S Woodham Ferrers	2		Holland	4
	Springfield	3		Manningtree	3
	Stock	4		Walton	3
	Writtle	4		West Clacton	3
Colchester	Colchester	1	Uttlesford	Dunmow	2
	Greenstead	2		Saffron Walden	1
	Prettygate	4		Stansted	4
	Stanway	3		Thaxted	4

- 3.15 ECC intends to withdraw service from tier 4 locations, on the basis that because of relatively low demand, the availability of other services and considering the community served, a library service is not required in these locations as part of the comprehensive library service offer.
- 3.16 The strategy invites interest from groups offering shared space to library services or aspects of the library service, in supporting ECC provision in tier 2 and in running library services with ECC support in tier 3 locations. In planning service provision ECC will take account of existing partnerships or interest in joint working and of the best use of available buildings and spaces.
- 3.17 An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted to inform decision-making of the draft strategy (EqIA, Appendix 4). The EqIA is an assessment of the impact of the proposals and further detailed assessments will be undertaken throughout the development of the strategy and following public consultation. This current draft identifies **four** main groups who it is considered might be more affected by the proposals or that the proposals may impact more significantly than others, by reason of the fact that they are more likely to use library services or may find it harder to travel. These are:
- those aged 60 and over (22% of library service users),
 - children under nine years of age (23% of library service users),
 - females, who make up 58% of users and new parents
 - those who identify as Black, Asian or other ethnic minorities – this equates to 7% of the Essex populations and 11% of Essex Libraries active members ⁵.
- 3.18 Rurality is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 but is an additional factor to take into account when considering the impact of the proposals. For those living in rural communities the impact is likely to be that they would have further to travel to an alternative library service. Where residents are unable or have difficulties accessing their nearest library service, Essex offers a range of alternative solutions such as the mobile library service, home library service, friends and family memberships and online library service.

4. Delivery Model

- 4.1 Essex library services are currently delivered in-house, managed by ECC. There are alternative delivery models that some other authorities use, such as setting up a local authority trading company, transferring the whole service to a commercial company or charitable trust, or partnering in a joint venture.
- 4.2 We visited a number of library services run by other local authorities and considered the approach taken by others during the development of the Strategy, including Suffolk County Council who have created a Public Service Mutual⁶ organisation to deliver their library services, Peterborough which has

⁵ Your community, libraries and you: summary report of public engagement and research, 2018

⁶ Public Service Mutual: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-alternative-delivery-models-toolkit/alternative-delivery-models-explained#adm-detail>

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introduced smart library access and East Sussex who are delivering in-house (with re-engineering). Such schemes have savings programmes that include many of the options we have either delivered already or that we propose to deliver through the strategy.

- 4.3 The draft strategy proposes that at this time the service be kept in house, albeit that we anticipate that community libraries and tier 3 libraries will be run by community organisations. Options will continue to be reviewed over the life of the strategy.

5 Considered options

- 5.1 The following options have been considered. Option 2 is the recommended option to enable the council to retain a comprehensive and efficient service, whilst increasing community involvement and achieving required savings.

	Option 1	Option 2 (Recommended)	Option 3
Tier 1	Retain	Retain	Retain
Tier 2	Retain	Retain	Run by the community or other partners with ECC support or retain if no suitable offer is forthcoming over the life of the Strategy
Tier 3	Retain	Run by the community or other partners with ECC support. If no suitable offer is received and accepted within a period of six months from Cabinet approval of the strategy, we intend to re-consult on the future of that library. This six month period may be extended to up to 12 months if proposals have been received but not agreed - or if we believe that deliverable proposals are likely to be forthcoming during that period.	Run by the community or other partners with ECC support or withdraw provision if no suitable offer is forthcoming within 12 months
Tier 4	Withdraw Provision	Withdraw Provision	Withdraw Provision
Total Savings	Up to £974k	Up to £2m*	Up to £3.7m*

* All savings are indicative estimates only, subject to further verification, and do not include additional one off or ongoing costs of supporting community libraries or any capital costs or benefits.

6. Impact and opportunity

- 6.1 Closure of tier 4 library services would affect 11% of active users and reduce revenue expenditure on library services by circa 11%. Changes to provision in tier 3 would affect 17% of active users, although in most cases we anticipate that they will be able to access library services in other locations and we anticipate that many libraries in tier 3 locations will be taken over by community organisations. Tier 3 library services account for circa 12% of revenue expenditure. Closure of tier 4 services and changes to tier 3 could save up to £2m a year in total, depending on the level of community or partner interest and ECC support provided. It should be noted that many of the closures are lightly used libraries and/or are in locations where alternative libraries are nearby, meaning that in seeking changes to tier 3 and 4 libraries we believe that the service will remain comprehensive and efficient and will make it as easy as possible for as many people as possible to continue to access library services. Based on the information we have, we have no reason to think that the libraries selected for changes will have a bigger impact on people with a protected characteristic than if other locations had been selected instead. We do not however have access to data about the usage of individual libraries by ethnicity or racial origin. Clearly there is a risk that some service users will find it harder to access libraries than they currently do, although by encouraging proposals from the community and by careful selection of libraries we believe we have kept this to a minimum.
- 6.2 The statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for people who desire to use it can be met through provision of library services in tier 1 and tier 2 locations plus eLibrary, mobile and home library services. However, recognising the benefit of providing library services in tier 3 locations, support will be offered to community groups interested in running community libraries in these locations. Account will be taken of the potential to share space with other ECC services and of existing partnerships or interest; other groups will be invited to express interest during the consultation. Usage of ECC-run and community-run services and evidence of need will be reviewed annually and support may be withdrawn in future if there is insufficient evidence of need. Additional mobile library stops could be added to meet needs where no other provision exists, for example if a tier 4 library closes and there is no alternative provision nearby.

7 Next steps

- 7.1 Given the proposed changes in service provision, a 12-week public consultation is proposed, to run from 29th November 2018 to 20th February 2019.
- 7.2 The primary response channel will be an online survey, hosted on the Essex Insight website. There will also be the option to respond by phone or on paper for those who cannot or do not wish to respond online. The survey will be available in large print, in an Easy Read version that will enable us to capture the views of children and young people under 16.

- 7.3 District, borough and city leaders, town and parish councils, partner organisations and stakeholders will be notified and invited to respond to the consultation and share information about the consultation and respond. Active users will be notified by text, phone, email or letter and the consultation will be publicised in libraries, via ECC channels and via media and social media. Information drop-ins will be held at libraries around the county, for people to find out more before responding.
- 7.4 Organisations will be invited to express interest in joint provision. When implementing the strategy we will take account of these and of discussions that have already taken place with interested organisations. Such discussions will continue during the consultation period.
- 7.5 Once the consultation period is over, responses received will be evaluated, and the Cabinet will be asked to adopt a final version of the strategy in the light of the public consultation which will be brought to Cabinet in summer 2019 for approval.

8. Issues for consideration

8.1 Financial implications

- 8.1.1 It is anticipated that resources required to evaluate responses to the consultation will be met from existing Customer Services resources.
- 8.1.2 During the period of consultation, detailed analysis will be undertaken to identify the technology and property implications of each option.
- 8.1.3 Should the costs of the requirements to gather information not be able to be met from within existing Customer Services budgets, the relevant cabinet member will be asked to agree additional funding via Cabinet Member Action.

8.2 Legal implications

- 8.2.1 ECC has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it.
- 8.2.2 In considering how to meet the duty the Council should carry out an assessment of the needs which the service has to meet. In order to ensure that the needs assessment is accurate, it is advisable to consult on the needs assessment as alongside any proposals to change the service.
- 8.2.3 Changes to library services can be examined by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport.

9 Equality and Diversity implications

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- 9.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. However, this assessment will be reviewed with individual impact assessments completed following feedback from consultation.

10. List of appendices

Appendix 1: Essex Future Library Service 2019 to 2024 draft strategy

Appendix 2: Essex Library Services Need Assessment

Appendix 3: Your community, libraries and you: summary report of public engagement and research, 2018

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment