

Essex Library Service

Library Service Update

PSEG Scrutiny Committee

18 December 2019



Essex County Council

Summary

July 2019

- The Essex Future Library Service Strategy 2019-2024 was approved by Cabinet on 23rd July 2019
- A £3 million investment was awarded to improve the library service through:
 1. Some library refurbishments;
 2. Technology
 3. Support and set up of Community run libraries

August 2019

- A Call-in meeting was held on 8 August where majority agreed to commence with the delivery of the Strategy
- Implementation plans were drafted for the 3 keys areas aligned to the Investment and work to deliver commenced

Library Refurbishments



The future library service strategy committed to invest in refurbishing some of the larger libraries, to deliver a consistent high-quality look and feel across the network

➤ **£1.9m is allocated to refurbishments. We aim to deliver:**

- Consistent branding and clear signage
- Flexible furniture and suitable shelving
- New meetings rooms or pods
- Suitable areas for co-locating library and other services
- Libraries that are accessible and inclusive for all

The future library service strategy committed to invest in refurbishing some of the larger libraries, to deliver a consistent high-quality look and feel across the network

- **A set of principles is being developed to identify the recommended list of libraries to be refurbished (estimated to be five libraries at this time)**
- This will take into account
 - Building considerations
 - Co-location/partnership opportunities
 - local circumstances
 - Urgency of refurbishment
- Also, any Mitie refurbishment work (where possible) e.g. windows and boiler replacement schemes

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- **Delivering other services within libraries is an ambition of the Strategy – and the refurbishment of libraries could support and enable us to attract a wider and more diverse audience:**
 - Providing a modern look and feel;
 - Offer space and facilities to local community groups, people with additional needs, students and older people
 - Create community hubs
 - Provide comfortable space for people to meet and study

- **Engagement with services such as Adult Social Care, CAB, ACL, DWP, Parish Councils, Schools and CVS**

- **Next Steps**
 - Procurement will commence early next year
 - Programme of work will commence Summer 2020

Library Management System



The future library service strategy committed to investment in technology

- **Delivery aims:** to procure a modern Library Management System (LMS) that will
 - provide an effective system for managing stock and customer data.
 - be innovative, provide value for money, be within budget resources
 - allow for the development of new services
 - integrate with other systems e.g. self service facilities, PN (People's Network), payment system
 - be interactive and provide excellent customer experiences
 - increase customer satisfaction
 - provide a smoother, more efficient experience
 - increase usage by providing greater customer journey information
 - enable the service to proactively meet and improve customer needs
 - Make the service more visible to encourage new users

- A recommended option to procure an updated LMS solution that will enable the above is being finalised, with a decision expected early next year

The future library service strategy committed to investment in technology

➤ Other technology initiatives to support the improvement of libraries include:

- Cashless payment facilities
- Self-service facilities
- Public Network computers refresh (Windows 10)
- Website re-design
- visitor counters/security gates improvements

➤ Next Steps

- Procurement commences (early next year)
- Implementation of new solution (commences early summer 2020)
- System GO Live - New solution in place and operational (including staff training) – (by summer 2021)

Community-run Libraries



The future library service strategy committed to supporting community run libraries

- **The Council is committed to supporting community run libraries that can deliver a quality, sustainable and inclusive services**
 - cabinet member action was taken on **14 November** to confirm how proposals for community run libraries will be assessed.
 - 14 criterion were agreed
 - Community Library's team are on hand to support all interested groups or individuals in the development of their community library proposals.
- Following approval of the CMA, a detailed information pack (which includes guidance on the criteria) for groups or individuals that have expressed interest was published on **15 November**.
 - All active EOI submitters were sent a link to the pack and invited to some initial information sessions to help them go through the pack, meet members of the Community libraries team, including others considering making a proposal.
- The Community library web page has been fully updated to reflect developments, and this includes answers to a number of FAQs

Ongoing next steps:

- Continued close engagement with groups who have maintained interest in setting up community run libraries.



Recent activities happening across the Library service



- ❖ A New energy saving lighting scheme has already begun in to 20 – 30 libraries. This will make energy efficiencies, quality lighting that will improve the atmosphere for library users and reduce carbon emissions, in line with the Government's commitments to the Paris Agreement on climate change.
- ❖ Over 2000 copies of e-comics were downloaded in the first 6 months of this new service and we recently added another 53 new e-comic titles to the e-library catalogue .
- ❖ The refresh of the Library Service's Public Network Computers to Windows 10 began November 2019
- ❖ A Volunteering Open Day was held on 19 November and we received 26 new applications
- ❖ 3 "Love Your Library" days one on Saturday 14th December, Saturday 15th February and Saturday 11th April to help promote the library service events and activities and encourage people to join.
- ❖ Nearly 32,000 children joined the Summer Reading Challenge, reading 425,057 books. 446 out of 515 schools were visited by library staff promoting the Challenge 579 volunteers were recruited who gave nearly 11k hours of their time
- ❖ Last Saturday successful outreach event in Frinton

Appendix 1

Community run libraries web page and Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Link -

<https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/libraries-consultation/community-library-services/>