

Report Title: Everyone's Library Service – Post Consultation Changes

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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.