

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Public Protection
DATE	6 July 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen's Future Library and Information Service
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/23/216
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Jacqui McKenzie
REPORT AUTHOR	Margaret Stewart
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 On the 1st March 2023 the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment was instructed to bring a report to this Committee, during financial year 2023/24, outlining options for, the design of a 21st Century library provision that can then be shared for consultation. This report seeks permission to consult with library stakeholders to ensure the design of future city library provision is sustainable and responsive to the evolving needs of our communities ahead of submitting a plan for Aberdeen's Future Library and Information Service later in 2023/24.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Committee:-

2.1 Instructs the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to carry out engagement and consultation with stakeholders to understand current and future demand and how available resources can be maximised to ensure continued access to library and information services that are sustainable and responsive to local need;

2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to work with stakeholders to co-design a strategic vision and plan for the Library and Information Service in the context of the Community Planning Aberdeen Partnership;

2.3 Approves the timeline for consultation, communication, analysis and design of Aberdeen's Future Libraries and Information Service vision and plan, as set out in 3.8 of the report;

2.4 Instructs the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to report back to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee

on the Future Libraries and Information Service vision and plan at the first Committee meeting of 2024.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council's Library and Information Service continues to be an essential service for citizens who live, work, study and play in Aberdeen. Customers can access; information, reading development for adults, children and young people, health and wellbeing, business and employability and local history support and resources. These are available; physically through 10 Community Libraries and the Central Library's 4 departments, digitally 24/7 through the Library catalogue, webpages and databases or at home through the Home Service. The majority of schools across our city also have an on-site school library.
- 3.2 The speed of change globally and locally over the last 5 years has been consequential in relation to society, the economy and technology. Within the Library and Information Service change has been felt through the reduction of the library estate. During the pandemic change enabled innovation in many aspects of delivery while other areas have remained the same. There is a need to evaluate; what works well, where changes can be made and where further efforts are required to ensure future provision reaches all communities in our city. This will happen through dynamic leadership and listening, collaboration, and innovation with library stakeholders to ensure our future Library and Information Service can support current and new customer's evolving needs and aspirations in a changing world and City.
- 3.3 Libraries are about people, the way the people in our city access the Library and Information service is changing with a reduction of physical visits and a considerable and steady increase in virtual visits. Increasing numbers of young people are also now seeking digital resources in our schools signifying a change in behaviours as young people and families became more reliant on digital resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. While both physical and digital access routes are valuable and essential and are not exclusive of each other, we need to ensure library resources are directed and invested in, based on how customers choose to access facilities locally, their current support and information needs, not solely traditional library services now and in the future. Any new model will require to be agile to changing community needs.

year	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Physical library visits	901,526	871,893	865,163	54,101	117,137	403,398
Virtual library visits	560,097	558,089	872,252	1,062,520	1,164,747	1,248,491

There is also a need for all partners (internal and external) to think quite differently about how we use our estate, how our services are shaped (such as education,

children's social work, Community Learning, Employability services, Financial Inclusion Services and Library and Information Service) and how services should deliver services in partnership with others to help mitigate risks to children and families. There is clear evidence, from our work to develop our Fit Like Service and Edge of Care Pilots, that this focus on moving upstream and increasing emphasis on prevention and early intervention is welcomed by families and more effective in mitigating risks.

Working in a more collaborative way to support individuals, children, young people and families could help realise the full benefits of being a commissioning council and fully take advantage of our close links with partners. The pandemic taught us that taking a more coordinated and multi-disciplinary approach enables us to be more responsive to the bespoke needs in our communities. Seeing our library and information service as part of a bigger system of family support would enable the insight gleaned in one part of the organisation or partnership (for example low levels of literacy confidence identified by our Employability team) informing the work of others (for example the work of schools, Community Learning and Development and our Library and Information Service).

Library and Digital Strategy

3.4 Forward: Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2012-2025 sets strategic aims with a focus on People, Place and Partnership:

People: Libraries will support people and communities to reach their full potential and celebrate the unique skill set of staff.

Place: Libraries will be recognised as both valued places and place makers, with community led design at the heart.

Partnership: Libraries will deliver on local and national priorities through a strategic approach to collaboration and partnership.

These are underpinned by five foundations for success:

- Data driven service design
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Seamless Customer Journey
- Staff Culture
- Sustainability

While Forward focuses predominantly on a physical library context, how the library service advances with technology and enables customers to do the same is informed by Digital Scotland's – A Changing Nation: How Scotland will Thrive in a Digital World, Aberdeen's Future Library and Information Service consultation and subsequent plan will be informed by these and other strategies referenced on 8.0 of the report.

The Family Support Model

3.5 The Independent Care Review (ICR), The Promise, published in February 2020, made a series of recommendations in how to support our most vulnerable children and families following an in-depth review. There is broad consensus that applying these recommendations will help us secure more positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

The Promise identified 'Ten Principles of Intensive Family Support' which very much align with the workings of our library and information service.

Community based	Holistic and relational
Responsive and timely	Therapeutic
Work with family assets	Non stigmatising
Empowerment and agency	Patient and persistent
Flexible	Underpinned by children's rights

Consideration of these 10 principles, would allow us to consider how our Library and Information Service could impactfully contribute to a local Family Support Model. This in turn will enable consideration of how best we can use our library services to help mitigate risks which directly impact on longer term outcomes, such as poverty, and take a more preventative approach.

Also worthy of consideration, is the current programme of education reform. There are early indications that there will be an increased emphasis on looking more holistically at learning provision serving young people and adults to help maximise employment and training pathways. Taking this approach will help support skills development, increase opportunities into employment or study and ultimately our economy. The Council continues to consider the various reform agendas to ensure that we are well positioned to implement the required changes.

Approach to Engagement and Consultation

3.6 Library stakeholders are library customers, members of the public; people who live, work, study and/or play in Aberdeen, library staff and internal partners and external partners. How we engage and consult is important, there is a strong public support for libraries and we look forward to working with individuals, families and communities across a range of approaches that are responsive to age, stage and demographic. Engagement will be designed mindful of access barriers. There will be opportunities designed for children and young people, more anonymous consultation in libraries and online and invites to join themed focus groups as well as bringing in expertise from across our national library networks. It is important we capture the voice of library customers as well as capturing input from those who don't currently access the library service or have yet to access services.

3.7

What are we consulting on?	Methods of capture
What do the changes locally in society, the economy, technology, the environment and demographic over the last 5 years mean for the Library and Information Service and future provision? What adjustments still need to be made?	-research from national think tanks -consultation with library experts -sense making workshop with local stakeholders (public, partners and staff)

What considerations need to be made in relation to the change we may see in the next 5 years?	
What is the vision for our Library and Information Service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visioning workshops, with different stakeholder groups -prompts as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires
Reading, literacy and learning for all is at the heart of the Library and Information Service, how do we ensure this is obvious, accessible, sustainable, relevant, of quality and in line with local and national learning programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sense making workshops with local stakeholders (public, partners and staff) -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups -specific consultation with learning partners
How customers currently use library and information services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
How and when do customers need to access the library service now and in the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
What services are most important for customers to access?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
To what extent do customers and partners know about the range of, facilities, learning support, resources and services provided through the Library and Information Service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
What other services from across our partnerships could be delivered through the Library and Information Service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
What services could be delivered differently or are no longer required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
What are the barriers to accessing physical, digital and home library services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
What does the customer journey look like and feel like throughout the Library and Information Service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -individual customer interviews -focus group activity -perspective capturing from staff and partners

What does innovation in the Library and Information Service currently look and feel like?	-consultation with library stakeholders -innovation review as part of library plan
How can we maximise the use of the use of the library estate?	-research into alternative practices -consultation with library stakeholders
How will Library Management rules be informed by library future provision?	-as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires
How can future library provision be enhanced by continued stakeholder dialogue?	-consultation with library stakeholders -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of focus groups
What and where are the opportunities for community involvement and community empowerment within libraries?	-sense making workshop with local stakeholders (public, partners and staff) - consultation with library and community development professionals
What is the role of volunteers in future library provision?	-specific input from the voluntary and public sector -as part of online, in person and age and stage appropriate questionnaires -as part of themed focus groups
What skills to do Library and Information Services staff require to meet current and future need?	-informed by emerging priorities from this consultation -staff surveys and staff focus groups

3.8 Engagement and consultation will take place from July to September 2023 and will coincide with Aberdeen Reads, the library summer reading challenge, summer community galas and events and with the new term of school, Further and Higher Education and other community programmes starting back towards the end of August. There will be analysis and communication of findings in October with a draft Aberdeen's Future Library and information Service plan shared with focus groups, adjustments made and presented to the first Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee of 2024.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Failure to consult and engage with all stakeholders	Promotion of stakeholder consultation exercises both online and in person	L	Yes
Operational	Failure to understand and address stakeholder input to Future Library service plans	Relevant processes in place.	L	Yes
Financial	Potential for stakeholders ideas and input and expectations to exceed available resource	Stakeholders expectations around resources managed	L	Yes
Reputational	Failure to address stakeholders concerns and issues, and to meaningfully engage and consult.	Communication plan around engagement and consultation opportunities and relevant processes in place for feedback.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p>A city of opportunity</p> <p>A council that listen and Works</p>	<p><i>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems • Recognise that citizens and communities – rather than the City Council - are best placed to say what services they require and how these are provided and seek to give greater control over appropriate services and facilities to local communities.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report will support consultation and inform decisions on library output that directly relates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 3. 500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026</i>
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report will support consultation and inform decisions on library output that directly relates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase uptake of parenting and family support by 10% by 2022.</i> • <i>95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026.</i> • <i>90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026</i>
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p> <p>Children services plan</p>	<p><i>The proposals within this report support</i></p> <p>Listen to and learn from the feedback of care experienced children, young people and their</p>

<p>Customer Digital and Data Strategy</p> <p>Community Empowerment Strategy 2023-2026</p> <p>Culture Aberdeen - A cultural strategy for Aberdeen 2018 -2028</p>	<p>families to ensure the design and improvement of services takes account of their views.</p> <p>Identify and enable other group to be involved in the library engagement and consultation process.</p> <p>The Customer, Digital and Data Strategy aligns the delivery of library engagement and consultation with our 'We CARE' charter, under the 4 key responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected • Accessible • Responsive • Empowered • Both in approach to engagement and consultation activity and in the design of service delivery. <p>Stretch Outcome 16 - 100% increase in the proportion of citizens who feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026. More specifically 16.2 Childrens Rights, as we test approaches that will inform change ideas.</p> <p>Grampian Engagement Standards, approaches will be used to shape community engagement.</p> <p><i>Ambition 1 outcome 2: Improve accessibility and engagement with individuals from all protected characteristics and ensure that cultural activities reflect more clearly the increasingly cultural diversity of Aberdeen.</i></p>
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<p>Integrated Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Work on the Integrated Impact Assessment for Aberdeen's Future Library Service vision and plan is underway. The Integrated Impact Assessment will be available (alongside the plan) when a report is presented to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in early 2024. The data collected as part of the consultation will help inform the Integrated Impact Assessment.</p>

Data Protection Impact Assessment	A DPIA will be completed as part of the consultation process
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10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Budget Meeting, Council - Wednesday 1st March 2023, Decision Sheet, 3.1

10.2 Forward: Scotland’s Public Library Strategy 2012-2025

10.3 Digital Scotland’s – A Changing Nation: How Scotland will Thrive in a Digital World

10.4 CFS/23/207 Developing a Family Support Model and the Edge of Care Pilots

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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