



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

25 July 2024

Report of the Executive Director - Place

Draft Public Library Strategy

(Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change)

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or savings which are, significant having regard to the budget for the service or function concerned (this is currently defined as £500,000) and it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral areas in the County.

3. Purpose

3.1 To set out the draft Library Strategy for the period 2024 to 2029 (Appendix 2), including the proposed Vision and operating Principles and propositions for core delivery and to seek approval to undertake a public consultation exercise in relation to the draft Strategy, as required by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

- 3.2 To seek Cabinet approval to notify the Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) of the draft Strategy and invite comments from the DCMS.
- 3.3 To advise Cabinet of the overall approach to finalising the Strategy following receipt and assessment of comments and the proposed report to Cabinet early in 2025 which will set out the final proposals and implementation plan.

4. Information and Analysis

Context

- 4.1 Across Derbyshire, libraries serve as community hubs and as a front door to other Derbyshire County Council services either by utilising dedicated computers within the building or through direct contact with library staff offering help and advice. Libraries are trusted community spaces, free to enter and open to all and they are highly valued by local communities and partners. The Service itself has a proven track record of working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. Libraries must, however, continue to change and adapt to the needs of their communities, and operate efficiently within the funding available.
- 4.2 Members will be aware of the previous Public Library Service Strategy which was presented to Cabinet on 5 April 2018 (Minute No. 102/18 refers). The Strategy envisaged a significantly changed library service, with the introduction of tiered libraries based on size and usage, an approach to community management (CMLs), a refreshed mobile service and a £1.6m reduction to the Library Service budget (as originally approved at the Cabinet meeting of 20 July 2017).
- 4.3 In the six years since the Strategy was finalised, good progress has been made to implement the proposals, including: applying a tiered system to library provision and standardising opening hours; completing a major staffing review; the opening of new libraries in Glossop (2018), and Belper (2020); the introduction of two Community Managed Libraries at Tideswell and Woodville; the successful relocation of Killamarsh Library within the community leisure centre in 2022; and, the achievement of £1.371m savings as a result. Work on the proposed relocation of both Staveley and Clay Cross libraries to new and more energy efficient buildings is also progressing, with funding having been secured from the relevant district council Town Deal.

- 4.4 However, the impact of the global pandemic in 2020, the cost of living and the energy price crisis of 2022 to 2024 have significantly changed the context in which the Council and the Library Service operates. The pandemic resulted in the physical, temporary closure of library buildings whilst the development of other service offers such as ‘book and borrow’ and the home library service became a lifeline to many people isolated from wider contact. User numbers and the level of book loans are now recovering towards pre-pandemic levels (1,268,308 visits to static libraries in the period April 2023 to March 2024).
- 4.5 The cost of living and energy crisis continues to impact the Council’s operating environment resulting in an exceptionally challenging financial position, with growing demands on services for older people and vulnerable children and the overall cost of service provision outstripping the funding that is available to the Council.
- 4.6 High utility and construction costs have particularly impacted building running and maintenance costs over the last four years, resulting in the need for targeted service reviews to achieve better value for money and ensure cost-effectiveness in service delivery.
- 4.7 Having regard to the above, the Council agreed a package of savings at its Meeting on 14 February 2024 (Minute No. 11/24 refers) to achieve a balanced budget for the coming year. This included a further reduction to the Library Service budget of £0.625m over the period April 2025 to March 2029 (Revenue Budget Report 2024-25, Appendix 6, p123) – in addition to the £0.285m savings required to be carried forward from previous years (total savings to be achieved between 2024 and 2029 is £0.910m).
- 4.8 This financial position has resulted in the need for a new Library Strategy to ensure the service can achieve the required savings, whilst still meeting its statutory requirement to deliver a ‘comprehensive and efficient service’. The draft Strategy and associated documents (Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment) are provided at Appendices 2, 3 and 4; the remainder of this report outlines the approach taken to strategy development and provides a summary of the Strategy proposals.

Approach to Strategy Development

- 4.9 In developing the new, draft Strategy, a review of current library provision has been undertaken by a core project team made up of service managers, senior officers and colleagues from a range of

corporate services. Work has used the previous Library Strategy (2018) as base and has included an assessment of performance, trends, budgets, feedback from stakeholders and desktop benchmarking against provision in other local authority areas such as North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. A place-based approach has been applied to the assessment, including an understanding of socio-economic conditions, the location of library buildings within communities and levels of accessibility. This has enabled a better understanding of the Service's baseline position as of June 2024 and has helped inform development of the draft strategy which will be tested through more detailed staff engagement and public consultation over the coming months before the strategy is finalised.

4.10 The draft Library Strategy document is set out in three broad sections:

- i. **Baseline** – information regarding the operating environment of the Library Service, including performance outputs.
- ii. **Future Shape** – vision, principles and objectives for future service delivery and overall shape of the proposed strategy over the period 2024 to 2030.
- iii. **Proposed Strategy: Driving Delivery** – setting out the various components of the new draft strategy.

Section 1 - Baseline

4.11 In summary, section 1 of the draft Strategy confirms:

- The Library Service currently operates from 45 'static' library buildings, including 2 community managed libraries, based in locations across the county.
- Libraries are categorised into one of four tiers with varying opening hours
- Two mobile libraries provide 231 stops in 151 communities – covering both urban and rural communities, and serves 610 customers
- A home library service (HLS) is used by 1,380 users
- A total of 189 staff are employed in the service, or 81 full time equivalents.
- There are currently 76,220 active library cardholders making 1.27m visits and borrowing 1.78m physical items per annum.
- Static libraries offer a range of services beyond book loans including: access to IT and printing, adult care payments, study space and warm spaces – as well as being focal points within communities for local events, police surgeries, citizens' advice etc.

- Different static libraries perform at different levels in terms of visitor numbers, loans, staffing costs, building costs etc; the cost effectiveness of our 43 DCC-run libraries (based on cost/number of users) varies from £0.63 to £12.90/visit.
- Based in the Council's 2024 budget and medium term financial plan, the service needs to achieve a further budget saving of £0.625m over the period April 2025 to March 2029; an additional £0.285m has been achieved in May 2024, as part of the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Implementation of the previous Library Strategy (2018) has progressed well delivering £1.371m savings, whilst helping the service recover from the impact of the pandemic; all key performance measures have shown an increase in use and activity over the period 2022 to 2024, with the exception of mobiles, which has shown a 17% decrease in patronage.
- Over the same period, e-borrowing (books, audio, magazines and newspapers) have shown a significant increase with 1.06m digital items borrowed annually – up to 54% increase in access.
- Static provision is more cost-effective than mobile provision (£54/user versus £240/user respectively).
- The socio-economic conditions of Derbyshire vary across the County but headlines include: 22 areas within the county fall within the 10% most deprived areas of England – many of our static libraries are located in these areas; 15% of children in Derbyshire live in income deprived households, and 12% of older people live in low-income households. Derbyshire's average educational attainment rate is lower than the England average; the proportion of those aged 16+ with no academic qualification is slightly higher than the England average; 15 wards in the county have been identified as having acute literacy needs.
- Ensuring access to library services – especially in deprived and/ or remote communities is key to supporting improved well-being and inclusive growth – helping provide people with the opportunities to reach their potential.

Section 2 - Future Shape

- 4.12 The changes made through the previous Library Strategy in 2018 have provided a firm foundation on which to deliver a more efficient and effective service. Library also proved themselves to be resilient and responsive throughout the challenges of the pandemic providing dedicated support to local communities. As a result of the 2018 changes, the Library Service operates in a very lean, effective structure, with minimum levels of staffing in most of Derbyshire's sites. Additional

productivity savings are therefore challenging to achieve without a robust approach to cost-effectiveness.

- 4.13 Public's needs and demands from library services have also changed since 2018. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of new digital ways of working, learning and communicating, resulting in the rapid and significant increase in the use of digital resources - over 1.06m digital loans were borrowed from libraries in 2023-24. This use, however, has not overtaken the physical services of libraries, which continue to be heavily in demand with 1.78 million items being borrowed over the same period. Libraries are a recognised safe, warm space for people experiencing hardship and loneliness and are often the trusted front door in their community by which residents can access a range of other Council services. This need remains evident and is considered a key factor in helping shape the future offer of the Library Service and the proposed approach set out in the draft Strategy.
- 4.14 In terms of the policy framework for any new or revised strategy, the Government's Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964 sets out the statutory requirement: "*Authorities should provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof*".
- 4.15 In addition, Derbyshire County Council's *Council Plan Refresh, 2024/2025* confirms the following outcomes to be achieved:

We want Derbyshire to have:

- ***Resilient, thriving, and green communities*** which share responsibility for improving their areas and supporting each other.
- ***Happy, safe, and healthy people***, with solid networks of support, who feel in control of their personal circumstances and aspirations.
- ***A strong, diverse, and clean economy*** which makes the most of Derbyshire's rich assets and provides meaningful opportunities for local people to achieve their full potential.
- ***Great places to live, work and visit*** with high performing schools, diverse cultural opportunities, transport connections that keep things moving and a healthy and sustainable environment for all.
- ***High quality public services*** that work together alongside communities to deliver services that meet people's needs.

- 4.16 The Library Service has a clear role to play in supporting each of these outcomes and the new, draft Library Strategy provides the route map for doing so.
- 4.17 Having regard to the issues and considerations set out above, a draft strategy has been developed that balances the need to ensure delivery of £0.625m savings up to March 2029 with the statutory requirement to maintain a comprehensive and efficient service – that is also relevant and meets the needs of communities.
- 4.18 The following draft principles have been developed to help frame the draft Strategy:

Proposed Principles

- **Provide a Strong, Responsive Service Offer**
- **Ensure a Strategic Approach to Location and Investment**

- 4.19 Applying these principles will help ensure those communities and individuals who experience challenging circumstances or face rural isolation, can retain access to some form of provision. The ethos of these principles is evidenced in the proposed vision for the strategy:

Proposed Vision

To put library provision at the heart of communities enabling access to a range of other services and helping nurture personal growth and wellbeing through access to reading, digital technology, culture and lifelong learning.

- 4.20 In line with good practice, a number of objectives have been developed to help ensure effective delivery of the proposed vision. These objectives will form the basis of the Service's performance management framework going forward and will be linked to relevant performance measures and targets:

Proposed Objectives

- To meet the Council's statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service.
- To support and enhance the impact of 'place' – through provision of a network (hub) of static libraries located in the heart of communities.
- To be people and customer focused – ensuring the needs of existing and potential users are met through a refreshed approach to outreach provision (spoke).

- To provide high quality, modern and efficient service - maximising the impact of all available resources and improving cost-effectiveness through the use of available technology and community capacity.

4.21 By adopting a resilient, long-term strategy for the service framed around the above objectives, it will be possible to preserve the benefits of previous investment in library assets (its staff, stock, premises and partnerships), take advantage of other funding opportunities as they present themselves (e.g. town deal funding which is supporting relocation to new premises) and retain the Council's reach across all areas of the County, protecting access to a range of services as far as possible.

Section 3: Proposed Strategy – Driving Delivery

4.22 It is proposed that delivery of the strategy and achievement of the required £0.625m savings be **phased over the four-year period**, April 2025 to March 2029; this will allow consideration to be given to potential opportunities linked to place-based capital funding such as town deals and revenue funding such as Section 106 and the Shared Prosperity Fund (or similar). It will also allow for feedback from public and staff engagement to be duly considered and built into proposals over the latter part of the four-year period, potentially building in service enhancements, despite the budget reductions which must be achieved. To support this approach, it is proposed that formal consultation with staff and public will also take place in a phased way (see section 5 of this report).

4.23 The draft Strategy is made up of four core strands framed around:

- i. Static provision – a network 43 library buildings (hub model)
- ii. Outreach provision – integrating the former mobile and home library service (spoke model)
- iii. Community supported provision
- iv. Digitally enhanced services – maximising use of technology for greater efficiency and effectiveness

4.24 The above are proposed to be supported by an enabling strand of work around staffing training and development; this will help ensure effective support to implementation of the strategy, once approved. A dedicated programme of staff engagement over the next 12 months will secure the input of staff as the draft strategy proposals are shared, refined and finalised.

4.25 A summary of the proposals contained in the draft strategy is outlined below:

Strand	Proposal	Phase
1 – Static Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain all current library buildings as a core ‘hub’ network of provision • Retain all current tiers and set clear service standards of provision • Reduce opening hours by an average of 10% to achieve £0.245m savings • Embed principle of libraries as ‘front door’ to other Council services – offering technology to access services • Continue to explore opportunities for co-location and relocation to more energy efficient buildings – buildings with highest running and maintenance costs to be prioritised. • Invite detailed discussions with communities on opportunities – through first round of public consultation 	<p>Phase 1: 2025/26</p> <p>Phase 0: 2024/25</p> <p>Phase 1 onwards</p>
2 – Outreach Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine the current mobile and home library service into single ‘outreach service’ (spoke) • Propose removal of mobile stops up to three miles from accessible static library – potential for small number of new/ changed stops on routes • Access funding to support replacement of large diesel vehicles and staff cars with new, reliable EV vehicles. Ensure improved cost-effectiveness in service delivery • Pilot use of EV for home library service – summer 2024 • Extend pilot for small area of mobile provision in same locality – summer 2024 • Invite views on routes, stops and opportunities through first round of public/ staff consultation 	<p>Phase 1: 2025/26</p> <p>Phase 0: 2024/25</p> <p>Phase 2 onwards</p>
3 – Community Supported Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new model for community-supported services – linked to enhancements from use of technology • Prioritise those static libraries with high building and running costs • Invite views and willingness of community to support provision in their locality • Finalise community based model based on consultation feedback 	<p>Phase 1: 2025/26</p> <p>Phase 0: 2024/25</p> <p>Phase 1: 2025/26</p>
4 - Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in self service tech – prioritise Tier 3 and 4 libraries 	<p>Phase 2 onwards</p> <p>Phase 1: 2025/26</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade computers in static libraries to support improved access to other council services – libraries prioritised based on availability of other council assets within localities 	Phase 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm best locations for ‘smart’ technology – roll out • Invite views – link feedback to community based proposals, draw out potential for service enhancements 	Phase 0

Additional Comments

4.26 To help achieve budget savings in the early phasing of strategy implementation – whilst maintaining the current building network, it is proposed to implement a c.10% reduction in opening hours across all tiers of libraries. To ensure all communities can access library facilities, no library will be programmed to open for less than 16 hours per week, and all libraries will open on Saturdays. The table below outlines a proposed allocation of opening hours:

	Current Hours per week	Proposed Hours per week	Change	No. of Libraries
Tier 1	51	45	-6	1
Tier 2	46	42	-4	14
Tier 3	30*	28	-2	10
Tier 4	18*	16	-2	18

* some Tier 3 and Tier 4 libraries are currently open less than 30 or 18 hours per week.

4.27 An example opening hours patterns is shown below but it should be noted, the final proposals will be localised to reflect usage at each library (ie busiest times):

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Tier 1	9.00-18.00	9.00-17.00	9.00-13.00	9.00-18.00	9.00-17.00	9.00 - 16.00
Tier 2	9.00-18.00	9.00-13.00	9.00-17.00	9.00-18.00	9.00-17.00	9.00 - 13.00
Tier 3	9.00-13.00	9.00-13.00	9.00-17.00	Closed	9.00-17.00	9.00 - 13.00
Tier 4	9.00-13.00	Closed	9.00-13.00	13.00-17.00	Closed	9.00 - 13.00

4.28 The existing home delivery service and mobile library service provides a mechanism for residents that are unable to visit a static library (due to rurality or personal circumstances) to access library services. However, the current configuration of the service is reliant on costly, unreliable vehicles and the need for better, low-carbon solutions is critical in the immediate term. The service is piloting the use of small electric vehicles in one locality over the summer period and proposes to extend this to

provide a mobile offer for willing customers in the same locality. The impact of the pilot will be assessed and used to inform finalisation of the outreach service proposals over phase 1 of strategy implementation and beyond.

- 4.29 Only two libraries (Woodville and Tideswell) have been transferred successfully to a community managed model since 2018 on implementation of the first Library Strategy. Although a number of other communities expressed an interest in such, these have not materialised into any firm proposals. It is therefore proposed to offer a new technology-supported model to increase use and efficiency at smaller library sites - and which may enable more community uptake.
- 4.30 A copy of the full draft Library Strategy is provided at Appendix 2 of this report, alongside detailed data in the Needs Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment at Appendices 3 and 4 respectively. These documents give further insight into the staffing levels, running costs, building condition, geography, socio-economic indices and other factors which have been used to inform the draft Strategy.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Public consultation on the draft Strategy is proposed to take place in different phases, linked to the implementation of different aspects of the draft Strategy and to the achievement of savings over the four-year period; it is likely there will be at least two consultation processes.
- 5.2 The table at paragraph 4.25 summarises the broad areas of consultation in Phase 1 which is due to take place between August and October 2024
- 5.3 During this time, formal consultation will take place with Library staff and comments will also be sought from the Department of Culture Media & Sport, which has the statutory responsibility for superintending the English public library service.
- 5.4 Comments from the initial consultation exercise will be used to inform finalisation of the Library Strategy which will be presented to Cabinet in January 2025 for agreement and implementation. As noted earlier in this report, specific views will be sought from staff and public regarding the community managed approach, use of technology and other local opportunities; it is likely this feedback will result in the need for a second

round of consultation as individual proposals within each strand are developed over the full period up to March 2029.

6 Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 Option 1: Do nothing - This option would result in the Library Service continuing to overspend its available budget and not achieving the required savings which would place increased pressure on the Council's Five-Year Financial Plan. Also, opportunities to secure improvements to library sites would not be achieved. As the Council has a legal obligation to balance its budget, and a responsibility to residents to prudently plan and run its services, this option is not considered viable.
- 6.2 Option 2: Develop an alternative draft Strategy – this may include other options such as reducing operating costs by closing library sites or cessation of mobile provision, or a combination of both. – Detailed work has been undertaken to consider all the available data and balance the inherent tensions of achieving budget savings with ensuring a comprehensive and efficient service is provided. At this moment in time, it is considered the draft Strategy, as presented in Appendix 2 represents the best option for achieving this. Consultation with staff and the public will test whether other solutions are available and/or workable in meeting the necessary requirements.

7 Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 Cabinet Report, Public Library Service Strategy, dated 5 April 2018 (Minute No. 102/18 refers).

9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications.
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – Draft Public Library Strategy.
- 9.3 Appendix 3 – Library Service Needs Assessment.
- 9.4 Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Analysis.

10 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the draft Library Strategy for the period 2024 to 2029 (Appendix 2), including the proposed Vision and operating Principles and propositions for core delivery and approves to undertake a public consultation exercise in relation to the draft Strategy, as required by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.
- b) Approves to notify the Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) of the draft Strategy and invite comments from the DCMS.
- c) Approves the overall approach to finalising the Strategy following receipt and assessment of comments and notes the proposed report to Cabinet early in 2025 which will set out the final proposals and implementation plan.

11. Reason for Recommendations

- 11.1 A refreshed approach to delivering library services is required if budget savings are to be achieved. Undertaking a public consultation will ensure the long-term provision of Derbyshire County Council's library service is informed by the needs of its residents and may provide valuable additional ideas or approaches.

12. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 12.1 No.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 The Council is currently working to address significant budgetary challenges. This includes a further reduction to the Library Service budget of £0.625m over the period 2025 to 2029 (Revenue Budget Report 2024-25, Appendix 6, p123) – in addition to the £0.285m savings required to be carried forward from previous years. The total savings to be achieved by the Library Service between April 2024 and March 2029 is therefore £0.910m.
- 1.2 The current revenue budget for the Council's Library Service is £5.09m (not including the majority of Property costs). Through a robust review of current budgets and analysis of spend, the Service has identified that £0.285m savings can be achieved with immediate effect without impact on service delivery.
- 1.3 As a result, of the remainder £0.625m saving is to be achieved over the period 2025 to 2029. Previous successful savings work has included restructuring and remodelling the service management, and reduction of the stock fund.
- 1.4 The draft Library Strategy sets out a new approach to meeting the on-going financial challenges in a careful and considered way. Reductions to the operating pattern of libraries to reduce service costs are being proposed to meet some financial savings target in the first year (2025-26), and savings from co-location/relocation/ more efficient use of sites and technology in subsequent years.
- 1.5 It is proposed that the 10% reduction in opening hours will be implemented in 2025-26 and will achieve an estimated £0.245m saving, with the remainder savings (£0.380m) being achieved from April 2026 to end of March 2029. The profile of these savings will be subject to detailed proposals being developed on feedback from consultation and approval of the final Library Strategy.
- 1.6 Savings from reduction in opening hours would be mainly achieved through reductions in staffing; this would involve reduction in contract hours and possibly, some redundancies. There will be a process of

engaging with staff and trade unions (see section 3 below). Achieving the savings is likely to incur one-off redundancy costs which will be assessed if this proposal is approved to proceed.

Legal

- 2.1 The provision of public libraries is governed by various pieces of legislation. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, section 7, states:

'It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.

In fulfilling its duty, the Council should have particular regard to the desirability of:

- i) Securing that facilities are available for borrowing books, records, films etc. sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the needs of all, and the special requirements of adults and children*
- ii) Encouraging adults and children to make full use of the service and provide advice."*

- 2.2 While it is the Council's responsibility to determine how to deliver library services, considering local needs and available resources, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport is responsible for national library policy and must oversee and promote public library services. The Secretary of State can order an inquiry where there are concerns that a local authority is not fulfilling its duties under the Act.

- 2.3 The courts, Mr Justice Ousely, in *Bailey v London Borough of Brent*, have interpreted the requirement to provide a service in the following terms: *"An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources. Decisions about the Service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough."*

- 2.4 The Secretary of State also noted that, as confirmed by the High Court in *R (Green) v Gloucestershire City Council* [2011] EWHC 2687 (Admin): *"the availability of resources is highly material to the question of what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service. The section 7 duty cannot be exempt or divorced from*

resource issues and cannot in law escape the reductions which have been rendered inevitable in the light of the financial crisis engulfing the country.”

- 2.5 Mr Justice Collins (Simon Draper and Lincolnshire County Council July 2014) drew on all previous judicial reviews and elaborated on comprehensive and efficient in a county setting: *“The key is reasonable ability to access the service by all residents of the county. This means that distances and time taken to reach a library must be reasonable and any particular problems, whether physical disabilities, or created by age or family considerations, must be capable of being met...Budgetary constraints are a material consideration”*.
- 2.6 The Service has also sought to learn from the experience of other library authorities across England in the formulation of its draft strategy and has taken into account the key findings from the 2009 Charteris Review of the library service provided by the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral. Specifically:
1. Requirement to make an assessment of local needs prior to considering changes to the library service.
 2. The need to take a strategic approach to the library service rather than focusing on asset management and financial savings.
 3. Consideration of the need for a comprehensive outreach service.
- 2.7 The Libraries Taskforce (a DCMS Outside Body established in 2015) advised that authorities considering making changes to the provision of their library service should send notification of their proposals to the DCMS to assist the Secretary of State in their Superintendence role. They also emphasised that changes to the existing library network require extensive consultation. Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed to send notification of the outline proposals contained within the library strategy to the Secretary of State at the DCMS during the period of public consultation.
- 2.8 In delivering library services, the Council must also comply with the Equality Act 2010 and, in particular, the Public-Sector Equality Duty. This ensures that the Council considers the needs of all individuals in shaping policy and delivering services and guarantees that the Council does not disadvantage individuals or groups.

Human Resources

- 3.1 Staff will be consulted as key stakeholders in the provision of the Library Service and implementation of the proposed Strategy. The process for engaging and consulting staff will be in line with the Council's approved policies and will include engagement with Trade Unions and it is noted that an engagement programme is being developed within the Service which will provide staff with some indication of the main ways and timescales for involvement in finalising the Strategy.
- 3.2 It is recognised the draft Strategy proposes an additional strand of activity linked to staff training and development to help ensure implementation of the final Strategy and this is to be welcomed.
- 3.3 Subject to the outcome of the first round of public consultation, any staffing implications will be the subject of a future paper to Cabinet and separate consultation with the staff and the Trade Unions.

Information Technology

- 4.1 Continued development of the use of Information Technology in the Council's libraries is an important element for driving further efficiencies, through use of self-service technology, which will be prioritised in the coming period. In addition, public take-up of the library service digital offer continues to grow strongly and provides an accessible facility for residents to access learning, research, and recreational materials on their own digital devices at home and in libraries. With the increase in home working following the pandemic, residents, partners, and Council staff are able to make use of the network of library sites to access wi-fi, printing and study spaces across the length and breadth of the County.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 A draft Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) has been developed in parallel with the development of the draft Library Strategy; a copy of the draft EIA is attached as Appendix 4. This will be revised following public and staff consultation, and should not be interpreted therefore, as a definitive assessment of impact. It does, however, provide insight into what is considered to be the potential impact of the Strategy at this stage.

5.2 Based on the assessment of the Draft Strategy, no disproportionate impact has been identified for the following groups/protected characteristics:

- Marriage or civil partnership
- Users of BSL

Possible impacts have been identified for the following groups/protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Race and ethnicity
- Sex and gender
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Human rights
- DCC employees
- Community and voluntary organisations
- Socio-economic/financial inclusion/deprived communities/thriving communities
- Isolated rural communities
- Carers
- Armed forces

Possible positive impacts have been identified for

- Race and ethnicity
- Community and voluntary organisations

Issues identified include:

- Meeting the different needs of urban and rural communities
- Tackling the challenges associated with a large, geographically diverse county
- Providing access to appropriate resources and services for an ageing population
- Catering for the needs of dependents and those who care for them
- Provision for those for whose main language is not English
- Services to support education and career prospects
- Literacy and essential skills support
- Support for the digitally excluded including access to wi-fi, the internet, computers and digital skills support
- Support for children and wider family literacy

- Resources for parents/carers to support their children's learning
- Provision of resources reflecting the diverse nature of today's society
- Access and signposting to services and organisations supporting the long-term sick, disabled and the elderly
- Services to tackle social isolation experienced by the elderly, single person households and parents/carers with young children
- Meeting the needs of those with no access to a car or who find using public transport difficult
- Meeting the needs of those affected negatively by changes to the transport or library network.
- Providing access out of hours for those that work
- Maintaining a mixed profile offering both physical and digital resources so those considered digitally excluded still have access
- Impact of new housing developments and pressure they place on local resources

5.3 In order to address any potential impacts, communities will be consulted on proposed patterns of opening hours to ensure opening hours and access to services is maintained as far as possible – and potential mitigations identified. The draft Strategy proposed that notices could be used providing details of other nearby libraries opening times to highlight alternatives.

5.4 It is proposed that all libraries will be open on Saturday mornings and Tier 1 and 2 libraries will open to 18.00 two nights a week, providing access by workers and those with differing shift patterns. The use of self-service technology will also be investigated as a means of extending opening hours.

5.5 Digital services and investment in e-resources will provide alternative access 24/7 to books, audio books, newspapers and magazines. These services will be promoted to raise awareness and encourage take up. The request service will also be available to enable items to be delivered to their nearest library. The geographical spread of static libraries, mobile stops and routes will be considered when planning any changes to service provision. Transport networks will also be taken into account to maximise access when looking at the relocation of services. Outreach services will serve areas where access to static services is logistically difficult. Investment in new electric vehicles will improve the efficiency and reliability of the mobile service.

5.6 Further potential mitigations are outlined in the draft EIA.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 The Draft Library Strategy aims to support the achievement of the Council's Strategic Outcomes as set out in the Council Plan Refresh 2024-25:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/council/policies-plans/council-plan/council-plan-refresh-2024-to-2025.pdf>

“Our Outcomes

We want Derbyshire to have:

- *Resilient, thriving, and green communities which share responsibility for improving their areas and supporting each other*
- *Happy, safe, and healthy people, with solid networks of support, who feel in control of their personal circumstances and aspirations*
- *A strong, diverse, and clean economy which makes the most of Derbyshire's rich assets and provides meaningful opportunities for local people to achieve their full potential*
- *Great places to live, work and visit with high performing schools, diverse cultural opportunities, transport connections that keep things moving and a healthy and sustainable environment for all.*
- *High quality public services that work together alongside communities to deliver services that meet people's needs.”*

- 6.2 Library services in particular contribute strongly to Outcome 4 – “Great places to live, work and visit with high performing schools, diverse cultural opportunities, transport connections that keep things moving and a healthy and sustainable environment for all”; the draft Library Strategy has embedded the principles of Outcome 5 in its proposals– “High quality public services that work together alongside communities to deliver services that meet people's needs.”

- 6.3 As part of the Place Directorate, the Strategy seeks to embed best value principles in all aspects of our service delivery, driving innovation and improvement in the achievement of council objectives.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

Property and Asset Management

- 7.1 In 2024, the Council implemented a Corporate Landlord approach to property and asset management, and the property budgets associated with the library network were transferred to the Property Department.

The baseline assessment undertaken as part of the strategy development work has included analysis of running costs and maintenance liabilities at all static libraries. Those buildings with poor energy efficiency and significant maintenance backlogs represent an on-going financial challenge to the Council and the proposal to seek opportunities for relocation and co-location is in line with the approach taken by the Property Department.

- 7.2 Those libraries which would benefit from either more intensive/efficient use of premises or from relocation or co-location to other premises in the locality include: Alfreton, Ashbourne, Bakewell, Bolsover, Buxton, Chesterfield, Dronfield, Eckington, Ilkeston, Matlock, Shirebrook and Whaley Bridge. However, this is not an exclusive list and as opportunities in other communities become available, these could and should be explored.