Decision on future library strategy for Gloucestershire   **AGENDA NO:**

Cabinet Date	5 April 2012
Leader of Council	Councillor Mark Hawthorne
Key Decision	YES
Background Documents	Cabinet Report*: Consultation on the Draft Library Strategy 2012* (20th January 2012) Consultation Report – Appendix 1 Context and User Needs Assessment - Appendix 2 (detailed annexes to the Context and User Needs Assessment can be found at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries2012 Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire - Appendix 3 Equality and Community Impact Assessment – Appendix 4 Making fair financial decisions – Appendix 5 Council Outcomes Framework – Appendix 6 Proposed library opening hours – Appendix 7
Location/Contact for inspection of Background Documents	Cabinet members' copies are attached Web link: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries2012 Inspection hard copy available on request
Main Consultees	Full consultation carried out across Gloucestershire with over 3900 responses received Further detail can be found in the Consultation Report – Appendix 1
Planned Dates	Staged implementation following the Cabinet decision
Divisional Councillor	All
Officer	Jo Grills, Operations Director, Education, Learning and Libraries Email: jo.grills@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Purpose of Report	To provide information on the response to the consultation on the draft library strategy to enable cabinet members to give approval to a new library strategy.

Recommendations	Cabinet is recommended to approve:
	
	1. The Vision and Outcomes for the new Library Strategy.
	2. The development of the Virtual Library Service.
	3. The provision of the static library network as listed below:
	Statutory provision:
	9 council-run Main Libraries: Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Dursley, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Coleford, Newent and Stow
	
	22 council-run Local Libraries: Lydney, Tetbury, Fairford, Chipping Campden, Winchcombe, Bishop's Cleeve, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Up Hatherley, Charlton Kings, Cinderford, Hester's Way, Matson, Tuffley, Prestbury, Churchdown, Stonehouse, Nailsworth, Wotton-under-Edge, Moreton-in-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Water
	
	Non statutory provision:
	7 community-run libraries: Berkeley, Brockworth, Bream, Minchinhampton, Lechlade, Mitcheldean and Newnham
	
	4. a. The core opening hours for each local library as proposed in the draft strategy and outlined in Appendix 7.
	
	   b. Consultation about the allocation of opening hours across the week in each local community (It should be noted that consultation about opening hours at Main libraries is not being undertaken as these opening hours are not changing and consultation with communities about their allocation was undertaken in the summer of 2011).
	
	   c. Feasibility studies and consultation in local areas where alternative locations for libraries have been suggested.
	
	5. A six month transition period during which community libraries will operate as council-run libraries to facilitate the smooth transition to community run libraries.
	
	6. The replacement of the existing mobile library service by a Public Sector Mobile library service and extended use of the Share a Book Mobile for children.
	
	7. That the document "Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire" is amended according to the recommendations outlined in this report and that this is approved as the final library strategy for Gloucestershire.

Resource Implications	The initial November 2012 *Meeting the Challenge* savings target for library services was set at £2.6 million. This was later reduced to £2 million in February 2011. Savings of £1 million per year have already been achieved in the library service through the council wide initiative to reduce management costs and cut back office processes. It was estimated that the draft library strategy would save in the region of a further £0.8 million. This budget change would equate to a 25.7% reduction from 2010/11 t0 2012/13. The estimated £0.8 million savings from the Library Strategy will comprise of: • £300,000 from reduced opening hours • £200,000 from reconfigured mobile library service • £300,000 from community libraries It is recommended that there is a six month transition period before implementation of community libraries. This leaves a £150,000 shortfall in 2012/13 which will be funded from the Transformation Reserve. The mobile library service proposed in this report will require additional revenue investment of £40,000 a year which will be met in 2012/13 from the Transformation Reserve. It is anticipated that this amount will reduce as partners contribute to the cost of the Public Sector Mobile service and will be reviewed as part of the 2013/14 budget process. The capital cost of the new Public Sector Mobile will be offset by the sale of existing vehicles.

MAIN REPORT CONTENTS

1.   Summary of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the response to the consultation to enable cabinet members to give approval to a new library strategy for Gloucestershire.

Cabinet members' attention is drawn to the extensive set of appendices which accompany this report. These provide detailed feedback from the consultation, supporting evidence about the needs of library users and impact on equalities as well as the draft strategy. These are:

Appendix 1: Consultation Report

Appendix 2: Context and User Needs Assessment

Appendix 3: Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire

Appendix 4: Equality and Community Impact Assessment

Appendix 5: Making fair financial decisions

Appendix 6: Council Outcomes Framework

Appendix 7: Proposed library opening hours

Statutory/legal duties: The report reminds cabinet members of their statutory and legal duties in respect of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, Public Sector Equality Duties and the Gunning principles relating to consultation.

Consultation: Following the Cabinet decision on 20 January 2012 a public consultation has been carried out on the draft library strategy, entitled "Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire" and the initial Equality and Community Impact Assessment. The full Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 1. In sections 4, 5 and 6 of this Cabinet Report, Members' attention is drawn to the key aspects of the Consultation Report. Section 10 addresses each of the key considerations presented in the final section of the Consultation Report.

Context and User Needs Assessment and Equality and Community Impact Assessment: Updated versions of both these documents can be found in Appendix 2 and 4 respectively with changes highlighted in blue font. Revisions to these documents and other feedback from the consultation have been used as the basis for the amendments to the draft strategy recommended in this report.

The new library strategy: The Cabinet Report seeks approval for the Vision and Outcomes set out in the draft strategy, the Virtual library, static library provision, outreach service and a mobile library service, which taken together are designed to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for Gloucestershire. Alternative proposals suggested during the consultation are considered in the report and some amendments to the draft strategy are recommended.

Resource Implications: the new library strategy is set in the context of the Meeting the Challenge programme. Savings to be achieved through the implementation of the new strategy are outlined in section 11.

2. Background

On 20 January 2012, Cabinet approved public consultation on a draft library strategy and an initial Equality and Community Impact Assessment and agreed to receive a further report setting out the consultation results and final recommendations on the future library service.

The library strategy is set in the context of the *Meeting the Challenge* programme which is the council's response to reduced government funding for local authorities. The council has established that there is a need to make savings of £114million by 2014 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval for the new library strategy for Gloucestershire.

3. Statutory Duties/Legal context

In addition to the general public law principles applicable to decision making such as Wednesbury reasonableness and the duty to set a balanced budget, there are two important statutory duties which the council must meet in respect of the library strategy.

a. Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 ("the PLMA")

Under the provisions of the PLMA, the Council, as a library authority, has a statutory duty (not a discretionary power) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons wishing to make use of it.

The PLMA does not define what is meant by "comprehensive and efficient". However it does provide that the library authority must make facilities for borrowing books and other materials available to people who live, or work, or are undergoing full-time education in Gloucestershire. It also provides that in fulfilling the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, it shall in particular have regard to the desirability of:

i. Providing facilities for the borrowing of, and reference to, books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirement both of adults and children; and

ii. encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service, providing advice as to its use, and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required; and

iii. securing co-operation between the library authority and others exercising public functions within the county.

A Local Inquiry into the Public Library Service provided by Wirral MBC undertaken by the Secretary of State, carried out in September 2009, concluded that in deciding how

to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' the council must assess and take into account local needs. The Secretary of State set out the matters to be considered when undertaking that assessment, including the needs of various adults and of children and the need for a strategic plan. Although the 'Wirral report' does not have the force of law, it indicates the circumstances in which the Secretary of State may intervene under his/her default powers set out in section 10 of the Act.

Moreover recent case law suggests that section 7 of the PLMA imposes an implied duty to take reasonable steps to assess the needs which the library service should meet. To this end a detailed Context and User Needs Assessment has been prepared recording and analysing information which the Council has about the current library service, and the needs of those to whom the Council owes duties under section 7 of the Act, to inform the strategy. An Initial Equality and Community Impact Assessment was also drawn up. Both of these key documents have now been updated in the light of findings from the consultation.

In February 2011, the DCMS provided guidance to library authorities about alternatives to library closures, including the role which community managed libraries could perform. In his evidence to the Select Committee inquiry on library closures, the Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries, Ed Vaizey, who is responsible for libraries, was asked for his view about what was meant by a "comprehensive and efficient" service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act. Mr Vaizey described it as "an elastic definition" and said that the government wants local authorities to have relatively wide discretion. He supported the use of volunteers and the provision of community libraries which were outside statutory provision:

> "There are examples where libraries that have been taken over by the community end up opening longer and having a book stock that is more in tune with what people want in the local community because it is run by people who are on the ground, by neighbours and friends. ...I think a balance needs to be struck. ....When a council examines its library service and decides what it regards as a comprehensive and efficient library service, taking into account all the range of factors, including the resources available to it, it makes a decision about what is appropriate. If there is then an opportunity for a library that might shut its doors to remain open because the community is willing to take it on as has happened in many local authorities over the last couple of years, that opportunity should be seized where it is possible and where it is viable......We would still want to see a comprehensive and efficient local authority-run service in the local authority."

Whilst this statement does not have the force of law it can be considered indicative of the government approach to delivery of library services.

In considering what is "comprehensive". Members should consider the wide range of information set out in this report and its appendices about the county's population, their particular needs for library services, the active users of the existing library service, the results of the consultation, the results of the needs assessment, opportunities offered by a range of different forms of distribution and access to library facilities, the differing needs of people with a range of characteristics.

In considering whether the service is efficient, Members should have regard to the costs of the existing service, the resources available to the Council for delivering library services against the background of public funding cuts, and alternative means of distribution and access.

Section 9 of the 1964 Act states that a library authority may make contributions towards the expenses of another library authority or of any other person providing library facilities for members of the public.

b.   Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

In formulating the new library strategy, indeed in exercising all its functions, the council must also comply with the statutory duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act, known as the public sector equality duty. This requires the Council, and Cabinet Members as decision makers in particular, to have due regard to the needs to:

a)   Eliminate discrimination (both direct and indirect discrimination), harassment, victimisation, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

b)   advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

c)   foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty, or the statutory needs.

Direct discrimination occurs if, because of a protected characteristic, a local authority treats a person less favourably than it treats or would treat others.

Indirect discrimination occurs if a local authority applies to a person a provision, criterion or practice which is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic of that person ("B"). A provision, criterion or practice is discriminatory if –

(a) The local authority applies, or would apply, it to persons with whom B does not share the characteristic,

(b) It puts, or would put, persons with whom B shares the characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with persons with whom B does not share it;

(c) It puts, or would put, B at that disadvantage, and

(d) The local authority cannot show it to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

In short, indirect discrimination would arise if a local authority applies the same provision, criterion or practice to everyone, but it puts those in a certain protected group at a "particular disadvantage" when compared with persons who are not in that protected group. Even if a "particular disadvantage" arises, indirect discrimination will not occur if the provision, criterion or practice can be justified – i.e. if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The relevant protected characteristics referred to in section 149 are:
age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

Section 149(2) goes on to explain that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Section 149 states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status. This means that the first arm of the duty applies to this characteristic but that the other arms (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.

One of the guidance notes published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is entitled "Making fair financial decisions". Members should take this guidance into account in making their decision. It sets out what is expected of decision makers responsible for delivery of key services in order to make decisions as fair as possible. A copy is attached to this report in Appendix 5. The guidance points out that "Financial proposals which are relevant to equality, such as those likely to impact on equality in your workforce and/or for your community, should always be subject to a thorough assessment."

It goes on to say that assessments of impact on equality must contain enough information to enable a public authority to demonstrate it has had due regard to the aims of the equality duty in its decision making and consider ways of mitigating or avoiding any adverse impacts. Furthermore it is important to remember that the potential impact is not just about numbers. Evidence of a serious impact on a small number of individuals is just as important as something that will impact on many people. The EHRC suggest that engagement is crucial to assessing impact on equality in order to help to improve the equality information that is used to understand the possible

impact of a policy on different protected groups. For this reason the consultation has paid particular attention to actively seeking and taking into account the views of groups which are traditionally hard to reach.

Thus, in reaching their decision on this report, Members must have due regard to the three statutory needs and Members should consider specifically what impact the library strategy will have on the three statutory needs, and on people who have the protected characteristics. Case law has established that the duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind. "Due regard" requires an analysis of the material available to the council with the specific statutory considerations in mind.

Due regard to the three equality needs must form an integral part of the decision making process. Members must consider the effect that implementing a particular policy will have in relation to equality before making a decision. There is no prescribed manner in which the equality duty must be exercised. However, Members must have an adequate evidence base for their decision making. This can be achieved by means including engagement with the public and interest groups, and analysing details about the area and those who use the library service. The potential equality impact of the proposed changes to the library service has been assessed, and that assessment is found at Appendix 4. A careful consideration of this assessment is one of the key ways in which Members can show "due regard" to the relevant matters.
Where it is apparent from the analysis of the information that the policy would have an adverse effect on equality then adjustments should be made to avoid that effect (mitigation). The steps proposed to be taken are set out in the Equality and Community Impact Assessment.

Members should be aware that the duty is not to achieve the objectives or take the steps set out in s.149. Rather, the duty on public authorities is to bring these important objectives relating to discrimination into consideration when carrying out its public functions (which includes the functions relating to libraries). "Due regard" means the regard that is appropriate in all the particular circumstances in which the authority is carrying out its functions. There must be a proper regard for the goals set out in s.149. At the same time, Members must also pay regard to any countervailing factors, which it is proper and reasonable for them to consider. Budgetary pressures, economics and practical factors will often be important. The weight of these countervailing factors in the decision making process is a matter for members in the first instance.

Members will be assisted in this by the updated Equality and Community Impact Assessment and the summary set out below in Section 8 of this report.

c.   The Principles of Consultation

Members should be aware of the principles of consultation as originally stated in the 1985 case of R v London Borough of Barnet ex parte Gunning and known as the Gunning principles. They are that if consultation is undertaken, then:

- it should be when proposals are still at a formative stage;
- there should be sufficient reasons for proposals to permit intelligent consideration;
- there should be adequate time for consideration and response;

- the responses must be conscientiously taken into account.

Moreover HM Government published in July 2008 a Code of Practice on consultation which, whilst applicable to central rather than local government, and without having legal force, does contain useful advice on the conduct of a public consultation. The Foreword points out that there will be times when deviation from the Code is unavoidable when running a formal, written public consultation and it is then recommended that reasons are given for the deviation and what measures will be employed to make the exercise as effective as possible in the circumstances.

Members must be content that the consultation process carried out for the Libraries 2012 Proposals has been sound and reached communities so as to reflect their views. Responses must be properly considered and reasons given sufficient to indicate why a particular response or suggestion may not have been adopted.

4.   The Consultation Process

A detailed and rigorous consultation on the draft library strategy and the initial Equality and Community Impact Assessment was carried out between 30 January 2012 and 11 March 2012.

This six week consultation built on the findings from previous consultations undertaken by the council since September 2010. These included: Meeting the Challenge "Let's Talk", 2010/11 Budget Consultation and Consultation on libraries proposals (18 November 2010 to 11 February 2011) which have been included as annexes to the Consultation Report. It also built on informal consultation and dialogue carried out with residents and community groups as part of the Council's Big Community Offer. Business plans were received and accepted from all communities where community libraries were previously proposed but these were put on hold because of the judicial review of the council's previous decision on its library strategy.

It is important to note that the council's 2010/11 Library Strategy consultation process formed one of the grounds of this legal challenge, but this ground was not upheld by Judge McKenna in his ruling of 16 November 2011 who judged that the consultation had been conducted with an open mind, at a formative stage and that consultees had been given sufficient information about the proposals to permit intelligent consideration. Therefore data from the consultation exercise of November 2010 – February 2011 has been taken into account in this report and it meant that the usual 12 week consultation could be foreshortened because the council already had the benefit of the previous consultation feed back. The six week period was nevertheless intense and over 3,900 responses were received overall.

The council engaged the Consultation Institute to provide quality assurance, ensuring a robust and comprehensive consultation exercise. An independent consultation company, Vector Research, was appointed to assist the council in undertaking the consultation.

The council set out to undertake consultation which would not only be representative of the county as a whole but also able to provide detailed feedback, particularly from

groups who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act. These groups can be hard to reach and under-represented in consultations.

There were three main strands to the consultation focusing on different groups:

i.   representative sample of the population of Gloucestershire as a whole through the telephone survey;

ii.   groups of particular interest, largely representing groups who share the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, who were invited to attend workshops;

iii. self-selecting groups who attended road-shows, completed questionnaires or corresponded with the council.

The consultation exercise included:

- A random telephone survey of 1000 households across the county

- Paper survey, including an "easy to read" version and an on-line survey

- Postal survey of 1000 randomly selected library users

- Fifteen road-shows across the county

- Eight deliberative workshops with "hard to reach" groups

- Focus groups in two primary schools

- Supported sessions with gypsy and travellers and with people with learning disabilities

- Letters sent to all mobile library users (who only use this form of library service). Library managers were available on the mobiles for individual conversations

- Correspondence with 270 voluntary and community stakeholder groups across the county asking for their views on the Initial Equality and Community Impact Assessment

- A focus group composed of members of the council's Health and Community Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- An opportunity offered to all library staff to attend a meeting to discuss the proposals but this was not taken up. (The proposed strategy is unlikely to have a significant impact on staff since a major staffing restructure has already taken place)

- A single web page (gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries 2012) to facilitate easy access to documents relating to the draft strategy. Frequently asked questions were updated regularly

- Officers responded to 267 emails and letters seeking additional information

Officers also met representatives from local community groups and others including members of the Friends of Gloucestershire Libraries.

5.   Comments or complaints about the consultation process

The council received 57 complaints or adverse comments from 37 individuals. The aspect of the process attracting the most comment was the on-line and paper questionnaire with 2% of questionnaires containing a negative comment. Following the initial complaints and a request that the questionnaire should be withdrawn in the first week of the consultation, Vector Research was asked to regularly monitor and report on non completion rates or other indications that people were unable to respond to particular questions in the on-line or paper questionnaire. Vector Research found that the vast majority (94%) of respondents were able to complete the questionnaire successfully.

In response to the complaints received, the council promoted the fact that assistance to complete the questionnaire was available at all road-shows and in libraries. The council offered substantial support to help people understand the proposals and respond to the questionnaire. It is estimated that over 400 were directly supported in some way to take part in the consultation.

A log of complaints was compiled and action taken in response was noted (Appendix 1 annex 21).

In summary, the complaints were:

- the questionnaire was confusing and complex because it asked people to allocate points to illustrate how they would prioritise proposals. Since there were 3 priorities and 10 points to allocate, it was impossible for people to divide the points equally if they wanted the 3 priorities to be of equal importance.

  Comment: where respondents allocated 3.3 points to each priority this was interpreted as equal preference for each priority. Additional information was made available after 15th February 2012 to clarify this. However, an analysis of responses at different points during the consultation revealed that few people weighted the criteria equally either before or after the guidance was issued. This indicates that generally people wanted to indicate greater importance of some of the criteria above others.

- The complexity of the questionnaire would exclude people with low literacy levels.

  Comment: around 400 people were supported to complete questionnaires at the road-shows and on mobile libraries. Moreover, support completing the questionnaire was also available for those attending workshops, and it was made clear that assistance was available at all libraries for anyone who needed it. For people with particular needs, 'easy read' and large print versions of the questionnaire were made available. 121 'easy read' versions were completed.

- The questionnaire was designed to generate data that would support the draft proposals.

  Comment: this is a common criticism in consultations where respondents are asked for their views on a single proposal. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents were given ample opportunity to express their views through open questions with free-form boxes, in addition to the specific questions. The council drew people's attention in particular to the free form boxes. More than 10,000

free-form comments were received and a total of 267 email and letter correspondence.

- Intrusive nature of some questionnaire themes.

  Comment: given the priority placed on ensuring that the views of all parts of the community were captured, asking these questions was unavoidable. However, respondents were free to miss these questions out if they wanted to.

- People were unable to say how the proposals for Partnership or Community Libraries would impact on them as the information did not specify when the opening hours would be during the week or the proposed venue for these libraries.

  Comment: a guide was provided to the number of opening hours. When people were asked to consider their last visit to the library and assess what impact the proposed changes would have had, respondents were given a choice of boxes to tick including "no effect" and "would require further planning etc." Therefore respondents who were unsure about when the opening hours would be could tick the second option (or one of the other alternatives).

It is judged that these comments and complaints do not vitiate the consultation as a whole.

6.   Summary of feedback from the consultation

The headline data presented in the Consultation Report (Appendix 1) presents a fairly consistent reaction to the draft strategy and its key elements. At a headline level the representative quantitative research, from the telephone survey, shows a significant level of support for key proposed changes, with over 82% agreement with the proposal to extend the use of volunteers, share buildings and introduce community run libraries. 78% of respondents agreed with the proposals relating to mobile services - that the council should look at reducing mobile services and sharing a new service with other public and voluntary sector organisations.

In the consultation forums where people had more time and opportunity for reflection, conversation and deliberation, there were ultimately stronger levels of support for the council's approach. However this contrasts with the submissions from the self-selecting (postal and online) respondent groups where although the majority (58%) agreed with the same propositions, others were critical of the draft strategy.

Overall, the findings from the consultation show that there is a measure of support for the overall strategy, with some key elements achieving significant levels of support. Moreover, efficiency and access principles that made up the strategy are not significantly challenged by alternative factors.

Section 9 of the Consultation Report lists some key considerations which the council should take into account. These key considerations are listed below and a detailed response to each consideration is given in section 10 of this report.

a. *Does the proposed strategy offer adequate measures to ensure that the professionalism of library services will be maintained in proposed community libraries?*

b. *How will the council address the disproportionate impacts on older women and those living in rural areas (in relation to mobiles), and older people generally, who are twice as likely to expect negative impacts as a result of the implementation of the strategy compared with the public as a whole?*

c. *The top priority identified by the public in determining how resources should be allocated was ensuring that vulnerable groups, deprived communities and those living in remote areas can still access libraries. With this in mind, does the proposed strategy allocate resources in a way that mitigates these concerns?*

d. *Those taking part in the consultation have indicated that while they do accept the case for a reduction in mobile library services and making changes to how they are run, they wish to see a service continue.*

e. *A clear message expressed through the consultation was that in considering 'access' to library services, the council should take into account availability of transport and parking issues.*

f. *Given that some respondents felt that they were unable to fully assess the impact that proposed changes to library services would have on them due to a perceived lack of information about future library opening times (NB 13.7% of respondents did not complete this question), further consideration needs to be given to how the public can have more of a say about this (i.e. through further consultation at individual libraries where changes to opening hours are planned).*

g. *While the proposed changes raised concerns associated with a number of different libraries, there was particular opposition to the community library proposals for Minchinhampton Library, Lechlade Library and Brockworth Library. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the specific concerns raised by these communities.*

h. *The consultation also took a number of steps to ensure that the views of people belonging to vulnerable and protected groups were heard. This resulted in the identification of some specific concerns about the potential impact of the library strategy on them and their peers. Adequate steps need to be taken to address the points raised.*

Information from the consultation about the impact on vulnerable and protected groups has been included in the revised Equality and Community Impact Assessment. Mitigations suggested by members of protected groups who took part in the deliberative workshops have also been included as an annex to the Consultation report and taken into account in the ECIA.

7.   Context and User Needs Assessment

Where responses included data relevant to the Equality and Community Impact Assessment, this was included in the updated ECIA with changes indicated in blue font. The key points from the ECIA are summarised in section 8 of this report.
Where responses included generic alternative suggestions, these are considered in section 9.4 of this report.

The council received some responses which either challenged data in the Context and User Needs Assessment or provided additional information to be considered. These submissions were subject to a robust process to ensure that all comments were investigated by the relevant team in the county council or partner organisation.

Note that this document describes in detail the "general requirement and any special requirements both of adults and children" as required by section 7 PLMA. Some generic and specific issues relating to local areas are outlined below.

7.1   Generic points:

a.   **Library catchment areas**: Several comments were received about the data set used to determine library catchment areas. The council has reviewed these catchments and is confident that the designated catchments areas are appropriate because they reflect natural communities and local issues such as public transport, main road links and shopping facilities rather than being strictly distance or district based.
b.   **Population data**: The council is confident that the data used to analyse the demography of each catchment area is correct.
c.   **Library Users**: Information about library users was obtained from the Library Management Systems and records kept by the service. This is a key component of the needs assessment to identify how people use the service.
d.   **Deprivation levels**: Several submissions quoted deprivation levels for the county. It is important to note that the council is using national comparators when presenting information relating to deprivation.

7.2   Specific comments relating to local areas

Detailed submissions were made on behalf of each of the areas listed below. These have been analysed by the council's research team and in some cases changes have been made to the Context and User Needs Assessment. The paragraphs below outline the key points and conclusions area by area. Where responses have been received from representative groups these have been named.

a.   Berkeley

The Berkeley Community Library Committee challenged some of the council's data. Analysis by the council's research team has resulted in some minor changes to the Context and User Needs Assessment. However these changes do not significantly change the size of the Berkeley library catchment area. There are no confirmed future developments for Berkeley which would have an impact on the level of the population in the library catchment.

The bus service to Dursley is currently infrequent but from 16 April, 2012 the service will be extended from the current Monday to Thursday service to Monday to Saturday.

b.   Brockworth

Submissions were received from individuals, Brockworth Parish Council and Brockworth Community Project. Several of these drew attention to the level of deprivation in Brockworth. The Research Team found that one neighbourhood in the area is amongst the top 30% of the most deprived in the country. The fact that Brockworth has better access to services and housing, better than average health and a better than average living environment means that it does not qualify as one of the top 20% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Further consideration of deprivation factors can be found in section 9.4 of this report.

Some submissions also drew attention to the planned development of around 1500 homes in the Brockworth area during the next ten years. The council will ensure that the needs of these developing communities will be assessed in coming years as the number of houses increases.

c.   Hucclecote

The submission drew attention to the planned development of homes at Coopers Edge. As indicated above, the council will ensure that the needs of these developing communities will be assessed in coming years as the number of houses increases.

d.   Lechlade

Submissions were received from Cotswold District Council, Lechlade Town Council and Lechlade Parish Council as well as individuals.

The previous version of the Context and User Needs Assessment suggested that travel to Cirencester by public transport would take between 45 and 60 minutes. This has been amended to show that the length for this journey is 52 minutes from Lechlade to Cirencester and 57 minutes for the return journey. The previous Assessment did not include travel times between Lechlade and Fairford libraries. These are calculated to be a 7 minute journey by car and a 17 minute one way and 18 minute return journey by bus. Submissions from Lechlade have challenged the criterion included in the draft strategy which suggested that it should be possible for local people to travel to a Main library within 30 minutes by public transport. Section 9.3 of this report explains that the council has based the network of static libraries on four criteria which need to be read together rather than in isolation.

It should be noted that there are a number of alternative out of county libraries accessible to the residents of Lechlade including Highworth Library, part of the Swindon Borough library network, which is within 9 minutes travel time by car and 15 minutes by public transport. Highworth library is open for 53 hours a week. Currently 163 library users from the Lechlade area access libraries within the Swindon borough.

The council is currently investigating the possibility of a more direct bus route to Cirencester which would shorten the time of the journey from Lechlade to the Main library in Cirencester.

After reconsidering the range of the Lechlade library catchment area at the request of the community, the council is confident in its original determination of the catchment area.

e.   Minchinhampton

Submissions were received from the Minchinhampton Library Steering Committee, Friends of Minchinhampton Library and Minchinhampton Parish Council.

Some submissions drew attention to Multiple Deprivation Indices indicating that one of the three neighbourhoods in Minchinhampton ranks in the top 40% (at 38%) nationally which would be a rank of the 20% of the most deprived communities in Gloucestershire. As previously stated, the council is using national deprivation rankings. The equivalent national ratings for the other two neighbourhoods in Minchinhampton demonstrate that they are ranked at 69% and 86% nationally.

A significant number of submissions have referred to the proportion of older people (aged 65 and over) living in Minchinhampton. This supports the information in the original Context and User Needs Assessment. This is considered in the Equality and Community Impact Assessment and in the next section of this report.

Submissions have drawn the council's attention to access issues, particularly for older people. The council has established that there is access to alternative libraries, should this be needed, for people with mobility difficulties who can drive or use public transport. Spaces are available for members of the Blue Badge scheme both directly outside Stroud library and a very short distance away on the same road. Buses also run regularly between Minchinhampton and Stroud, however it is acknowledged that the Stroud bus stop is approximately 15-20 minutes walk from the library. Access is also available to Nailsworth by bus which runs Monday to Saturday and so allows access outside school hours at the weekend. The bus stops opposite to Nailsworth library. There are five buses a day from Minchinhampton to Nailsworth which depart roughly every two hours and three return buses. The journey takes approximately 15 minutes. Analysis of Minchinhampton library users shows that less than half live within one mile of Minchinhampton library with many travelling some distance. This gives a clear indication that a high proportion of current users of Minchinhampton library have access to some form of transport to access library services.

The Parish council drew attention to the potential economic impact in the local area if people ceased to use Minchinhampton library.

It has been concluded that there is no strong evidence for re-considering Minchinhampton as a council run library in the light of the mitigations which will be put in place, particularly those designed to meet the needs of older people

f.   Mitcheldean

The Mitcheldean Library Action Group submitted a detailed profile including information about health and housing. The Group questioned whether the council was using the most up to date information. The council is confident that the Context and User Needs Assessment is based on up to date data range for the library catchment area. Submissions also referred to issues relating to car access, poverty in Drybrook (which is also in the Cinderford library catchment area) and older people living in Mitcheldean. The council's analysis found that there was not a significant difference from the county average for car or van ownership. Rough estimates show that around 17% of children and 16% of adults in Drybrook are income deprived, which is slightly above the estimated 14% for both groups over the whole county. The percentage of older people over 65 living in Mitcheldean is 1% above the county average.

An hourly bus services is available to Gloucester which takes about 35 minutes. There is a bus service between Mitcheldean and Cinderford four times a day which returns from Cinderford three times daily. This service is likely to be improved.

g. Moreton in the Marsh

Submissions drew attention to the planned development which will lead to an increased population in future years. The council will ensure that the needs will be assessed in coming years as the development progresses.

h. Nailsworth

The submission from Nailsworth Town Council drew attention to access issues. Parking is currently provided adjacent to Nailsworth library. For those with mobility difficulties choosing to access Stroud Main library, Blue Badge spaces are available outside Stroud library and a very short distance away on the same road.

i. Newnham

The Newnham Library Group's submission drew attention to the needs of less mobile people and the location of centres for older people. Data indicates that there is a high percentage of car or van ownership in the area. The area does appear to have a relatively high proportion of the population who are older and who may have physical mobility issues. There are several care homes or sheltered housing in or close to Newnham. Equality issues are addressed in the Equality and Community Impact Assessment.

j. Stonehouse

The submission from Stonehouse Town Council drew attention to the high level of computer use at Stonehouse Library. There are five People's Network PCs available in Stonehouse library and a further 16 PCs available in Stroud library.

8. Equality and Community Impact Assessment

As stated above, the consultation process used a targeted approach to increase the council's understanding of the potential impact of the new library strategy on specific groups, particularly members of the protected groups under the Equality Act. The initial

Equality and Community Impact Assessment was reviewed and updated in the light of this information and is attached as Appendix 4 with changes indicated in blue font.

Representatives from protected groups were targeted through invitations to attend deliberative work-shops, a quota was set to ensure feedback from protected groups was captured through the representative telephone survey. Open consultation also meant that anyone wanting to express their views could do so, and consultation road shows supported this process. Consultation also included a visit to a traveller site, visits to secondary and primary schools, a dedicated email enquiry line was also set up for queries and comments from stakeholders and the public.

Large print and easy to read versions of the consultation survey were made available. Letters were sent to a wide range of stakeholders representing different groups and communities across Gloucestershire. Comments were invited in relation to the needs of people in the groups they represent.

Our analysis has noted that the new library strategy's reduction in opening hours at some libraries and changes to the mobile library service will have an impact on people who want to use libraries across the general population of the county. Library services will still be available and accessible but in some cases it is anticipated that a behavioural change could be required, such as changes to the timing of their visit, the library they use or the journey taken.

In terms of reduction in opening hours there are minor adjustments at 4 libraries, moderate changes at 2 and more significant ones at the remaining 10. In the case of Moreton in Marsh library, co-location with a partner service means an additional 19 hours per week will be provided giving a total of 31 hours per week and in the case of Churchdown library a financial contribution from the parish council is planned meaning an additional 16 hours per week can be provided to total 28 hours per week. Although Bishop's Cleeve will have a 24.5% cut in hours compared to its current hours it will still have 40 hours per week which is the same as some Main libraries and it does mean that the library could be open over 6 days per week.

The 7 libraries with more significant cuts to opening hours are Up Hatherley, Hester's Way, Nailsworth, Hucclecote, Quedgeley, Prestbury and Wotton. Detail about travel to alternative libraries is given in the Equality and Community Impact Assessment. Note that communities at Wotton, Nailsworth and Prestbury have all indicated interest in providing volunteers to help extend core library opening hours.

The library strategy is considered to have potential for both positive and negative differential impacts on people sharing one or more of the protected characteristics. The development of the virtual library, the reconfiguration of the mobile library service, partnership with voluntary organisations such as the WRVS and the use of volunteers to work in libraries, all have the potential to have a positive impact.
For some groups, no new information has come forward as a result of the consultation process or the research undertaken. This has confirmed our belief that the new library service arrangements would not have any greater or lesser differential effect on people in relation to: gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

A reduction in opening hours at libraries in Bishop's Cleeve, Up Hatherley, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Charlton Kings, Longlevens,Hester's Way, Matson, Tuffley, Churchdown, Nailsworth, Moreton, Prestbury, Wotton, Stonehouse and Bourton may have a more significant impact. These relate to the protected groups in terms of age, disability, sex. This is especially the case when combined with other factors affecting these protected groups such as access to services, socio- economic disadvantage, and also when the needs of carers, lone parents and pregnant women are considered in this context. Following the Cabinet decision there will be local consultation on the spread of opening hours across the week.

a.   Older people, particularly those with mobility difficulties

Analysis of consultation responses and local and national data has shown that the greatest impact of the new library strategy is likely to be on older people, who use the libraries where the opening hours will be reduced, especially those over 75, particularly those with mobility difficulties. When library hours are reduced, it is expected that older people will have most freedom to change their behaviour to access their nearest library at times when the libraries open, as they are more likely to be retired. If they cannot access their local library during the times when it is open, there may be an adverse impact on this group in accessing their next nearest library.

Research information from Age UK indicates that an achievable walking distance for older people declines with age and that a distance of 200 metres would present problems for many. Car use declines with age and older people become more reliant on public transport. Eventually many older people can get put off travelling at all if the distance seems too far or the journey too difficult. Additionally, personal mobility difficulties begin to develop and increase with age.

Mitigations are outlined in the Equality and Community Impact Assessment including a commitment to enhance the methods we offer to help older people access library services, particularly through additional volunteer support in partnership with the WRVS to help older people access library services. The council will continue to expand the number of Library Clubs from the current 25, and arrange transport to these clubs or for library visits at other times for those with mobility difficulties. The partnership with the WRVS will increase the number of volunteers available to bring people to Library clubs, including those living in residential homes. For those not wishing to leave their homes, book delivery will be arranged through volunteers and in co-ordination with other partners such as Village Agents.   Boxed book collections will be provided to older people's residential homes from a nearby library or to lunch clubs and other places older people meet.

Nationally the WRVS is supporting older people to use computers and they are willing to support older people with internet access at home to learn how to use the virtual library to place requests or down load e books or e audio services.

For older people who can still travel independently public transport or community transport will be available to access libraries. In co-ordination with the council's integrated transport service more flexible community transport arrangements will be developed. These will depend on the needs identified by people affected but will

include a flexible phone and book service and library visit pass. Older people also have concessionary travel passes.

The public sector mobile service will provide library services in rural areas. It will also provide access to other partner agencies and to the internet and wider sources of information.

The library strategy proposals for volunteers in either council run or community run libraries provide retired people with opportunities to sustain social interaction and this could have a positive impact on people's lives and help them to remain active in their communities.

b.   Children and Young People

The reduction in opening hours may have a particular impact on children and young people if they cannot access their preferred choice of library during the times when it is open. For libraries where there will be a reduction in opening hours then the Baby Bounce and other sessions targeted at children will continue but be re-timetabled.

The strategy is likely to impact particularly on children living in families without access to a car in rural areas where a mobile stop would no longer be provided. Provision in community-run libraries would continue shaped around the wishes of the local community. Children are reliant on parents or carers for accessing a library until they reach older teenage years. Currently libraries provide a safe neutral space for children to study and access computers and this will continue.

Mitigations will include the following:

A tailored library visit travel pass to help families living in more rural areas or on lower incomes if they need to travel further to a library owing to the library strategy changes. Children with access to the internet at home will benefit from the further expansion of the virtual library service for homework and for e.books for children.

Children will have access to their school libraries. Librarians from Main and Local libraries will undertake school visits and provide outreach to schools and children's centres and other places where children and families meet.

The public sector mobile library service will be available to them in rural areas. The "Share a Book" mobile will be used to target library services to more vulnerable groups of children and those who may be most affected by educational, social or economic deprivation factors

c.   People with disabilities

The reduction in opening hours may have a particular impact on people with disabilities if they cannot access their preferred choice of library during times it is open.

There is potential for differential negative impacts mainly for people with mobility related disabilities in terms of access to libraries, for people with learning disabilities who may need more explanation about the changes and support to change their routine. For

those who have a visual impairment if they need to use a different library they may need mobility route training to get used to a different journey to a library. Children with disabilities and their families may be affected if they need to switch their library use to an alternative location.

All council run libraries are accessible to disabled people using wheelchairs. Disabled people will be able to park at 21 of the libraries which have on site parking. Hearing loops are available in some council-run libraries and these are being extended to all libraries.

The libraries will continue to be part of the "keep safe scheme" for people with learning disabilities and staff will help to explain changes to people who need additional support. Services to people with visual impairments remain unchanged with the postal supply of talking books continuing and downloadable e.audio books are now available as well as large print books. The flexible community and volunteer transport arrangements will be available to disabled people who are also eligible for concessionary travel passes. Library Clubs and volunteer home delivery book services are also available to people who cannot leave their own home. The development of the digital library services could provide a better means of access for some disabled people such as those with mobility or hearing disabilities.

Existing services to support children with disabilities will continue, for example large print books and talking books and clear vision Braille picture books. Bookshine packs for pre school age children who are deaf and Booktouch packs for pre school children who are blind or partially sighted will also be available.

d.   Sex

A negative impact may occur where, on account of a reduction in opening hours, people are not able to visit their preferred library.

This protected characteristic may have significance in terms of the potential for discrimination when other factors are also taken into consideration such as for women especially in terms of caring responsibilities, dependent children, socio- economic disadvantage and ageing. Women are the largest group of library users and tend to be the group taking children to libraries. For younger women as carers or lone parents who may need to change their library use due to changes to the library service there may be barriers to using public transport in both logistical terms and due to costs.

The flexible travel arrangements and library travel pass will help to improve access to libraries to those families without a car who may also be on low income. Volunteers will be able to deliver books on a temporary basis if pregnant women are unable to travel due to health reasons.

The Share a Book mobile service will be focused on serving children and families and the reconfigured public sector mobile service will also be available to them in rural areas.

For men, there is some evidence that the provision of electronic library services will prove more attractive to them and there could be positive aspects that mean men who do not usually visit libraries will use the virtual library service.

In summary there are three main points for Members to note:

i) The new library strategy will have limited impact on the majority of library users in the county. In areas where opening hours are reduced some library users may need to change which day or time they visit the library or travel to an alternative library. Local consultation will take place in respect of opening hours across the week.

ii) Where the council has identified a differential impact on protected groups mitigating actions have been identified.

iii) There will be a package of support to assist community groups to take on the running of their local library. Equality of access to library service will be a requirement of the agreement with the Council. Inclusion training will be provided by council librarians. The Council believes that the offer of active community volunteering opportunities has the potential for a positive impact.

9. The Library Strategy for Gloucestershire

It is proposed that the document "Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire" (Appendix 3) is adopted as the final library strategy following the inclusion of the amendments recommended below.

9.1 Vision and Outcomes

The Vision and Outcomes for the library service are set within the context of the Council Strategy which was agreed by the county council on 22 February 2012. The strategy set out three core values:

Living within our means: the council is committed to spend money only on what it can afford. The strategy is to maximise efficiency and save money wherever possible by joining up with partners.

Providing the basics: in times of reduced resources the focus has to be on services that improve outcomes for local people, on the quality of council services and on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable.

Helping communities to help themselves: empowering communities to do more themselves and to give them the tools they need for community action

The council strategy sets out the key strategic outcomes that the council is aiming to achieve for local people. Appendix 6 demonstrates how the new library strategy will contribute to those outcomes.

The Vision for the Library Strategy

Our vision is to support individuals and local communities to achieve their aspirations by creating a vibrant, welcoming library service that provides access to books, information and learning opportunities in a variety of ways and in partnership with others.

The ways in which this vision will be delivered will change and evolve according to technological innovations in providing books and information services, the needs of Gloucestershire people and the council resources available to meet those needs. The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- A free **core** library service accessible to all to meet the different needs of individuals at each stage of their lives
- Libraries which reflect local needs and respond effectively to changes in demand
- Library services which support vulnerable people and groups, aiming to "close the gap" by working with other partners and supporting vulnerable people as part of the personalisation and choice agenda
- Access to high quality information that is not freely available elsewhere so that people can make informed choices and live independently
- The promotion of the benefits of books, reading and information as a means to foster literate communities who can help themselves
- Support for improved health and well being and increased life chances through the promotion of the benefits of reading and learning and access to information
- An access point to informal learning through the provision of books and information, and by working with partners and signposting learners to their services
- Opportunities for volunteering to enhance library services, empower members of the public and support active communities through working with individuals and community groups
- Libraries as part of the wider network of services from the public, private and voluntary sector which contribute to bringing about social and community benefits. This includes providing a front door through which people can access the range of council, community and partner agency provision

The implementation of this vision and outcomes will be achieved by working in partnership with communities, our partners and volunteers through different delivery mechanisms including digital means through the virtual library, a reconfigured network of libraries, a mobile service and through services targeted to support vulnerable people.

Recommendation One:

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Vision and Outcomes for the new Library Strategy

9.2 The Virtual Library

A key aspect of the new Library Strategy is the continued expansion of services available through the virtual library providing round the clock access to digital services.

An e book download service will be introduced in 2012 and on line payment for request services. The library service already offers a mobile phone interface to the library catalogue. Further developments will be made including shared book lists, reviews and links to social media. Experience from elsewhere in the country has shown that library membership has increased with the introduction of e books, particularly for men.

Recommendation Two:

Cabinet is recommended to approve the development of the Virtual Library Service

9.3   The static library network

The draft strategy proposed a network of libraries. The network included 31 libraries (reduced from the current 38 libraries) which would be part of the council's statutory provision. The remaining 7 libraries would be offered to communities but not part of the statutory provision. Taken together with the virtual library, outreach service and mobile library service, officers are confident that these 31 static libraries provide a comprehensive and efficient service which meets the requirement of section 7 of the PLMA. It is not therefore necessary to continue to provide 38 libraries to ensure that a comprehensive and efficient library service is available. Members are invited to adopt this conclusion. However, officers consider that it would be desirable (although not necessary) to maintain a library service at the 7 communities, and recommend providing support to community groups who wish to take over the running of these libraries as detailed at section 9.4d. of this report.

Four criteria were used as the basis for determining the location of the 31 Council-run libraries. During the consultation there has been some confusion about the application of these criteria. It should be noted that the four criteria should be taken together rather than in isolation (see pages 13-18 in the document "Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire"). The nine Main libraries serve the majority of the population of the county. However, given the rural nature of the county, in addition to Main Libraries, other Local and Partnership libraries have been included in the draft strategy in order to ensure access within around 30 minutes by public transport.

Therefore in the draft strategy the proposed static library network is as below.

i.   9 Main Libraries to be located in the five main district towns and three additional towns in the most rural districts: Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Dursley, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Coleford, Newent and Stow. These libraries would be open six days a week, providing an access point to wider public services.

ii.   12 Local Libraries which would serve areas of high population located in: Lydney, Tetbury, Fairford, Chipping Campden, Winchcombe, Bishop's Cleeve, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Up Hatherley, Charlton Kings and Cinderford. These libraries would be open across five days a week, including Saturdays. 10 Partnership Libraries which would serve a range of types of communities, some in the most deprived areas of the county, others serving catchments with more young, disabled or older people. It was proposed that the council will provide a guaranteed minimum core library service with the option of community support to extend opening hours. It was proposed that partnership libraries would be located in:

Hester's Way, Matson and Tuffley (with core provision of 21 hours) and in Prestbury, Churchdown, Stonehouse, Nailsworth, Wotton-under-Edge, Moreton-in-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Water (with core provision of 12 hours).

iii. 7 Community Libraries which would be outside the council's statutory library service and would be offered for the local community to run, with support from the council. It was proposed that the offer of community libraries should be made to Berkeley, Brockworth, Bream, Minchinhampton, Lechlade, Mitcheldean and Newnham. There may be a reduction or increase in core opening hours at these libraries, depending on the extent of the local provision.

The current and proposed hours for each library are set out in Appendix 7.

It is clear that there is some confusion about the terminology used for different types of libraries. This is particularly the case for the term "partnership". Consultation responses have been positive about delivery of the library service in partnership with other organisations in order to reduce costs by sharing buildings or staff, but respondents were unclear why partnerships could not be entered for all libraries. Partnerships are already in place in several libraries, for example with the police at Bishop's Cleeve, Newent and Nailsworth and with the Cotswold Volunteers at Moreton.

Some respondents to the consultation commented that they want the council to be more explicit about the status of the proposed community libraries.

In order to avoid confusion, it is proposed that the draft library strategy is amended to use the term "local" for all the libraries previously listed as local or partnership libraries resulting in three types of libraries.

Statutory provision: Council-run Main Libraries

Council-run Local Libraries

Non statutory: Community-run Libraries

9.4 Alternative suggestions for the static library service

Various alternative options for the static library network have been presented by different groups during the consultation.

a. Savings could be achieved by reducing hours across all libraries, thereby retaining all libraries as council run (statutory).

This option was suggested predominantly by residents living in areas of the county where a community library is proposed. Lechlade Town Council, with agreement from Fairford Town Council, suggested that a statutory library could be retained in Lechlade by transferring some hours from Fairford Library. There was also some initial support for a "salami slice" or "sharing pain across the board" approach in the deliberative workshops. It was suggested that opening hours could be supplemented by volunteers. Some respondents pointed out that this approach had been taken by other councils as a way of maintaining all libraries under statutory provision with professional staff.

However, this approach would require a significant cut in library opening hours if applied across the county, estimated to be around 38% of total opening hours to achieve the same level of savings. It is felt that this could lead to a slow degradation of the service as a whole and would impede the implementation of the Vision for libraries already outlined in section 7 of this report. The size of the network as outlined in the draft strategy is one which the council can support and grow in order to meet the council's vision. Limiting the number of hours available across all libraries would restrict opportunity for libraries to act as a "one stop shop" for public services. Reducing hours across all libraries would impact on a greater number of people with a higher number of net losers, including those from "protected groups" under the Equality Act and those living in areas of deprivation. It is unlikely that all areas of the county would be able to attract support from volunteers to make up the reduction in hours. This approach also mitigates against community involvement and the opportunity for local communities to offer services which meet the needs of local residents. This option also has financial implications in that a greater proportion of the library service budget would be spent on overheads such as maintaining buildings rather than on the front line. The opportunity to channel investment into key areas would be reduced.

For the reasons outlined above, this alternative suggestion is not supported.

b.   The council should place greater emphasis on providing council-run (statutory) libraries in areas of deprivation.

There was a strong response from the consultation that libraries should support vulnerable people, particularly those living in areas of deprivation. Deprivation was taken into account in the draft strategy. Library access to support the needs of people living in the top 20% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country was included as one of the four key criteria used to determine the proposed library network. The application of this criterion led to the inclusion of libraries in Hester's Way, Tuffley and Matson within the council's statutory provision. Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury libraries service other areas of deprivation in the top 20%.

If the criterion was extended to include the top 30% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, Brockworth library would be retained as a council-run library, since according to the indices of multiple deprivation, Brockworth is in the top 30% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Indices for some aspects of deprivation, for example housing and health outcomes, prevent Brockworth from ranking in the top 20% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Changing the deprivation criterion would result in resources being spread more thinly, thereby potentially adversely affecting areas across the county with higher levels of deprivation.

Steps to mitigate any adverse effects on users of Brockworth library as a result of the proposal are set out in the Equality and Community Impact assessment.

The suggestion that a higher deprivation factor is adopted is not supported.

c.   The council should continue to run all libraries by changing the proposed "Community Libraries" into council- run (Partnership) libraries with reduced hours.

This was suggested by the majority of areas for which a Community Library was proposed. The main reason was that professional staffing could continue and be supplemented by volunteers. Costings show that there is a cost differential of around £300,000 per year between proposals for community libraries and partnership libraries.

This proposal shares many of the disadvantages already referred to in part (a) above. The council would continue to have statutory responsibility for an additional seven libraries and consequently an increased share of the total budget would be needed to cover costs for staff, stock, strategic oversight and buildings. Spreading the service more thinly mitigates against achieving the Vision for libraries outlined in the draft strategy. This proposal would also restrict community groups from being able to introduce additional uses for the library buildings with potential loss of opportunity to enhance "active communities". Cumulatively, savings are significant - over five years £1.5million would be saved.

The consultation highlighted that respondents were very satisfied with the service they receive from library staff. The Council will make available professional support and training for volunteers at community-run libraries. Front line staff are not professionally qualified librarians themselves but do receive training.

Therefore this proposal is not supported.

d. The council should provide greater support for community libraries.

Comments from self selecting respondents to the consultation express concerns that running libraries is a professional task and communities should not be expected to do this without support. There was some concern that the council should not simply "cast communities to their own devices".

The council is already proposing to allow the community to purchase the library building or to take over the lease on a peppercorn rent and to provide furniture and the start-up book collection. The council will also provide and support the library management system for issuing books and provide and support the People's Network PCs so that users of community run libraries can access the internet and the Virtual Library. Services will be provided to deliver and collect books reserved from other libraries and the council will liaise with book suppliers to obtain discounts. Staffing from the council's library staff will also be provided to each community library for up to three hours a week for training and support. If a community group feels that it can no longer continue to run the library, the council will endeavour to find a new group to take over. Cabinet members will be informed if this occurs.

An annual grant of £10,000 is available for each community library so that each community can decide whether to purchase stock, professional support and advice or other costs.

The council could allow a transition period of six months during which the library would continue to operate as a council-run library. This would enable community groups to build capacity and train and would also provide opportunity to learn about practicalities from the Painswick Community Library experience. This would however delay savings

to the library budget by six months and could cause frustration for some community groups who are keen to get started.

e. Alternative suggestions for library venues and for distribution of library opening hours across the week.

Some areas have suggested alternative venues for the library, for example the Oasis building in Hester's Way. Other local areas have requested library opening on specific days of the week, for example Sunday opening in Bishop's Cleeve.

The consultation has not focused on these issues which will be subject to further consultation in the relevant local areas once the decision has been taken about the library strategy.

Recommendation Three:

Cabinet is recommended to agree the provision of the static library network as outlined above and listed below:

Statutory provision:

> **9 council-run Main Libraries:** Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Dursley, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Coleford, Newent and Stow

> **22 council-run Local Libraries:** Lydney, Tetbury, Fairford, Chipping Campden, Winchcombe, Bishop's Cleeve, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Up Hatherley, Charlton Kings, Cinderford, Hester's Way, Matson, Tuffley, Prestbury, Churchdown, Stonehouse, Nailsworth, Wotton-under-Edge, Moreton-in-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Water

Non statutory provision:

> **7 community-run libraries:** Berkeley, Brockworth, Bream, Minchinhampton, Lechlade, Mitcheldean and Newnham

Recommendation Four :

Cabinet is recommended to agree:

a. **the core opening hours for each local library as proposed in the draft strategy and outlined in Appendix 7**

b. **consultation about the allocation of opening hours across the week in each local community (It should be noted that consultation about opening hours at Main libraries is not being undertaken as these opening hours are not changing and consultation with communities about their allocation was undertaken in the summer of 2011).**

c. **Feasibility studies and consultation in local areas where alternative locations for libraries have been suggested**

Recommendation Five:

Cabinet is recommended to agree to a six month transition period during which community libraries will operate as council-run libraries to facilitate the smooth transition to community-run libraries

9.5 The Mobile Library Service

The draft strategy set out a proposal to cease the current mobile library service and to consider the provision of a public sector mobile vehicle to provide a mobile library service alongside access to other services. Currently three community mobiles provide routes across the county with stops between 10 minutes and an hour and a half, mainly in rural areas but also in town suburbs. The Homelink vehicle visits residential homes and sheltered housing on a seven week rota. The Share a Book Mobile is used by Library Services for Education to provide loans to schools and other educational settings and by the public library service to visit playgroups and nurseries and to provide outreach activity during summer holidays. The cost of the mobile service is relatively high. For example, the cost per visit of the three community mobiles is £8.90 compared to the average cost of £1.87 for county library provision.

During the consultation people were asked for their views on a public sector mobile which would provide access to wider services in addition to a library service. This received support from a large majority of respondents. The group most likely to disagree were rural residents, disabled people and women but these responses were relatively small compared to the level of agreement. Although there is relatively low use of the mobile libraries, this service provides support for older and disabled people and to young children. It is important that the council considers the needs of these users and access in rural areas as well as ensuring that the service is more cost effective and efficient.

Therefore it is proposed that the council has two mobile library services:

a.   A Public Sector Mobile Service

This would include a mobile library book loan service and PCs with internet access to support those living in rural areas to access a wider range of services of strategic partners such as health or the police. The mobile would visit up to 50 communities in rural areas over a three week rota and provide stops of a minimum of one and a half hours and up to half a day in busier locations. The stops would be matched to meet the needs of partner services, where there are larger numbers of existing mobile library users and in some cases these could be near to residential homes or other community facilities. This service has the potential to improve equality of access in rural areas to electronic information services and a range of library and other public services

b.   Share a Book Mobile Service

This mobile will continue to be used by Library Services for Education. In addition, it is proposed that for two days each week and in school holidays the vehicle will provide a portable library mainly in rural areas of the county and in areas of deprivation. It would serve children focusing on the early years and primary school age range and visiting

locations such as nurseries, schools, children's centres, traveller sites and play schemes. The public service mobile would also stock books for children.

The cost of the reconfigured mobile library service is estimated to be around £80,000 a year.

Recommendation Six:

Cabinet is recommended to approve the replacement of the existing mobile library service by a Public Sector Mobile library service and extended use of the Share a Book Mobile library service for children

10. Overall conclusion

It is important that Cabinet members are assured that each of the key considerations arising from the consultation have all been addressed and that equality issues have also been properly considered so that the council can meet its statutory duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

Key considerations arising from the consultation

a. *Does the proposed strategy offer adequate measures to ensure that the professionalism of library services will be maintained in proposed community libraries?*

Section 9.4 of this report includes the full list of support the council will provide for community libraries which will include 3 hours of advice and support a week from council library staff. Currently front line customer service staff who work in libraries are not themselves professionally trained librarians although they are trained and managed by professional library staff. Training for all volunteers who work in libraries will be carried out by library professionals. Further discussion will take place with community groups about the support which they need. Community groups could choose to use some of their annual £10,000 grant on purchasing additional professional support. Therefore the council considers that it is putting adequate measures in place to support the professionalism of service in community-run libraries.

b. *How will the council address the disproportionate impacts on older women and those living in rural areas (in relation to mobiles), and older people generally, who are twice as likely to expect negative impacts as a result of the implementation of the strategy compared with the public as a whole?*

The duty to have due regard to the statutory needs under section 149 of the Equality Act has already been highlighted in section 3 of this report. The Equality and Community Impact Assessment provides a detailed analysis of the potential impact of the new strategy and the action which will be taken in mitigation. In section 8 of this report, it is recognised that there are some groups on whom there may be more significant impact.

As discussed in section 8, the greatest impact is likely to be on older people, especially those over 75, particularly those with mobility difficulties, on children and young people,

particularly those living families without access to a car living in rural areas, people with disabilities and on women.

In the Equality and Community Impact Assessment the council sets out the measures which will be taken in mitigation. These are also outlined in section 8 of this report. They include the provision of the Public Sector mobile library service and the Share a Book mobile service for children, partnership with the WRVS, the extension of library clubs, flexible community transport arrangements, tailored library visit travel passes and the further development of the digital library service.

The council considers that these initiatives will mitigate the differential impact of the new strategy on those who will be most affected by the changes to the library service.

c. *The top priority identified by the public in determining how resources should be allocated was ensuring that vulnerable groups, deprived communities and those living in remote areas can still access libraries. With this in mind, does the proposed strategy allocate resources in a way that mitigates these concerns?*

As discussed in section 9.4 above, when determining the draft criteria for the provision of the static library network the council decided to include a factor on deprivation. The council chose to use the national indices of multiple deprivation and adopt a criteria providing access to a library for those living within neighbourhoods which are in the top 20% of the most deprived in the country. For this reason council run libraries were proposed for Hester's Way, Tuffley and Matson. Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury libraries serve others areas of deprivation in the top 20%.

Consideration has been given to extending the criteria to the top 30% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. The reasons for and against this are outlined in section 9.4 of this report. The fact that an extension of the deprivation factor would result in resources spread more thinly, thereby potentially affecting the areas of the county with higher levels of deprivation was considered to be a key factor in deciding to set the criteria at 20%.

Access to the library service in remote areas was an important consideration in determining the proposal for the Mobile Library Service which is outlined in section 9.5 of this report. The Equality and Community Impact Assessment sets out further actions which will be taken to mitigate the impact of the strategy on people living in remote areas. These include flexible community transport arrangements, tailored library visit travel passes, further development of the digital library service as well as the Public Sector mobile library service and the Share a Book Mobile for children.

The council considers that the needs of vulnerable groups, deprived communities and those living in remote areas have been taken into consideration in the allocation of resources.

d. *Those taking part in the consultation have indicated that while they do accept the case for a reduction in mobile library services and making changes to how they are run, they wish to see a service continue.*

Section 9.5 of this report outlines the council's proposal to maintain a mobile library service through a Public Sector Mobile and extending the use of the Share a Book Mobile for children. The new Public Sector mobile service will visit up to 50 communities in rural areas over a three week rota and provide stops of a minimum of one and a half hours and up to half a day in busier locations. The new service will enhance opportunity to access digital technology as well as providing access to other public services. The Share a Book mobile will support early years and primary aged children particularly those living in rural areas and areas of deprivation.

The council is therefore proposing the continuation of a mobile library service.

e. *A clear message expressed through the consultation was that in considering 'access' to library services, the council should take into account availability of transport and parking issues.*

The council has taken transport and parking issues into account. Access was an important factor taken into account when determining the criteria on which the static library network should be based. The criteria included access to libraries in rural areas. The Context and User Needs Assessment provides information on transport and parking for each library catchment. Section 7 of this report refers to some specific areas of the county where transport issues have been raised during the consultation, for example Minchinhampton, and outlines the response which the council has made. The Equality and Community Impact Assessment outlines measures which the council will take to mitigate the impact on those most adversely affected by the new strategy. These mitigations include flexible community transport arrangements and tailored library visit travel passes.

For these reasons, the council considers that the availability of transport and parking issues have been taken into account.

f. *Given that some respondents felt that they were unable to fully assess the impact that proposed changes to library services would have on them due to a perceived lack of information about future library opening times (NB 13.7% of respondents did not complete this question), further consideration needs to be given to how the public can have more of a say about this (ie. through further consultation at individual libraries where changes to opening hours are planned).*

As outlined in recommendation four, consultation about the allocation of opening hours across the week will take place in each local community, although it should be noted that consultation about opening hours at Main libraries will not be undertaken as these opening hours are not changing and consultation with communities about their allocation was undertaken in the summer of 2011.

g. *While the proposed changes raised concerns associated with a number of different libraries, there was particular opposition to the proposals for Minchinhampton Library, Lechlade Library and Brockworth Library. Therefore consideration needs to be given to the specific concerns raised by these communities.*

The specific concerns raised by these communities have been discussed in detail in section 7 of this report. Reference has also been made to these areas in the Equality and Community Impact Assessment, particularly in relation to Minchinhampton since the council recognises that the strategy will have a greater impact on Minchinhampton because of the high proportion of older people living in that area. However, the council considers that sufficient measures are in place to mitigate the impact.

> h. *The consultation also took a number of steps to ensure that the views of people belonging to vulnerable and protected groups were heard. This resulted in the identification of some specific concerns about the potential impact of the library strategy on them and their peers. Adequate steps need to be taken to address the points raised.*

The council recognises that there are some groups on whom there may be more significant impact. As discussed above, the greatest impact is likely to be on older people, especially those over 75, particularly those with mobility difficulties, on children and young people, particularly those living families without access to a car living in rural areas, people with disabilities and on women. Strategies suggested by those attending the deliberative workshops have been helpful in identifying mitigating actions. These have contributed to ensuring that the Equality and Community Impact Assessment is a robust analysis which will enable cabinet members to have due regard to the statutory equality needs when making their decision on the final library strategy.

Officers consider that the negative impacts have been mitigated to the maximum extent possible and that the number of people in protected groups who will suffer a negative effect thereafter is very small. The council remains under very significant financial restraints thus it is considered reasonable to continue with the proposed strategy.

11. Resources Implications

The initial November 2012 *Meeting the Challenge* savings target for library services was set at £2.6 million. This was later reduced to £2 million in February 2011. Savings of £1 million per year have already been achieved in the library service through the council wide initiative to reduce management costs and cut back office processes. It was estimated that the draft library strategy would save in the region of a further £0.8 million. This budget change would equate to a 25.7% reduction from 2010/11 t0 2012/13.

The estimated £0.8 million savings from the Library Strategy will comprise of:
- £300,000 from reduced opening hours;
- £200, 000 from reconfigured mobile library service;
- £300,000 from community libraries.

It is recommended that there is a six month transition period before implementation of community libraries. This leaves a £150,000 shortfall in 2012/13 which will be funded from the Transformation Reserve.

The mobile library service proposed in this report will require additional revenue investment of £40,000 a year which will be met in 2012/13 from the Transformation Reserve. It is anticipated that this amount will reduce as partners contribute to the cost of the Public Sector Mobile service and will be reviewed as part of the 2013/14 budget process. The capital cost of the new Public Sector Mobile will be off set by the sale of existing vehicles.

Recommendation Seven

Cabinet is recommended to agree that the document "Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire" is amended according to the recommendations outlined in this report and is approved as the final library strategy for Gloucestershire.

12. Options

a.   To approve the new library strategy and the recommendations as set out in this report;

b.   To amend some or all of the recommendations.

13. Summary of the Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to approve:

1.   The Vision and Outcomes for the new Library Strategy;

2.   The development of the Virtual Library Service;

3.   The provision of the static library network as outlined above and listed below:

Statutory provision:

9 council-run Main Libraries: Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Dursley, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Coleford, Newent and Stow

22 council-run Local Libraries: Lydney, Tetbury, Fairford, Chipping Campden, Winchcombe, Bishop's Cleeve, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Up Hatherley, Charlton Kings, Cinderford, Hester's Way, Matson, Tuffley, Prestbury, Churchdown, Stonehouse, Nailsworth, Wotton-under-Edge, Moreton-in-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Water

Non statutory provision:

7 community-run libraries: Berkeley, Brockworth, Bream, Minchinhampton, Lechlade, Mitcheldean and Newnham

4.   a. The core opening hours for each local library as proposed in the draft strategy and outlined in Appendix 7

     b. Consultation about the allocation of opening hours across the week in each local community (It should be noted that consultation about opening hours at Main libraries is not being undertaken as these opening hours are not changing

and consultation with communities about their allocation was undertaken in the summer of 2011).

    c. Feasibility studies and consultation in local areas where alternative locations for libraries have been suggested

5.   A Six month transition period during which community libraries will operate as council-run libraries to facilitate the smooth transition to community run libraries.

6.   The replacement of the existing mobile library service by a Public Sector Mobile library service and extended use of the Share a Book Mobile for children.

7.   That the document "Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire" is amended according to the recommendations outlined in this report and that this is approved as the final library strategy for Gloucestershire.

14. Implementation

The agreed strategy will be implemented by the library service in a staged manner, giving sufficient notice to library users of any changes.

15. Risk Assessment

Uncertainty about the future of library services in Gloucestershire will remain if the council does not reach a final decision on the library strategy. The council's libraries may be unsupportable from the budget available and not fit for purpose in the twenty first century if changes are not made.

16. Performance Management/follow up

The Operations Director for Education, Learning and Libraries and the Head of Library Services will oversee the implementation of the new strategy.

The Equality and Community Impact Assessment will be reviewed annually to ensure that mitigating actions are effective.

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Report Title	Approval of a new library strategy for Gloucestershire
Statutory Authority	Section 7 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
Relevant County Council policy	Meeting the Challenge
Resource Implications	As outlined in the report
Sustainability checklist:	
Partnerships	Current partnerships will continue. New partnership arrangements are likely to be developed for sharing premises
Decision Making and Involvement	Decision makers will take into consideration feedback from the wide range of stakeholders involved in the consultation, particularly those representing groups with protected characteristics
Economy and Employment	There will be a reconfiguration which will have implication for temporary posts
Caring for people	The needs of vulnerable people and those with protected characteristics have been taken into account in drafting the strategy and identifying mitigating actions
Built Environment	Opportunities for Community Asset transfer
Natural Environment' including Ecology (Biodiversity)	
Education and Information	Library provision and the development of the virtual library supports access to information and informal learning
Tackling Climate Change	Carbon Emissions Implications? Neutral Vulnerable to climate change? No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Has an EIA been completed? Yes Was a differential impact identified? Yes Yes – copy of impact assessment attached.
Human rights Implications	Human rights implications are closely allied with public sector equality duty and will be considered in that context
Consultation Arrangements	Further consultation will be carried out in local areas to determine the allocation of opening hours across the week in individual libraries. There will also be further consultation in areas where alternative locations have been proposed.