



REPORT TITLE: Library Strategy 2023-2028

Cabinet Date	23 rd November 2022
Cabinet Member	Cllr Dave Norman MBE, Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	To approve the new Library Strategy 2023-2028 for recommendation to County Council.
Recommendations	That Cabinet recommends that the Council adopt the Library Strategy 2023-2028 as part of the Council's Policy Framework
Reasons for Recommendations	The current Library Strategy was formally adopted in 2012 and is outdated. The new Library Strategy 2023-2028 outlines the vision and aims for Gloucestershire's modern library service. Views of Gloucestershire residents were sought between 4 th July and 23 rd September 2022 and have been incorporated into the strategy which is now presented.
Resource Implications	The future strategy will be delivered within the libraries base budget identified through the Council's MTFS for 2022/23 – 2025/26.
Background Documents	Decision - Decision on the future Library Strategy for Gloucestershire Decision - To seek approval to go out to public consultation on the proposed draft library strategy (gloucestershire.gov.uk) Results of Public Consultation (Appendix 1)
Statutory Authority	Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964
Divisional Councillor(s)	All
Officer	Name: Jane Everiss, Head of Library & Registration Services Tel. no: 01452 425027 Email: jane.everiss@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public consultation – 4th July – 23rd September 2022• Report returning to Cabinet meeting – 23rd November 2022• Finalised library strategy recommended for adoption at Full Council meeting 15th February 2023• Implementation from 1st April 2023

Background

1. Under the provisions of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (PLMA), the Council, as a library authority, has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons wishing to make use of it.
2. 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.
3. On 5th April 2012, Cabinet approved the current library strategy “*Developing a new strategy for library services in Gloucestershire*”. This strategy has been in place since that time and no longer represents the future vision and ambition for libraries within Gloucestershire.
4. The new library strategy outlines the direction and ambitions for Gloucestershire Library service and represents a far more up to date vision for the library services it provides to Gloucestershire residents, students, and workers.
5. The new strategy incorporates the following:
 - A new vision for Gloucestershire Library Services
 - The current provision of library and wider services
 - The aims and ambitions of the library service between 2023 and 2028
 - A clear outline of the service’s core offer

A 12-week public consultation was undertaken between 4th July and 23rd September 2022, which enabled residents, students, and workers in Gloucestershire to respond to the draft strategy. Feedback from the consultation was considered and has been incorporated within the strategy which is now presented.

Outcome of Public Consultation

6. The results of the public consultation are included within the report at Appendix 1. High level results indicate:
7. The public consultation survey received 277 responses. Of those 277 responses 94.9% of people were satisfied or very satisfied with their library service. 4.7% were not satisfied with 0.4% being not at all satisfied.
8. 76.9% of respondents stated that they knew more about what the library service has to offer after reading the Strategy.
9. 69.6% of respondents rated their overall opinion of the strategy as good with 19.2% rating it as excellent. 10% felt the strategy was poor with 1.3% feeling it was very poor.
10. 77% of respondents felt the strategy was easy to understand, 76% that the case studies were relevant and 75% that the core offer demonstrates what they can expect from the library service.

11. When asked if the ambitions within the 5 C's were relevant, people agreed or strongly agreed they were relevant as below:

- Core - 204 people responded positively
- Climate - 203 people responded positively
- Community – 203 responded positively
- Connect – 201 responded positively
- Creativity – 200 responded positively

12. We received a number of comments that expressed concern that libraries would be closed, or funding removed. The majority of comments, however, were in support of the service that libraries currently offer. Some feedback was received that outlined elements respondents would like to see included in the Strategy – the following has therefore been included within the updated Strategy:

- Core – Provision of access to Local Studies collections within libraries.
- Core – To support Home Educators through provision of resources and spaces.
- Core : ambition – Work with Schools to support class visits to local libraries to promote reading for pleasure to children.
- Core : ambition – To strengthen support and accessibility to reading for reluctant readers and those in local communities whose first language is not English.
- Connect : ambition – To expand the provision of meeting spaces within libraries.

13. The Strategy has also been updated following the formal decisions taken to re-locate the libraries in Stroud & Gloucester. The sections under Community now include reference to these two projects.

14. The remainder of the changes were minor grammatical changes and a swap of the case studies in Core & Community.

Options

15. Not to approve the new Library Strategy – this option is rejected as it is considered that the previous strategy is out of date and does not support the delivery of Gloucestershire's modern library service. In addition, the new strategy incorporates feedback from members of the public.

16. Approve the new Library Strategy for recommendation to County Council – this option is recommended. Results from the public consultation survey show support for the new Library Strategy with 19.2% of respondents rating the strategy as excellent and 69.6% as good.

Risks

17. Concerns were raised within the consultation about risks to library budgets leading to reduced stock, library closures or reduction of services. There is a risk that financial reductions in budget may mean that some areas of the Library Strategy beyond the Core service might not be able to be delivered.

Financial implications

18. The future strategy will be delivered within the libraries base budget identified through the Council's MTFs for 2022/23 – 2025/26.

Climate change implications

19. The Library Strategy recognises the importance of climate change and sustainability. It includes a section which details the steps the library service has taken to date to address the climate emergency.

20. In summary these actions include:

- Stock collections and initiatives related to sustainable living and the environment
- Tree and wildlife planting in library garden areas
- Engaging communities in activities, events and conversations that address the climate change crisis to promote and affect change
- Delivering initiatives that encourage and promote swaps, re-use and repair.
- Choosing suppliers and partners who demonstrate environmental integrity and sustainable work practices.

21. The new Library Strategy also outlines the library service's ambitions for the next 5 years some of which include:

- Challenging and adapting our behaviours in respect of climate and sustainability
- Exploring more sustainable travel options for people wishing to visit libraries
- Exploring the provision of free water refill and local recycling points
- Reviewing our van deliveries to reduce our carbon footprint
- Partnering with local community groups to enhance & expand the use of our outdoor spaces – creating community gardens to support healthy living.

22. 203 people who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that our climate ambitions were relevant.

Equality implications

23. Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? Yes

Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment in order to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

24. The Library Strategy consultation received 277 responses. Of those who responded 20.4% stated they had a disability, long-term illness or health condition. 36.7% of survey respondents were over 65 and 67% of respondents were female. 86.9% of respondents were White: British/Irish/European with 47.3% stating they were Christian, followed by 33.8% who stated they had no religion.

25. Whilst the responses received were a small number, the above statistics appear to indicate that those responding to the survey aligned with the average Gloucestershire

population in terms of protected characteristics, with the exception of those declaring a disability, long-term illness or health condition where a slightly higher percentage engaged.

26. The Library Strategy outlines ambitions to increase the equality, diversity and inclusivity of the library workforce, its range of stock and its activities. The library service will reach out to community partners to engage and consult with diverse groups to help shape the library services in those local areas with the aim of increasing access.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

27. The Library Management System which manages library customers' use holds personal information. The current system has been in place since April 2020 and a DPIA is being undertaken to ensure any risk to library user's personal data is documented and minimised.

Social value implications

28. Libraries offer many social value benefits. The service actively encourages volunteers, work experience and DofE experience. These volunteers assist with providing services ranging from home delivery to those who are housebound to supporting people to use ICT and access the internet. Young people can gain confidence and some work experience by volunteering alongside experienced staff, whilst with older people volunteering can reduce social isolation.
29. Free activities offered by libraries are aimed at helping older people to live within their own homes, reducing social isolation, supporting carers of people with dementia and activities aimed at supporting maternal mental health and children's literacy and development. The libraries offer Books on Prescription which are prescribed by GPs to help with medical and mental health issues.
30. The library innovation labs provide dedicated support to build skills and confidence. This extends to businesses supporting with volunteers to help give back to the community and workshops specifically aimed at communities who might not otherwise have access to the specialist technical kit. These workshops help spark young people's interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering & mathematics), supports with training, skills and confidence in digital technology and supports economic recovery for start-ups and small businesses.

Officer recommendations

31. That Cabinet recommends that the Council adopt the Library Strategy 2023-2028 as part of the Council's Policy Framework

Performance management/follow-up

32. The Library Strategy will be reviewed on a yearly basis and a report produced to demonstrate how the service has performed against the ambitions outlined in the Strategy document.

Case studies will also be updated to ensure that the Strategy remains current.