OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Report subject	**BCP Council Libraries – Draft Library Strategy**
Meeting date	29 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report updates Cabinet on the progress which has been made with the future library strategy following two previous reports in February and December 2024.
	The report sets out the key drivers for the library strategy, detailing the suggested future focus of the library service, the priorities for investment, and the action plan required to ensure we can continue to deliver an efficient and comprehensive service for the future.
	The work to underpin the strategy has given us a clearer understanding of where to target investment to bring improvements for our communities, increasing access, and modelling provision within clusters.
	The vision is an ambitious one, focussed on delivering improvements and cementing the value of libraries within our communities.
	Whilst there is undoubtedly a resource challenge, as there is in delivering all council services, the strategy remains an ambitious statement of intent. Working with partners, the community, and internal teams, we will develop our preparedness for funding opportunities and focus on greater collaboration to ensure libraries deliver in a time of financial stress and even greater societal challenge.
	It is anticipated that following endorsement of the draft Library Strategy, any changes of provision to be proposed within the life of the strategy will undergo a second stage consultation process, as appropriate.
Recommendations	**It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet** (A) Endorse the draft Library Strategy as an ambitious plan to ensure our libraries remain at the heart of our communities and open to all. (B) Supports the implementation of Open Access technology in 4 libraries to aid the ability for them to be in use when otherwise they would be closed.

	(C) Support the clustering of libraries within 4 geographical areas.
	(D) Endorse the approach to work up plans for the remodelling of Hamworthy, Rossmore, Southbourne and Charminster libraries as community hubs to enable wider use and understand the options for Winton Library.
	(E) Endorse the development of options appraisals in relation to Creekmoor and Parkstone libraries, in time, as required.
	(F) Support the continued creation of Friends' Groups and volunteer roles in supporting the library offer.
	(G) Endorse the high-level action plan which will be developed to support strategy delivery.
	(H) Support consultation needs on a project-by-project basis over the life of the strategy.
	(I) Delegate authority to the Director of Customer and Property in conjunction with the Portfolio Holders for Culture and Communities, in relation to decisions arising from the strategy and action plan
	(J) Recognise the key role that arts, culture, creative health and public health can play in the future flourishing of our libraries and support ongoing work with Arts Council England to explore NPO status over the lifetime of the Strategy.
Reason for recommendations	The purpose of this report is to present the draft BCP Library Strategy.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Andy Martin, Portfolio Holder Culture, Communications and Customer
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operating Officer
Report Authors	Matti Raudsepp, Director for Customer & Property
	Lynda Anderson, Head of Customer & Libraries
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. On 7 February 2024, Cabinet approved a process to inform BCP's first Library Strategy which aims to create a sustainable future for the service.

2. Public consultation commenced on 7 May 2024, to gain views of the community. Five separate surveys were made available seeking the views of Adults; Children aged from birth to school year 4; and Young People aged between school year 5 and 13. In addition, we surveyed the users of the Home Library Service and created an Easy Read questionnaire for those with learning disabilities.

3. The Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture also sought the views of the main Political Groups representing the BCP area.

4. The results of these consultations together with a comprehensive needs analysis for the BCP area were presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2024.

5. An agreement was made to return to Cabinet following further deeper analysis, to present the draft of the new library strategy for BCP Council.

Core Purpose of libraries

6. Those who responded to the consultation recognise the importance of libraries for the community regardless of whether they use them personally.

7. Our elected members of all political groups have talked passionately about the value of libraries and the need to retain library services recognising them as vibrant places where people can borrow resources, access information, take part in an activity or event, meet and interact with other people or simply feel safe and warm.

Priorities of our Libraries

8. The draft library strategy sets out 3 primary objectives which underpin the core service priorities of the library service. Having a clear purpose helps us to be clear about where our resources should be targeted.

9. These are as follows:

   - **Promote literacy, reading and study**
     - Promoting reading for pleasure

- Supporting children to become excited about reading to develop imagination, vocabulary and learning
- Supporting literacy for all
- Developing/identifying dedicated spaces for study

- **Providing access to technology and digital learning to support communities in their everyday lives.**
  - Enable communities to access information and digital services
  - Enable communities to develop new skills to manage online

- **Enable the support of healthy and creative communities**
  - Enable access and create opportunities for the community to participate in a variety of events and activities including arts and cultural experiences
  - Enable creative skills development and enabling talent to flourish
  - Enable and support opportunities for children and adults to connect with others, reducing health, social, economic inequality

10. Many of these objectives are already embedded within the service and will continue to be supported using the service budget.

11. Libraries are integral community spaces that are open to all and provide a host of valuable services to the BCP community.

12. However, the key to delivering these objectives will be to create stronger partnerships with internal departments, outside organisations and community groups to support development and bring capacity in specific areas.

BCP's Cultural Development Team

13. Libraries provide an incredibly useful network through which BCP Council can deliver or facilitate a wide range of arts, culture and heritage activities, reaching a broad spectrum of the population and engaging a wide and diverse audience.

14. The Council's Cultural Development Team work to ensure delivery of the Cultural Strategy across the conurbation and act as connectors between the existing cultural organisations and the audiences in BCP.

15. The Cultural Development Team can facilitate cultural activity across the Library Service, ensuring quality cultural experiences and opportunities reach residents and visitors who might not be able to access them through other means.

Public Health

16. Libraries play a significant role in promoting public health and wellbeing, offering resources and support that contribute to healthier communities and reducing inequalities.

- **Reduced Loneliness**: Libraries provide community spaces where people can connect, participate in activities, and feel a sense of belonging, crucial for mental wellbeing.

- **Improved Mental Health**: Libraries offer a safe and supportive environment that helps alleviate stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

- **Increased Health Literacy**: Accessing reliable health information empowers individuals to make informed health and wellbeing decisions.
- **Support for Self-Management**: resources, support groups, information and signposting that help individuals manage their health conditions.
- **Community Hubs and Social Connection**: Libraries host events, workshops, and activities that foster social connections and bring people together.

17. Promoting better health outcomes, libraries help reduce the burden on care systems and save money.

18. The strategy will encourage greater use of public health colleagues to use the library network to expand all these opportunities.

19. Together with colleagues in Skills and Learning, Communities and Public Health and the Events team, we aim to do more for the community through joined up working, contributing to our libraries operating as bustling places.

Key elements of the draft strategy

20. In addition to the above 3 service priorities, the underlying aim of the library strategy is to sustain and modernise the library offer to ensure we continue to deliver comprehensive and efficient library services for future generations.

21. By far the biggest challenge in this is managing the costs of our buildings. There is a known immediate investment need of £1.8m in repair and maintenance issues across the library estate. (Appendix 1).

22. This figure represents what is known to our surveying teams and is the bare minimum required to rectify current high priority building related issues. Failure to address these will lead to further deterioration and may lead to the necessary closure of sites, until repairs funding can be sourced.

23. Existing revenue budgets within the service or in Facilities Management are not sufficient to tackle the issue without additional investment.

24. Libraries were not prioritised for CIL funding allocation in the last review although historically, there has been some success in accessing Neighbourhood CIL funding via ward Councilors.

25. Going forwards, being in a state of readiness to bid for and secure external funding will be paramount in delivering the library strategy, unless internal options come forward in future years.

Model of delivery

26. In developing the draft strategy, we have considered with Cabinet members the options for managing costs and other pressures within the revenue budget to achieve continuous improvement.

27. We are keen to retain in-house delivery of our library services and have not pursued options to outsource library delivery or pursue community led libraries. We do, however, recognise that libraries deliver more with community involvement and we need to enable more opportunities for interested groups to participate.

Usage of our libraries

28. Library usage data and responses to the consultation has given us good information and a better understanding of how the public use our library service.

29. Appendix 2, details the following information at branch level for the year 2024/5:

- Number of visitors
- Number of items issued/loaned
- Catchment area in terms of number of wards users come from
- Number of active users
- Average number of active borrowers per month
- % of users who only use the named library
- % of users who have used an alternative library in addition to the named library

30. Using the different indicators, we have been able to group library branches in relation to their use.

31. The Town Centre libraries are most used, and Springbourne, West Howe and Ensbury Park, the least used. Opening hours will impact this.

32. Canford Cliffs, Creekmoor, Ensbury Park, Hamworthy, Springbourne and West Howe all attract users from one ward area only, as opposed to Broadstone, Charminster, Tuckton, and the 3 Town Centre libraries which attract users from 4 or 5 wards.

33. Poole libraries, except for Rossmore, Broadstone and Poole, are all concentrated in the lower half of the usage table attracting very localised use.

34. The information around the number of users who only use 1 library instead of visiting multiple libraries is also included in the Appendix, to help us understand user habits.

Current opening hours and accessibility of our libraries

35. Currently libraries are not distributed neatly across the conurbation. We have what we have inherited from the legacy authorities.

36. Libraries are grouped into bands which determine opening hours, staff numbers and what can be offered, which is also dependent on the space available.

37. The map below shows the location of our libraries, their current band and where those responding to our consultation told us they visit in addition to their main library.

Current banding with patterns of use
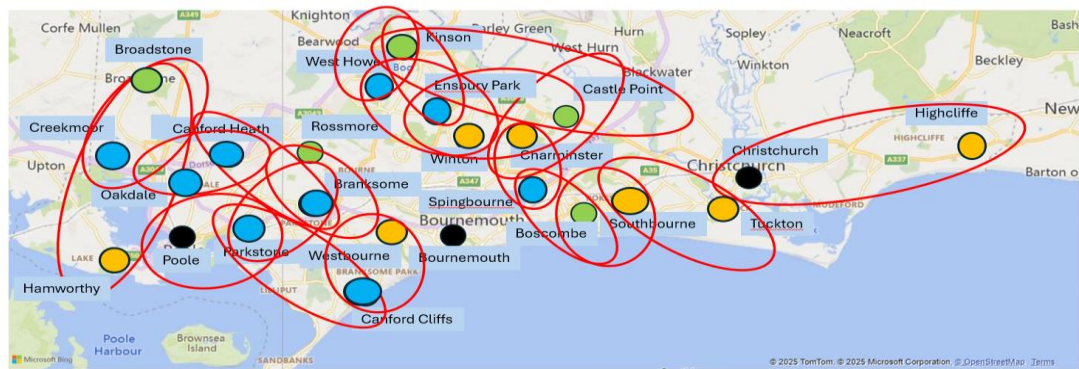
Band 4 Band 3 Band 2 Band 1   Where users said they visited in our surveys

38. The banding was agreed some years ago, and over time there has been some change in use. If we examine current usage Charminster is attracting users in similar quantities to band 2 users, despite being a current band 3, and Boscombe is attracting users in numbers equivalent to band 3 libraries as opposed to its current band 2.

39. Highcliffe and Hamworthy are attracting users in numbers like band 4 libraries, despite being open as band 3 libraries. However, both Highcliffe and Hamworthy have a higher concentration of users who only access this library, according to the consultation results, and therefore they have more local geographical importance.

40. Kinson is operating as a Band 1 library as it is a Customer Hub for BCP Homes, although the current opening hours are not as high as the libraries in the 3 Towns.

41. If we adjust the map to uplift Charminster to a band 2 library, reduce Boscombe to a band 3 library, and show Kinson as a band 1 library, the map looks as follows:

Banding adjusted for current usage with patterns of use
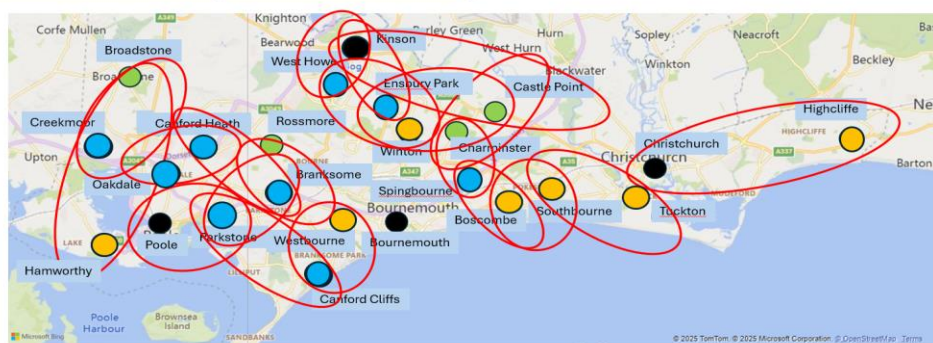
Band 4 Band 3 Band 2 Band 1   Where users said they visited in our surveys

Kinson becomes band 1 (Customer Hub)
Charminster becomes band 2 (usage and space to grow the offer)
Boscombe becomes band 3 (usage and lack of space to grow the offer)

42. Looking at the mapped usage habits of those who responded to our surveys, it is possible to define 4 clusters based on how our libraries are used across the conurbation.

43. Each cluster is made up of 6 libraries.

4 potential clusters – across which to organise opening hours

Band 4 ● Band 3 ● Band 2 ● Band 1
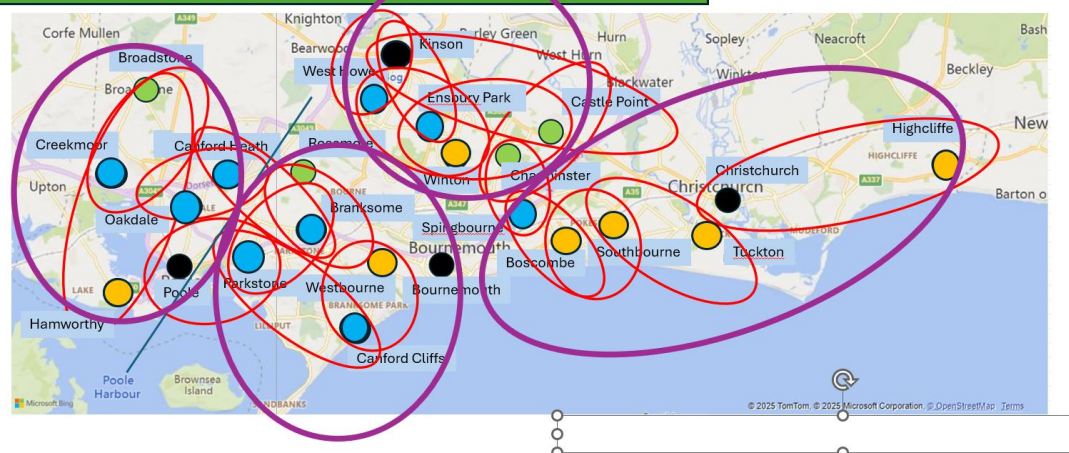
44. Each cluster has a band 1 library open for between 45.5 and 53 hours a week across six open days.

45. Each cluster has at least 1 band 2 library (open between 27 and 29.5 hours per week) apart from the Christchurch clusters which have more band 3 libraries open between 27 and 25.5 hours a week.

46. There are band 4 libraries open in each cluster, but a higher percentage of these are in the Poole area. Libraries in band 4 typically open for 21 or 22 hours each, opening at 10am and closing for lunch.

47. We have compared opening hours with both Dorset and Hampshire libraries. Both Council areas group opening hours in a similar way to BCP libraries, except for band 4 libraries. In both Hampshire and Dorset, opening in this group consists of either two full days or 4 half days per week, as opposed to BCP's current offer of 3 full days and 1 half days or 2 full days and 3 half days.

48. We have looked at various scenarios of how we might re-band libraries and amend opening hours within the clusters without significantly reducing staffed opening hours further. However, this makes very little difference to the bottom-line cost and therefore there is no plan to make changes to opening hours linked specifically to bands.

49. We will, however, take forward an action to consider whether we can improve the total number of opening hours across each cluster by reducing instances where more than 1 library in the group is closed at the same time.

Libraries as Community Hubs

50. We were asked to consider how libraries can be used as community hubs, to accommodate other purposes in the library space, to increase the benefit of the assets to the community and potentially offset costs elsewhere.

51. Libraries have already achieved efficiency for the council by bringing services into them, most notably when we created Customer Hubs in Poole and Christchurch.

This enabled the civic centres in those locations to close whilst retaining customer facing support.

52.	Kinson Library also operates as a hub providing customer access to BCP Homes residents. There is work currently underway to remodel the space above the library to enable staff outside of Housing to work from and meet with customers as they need.

53.	Running parallel to the library strategy development, there is a wider project looking at the Council's estates and accommodation to pinpoint how the occupation of our buildings might be rationalised.

54.	This work recognises that community hubs differ from customer hubs in their offering, and collectively we have identified 4 libraries which have potential space to improve the existing offer, as and when finances become available.

55.	Charminster, Hamworthy, Southbourne and Rossmore libraries are all large enough to support wider community activity. Both Rossmore library and Hamworthy library have café space which could be brought back into commercial/third party use, providing an additional facility for the community.

56.	Seeking funding and developing partnerships to reimagine spaces within these buildings will be a core part of the strategy particularly contributing to our creative and cultural development and public health ambitions.

57.	Winton Library may potentially be able to expand its space into a largely unused area behind the library, but the feasibility of this is yet to be determined.

Open access technology

58.	A key commitment within the 4 buildings in Charminster, Southbourne, Rossmore and Hamworthy is the introduction of open access technology to enable these buildings to be open when otherwise they would be closed.

59.	The introduction of open access technology will form the first phase of works within the identified libraries after which, remodelling of space to support greater community use, will follow.

60.	Open Access Technology is not a new concept and one which is widely used across the country. A summary of what this means is contained in Appendix 3.

61.	Following an expression of interest to the Arts Council for funding to implement this technology, BCP libraries was invited to submit a bid. We have subsequently submitted this, but it is unknown at this time whether it will be successful. An update should be available towards the end of this financial year.

62.	The concept would enable libraries to be open 6 days a week, probably between the hours of 8am and 8pm. The capital cost is expected to be in the region of £474,749, made up of £387,750 grant and £86,999 BCP funding.

63.	The adoption of open-access technology will extend the opening hours offer for existing users but also increase accessibility for those who can't currently access libraries during the hours that we are open.

64.	Open access will require an ongoing revenue commitment of an estimated £57,600.

65. A key priority within the strategy will be to pursue the introduction of open access technology and work towards agreeing options for each site in determining how to remodel the space to support more activity.

Other Options considered for changes to the model of delivery

66. **Reducing the number of sites** where library services can be run from has been considered as an option.

67. Closing any of our less-used libraries, subject to an appropriate impact assessment and mitigation, would generate in the region £65,000 per annum in revenue savings and over a period potentially turn off building-related costs. This gain is seen as minor compared to the value libraries bring to the community.

68. **Relocating** a library from the current building to a different building is an option which remains on the table for any building which has high value repairing needs or where there is a wider reason for considering relocation.

69. Whilst there is no identified funding for the buildings which have the highest value investment needs there is always the risk that these may need to close without much notice, should deterioration force this.

70. Creekmoor (£233k) and Parkstone (£87k) are two sites which may need options reviews developed at some point. Creekmoor Library is attached to Northmead House and the future use of this building is currently not known. Parkstone library is contained within a building which has space on upper levels which cannot be utilised because of its layout and access.

71. Options for both libraries will need to be considered over the life of the strategy.

72. **Merging library provisions** where two or more libraries are close together and serve the same communities may also provide a solution to cost management whilst acting as a catalyst to improve the offer to the area.

73. Given the difficulty around space in Parkstone library, the repair costs and proximity to Branksome library (which also has limited space and no public accessible toilets), these two could be considered for merger/relocation subject to a potentially suitable site being found.

74. Exploring options as part of the strategy will be included within the action plan.

Increasing staffed opening hours

75. Given the financial constraint the Council is working with, there is no scope for increasing staffed library hours within the budget available.

76. We have therefore looked at how we may bring some capacity to enable libraries to do more for communities in other ways.

Friends Groups

77. Our existing Friends' Groups work hard to promote the libraries they support, often raising money to provide small items to enhance the library setting or service. Small items of furniture are often funded alongside supporting initiatives for larger projects such as the Canford Cliffs extension or Ensbury Park garden room.

78. Growing the number of Friends Groups will be one of the strategy's core objectives and a new framework to support this is ready to be put in place.

Volunteers

79. In addition, we have reviewed the roles Volunteers can undertake to support library priorities to enhance and support the role of paid staff.

80. Role Profiles have been developed for this purpose and libraries will be encouraged to use these for delivery of activities and events.

Satisfaction with our libraries

81. Although satisfaction levels amongst those who responded to our consultation surveys are generally high, there are a couple of areas where satisfaction dropped.

82. Respondents told us that an improved range of stock and an improved refreshment offer would encourage people to use our libraries more.

83. Additional study desks also came up reasonably consistently across branches as an improvement area.

84. The lack of toilet facilities in some libraries was a cause of dissatisfaction in some libraries, notably Canford Cliffs, Ensbury Park and Highcliffe.

85. Lack of baby change facilities were a source of dissatisfaction at Highcliffe and West Howe.

86. Children would appreciate cozy seating options including chairs, sofa, bean bags and cushions within dedicated spaces. They echoed some of the comments in the adult survey around the provision of study desks with computers and printers.

87. Staff also made suggestions which focused primarily on improving furniture, noticeboards or blinds, with many libraries requesting carpet cleaning or replacement as well as decoration.

88. We will take these ideas through to our action plan to consider over the course of the strategy.

89. A project has already started to review what stock we have in our libraries, what borrows and does not borrow, with a view to re-organising and reinvigorating branch space, library by library.

90. It will be a long-term project, but it is hoped that we can improve displays over time and where it is possible, create some space to enable the provision of study desks and other items, or for more activities/events.

Action Plan

91. A high-level action plan has been produced (appendix 4) to capture the essence of the work to be done over the life of the strategy. It will be developed once the strategy is agreed and refreshed as a live document over the life of the strategy.

92. Whilst delivering improvement without identified funding creates a level of uncertainty about what is achievable, we have a wealth of information and a clear list of priorities to work through which has put us in a much stronger position.

93. We will seek the help of the commercial operations teams, and the economic development teams to advise and guide us through options for the libraries we want to remodel and consult those communities further.

Financial Context

94. The Council's financial challenges are not unique, and it is becoming increasingly common for councils across the country to be considering how their library services can play their part in addressing those challenges.

95. Cabinet's clear commitment to retaining all our libraries and the passion expressed by all political groups will be needed to foster the collaboration which will be required to access funding and bring projects to life.

96. The work undertaken on this strategy gives us a clearer understanding of the challenges we have within the library estate and the areas we can focus on to improve the experience for users.

97. Examining the budget spent on libraries in 2024/5 gives us an insight into why our expenses occur. There is a direct correlation between the number of buildings we use to deliver library services and the costs which come from this.

98. 49.5% of the service budget is spent on staffing costs, with a further 20.4% spent on servicing the Bournemouth Library PFI arrangement. 16.2% are connected to buildings leaving 8.9% on service costs (£557,871.46).

99. Typically, libraries have only 2 or 3 members of paid staff per branch, to meet current opening hours commitments (except for the main Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole libraries, which are larger and open for longer). Most staff are employed part-time, with opening hours no longer supporting full-time work for many.

100. The spending detail in 2024/5 is attached in Appendix 5.

Timeline

101. The draft strategy to accompany this paper is attached at Appendix 6.

102. Ordinarily, we would move to a second stage consultation on the strategy itself but as it does not propose any negative change to the service, it is suggested that subject to comment made during the committee process, the strategy is adopted, with the commitment that project-based consultation will follow to progress the various strands where change is being considered.

103. This would include any proposed change to any location of a library.

Summary of financial implications

104. Financial implications connected to the outcomes of the library strategy are yet to be fully understood and will need to be presented as options are developed over the next 5 years.

105. The open access project requires £86,999 match funding to secure an additional £387,750 of Arts Council funding, should our application be successful. This would be made up of existing budgets and 'in kind' costs.

106. The ongoing revenue commitment connected with Open Access will cost an estimated £57,600 which will need to be absorbed into the existing budget.

107. Libraries will be unable to deliver any in-year savings connected with the development of the wider Community Hubs saving workstream anticipated in the MTFP. £133k is earmarked for savings in 2025/26 and a further £399k is expected in 2026/27.

108. External funding streams for larger projects could come from national bodies such as the Arts Council and National Lottery fund. Smaller amounts could be secured from local businesses seeking to support community projects, or from sponsorship and donations.

109. We will seek the expertise of the economic development team to consider what interest there may be for income generation from the use of our space.

Summary of legal implications

110. Local Authority Library Services are a statutory obligation disseminating from the Public Libraries & Museums Act, 1964. The key duty for all libraries is to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who live, work or study in the area'.

111. What constitutes a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' is not defined by the DCMS, as it is expected that service is driven by local need and developed in consultation with local communities.

112. This strategy is not taking away or reducing services from our residents and therefore there are not likely to be any legal concerns at the current time.

Summary of human resources implications

113. The introduction of Open Access technology will require managers to be on duty outside of normal work hours to deal with any issues which might arise.

114. The introduction of 'standby' payments will be required.

Summary of sustainability impact

115. The sustainability of the library service offer, especially in relation to our library buildings is a key element in delivering this draft strategy.

116. An upgrade of the mechanical and electrical systems is a recurring issue for 18 libraries requiring an investment estimated of £908,000. This £908,000 is part of the total £1.8m required to manage current building failure.

117. We have had some success in applying for Salix grants to fund works of this nature in the past, servicing the repayments from reduction in energy costs achieved because of the upgrades. This funding source is however no longer available.

118. Public Sector Decarbonisation grant requires the removal of gas installations with preference for air source heat pumps. These are more costly to run and have a shorter life than gas boilers and are not therefore an affordable solution for us currently.

119. The ability to address these issues is therefore currently unknown.

Summary of public health implications

120. Health and Wellbeing is a core universal offer of libraries and many of our current stakeholders are from organisations targeting interactions and activities designed to support the wellbeing of the public.

121. Through the strategy we aim to work with public health and community team colleagues to identify how we can deliver more targeted activities and events aimed at reducing health, social and economic inequality, utilising joint working initiatives with other organisations.

Summary of equality implications

122. Equality Impact Screening has been undertaken. The strategy does not recommend any change which would have a negative impact on library users, or which would require a full Equality Impact Report and Action plan.

123. Equality impact requirements will be considered for any future project connected with the strategy, as those projects commence.

Summary of risk assessment

124. The risk in developing a library strategy is that any changes result in the council failing to meet its statutory obligations.

125. Statutory obligations are set out in the Public Libraries and Museum Act, 1964, as well as the Equalities Act 2010 including the Public Sector Equalities Duty, Best Value Duty 2011 guidance, Localism Act 2011 and the Human Rights Act, 1998.

126. Given there is no significant change affecting current delivery negatively, any risk around noncompliance with statutory duty are mitigated.

127. The ongoing risk is in the condition of library buildings and the potential that any branch may need to close at short notice, should the condition deteriorate and pose a H&S risk.

128. We will work with our FM colleagues to firm up what is needed in these buildings and seek funding to support future works.

Background papers

Report to cabinet – 7 02 24 – p489-518

Report to cabinet – 10 12 24 – p 439-498

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of Major Works required in Libraries
Appendix 2 – Usage and Usage Patterns in Libraries
Appendix 3 – Open Access in Libraries
Appendix 4 – High Level Action Plan
Appendix 5 – Financial Spend in Libraries 24/5
Appendix 6 – Draft Library Strategy

Appendix 1:

Appendix 1: **Summary of major works required on BCP's library portfolio**					
Building Description	**Summary**	**Build Cost**	**Electrical**	**Mechanical**	**Total**
Highcliffe Library	Roof void inspection needed, controls and reboiler required. Decking needs replacing	8,000.00	0.00	30,000.00	**38,000.00**
Castlepoint Library	No boiler controls, problematic lighting cannot be repaired	0.00	20,000.00	15,000.00	**35,000.00**
Boscombe Library	Controls needed boilers nearing end of life	0.00	0.00	15,000.00	**15,000.00**
Charminster Library	Parapet walls need rebuilding, major window issues, additional structural issues and repairs needed EICR due boards will need changing, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade,	325,000.00	15,000.00	70,000.00	**410,000.00**
West Howe Library	Full boiler and plantroom upgrade, window issues with ventilation	40,000.00	0.00	60,000.00	**100,000.00**
Ensbury Park Library	Nothing	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.00**
Southbourne Library	EICR is due and this will require changes to consumer units, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade,	79,500.00	10,000.00	70,000.00	**159,500.00**
Springbourne Library	Flat roof and parapet repairs, window issues. Full boiler and plantroom upgrade	77,500.00	0.00	35,000.00	**112,500.00**
Tuckton Library	Fire compartmentation. Full boiler and plantroom upgrade	18,800.00	0.00	45,000.00	**63,800.00**
Westbourne Library	Minor inspection items for roof, EICR consumer units, full boiler and plantroom upgrade	2,100.00	6,000.00	70,000.00	**78,100.00**
Winton Library	Windows, fire doors, localised roof repairs	75,100.00	0.00	0.00	**75,100.00**
Broadstone Library	Limited work needed. Drainage clearance some single glazing	700.00	0.00	0.00	**700.00**
Canford Heath Library	Some mains upgrade required, lighting mostly old non-LED, mostly single glazed windows, roof good condition for year, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade	0.00	20,000.00	35,000.00	**55,000.00**
Oakdale Library	Some localised roof repairs and repointing required Full mains upgrade overdue, lighting some led some non-LED	15,000.00	30,000.00	0.00	**45,000.00**
Branksome Library	Leased Building with some BCP responsibility. Lighting extremely poor	0.00	10,000.00	0.00	**10,000.00**
Rossmore Community Library and Learning Centre	Some lighting changed, replaced when old fail, budget required to replace remaining 50%, some issues with leaking glazing (monitor)	0.00	12,000.00	0.00	**12,000.00**
Hamworthy Community Library	New boilers and pumps	0.00	0.00	20,000.00	**20,000.00**
Creekmoor Library	Large plantroom upgrade to include air handling toilets in dire need of refurbishment, rooflight leaking, partial mains upgrade and LED lighting needed	38,000.00	15,000.00	180,000.00	**233,000.00**
Canford Cliffs Library and Offices	Roof in very poor condition, old lighting non-LED partial mains upgrade and some LED upgrade	180,000.00	10,000.00	0.00	**190,000.00**
Parkstone Library	Roof needs inspection previous issues, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade, mains upgrade and some lighting	6,500.00	10,000.00	70,000.00	**86,500.00**
Kinson Hub	New lighting required currently investigating funding streams	0.00	35,000.00	0.00	**35,000.00**
	Totals	**£866,200.00**	**£193,000.00**	**£715,000.00**	**£1,774,200.00**

1.   Our in-house team have pulled together a schedule of costs relating to each of our libraries to show what is known about most urgent repairing needs (would be high priority to do now if the money was available).

2.   The figures bring together what is known in terms of the building fabric, the mechanical costs and the electrical costs.

3.   They do not specify any decoration or recarpeting needs or anything that is unanticipated as being needed in the next two years (red).

Appendix 2:

Appendix 2: Usage and Usage patterns across libraries										
	2024/5 visitors	**2024/5 issues**	**Total across both 2024/5**	**No of wards the catchment area pulls from as 1st or 2nd choice libraries**	**Active Borrowers 2024/5**	**Average Active Borrowers per month**	**% of users who only use this library**	**Most used alternative**	**Where users also go**	
Christchurch	160960	85621	246581	6	4230	1333	22.4%	Tuckton (23%)	Highcliffe (18%)	Bournemouth (13%)
Poole	103807	69310	173117	5	4363	1203	8.7%	Parkstone (24%)	Bournemouth (20%)	Branksome (16%)
Bournemouth	135000	71517	206517	5	4968	1244	29.0%	Westbourne (38%)	Boscombe (23%)	Castlepoint (22%)
Kinson	56426	54617	111043	3	2725	791	8.7%	Castlepoint (36%)	Bournemouth (32%)	Winton (22%)
Broadstone	61420	61483	122903	4	2880	1030	27.8%	Poole (29%)	Creekmoor (20%)	Canford Heath (16%)
Castlepoint	49494	42109	91603	3	2650	706	4.4%	Bournemouth (51%)	Charminster (41%)	Winton (26%)
Charminster	35191	49769	84960	4	2415	729	12.0%	Castlepoint (46%)	Bournemouth (38%)	Winton (26%)
Rossmore	55013	27900	82913	2	1181	332	7.3%	Poole (46%)	Branksome (38%)	Bournemouth (25%)
Westbourne	41182	35345	76527	3	2127	644	8.9%	Bournemouth (56%)	Poole (20%)	Canford Cliffs (19%)
Southbourne	39484	34697	74181	3	2148	582	11.1%	Boscombe (41%)	Christchurch (38%)	Bournemouth (33%)
Winton	37580	32116	69696	3	1999	531	9.7%	Bournemouth (47%)	Castlepoint (39%)	Charminster (30%)
Tuckton	33077	30277	63354	4	1561	466	19.6%	Christchurch (40%)	Southbourne (27%)	Bournemouth (16%)
Boscombe	42523	26154	68677	3	1883	460	13.0%	Bournemouth (62%)	Southbourne (47%)	Springbourne (22%)
Parkstone	26016	25151	51167	2	1204	383	12.2%	Poole (56%)	Branksome & Canford Cliffs (24%)	Bournemouth (14%)
Highcliffe	19798	27174	46972	2	1054	412	27.0%	Christchurch (54%)	Bournemouth (10%)	Tuckton/Outside of BCP (7%)
Branksome	24893	21109	46002	2	1124	320	10.0%	Poole (57%)	Bournemouth (30%)	Parkstone (28%)
Canford Heath	23678	20760	44438	2	1121	318	14.6%	Poole (39%)	Broadstone (22%)	Oakdale (17%)
Canford Cliffs	22615	18014	40629	1	887	278	9.0%	Poole (43%)	Bournemouth (27%)	Parkstone (21%)
Hamworthy	20765	16938	37703	1	921	255	21.7%	Poole (51%)	Broadstone (12%)	Oakdale/Outside of BCP (11%)
Oakdale	20141	16718	36859	2	899	254	6.8%	Poole (61%)	Canford Heath (41%)	Broadstone (22%)
Creekmoor	19213	15650	34863	1	760	220	8.3%	Broadstone (43%)	Poole (39%)	Hamworthy (16%)
West Howe	16873	5847	22720	1	381	86	7.0%	Kinson (72%)	Bournemouth (44%)	Boscombe/Ensbury Park/Winton (22%)
Springbourne	14958	7635	22593	1	513	125	3.7%	Boscombe (57%)	Bournemouth (48%)	Charminster (43%)
Ensbury Park	8944	9150	18094	1	511	147	16.7%	Kinson (49%)	Bournemouth (36%)	Castlepoint & Winton (33%)

Appendix 3:

Open Access in Libraries

'Open access' in libraries is not a new concept. Nationally many library services now incorporate this into their service offer, primarily to enable access to library spaces when otherwise they would be closed. It has the advantage of libraries being open beyond the hours they can be staffed.

Individual users typically sign up for open access and undertake an induction to ensure terms and condition of use can be explained and understood, and other information is made clear around fire safety, health & safety, etc.

Other trusted partners can be signed up who subsequently take on the responsibility for use if they are for instance hosting groups, or inviting non-library subscribed users into the space.

Hours are often 8am – 8pm but others have done differently eg: opening at 7am or closing at 10pm.

There are various pieces of technology which need to be designed into the changes needed to any chosen library.

Typically, this will include:

- **Door opening technology** which can be activated within set times to enable a user to enter. Implementing the technology requires close working with a building maintenance surveyor, and it may be new doors or amendments to existing doors will be required.
- **Technology to control heat, light & ventilation** during the unstaffed hours.
- **People Counters** to understand number using the space for Fire Regulations.
- **Speakers/Tannoy/PA system** for announcement to be made (warning of closure times etc).
- **CCTV** to monitor activity and facilitate any action required. We are advised you need lots of cameras to pick up 'all angles.
- **Alarm functionality,** both intruder and fire, which work with the new way of operating.
- **Hired meeting rooms** may need Digi pads (or QR codes) adding to prevent misuse and availability for paying users.

Processes will need to:

- Consider how buildings are 'swept' and securely closed for the night.
- What impact there might be on the OOH teams if doors do not shut properly, or the technology 'traps' people inside.
- Create appropriate risk assessments.
- Sign up and induction processes.

- Any lease arrangements in buildings not directly owned/managed by BCP
- Consider where users will have access to and what areas they should not have access to. This may need partition walls or door entry access adding (workrooms, kitchens etc)
- Cleaning will be needed which may increase revenue costs.
- Discussions with Neighbourhood Policing Teams, ASB Team, Town Rangers, CSAS etc

Experience of other Library Services tells us:

- Any project will touch several teams in addition to libraries and will need a project manager.
- Main access doors need to be in good condition to prevent issues, especially out of hours.
- Do a pilot and refine project detail before committing to large numbers of libraries simultaneously.
- ASB is rarely an issue. Users must sign up and abide by the Terms and Conditions. Access can be disabled on the access card quickly and easily. Age restrictions apply.

Funding

The Library Improvement Fund made available by the Arts Council has been used to manage projects such as this.

Match Funding is not a pre-requisite for bidding but there is a strong message from the Arts Council that bids will be viewed more favourably where it exists.

Any bid can incorporate Project Manager costs – for 4 libraries a project length of 2 years is to be anticipated.

Library Improvement Fund – Capital funding

Expressions of interest open on 6/5/25 and close on 30/5/25.

Arts Council will then invite applications from a selection.

If selected, full application process opens on 24/6/25 and closes on 1/8/25

Decisions announced by end March 2026.

Activities can start from 1/4/26 but cannot start any later than 1/7/26.

Activities must complete by end March 2029.

Appendix 4:

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan		
Building Related Activity		
1	**Managing the cost of repair need across the library estate to avoid short or long term closure due to disrepair**	
1.1	**Prepare and understand the detailed requirements needed in our most at risk buildings in order to seek appropriate funding and discuss options**	
	1.1.1	Charminster Library
	1.1.2	Canford Cliffs Library
	1.1.3	Creekmoor Library
	1.1.4	Southbourne Library
	1.1.5	Springbourne Library
	1.1.6	West Howe Library
1.2	**Consider options to relocate the library offer where this would bring improvement or is required due to the wider asset management review**	
	1.3.1	Parkstone Library
	1.3.2	Branksome Library
	1.3.3	Creekmoor Library
1.3	**Develop ideas with the community for an enhanced library offer in Libraries which have potenatial space to do more**	
	1.4.1	Hamworthy Library
	1.4.2	Rossmore Library
	1.4.4	Charminster Library
	1.4.5	Southbourne Library
	1.4.6	Winton Library

		Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan	
		Accessibility Related Activity	
2		**Consider options to improve the facilities available in current Library Branches**	
2.1		**Consider the Feasibility, impact on space and cost of incorporating toilet facilities within libraries to inform options**	
	2.1.1	Tuckton Library	
	2.1.2	Parkstone Library	
	2.1.3	Highcliffe Library (and baby change)	
	2.1.4	Branksome Library	
	2.1.5	Canford Cliffs Library	
	2.1.6	Oakdale Library	
	2.1.7	West Howe (baby change)	
	2.1.8	Ensbury Park Library	
3		**Work up the detail and costs related to open access in libraries**	
3.1	3.1.1	Identify and cost physical building changes required	
	3.1.2	Procure door access system, CCTV, Tannoy, People Counters and other systems	
	3.1.3	Put in place a registration process, undertake risk assessment etc,liaise with insurance etc	
	3.1.4	Determine Out of Hours arrangements for ensuring buildings empty	
	3.1.5	Seek funding	
4		**Consider if opening hours across a cluster can be better organised to avoid clashes of closure times**	
4.1	4.1.1	Desktop review of current provision through a clustered lens	
	4.1.2	Engage with ward councillors	

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan

Management Team Actions

5		**Service Priorities - building capacity for improved service outcomes**
5.1		**Grow the partnership with Friends Groups**
	3.1.1.	Launch the new framework to support the set up of indendent Friends Groups
	3.1.2	Manage enquiries
	3.1.3	Managers to support as needed
5.2		**Increase the number of volunteer opportunities across libraries to support activities and events and facilitate staff to do more in libraries**
	3.2.1	Launch the Role Profiles through publicity on the web/social media etc
	3.2.2	Consider how to create the capacity to support the onboarding and ongoing management of volunteers
	3.3.3	Consider how to fund and administer DBS checks for specific roles.
5.3		**Enable front line staff to have some time to undertake personal development and refresh library spaces**
	3.3.1	Introduce up to 4 closure days per year for staff training, stock management and space reorganisation
5.4		**Enable managers to focus on improvement projects through paced project delivery**
	3.4.1	Work at a branch level to deliver improvements using consultation and staff feedback (study desks, teen spaces, children's nooks, replace furniture etc)
	3.4.2	Work with the Insurance Team to get the cover which support the new library model
	3.4.3	Seek funding
	3.4.4	Support staff to actively review and weed stock
	3.4.5	Review stock purchasing and management
5.5		**Create opportunities for localised funding from the community**
	3.5.1	Put in place a process to enable donations to be made for specific projects
	3.5.2	Seek funding from businesses who fund community activity

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan

Management Team Actions

6	**Promote literacy, reading and study**	
6.1	6.1.1	Libraries in all bands to deliver support for reading groups for all
	6.1.2	Libraries in all bands to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge
	6.1.3	Libraries in all bands to host at least two activity session in the summer connected with the Reading Challenge
	6.1.4	Libraries in all bands to promote Bookstart
	6.1.5	Band 1 and 2 libraries to support Bookstart storytime sessions between November and March annually
	6.1.6	Literacy Officers and Library Assistants to attend Assemblies in Schools
	6.1.7	Libraries in all bands to support class visits from schools throughout the year
	6.1.8	Promoting reading for pleasure
	6.1.9	Develop dedicated spaces for study
	6.1.10	Partner with the education team and Children Services to promote libraries as spaces for Young People
7	**Enable the support of healthy and creative communities**	
7.1	7.1.1	Libraries in all bands to deliver at least one social group per week (Knit & Natter, Coffee Morning etc)
	7.1.2	Libraries in all bands to deliver at least 1 games group per week (intergenerational)
	7.1.3	All libraries to support the Universal Offers calendar throughout the year – Arts & Culture
	7.1.4	All libraries to support a wriggle and rhyme session per week
	7.1.5	All libraries to support at least one activity during the Christmas and Easter Holidays for Children
	7.1.6	All libraries to offer Duke of Edinburgh and other Volunteering activities
	7.1.7	Band 1 and 2 libraries to support work experience placements
	7.1.8	Band 1 and 2 libraries to support code club for Young People
	7.1.9	Enabing creative skills development through interest led arts and crafts sessions
	7.1.10	Enable and support opportunities for children and adults to connect with others reducing health social and economic inequality
	7.1.11	Band 1 libraries to hold Living Knowledge Network exhibitions and activities connected with culture
	7.1.12	Bournemouth library to host quarterly music events
	7.1.13	Partner with the BCP Events team and cultural hub to bring activity and events to libraries
	7.1.14	Partner with Public Health to bring appropriate activity and events to libraries which help reduce health, social and economic inequality
8	**Providing access to technology and digital learning to support communities in their every day lives**	
8.1	**Invest in the I.T infrastructure**	
	8.1.1	Introduce Wi-Fi Printing for customers
	8.1.2	Review what devices woud support staff to facilitate public enquiries and requests for assistance.
	8.1.3	Consider the availability of power points and cabling to support study within libraries
8.2	**Improve the digital training offer to support the digital transformation of the Council and enable digital literacy within the community**	
	8.2.1	Partner with training providers to deliver ICT training for the public within libraries with suitable space.
	8.2.2	Expand tech buddy volunteering across all libraries
	8.2.3	Consider the gifting or loaning of redundant ICT to marginalised groups
	8.2.4	Work with our home library service provider and tech buddies to enable where wanted, digital literacy for those users
	8.2.5	Support the digital strategy folowing its discovery phase by enabling libraries to be places where digital champions can support the public

Appendix 5

Library	Annual Spend 24/25											Total Costs	Costs which might be realised if any branches were to close
	Branch Salary Costs	Centralised Salary Costs (1/24th)	Stock (1/24th)	Centralised Service Costs (1/24th)	PFI Contract	Branch related Costs (rates, utilities etc)	Cleaning Contract Costs	FM Planned Maintenance	FM Responsive Maintenance	Cash Collection	Printers (Canon Contract)		
Boscombe	£76,182.83	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£45,148.24	£11,503.92	£4,471.50	£15,104.82	£540.00	£468.62	£201,189.64	£153,419.93
Bournemouth	£391,806.35	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11	£1,271,613.23	£28,254.59		£775.27		£1,080.00	£1,411.16	£1,742,710.31	£423,327.37
Branksome	£32,837.88	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£14,682.52	£5,046.84		£507.99	£270.00	£482.21	£101,597.15	£53,827.44
Broadstone	£116,652.83	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£29,673.54	£8,669.04		£77,194.73	£270.00	£546.69	£280,776.54	£233,006.83
Canford Cliffs	£40,652.21	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£17,436.62	£2,900.52		£6,606.25	£270.00	£403.60	£116,038.91	£68,269.20
Canford Heath	£28,723.29	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£21,728.37	£4,841.52		£4,408.05	£270.00	£488.74	£108,229.68	£60,459.97
Castlepoint	£124,694.36	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£37,245.89	£11,484.12	£1,458.14	£820.11	£540.00	£482.92	£224,495.25	£176,725.54
Charminster	£85,260.89	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£24,083.64	£9,602.76	£1,979.96	£8,235.03	£270.00	£571.21	£177,773.20	£130,003.49
Christchurch	£212,542.83	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£77,681.49	£28,488.48	£6,451.67	£42,435.78	£1,080.00	£899.42	£417,349.38	£369,579.67
Creekmoor	£49,250.74	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£30,930.51	£6,390.12	£2,238.88	£2,171.16	£270.00	£574.39	£139,595.51	£91,825.80
Ensbury Park	£48,182.18	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£4,779.65	£2,447.76	£855.36	£1,783.35	£270.00	£386.80	£106,474.81	£58,705.10
Hamworthy	£81,159.96	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£33,007.29	£21,618.36		£3,607.34	£270.00	£502.64	£187,935.30	£140,165.59
Highcliffe	£78,481.42	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£10,541.79	£3,107.88	£2,431.71	£3,403.74	£270.00	£559.08	£146,565.33	£98,795.62
Kinson	£183,553.80	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£76,002.86	£29,350.92	£7,901.01	£23,473.54	£1,080.00	£533.15	£369,664.99	£321,895.28
Oakdale	£39,190.55	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£25,834.81	£3,865.92		£4,383.30	£270.00	£434.03	£121,748.32	£73,978.61
Parkstone	£43,301.89	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£13,104.18	£2,900.52		£2,359.20	£270.00	£504.06	£110,209.56	£62,439.85
Poole	£324,232.23	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£141,551.02	£46,819.44	£11,691.36	£22,340.27	£270.00	£1,628.06	£596,302.09	£548,532.38
Southbourne	£78,156.53	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£15,291.64	£5,247.36	£1,033.19	£3,755.96	£270.00	£491.75	£152,016.14	£104,246.43
Rossmore	£90,229.24	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£55,547.41	£13,004.40		£2,232.19	£270.00	£442.72	£209,495.67	£161,725.96
Springbourne	£48,007.79	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£15,810.26	£4,599.60	£1,051.05	£5,435.53	£270.00	£427.52	£123,371.46	£75,601.75
Tuckton	£89,204.44	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£15,407.07	£4,462.08	£3,537.97	£3,619.69	£270.00	£451.07	£164,722.03	£116,952.32
West Howe	£18,455.82	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£27,370.64	£5,321.16	£923.75	£10,500.42	£270.00	£454.74	£111,066.24	£63,296.53
Westbourne	£129,201.54	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£27,202.01	£8,695.92	£1,706.14	£2,280.51	£540.00	£488.79	£217,884.62	£170,114.91
Winton	£88,689.39	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£17,673.57	£7,355.28	£2,740.01	£10,783.10	£270.00	£472.81	£175,753.87	£127,984.16
	£2,498,650.99	£588,601.68	£250,428.72	£307,442.64	£1,271,613.23	£805,989.61	£247,723.92	£51,246.97	£257,442.06	£9,720.00	£14,106.18	£6,302,966.00	

Appendix 6
Draft Library Strategy

Executive Summary

I am delighted to introduce Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's first Library Strategy following Local Government organisation in 2019.

Having engaged in thorough and informative conversations with council colleagues from all groups and parties, with library staff and a range of stakeholders and partners and having listened to the views of library users and non-users through a comprehensive engagement programme, I am confident that this strategy will ensure the continuation of Library Services for current and future generations.

This is a strategy of ambition.

While around 40 libraries are shut each year in this country because of the financial pressures on local authorities, we do not want to see any closing in BCP. They are too valuable to all our communities.

In an age of financial stress and ever greater societal challenge, our libraries grow even more important, not less.

It is imperative they remain at the heart of our communities.

When so much of our public service is broken or has disappeared, libraries are the first line of defence and the last line of defence in and for our communities.

We want them to be warm spaces in the winter and cool places in the summer, where people can be alone and together at the same time.

In challenging financial times, we must be bold and confident about our ambitions, about the value of our libraries but that boldness and confidence must be shared and matched by our communities and organisations and indeed within BCP Council itself.

We need to talk about them more and ensure more visits for myriad reasons. It's not all about books and hasn't been for a long time.

We want self -service access to be pursued over the lifetime of the strategy.

We want our libraries to be partnerships of reading, arts, culture, community support and cohesion, creative health and health and wellbeing and an essential part of BCP's placemaking narrative.

We know community partners would welcome an even more collaborative approach, working together with the libraries and customer services teams to deliver services to clients in a flexible and efficient manner that caters to their needs.

And we know our community partners and other parts of BCP want to help us with our ambition to deliver more for everyone in our valuable library spaces. Library staff cannot do that alone.

Libraries play a unique role within our communities providing us with opportunities for learning, access to resources, safe and welcoming community spaces that contribute to health and wellbeing. They are about more than just books and literacy - they are spaces for people to meet, learn and exchange ideas.

We understand the passion our communities have for their libraries, and the satisfaction with and value of the services which are on offer. We know how public use of libraries have changed over time.

They are most widely used when young children are in a household, and again in later years. Expectations of libraries have also changed. Many don't have a need or desire to use libraries being able to access what they need on-line or through alternative provision.

This strategy aims to reflects the approach we plan to take over the next five years. We will continue to work with our communities, employees, volunteers and partners to ensure that we create a modern library service that is fit for purpose, whilst also continuing to explore the opportunities that innovative technology affords.

I am incredibly proud of BCP's Library Service and of all of those passionately dedicated to delivering it. By 2030

- We will have a library service where the model of delivery is formed around clusters informed by how the public have told us they access and use libraries.

- We will develop realistic options for improving efficiency and satisfaction with library provision by considering the location and facilities available at each site.

- We will create new community hubs in several of our libraries.

- We will ensure hours of opening across libraries are planned across a cluster of locations to maximise access for users and ensure uniformity based on demand

- We will promote working with Friend's Groups and test new ICT functionality to establish ways to offer out of hours use of library spaces.

- We will review and improve the digital offer in libraries to enable more streamlined and efficient access to devices, wi-fi, printing and payments.

- We will review the space within libraries to improve zoning and enable multi-use of the provision.

- We will develop ever closer and stronger partnerships with groups and organisations across BCP and within the council itself to ensure greater use of and access to areas of arts and culture, creative health, health and well-being and services that are lifeline to the vulnerable and those who lack the digital skills needed to access many digital by default services which are now in operation.

- We will build on the function of libraries as an important customer facing community spaces, ensuring that they are providing equitable services across the conurbation and reaching all pockets of need in tandem with the statutory services offered by BCP Council.

- We will work closely with Arts Council England to explore the possibility of becoming a National Portfolio Organisation with all the potential opportunities this can bring.

I am excited that we are continuing to develop a library service that will play a hugely significant role for more residents across all our communities. Achieving this ambition has never been more critical.

Councillor Andy Martin

Contents

Introduction and background

The Library Strategy sets out BCP Council's aspirations for the library service over the next 5 years. Its aim is to continue delivering highly valued services to our communities whilst having a clear focus on the investment needs primarily associated with our buildings, so that we can ensure the continued running of our library branches.

The current delivery of library services has been set within a context of continual change, not only because BCP was created from the amalgamation of services from 3 previous Council's, but because libraries have traditionally needed to diversify its offer, to 'justify' their existence in times of acute financial challenge across the Local Government sector.

What is clear is that libraries are a much-valued provision which go beyond the supply of books and other resources, to include a social value which contributes to increased health and wellbeing of various groups within our communities. For some groups, libraries are pivotal, whether this be in developing key reading and literacy skills from birth, facilitating people to access information and resources for study and lifelong learning, or safe places for older or vulnerable adults to mix with others and access information and advice.

Creating a library service which is **modern**, **efficient**, **comprehensive** and **sustainable** has never been more important.

Our resident engagement carried out in May and June 2024 tells us the library service is highly rated by those who responded to our surveys. Libraries are recognised as places where resources can be accessed, information and advice can be obtained, events and activities can be signed up for, and spaces used to keep warm, enable people to leave their home, or congregate and meet with others. Libraries are trusted spaces and the staff who work within them are regularly complimented, appreciated and valued.

There is however more we can do to tailor our service using the feedback we have received. We can modernise our service to meet ever increasing expectation in a digital world and in so doing create efficiency to future proof provision. We can also look at our model of delivery, to ensure it meets the habitual use from existing users and find opportunities to extend access to attract new user groups.

The Library Service is currently delivered from 24 different sites with a Home Library Service available to those who need it. The sites have been inherited from legacy Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Councils, and except for the creation of two Customer Hubs (Poole and Christchurch Libraries), we have not explored opportunities to evolve provision following the change in Local Government arrangements.

The provision of 24 libraries, averages 6 libraries per 100,000 resident population and means it is towards the higher end of the spectrum in terms of number of libraries compared with its CIPFA nearest neighbours. We are proud to retain these libraries.

The libraries based in the Town Centres of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are the most used libraries. The additional facilities and central locations in main shopping districts, tend to make them popular destinations and when we look at where users travel from to go to them, it is clear to see how valued the provisions are.

The other libraries are in community locations where there is varying demand. Evidence shows that many of these libraries draw users from a wider catchment area, with fewer libraries being solely relied on for access.

In designing our strategy, we have taken account of Government guidelines in determining our service. It is:

- Based on a comprehensive needs assessment

- Has been developed through consultation

- Robust in meeting our statutory obligations

- Over the life of the strategy, we will consult on options for any significant change, analyse the impact of any proposal and mitigate any significant factors

Purpose of the Library Service

Residents have told us what they think the priorities of the library service should be. Unsurprisingly, the primary purpose is to promote reading for pleasure, support children to develop reading and social skills, and to support literacy.

In addition, residents attend libraries so that they can borrow and browse books, attend an activity or event, undertake research, use computers, printers, scanners, photocopiers, or seek general information, advice and support.

Residents also recognise the value of libraries in offering a free comfortable space to go to, spending time away from home and to meet and interact with others.

The Library Service's primary objectives are therefore to:

Promote literacy, reading and study

- Promoting reading for pleasure
- Supporting children to become excited about reading to develop imagination, vocabulary and learning
- Supporting literacy for all
- Developing/identifying space for study

Enable the support of healthy and creative communities

- Enable access and create opportunities for the community to participate in a variety of events and activities including arts and cultural experiences
- Enable creative skills development and enabling talent to flourish
- Enable and support opportunities for children and adults to connect with others, reducing health, social, economic inequality

Providing access to technology and digital learning to support communities in their everyday lives.

- Enable communities to access information and digital services
- Enable communities to develop new skills to manage online

Basis of the strategy

This strategy has been built from the work undertaken to develop the Library Needs Assessment, a document that draws together statistical information about the BCP area and the makeup of our residents. It examines the demography and characteristics of our local population, economic activity, employment and earnings of our residents, and wider indicators captures as part of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (eg: education, skills and training, health, barriers to housing and services, crime, living environment etc). It also looks at library use and transport accessibility.

The strategy has also been informed by an extensive consultation which was undertaken in May 2024, canvasing the views of current library users and those with a specific interest in libraries, as well as a random sample survey across all wards in the area to also obtain the views on non-library users. Children and Young People also shared their views through surveys aimed at specific age groups as well as a survey tailored to those using the Home Library Service.

Discussions with Councillors and Staff have shaped the direction and ideas contained within the strategy.

Nationally, we have engaged with the Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) and examined national guidance and information published by Libraries Connected and partner organisations such as The Reading Agency, Association of senior Children's and Education librarians.

The main outcomes of our work, which underpin the new strategy are:

- An updated understanding of what our residents need and what they want from the library service
- A commitment to retain what works and yet deepen opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, and creative and cultural opportunities for our communities.
- An understanding of the investment needed to sustain an affordable, efficient network of libraries
- A commitment to partnership development and collaborative working with the community to bring capacity and join up our initiatives
- A focussed look at the library model organising delivery across 4 key clusters
- Improving technology to support digital options and the enablement of the community to operate in an increasingly digital world.

Future Model

The future model to be implemented as part of this strategy is based on grouping the management of Libraries into 4 Clusters. The clusters have been created using the information gleaned from the surveys, where respondents told us they visit as first, second and third choice locations. Each cluster has 6 libraries within it.

The clustering of library provision enables us to ensure there is one library open within the cluster six full days a week, and 1 library which we aim to make 'open access', which will allow registered library users to gain access between set (extended) hours when otherwise it would be closed.

The benefit of this is that library users and trusted partners can continue to use the library facility, increasing access over extended time periods and ensuring that as places libraries maximise their core value.

The four other libraries within each cluster will remain open. No change in opening hours is anticipated, however, over the life of the strategy, and once we have achieved 'open access', opening hours will be reviewed within each cluster. The aim of this will be to ensure standardisation of opening hours creating memorable schedules and ensuring a complimentary mix of hours across the group.
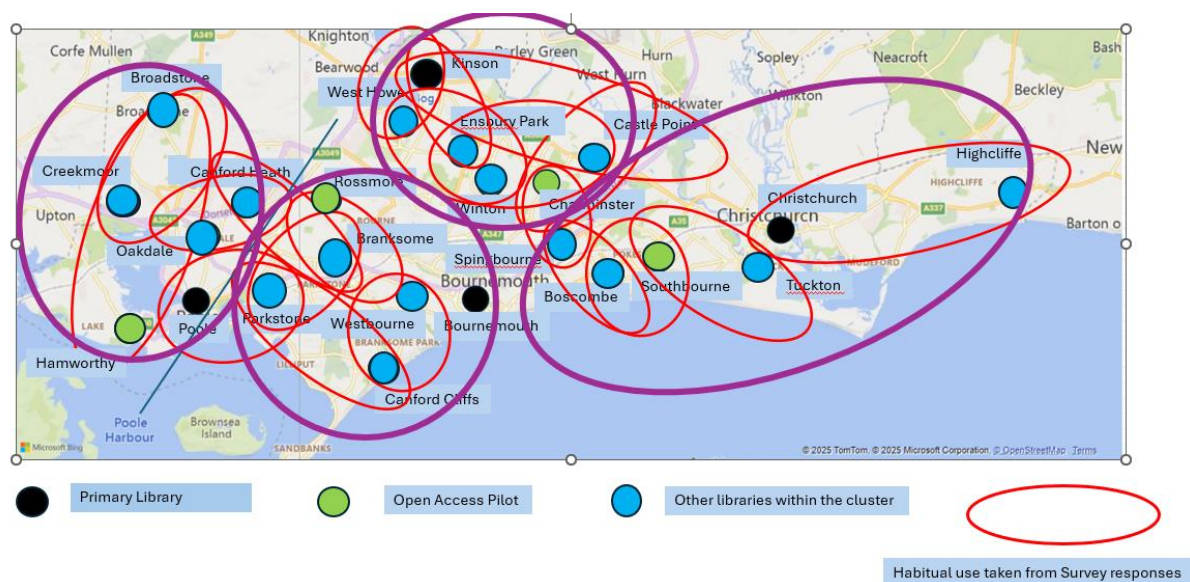
The proposed clusters are shown below. The blue highlighted are the libraries proposed for open access.

Cluster 1

Poole	6 full days	53 hours
Broadstone	3 full days, 2 half days	29.5 hours
Canford Heath	3 full days, 1 half day	21 hours
Hamworthy	3 full days, 1 half day	26 hours
Oakdale	3 full days, 1 half day	22 hours
Creekmoor	2 full days, 3 half days	21 hours

Cluster 2

Bournemouth	6 full days	53 hours

Westbourne	2 full days, 3 half days	27.5 hours
Rossmore	3 full days, 2 half days	29.5 hours
Parkstone	3 full days, 1 half day	22 hours
Branksome	2 full days, 3 half days	22 hours
Canford Cliffs	3 full days, 1 half day	21 hours

Cluster 3

Kinson	5 full days and 1 half day	45.5 hours
Castlepoint	3 full days, 2 half days	29.5 hours
Charminster	3 full days, 1 half day	27 hours
Winton	3 full days, 1 half day	27 hours
Ensbury Park	2 full days, 1 half day	18 hours
West Howe	2 full days, 2 half days	18 hours

Cluster 4

Christchurch	6 full days	53 hours
Tuckton	2 full days, 3 half days	25.5 hours
Southbourne	2 full days, 3 half days	26 hours
Boscombe	3 full days, 2 half days	30.5 hours
Highcliffe	2 full days, 3 half days	25.5 hours
Springbourne	2 full days, 2 half days	18 hours

Partnership working

Core to this strategy is the need for partners to come together to support the retention of our libraries. The financial position is difficult but with a strong plan to bring together joint ambition, we can realise a tremendous amount.

Libraries are integral community spaces that are open to all and provide a host of valuable services to the BCP community.

Organisations such as Citizens Advice are successfully located within several libraries across BCP and are aware that they are a lifeline to many of our clients, most notably those who are vulnerable and lack the digital skills needed to access many digital by default services which are now in operation.

The Library Strategy seeks to build on the function of libraries being important community spaces, ensuring that they are providing services across the conurbation and reaching all pockets of need in tandem with the statutory services offered by the Local Authority.

Evidence shows that the conditions of people's lives have the greatest impact on their health, and library spaces have an important role to play in reducing health inequalities through improving the wider detriments of health. The accessibility of social welfare advice via services such as Citizens Advice reduces strain on the Local Authority's statutory services, and the availability of advice and advocacy services allows libraries to offer effective support within community spaces.

The Library Strategy aims to strengthen the partnerships with other parts of BCP and external organisations to enhance the council's aims and ambitions and work together more closely and collaboratively. This will bring more people into our libraries for more reason

BCP's Cultural Development Team

Libraries provide an incredibly useful network through which BCP Council can deliver or facilitate a wide range of arts, culture and heritage activities, reaching a broad spectrum of the population and engaging a wide and diverse audience.

The Council's Cultural Development Team work to ensure delivery of the Cultural Strategy across the conurbation and act as connectors between the existing cultural organisations and the audiences in BCP.

The Cultural Development Team can facilitate cultural activity across the Library Service, ensuring quality cultural experiences and opportunities reach residents and visitors who might not be able to access them through other means.

Public Health BCP

Libraries play a significant role in promoting public health and wellbeing, offering resources and support that contribute to healthier communities and reducing inequalities.

• **Reduced Loneliness**: Libraries provide community spaces where people can connect, participate in activities, and feel a sense of belonging, crucial for mental wellbeing.

• **Improved Mental Health**: Libraries offer a safe and supportive environment that helps alleviate stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

• **Increased Health Literacy**: Accessing reliable health information empowers individuals to make informed health and wellbeing decisions.

• **Support for Self-Management**: resources, support groups, information and signposting that help individuals manage their health conditions.

• **Access to Technology and Digital Skills**: bridging the digital divide by offering access to computers and the internet.

• **Community Hubs and Social Connection**: Libraries host events, workshops, and activities that foster social connections and bring people together.

Promoting better health outcomes, libraries help reduce the burden on care systems and save money.

The strategy will encourage greater use of the library network to expand all these opportunities working in collaboration with the newly created Public Health BCP.

Cultural ambition

Working with the BCP Cultural Compact

Cultural Compacts were one of the key recommendations of the independent Cultural Cities Enquiry in 2019.

This proposed a new model of strategic place-based leadership to drive inclusive growth in cities through investment in culture. It defined culture as encompassing 'arts institutions, museums, libraries, the historic environment and cultural festivals, popular and grassroots culture' while also recognising that 'culture is a social expression that will take many different forms and is ever evolving.

There is the opportunity to work with the BCP Cultural Compact which acts as a connector and enabler across the BCP cultural community including many dozens of practitioners and groups.

The Compact's arts development officer is a huge advocate of art and artists in library spaces and working with the Cultural Compact would be a valuable way of partnering and delivering.

Artists say Dorset Libraries are very good at including artists through writing workshops and free performances for children.

This strategy aims to make programming more transparent to artists.

Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) Status.

NPO Libraries refers to libraries that have been designated as National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) by Arts Council England. This status signifies that they receive regular funding to deliver a range of cultural and creative activities within their communities.

The NPO programme aims to ensure that everyone has access to great cultural experiences and that creativity is valued and supported. It also aims to reach out to communities that might not have previously benefited from arts funding.

BCP Council already supports six NPO; Arts by the Sea Festival, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Lighthouse Poole, Activate, Pavilion Dance and (with Hampshire) the Red House Museum.

The work delivered by our NPO's underpins the importance of promoting creativity, learning, and community engagement. Through our NPOs we aim to join up our activity and in time, explore the option of pursuing NPO status for our libraries working with Arts Council England. ACE has expressed an initial interest in this.

Music and Heritage

Bournemouth Library has a particular focus on Music and Heritage.

Bournemouth Music Library is one of the biggest public music and dance collections in the south, offering sheet music, books, and recordings of pop, jazz, and classical music.

Choral and orchestral sets are available for loan, and whilst Library Assistants can help users, more capacity is needed to support the organisations and marketing of the items available. As part of the strategy, we will seek to gain volunteer capacity to support development of the catalogue.

The Heritage library in Bournemouth has a range of items about the local area and includes books, maps, directories, photographs, council records and more. A lot of this collection is for reference only and can't be taken away from the library.

In Poole the local history collection is housed by Poole Museum and there is little held within the Council for the Christchurch area.

BCP Council is currently developing a heritage strategy, and the library collections and archive storage will be considered as part of this wider review.

Digital Learning and tackling digital exclusion

Libraries are well known for offering digital access to our communities via free wifi access and public use PCs. Members of the public can access printing and scanning as well as a broad range of reading material through our online digital library.

We will modernise our printing offer to enable wi-fi print without the need to log on to a public PC. We will also consider, as resources allow the IT infrastructure within our libraries to support modern use, particularly for accessing information or study.

The Council's digital strategy (2025) aims to support an organisation wide focus on tackling digital exclusion and libraries are well placed to act as places to support development of this ambition.

Continuing to expand the number of 'tech' buddies in libraries to support communities to get online and feel comfortable and safe in doing so, remains a core commitment.

Challenges

All this ambition comes at a cost and in running our libraries we know that the major challenge for us lays in improving the condition of the library estate and investing in new the mechanical and electrical infrastructure to improve sustainability.

Across the library estate, £1.8m has been identified as being the investment needed to tackle some of the more pressing issues. Charminster and Southbourne as open access sites, will be priorities to invest in, and we will work towards putting together specifications to enable any potential bid for funding for these and other projects.

Running parallel to the library strategy development, there is a wider project looking at the Council's corporate estate to pinpoint how the occupation of our buildings might be rationalised to ensure efficiency and manage costs.

Whilst ensuring that we commit within the library strategy to retaining library services, there are some library buildings which need to be considered as part of this project owing to the link to wider assets.

Creekmoor library is attached to Northmead House, the future of which is under medium to long term consideration. The options around this will at some stage need to be understood, and the future location of the library may need to be consideration as part of that.

In addition, we have some library services which are in buildings which are underutilised but where options to use the space is limited by building configuration and access. The building Parkstone library is based in is not in a suitable condition to use for other services and considering an option to relocate the library close by should be an option we look at over the life of the strategy.

Public Toilets

The lack of availability of public toilets is an issue which is the cause of some dissatisfaction within libraries and currently this is not something we are funded to be able to change.

Some of our libraries are simply too small to accommodate a facility and we need to understand over the life of the strategy whether supporting a provision is practical.

We will look at the sites currently without a public toilet to consider the feasibility of putting one in, but this will need to be completed within the resourcing available. Where a facility can potentially be accommodated, funding would need to be available. Accessibility audits may help to inform any building related project, and we will seek to undertake these to consider options.

Delivery of the strategy

Delivery of the Library Strategy aims to create a library service which is **modern**, **efficient**, **comprehensive** and **sustainable**.

The key priorities under each of the key headings are captured below:

Creating a library service which is **modern**, **efficient**, **comprehensive** and **sustainable**

Modern:

- **Identify practical improvements to library spaces such as better zoning, additional study desks etc.**
- **Improve digital access for library users by implementing wi-fi printing and modernising the public access facilities.**
- **Review the device needs of staff to support digital engagement.**
- **Undertake access surveys across all libraries to inform access needs.**
- **Consider feasibility around inclusion of public toilets and improved baby change facilities.**
- **Improve soft furnishings to enhance spaces and create inviting spaces for literacy, reading and learning.**
- **Work with our insurers to support community access to library spaces.**

Efficient:

- **Review options for the location of libraries which could be improved by local relocation.**

- **Implement open access as an initial pilot.**

- **Increase usage of the four identified open access locations by working with the community to enhance the local offer.**

- **Review physical stock to remove items which do not lend well, create space and refresh displays.**

- **Review opening hours following the introduction of open access technology to standardise hours and ensure accessibility is maximised across clusters.**

- **Introduce up to 4 closure days per year for library staff to undertake training, manage stock and reorganise spaces**

Comprehensive:

- **Continue to support a range of activities and events in libraries to deliver the national universal offers for culture and creativity, health & wellbeing, Information and digital, and reading.**
- **Develop stronger relationships with partners to enrich our commitment to literacy, reader development and study for children.**
- **Develop stronger relationships with the Events team and Cultural Hub to support libraries as places where the community can access arts and cultural events.**
- **Develop stronger relationships with the communities and public health team to support libraries as places where the community can access health and wellbeing provision**

Sustainable:

- **Develop detailed specification for urgent works at our higher risk libraries to be prepared for funding options**
- **Continue to engage with the wider corporate asset review to understand options where the current library may be impacted by a wider review.**
- **Improve opportunities for volunteers to support library and community activity, including tech buddies.**
- **Increase the number of friends groups**
- **Put processes in place to support donations and seek funding through businesses which support community activity**

Summary of our proposals

As part of the development of the draft library strategy we have looked at a series of indicators at library level to understand their individual use and compiled a needs analysis to ensure we understand the wider demographic makeup and needs of the community.

We are proposing to retain all 24 libraries meaning that there is no immediate negative impact on our users. Furthermore, we are committed through the strategy to make some key investments, introducing open access technology to improve opening hours in 4 key locations.

The decision to invest in open access not only serves as a pilot which could lead to the introduction of similar technology in other libraries but safeguards the current staffing arrangements as we transition to the inclusion of this new option.

Importantly, open access is not intended to replace staffed hours but will increase access over and above what we could otherwise afford to do.

Funding is clearly an issue but in moving forwards with our strategy we are seeking to harness funding opportunities to deliver further improvements to library spaces. We will need to monitor the success of this carefully and consider in future years what further funding might be brought to the programme of works.

Through creating more detailed specifications, we are seeking to:

- Consider how to improve the range of services delivered from Charminster, Southbourne, Rossmore and Hamworthy libraries, especially linking to our health and wellbeing and cultural programme development.
- Understand the potential to include additional currently under-utilised space into Winton library.
- Create a state of readiness to seek funding for the various repairing needs within the library estate should any potential source of funding become available.

In addition, over time we will commission access audits of each of the libraries and consider the feasibility for accommodating public toilets.

At an operational level, we will:

- Continue to support the delivery of the national universal offers which span across a diverse and rich range of activities and events.
- Strengthen partnerships to support priority activity and grow opportunities for Volunteers and Friends groups to support the service.
- Consider how to reimagine library spaces through zoning, improvements in furnishings and study spaces, and rationalising physical spaces.