

A Strategy for Library Services in Gloucestershire 2012

1. Context and Background

The world in which we live is changing and one of the key drivers of this change is technology. The digital age is revolutionising how we communicate, how we shop, how we bank, how we find information and advice, and how we buy books - and in what form we choose to read them. Web culture and personal mobiles with 3G interactive technology and the increasing availability of free wi-fi are becoming everyday activities especially for younger people and many people of working age.

The other significant influence is the impact of the global financial situation. In the UK this is challenging public sector service provision and one aspect that impacts upon local authorities especially, is the reduction of the budget settlements and the capping of council tax by the government. This means that the county council is re-assessing priorities and is re-distributing its budget to where there is most acute need and to cater for areas where there is growth in demand for services. The council's approach to dealing with these pressures is known as 'Meeting the Challenge'. This has set three guiding principles for managing council services for the medium term. These are:

- Living within our means
- Providing the basics
- Helping communities to help themselves

The council's aim is to identify around 30% savings overall in terms of the costs of delivering council services in order to stay within budget. This is affecting all service areas and the 2010 'Lets - Talk' consultation exercise identified priorities with residents about how these savings might be met. These discussions helped the council to prioritise and protect budgets for services that provide support to people who may be vulnerable, especially older people needing social care and children at risk.

This strategy for providing library services is set in the context of these two main drivers for change; the technological revolution and the financial situation. Along with other council services, libraries have to take a share of budget savings. Nevertheless, at the same time we have used this opportunity to take a fresh look at our library service, looking at how it is being used and what people will need in the future in order to re-shape it and modernise. Part of the strategy is also to develop the role of the library service as a 'front door' or electronic 'portal' to public sector services whilst at the same time continue to address people's general and specific needs for library services within the resources available to us.

We are not the only council reviewing library services. Across the nation authorities are dealing with the same type of issues and seeking to reshape their service provision to meet local needs. Some are closing libraries, some are implementing community offers, a few are considering whether to contract out library services. Like Gloucestershire, some authorities have had to deal with legal challenges to their change proposals. A select committee inquiry investigated what might constitute a comprehensive and efficient library service for the 21st century and its report is due later in the summer of 2012.

The second phase of the Local Government Association and the Department for Culture Media and Sport's 'Future Libraries Programme' (FLP) aims to facilitate the means by which library authorities can learn from each other's best practices. As part of this, Gloucestershire has been successful in gaining a small grant in 2012 towards facilitating an investigation with our neighbouring authorities to see if we can identify any shared aspects of library service support where we might work together to secure reduced costs. In this way if opportunities for benefits can be found, it will help to relieve some of the pressure from the frontline services in the future.

2. The Legal Framework

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

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

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

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

- i) *providing facilities for the borrowing of, and reference to, books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials in*

sufficient quantity and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirement both of adults and children; and

- ii) encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service, providing advice as to its use, and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required; and*
- iii) securing co-operation between the library authority and others exercising public functions within the county.*

Recent case law suggests that section 7 of the PLMA imposes an implied duty to take reasonable steps to assess the needs which the library service should meet . To this end the detailed 'Context and User Needs Assessment 'has been prepared recording and analysing information which the Council has about the current library service and the apparent needs of its users. The assessment has been updated with new information that arose from the consultation.

The expression "*library service*" is not defined in the PLMA. Library facilities are referred to, but not defined, but library premises are defined in section 8(7). Section 8(7) provides:

"library premises" means

- (a) any premises which are occupied by a library authority and are premises where library facilities are made available by the authority, in the course of their provision of a public library service, to members of the public;*
- (b) any vehicle which is used by a library authority for the purpose of providing such a service and is a vehicle in which facilities are so made available"*

Thus a library service does not have to be provided from fixed premises. Furthermore when the PLMA was enacted nearly half a century ago, the revolution in access to electronic information was not envisaged. Local library authorities therefore need to be mindful of how to comply with section 7 in an age where the means of access to information, reading and learning have changed so much.

Section 9(1) of the PMLA permits a local authority to contribute to the expenses of any other person providing library facilities for the public and section 20 empowers the local authority to generate income by allowing library premises to be used for holding meetings and exhibitions and other events of an educational or cultural nature.

The courts have recently approved the principle that the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service "*cannot be exempt or divorced from*

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

b. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

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

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;*
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

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

The relevant protected characteristics referred to in section 149 are:

age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

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

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

Section 149 states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but that does not permit conduct which is unlawful under the Equality Act.

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

3. The needs assessment and consideration of the demographic characteristics of the county

In developing this draft library strategy we have undertaken a detailed analysis of:

- How library services are currently used
- The county's demographic and socio-economic characteristics
- What we know about library use and expressed library user needs
- How these factors combine to highlight factors that need particular analysis in the context of having regard to the equality duties.

The detail of this is found in the partner document to this strategy entitled: '*Context and User Needs Assessment*'. In that document a large section of the information has been gathered and evaluated under six 'library catchment' clusters that broadly parallel district council areas in order to be able to assess the position within these distinct geographical communities and so that local people can focus on their area where they live. This document was updated in March 2012 following further research and feedback from local communities during the Library Strategy consultation process.

In summary, the assessment told us the following in terms of some key considerations for the library strategy related to the **demographic factors**:

- Population growth is expected to be in Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Stroud
- The population of the county is aging and this is expected to add future economic, social and health related pressures
- 43.3% of the population live in Cheltenham and Gloucester
- About a third of all residents live in rural areas

- Generally people living in rural areas are not as likely to be economically disadvantaged
- People in rural areas need to travel further to access services although there are higher levels of car ownership in rural districts compared to the average for Gloucestershire.
- About 64% of people aged 75 and over live in urban areas
- There are no distinctive patterns in terms of gender with roughly similar numbers of men or women living in each district.
- Most lone parents live in Gloucester district and other urban areas and least in Cotswolds. Lone parents are more likely to be women.
- About 47% of the population are economically active and the economy is faring reasonable well apart from pockets of unemployment.
- There are around 1,000 young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS)
- The number of children 0-19 years is expected to fall with only Gloucester district currently forecasted to show growth.
- The child population living in Gloucester, Cheltenham and Forest of Dean show the highest proportion of pupils with special educational needs, eligibility for free school meals, and low attainment levels for looked after children.
- Levels of socio-economic deprivation are low generally in Gloucestershire but 25 neighbourhoods, all in the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury district council areas are in the top 20% of those listed on the country's indices of multiple deprivation
- The percentage of the black or ethnic minority population is around 6.1% and the majority of the ethnic population live in Gloucester or Cheltenham with some in other towns.
- The highest number of adult care service users live in the Gloucester district, followed by Cheltenham, then Stroud then the Forest with the lowest numbers being in the Tewkesbury district.

In summary, the needs assessment told us the following in terms of some key considerations for the library strategy related to the **Library use and expressed needs**:

- Around 40% of the population appear to use library services of some type
- Borrowing books is still stated as the most popular reason for visiting a library
- There is a significant differentiation between high use at the main urban libraries, especially Cheltenham and Gloucester compared to low use of most rural libraries, this may be partly related to opening hours available
- Just under 18% of the population are actually recorded as borrowing books from our libraries in 2010-11. The figure has not risen above 20% during the previous 5 years.
- There is no typical user or one type of need and people want different things
- People dip in and out of library use at different times of their life

- It appears that more women than men visit libraries
- Peak use appears to be for young children and families and for older retired people with more ad-hoc use from the middle age ranges when they have a specific need to use a library, for example when unemployed or studying
- Almost a third (30%) of the child population under 16 years borrow books from our libraries
- There was an almost equal split between children living in rural or urban areas borrowing books from the library in 2005; 29.6% rural, 30.19% urban
- The children's survey, 2007 showed that they are more likely to visit a library with a family member (75%) but at Matson and Hesters Way a higher percentage of the children were visiting the library without an adult present; 20% at Hesters Way and 30% at Matson
- The most common reason for children to visit was to 'borrow things' and the second most common thing was for reading with 12.5% saying they visited to do their homework
- A low percentage, 0.3% of the population borrow books from mobile libraries. About 50% of people who use mobile libraries also borrow books from other libraries in the county
- In 2010-11, 363,318 sessions were booked on the People's Network PCs in libraries and this represented about 60% of all time available
- There is growth in the use of library services available through digital means
- Postcode analysis of the adult users completing the survey in 2006 indicated that the largest proportion (43%) had travelled between 1 to 3 miles to use the library and only about 2% had travelled more than 12 miles. However, because of the sample size and response base these figures may not reflect actual percentages.

In terms of the 'protected characteristics' outlined in the Equality Act those that are most likely to require consideration in shaping the new draft library strategy in Gloucestershire have been assessed as being mainly in terms of 'age' and 'disability'. We have also given some consideration to 'sex' and 'pregnancy and maternity'. We have been mindful that the impact for people in these groups may have more significance when other factors are combined such as accessibility to services and lone parents and when combined with socio-economic factors.

An Equality & Community Impact Assessment was drawn up as part of the information available during the consultation period. This was updated and reassessed as a result of the feedback received from people who share these and other protected characteristics. This process of assessing and monitoring equality related needs will be embedded into the implementation of any actions arising from this Library strategy.

4. An overview of library services as of January 2012

The picture of library services prior to the new Library Strategy decision of 5th April 2012 can be found in detail in the '*Context and User Needs Assessment*' document. This section is intended to provide some background to the new strategy. We had 38 libraries around the county and 5 mobile libraries. All our libraries provide People's Network PCs for access to the Internet and other digital services. Many have self service facilities and we are continuing to expand this as a means of reducing costs and to free up staff time for other customer service, for example assistance with application for concessionary fares. Several of the libraries are co-located with other partner services also present in the library. Eight with children's centres and five provide 'Police Points'. About two thirds of our libraries have been refurbished in the last 10 years with three new builds. All libraries offer services to support the needs of children, older people and people with disabilities.

One of the mobile libraries, Homelink, is dedicated to providing bulk loans of books to elderly persons' residential homes. Another mobile, Share-A-Book is also used by Library Services for Education (a traded service that provides library services to schools and other education providers). This library's focus is on young children, visiting mostly early years settings. Three mobiles provide a traditional library service in the county, visiting mainly rural areas but also some suburbs of towns. They offer a total of 41 opening hours per week.

The virtual library provides digital access 24/7 to a range of library services including providing library users with the ability to manage their library account remotely, to reserve books and browse the catalogue, to download 'E Audio' books and access to a suite of electronic reference and other information. Together with our computer buddy volunteers we provide support to help people use computers as part of the national campaign to keep people who have never used computers online and especially older people using digital services.

The 'Ask Us' service is our specialist enquiry service available by email or phone and it deals with enquiries from individuals and businesses.

5. Our vision for the new strategy and the outcomes we want to achieve

Access, Aspiration, Opportunity

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

Outcomes

The ways in which this vision will be delivered will change and evolve according to technological innovations in providing books and information services, the needs of Gloucestershire people and, the council resources available to meet these needs but the underlying principles at the heart of the Library Strategy and the outcomes we want to achieve are:

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

6. How will we aim to achieve this vision and these outcomes?

In considering how the library service could be redesigned to achieve the outcomes we want, we have been mindful of any potential significance in relation to impacts on people who may share one or more of the ‘protected characteristics’ outlined in

the Equalities Act 2010. The council has given 'due regard' to the three statutory needs set out in section 149.

The duty is to have 'due regard' to the needs and impacts of policy change on those needs and is not in itself a duty to meet those needs.

For Gloucestershire, the analysis of the evidence base indicated that the two most relevant protected characteristics requiring active consideration in the context of our review of library services were 'age' and 'disability'. These factors become more significant when accessibility is considered as a potential barrier to participation. We also gave some consideration to 'sex' and 'pregnancy and maternity'. The Equality and Community Impact Assessment addresses the detail of the analysis and proposes mitigation to reduce the effects.

This strategy proposes a library service that encompasses different delivery mechanisms through:

- Digital means and via development of the virtual library
- Services targeted to support vulnerable people
- A reconfigured network of libraries.
- Engagement with communities and volunteers
- Development of partnership with other public sector agencies

By working in partnership with communities, other partners, and volunteers we aim to provide a universal library service that is also able to respond to local needs of people in both geographical communities and also to communities of individuals who share an equality related 'protected characteristic' and who may have specific needs in relation to access to services.

7. Digital means and development of the virtual library

Our strategy is that libraries will continue to be key places in the community where people will be able to access broadband and use computers. We will continue to provide support to assist people with accessing digital public services and digital communication, and digital information. The library service can play a pivotal role in ensuring that the gap between the information rich and information poor is reduced and that the digital economy is inclusive and available to all.

Our aim is to continue with the expansion of the services available through our virtual library which means wherever the Internet is available anyone will be able to use these digital services 24/7. We will provide an e.Books download service and online payment for request services. The virtual library will be a key component of the fully transactional council website. We will offer a mobile phone interface to the library

catalogue and we will introduce further improvements including shared book lists, reviews and links to social media.

There is some evidence from national research that men are more likely to use digitally based library services and may not ever enter a library building. The experience of other library authorities already offering e.Books is that through online services library membership increases. Our strategy is to open the virtual library door for many more people and to extend access to services for some people who may be mainly home based due to caring responsibilities or mobility difficulties. In the next 5 years we believe that use of our virtual library services will grow significantly. The digital technology will also make it easier for us to keep in touch with our users about their library service needs.

8. Services targeted to support vulnerable people

We provide, and our strategy is to continue to do so, many services developed to ensure inclusion and access to library services for those that want to use libraries but who may in some way may find access difficult. These help us to provide opportunities for people to participate in public life.

For people with visual impairment: We subscribe to R.N.I.B services to provide talking books by post to the homes of people with visual impairment. Large print books and talking books and clear vision picture books for visually impaired children are also available in our libraries. We provide super nova software and Browse Aloud software and training in their use to make it easier for people with visual impairments to use computers.

For older people and people with mobility difficulties: We offer 25 Library Clubs and co-ordinate community and volunteer transport for older or disabled people so they can visit the library to borrow books and meet others socially helping to reduce isolation for some. For people with mobility disabilities who prefer to stay at home but still want library books we have volunteers to take books to them.

For people with mental health related issues: In partnership with the health service we provide 'Books on Prescription'; self- help and awareness books prescribed by GPs for people with mental health issues.

For people in BME communities and people speaking other languages: We provide books, newspapers and magazines in 4 Indic languages, 4 European languages and Mandarin. In addition to these, we supply books in approximately 25 other languages each year through our subscription to 'Bright Books'.

For the LGBT community: The Library stock policy ensures that books reflecting the experiences of the LGBT community are available. In Gloucester Library there is a Loud and Proud collection.

For very young children and families: The introduction to the library and books starts from birth when our Gloucestershire Registration service joins babies and their families to the library. We provide Baby, Bounce & Rhyme sessions, story times and facilitate the delivery of the national Bookstart programme locally. We work with family learning tutors to provide Quick Read books and venues for classes and activities. We also provide library outreach services to children's centres.

For school age children: The Library helps to support their school work whether this is for internet access or advice about information sources. The Summer Reading Challenge for 4-12 yr olds is a means to help to sustain children's reading ages during the holiday period. Over 9,000 children took part in 2011. This included looked after children and disabled children.

For parents and carers: The library offers books and internet access to enable them to find help and advice, apply for jobs, housing and school places. We provide books on parenting and health, some selected in partnership with the local NHS and tailor family support for lone parents and others in partnership with our children's centres colleagues co-located in libraries.

For job seekers Gloucester Library is the venue for the Gloucestershire First 'job hub' and there is a second job hub in Coleford library. Other libraries are used as venues for the delivery of a six week training programme for NEETs.

8.1 Volunteering

This strategy will encourage partnership and community models that will welcome people who want to become actively involved in volunteering in libraries.

The library service has considerable experience of working with volunteers and has a clear framework for recruitment, training and recognition of volunteers. Many people offer to volunteer when they retire and people come from all walks of life and bring different skills. Volunteers help us to extend library activities to enhance the user experience. Examples are IT buddies helping people use the PCs, library club hosts, delivering books to disabled people.

In partnership with them, we will engage volunteers in a wider range of activity such as helping people to use the self service facilities and assisting those staff providing customer service. This could enable longer opening hours to be achieved in some cases.

We will also seek volunteers to help us to extend the reach of our services and outreach to people who may need extra assistance or support in finding travel options to get to a library and especially for those who may have mobility related disabilities. We will expand the means by which we offer this.

For example, we will work in partnership with the WRVS to help us to extend our outreach services to older disabled people. The council's transport team and the volunteer transport agencies and Rotary clubs will all add to the range of options for supporting travel to libraries should some people require this. We ask people what their needs are so that we are better able to minimise any disadvantages that might create barriers to library use.

9. A Reconfigured Network of Council Libraries.

It is the provision of libraries in the community that will continue to provide the core of our library service offer. We have taken into account the information we have gathered and analysed and also the feedback from consultation in the formulation of criteria. We have kept in mind; the nature of the geographic spread of the county, accessibility in both rural and urban areas, the potential impact in the context of public sector equality duties, factors that may particularly affect people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods of the county and been mindful of the pressures on the council's budget.

This context led us to four main criteria and two further considerations which combined helped us to come to a new network of council run libraries. The four main elements of the criteria are:

- Access to a main library within approximately 20 minutes by car or 30 minutes or less by public transport in the main county towns
- Accessibility of libraries in rural areas
- Density of population in urban areas combined with library use
- Library access to support the needs of people living in the top 20% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country

The further two aspects of consideration that emerged were the need to take into account the demography of the county in terms of the size of the population and secondly, the opportunity to advance public sector partnerships and co- location and the resource benefits this brings whilst also providing access to a wider range of public sector services from one venue.

9.1 Access to a main library within approximately 20 minutes by car or 30 minutes or less by public transport

The principle of having strategically placed main libraries in key towns in each district is the starting point for the proposed re-shaping of the network of library provision. These main libraries will offer a full range of services, and provide PCs with internet access and be open for between 40 to 54 hours per week across six days. All of the libraries will provide a means of connection into the wider council and other public services.

These are located in the main district towns, plus three additional towns in order to serve the most rurally geographically spread districts: Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Dursley, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Coleford, Newent and Stow.

This means that their location matches into the places where people shop and where people are most likely to use other facilities or services. These places have regular public transport and average drive time to one of these libraries would be around 20 minutes or less for residents living in these wider catchment areas. Car parking is also either located adjacent to the library or nearby. Public transport is available to these towns and journey times averaging between around 20 to 30 minutes or less could be made from the surrounding suburbs or villages.

It is envisaged that Gloucester and Cheltenham libraries will provide the largest range of library services and draw in people from across the whole county. Dursley is co-located with several other services in the same venue, Coleford is part of the 'Main Place' venue and Cirencester also provides access to the Registrars service. Gloucestershire constabulary has a 'Police Point' at Newent.

9.2 Accessibility of libraries in rural areas

This criterion takes account of the rural nature of much of the county and considers how access to a library can be maintained for the third of the people living in rural areas. We estimate that this would achieve an average travel time of around 15 minutes by car or within approximately 30 minutes by public transport to either one of these libraries, or to the nearest main library for people living in rural areas.

These libraries are Chipping Campden, Tetbury, Fairford, Cinderford, Lydney and Winchcombe which are all towns that provide shopping and other facilities including nearby parking. Tetbury, Fairford and Winchcombe are also currently co-located with a children's centre.

These libraries will be open between 28 to 35 core opening hours across 5 days of the week including at least half a day on a Saturday. They are seen as local

additions to the main library and we propose that they will be known as 'local' libraries.

9.3 Density of population in urban areas combined with library use

The towns in the Severn Vale, especially Cheltenham and Gloucester, account for the largest proportion of the population and have the largest population density. Forty-three percent of the population live in Cheltenham and Gloucester. The greater the population density the more likely there is to be higher demand for public services and other facilities. The larger populations also mean higher actual numbers of people who may have specific needs in terms of sharing one or more of the equality duty's protected characteristics. Hence, suburban libraries in towns will serve these areas of larger population as well as the main library.

In order to consider which of the suburban libraries in these towns should remain part of the revised network of libraries, usage statistics were considered on the basis that high use suggests that there is a need. These libraries all consistently record the highest levels of visits, and fall within the top 10 of the most visited libraries in the county. Access considerations ensure that public transport in these areas is good and a high proportion of residents may also be able to walk to a library.

These libraries are: Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Charlton Kings, Up Hatherley and Bishop's Cleeve. Apart from Hucclecote and Longlevens these libraries are also co-located with a children's centre. Longlevens is a dual use library shared with the junior school. Except for Longlevens, these libraries are all located near supermarkets or shopping precincts. In the Quedgeley area the housing development in surrounding areas has expanded considerably in the last three years including social housing

These libraries will also be known as local libraries, supplementing the services of the main library. They will be open for between 35 to 40 opening hours across 5 days per week. This range of hours will enable the council to make some savings. Our strategy is to work with the local community to extend these hours for example, through co-location of services or by volunteers working alongside library staff.

9.4 Library access to support the needs of people living in the top 20% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country

In terms of deprivation factors there are 25 neighbourhoods or 'Super Output Areas' (SOAs) in the larger urban areas of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury that are in the top 20% of the most deprived ones in the country when combining multiple

indices of deprivation. Two of these SOAs are within the catchment area of Cheltenham library and 12 within the catchment area of Gloucester library and one, Priors Park, in Tewkesbury. These main libraries and their outreach services will continue to serve the needs of people living in these areas.

The remainder of the SOAs or neighbourhoods with deprivation factors in the top 20% of the country are in the following current library catchment areas: Hesters Way (5 SOA), Prestbury (1 SOA- Oakley/Whaddon), Matson (2 SOA), Tuffley (2 SOA).

The analysis of the social and economic data about the characteristics of these four communities combined with the equality analysis demonstrated that there could be potential for greater impact in terms of reduced equality of opportunity for some people with specific needs. For example, in terms of more lone parents, lower educational achievement, more young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS) and more people on income support related benefits.

The council will provide a core library service and aim to work with community groups so that library services can be tailored and targeted to meet local needs. The council will provide advice, library stock, PCs and customer service staff and aim to work with partner organisations who can bring additional knowledge and skills to support the library offer to local people and by offering developmental volunteering opportunities opening hours could also be extended. Co-location will be actively considered as part of these partnerships. The libraries in these communities; Hesters Way, Matson, Tuffley and Prestbury will also be known as local libraries. A core of 21 hours per week is provided in each case as support to these areas of deprivation.

Although Hesters Way is within two miles of the centre of Cheltenham with good bus routes every 10 minutes to the centre of town, this library also serves the Springbank and Fiddlers Green areas which are further away from central Cheltenham. It is currently ranked 17th in terms of library visits.

Matson library has consistently shown low levels of use and is ranked 26th in terms of visits to libraries, this representing 1% of all county library visits. However, the needs assessment indicates that the library is used by children and young people for homework and access to PCs especially.

Tuffley library is poorly used in comparison with other libraries and is ranked 24th. In this catchment area there are two neighbourhoods in the category of top 20% most deprived neighbourhoods, Tuffley and Podsmead. Podsmead is Gloucestershire's most deprived community. People living in Podsmead may also be using the Gloucester library. Analysis of the Tuffley community indicates that there are a disproportionate number of social care users with a physical disability living in this area and the current use of the library shows that there is some demand for the service particularly from physically disabled people and school children. The library is expensive to maintain and cost per visit is over 50% above the average for the

county. We will consider means to reduce costs through co-location or by exploring options for an alternative venue. We will consult about this if options become available.

Prestbury library is less than 2 miles from the central Cheltenham library and the library serves both a relatively affluent community to the north and east of the area and also the Oakley / Whaddon area to the south west of Prestbury which accounts for the SOA in this library catchment. Prestbury library together with Cheltenham library will provide outreach into the Oakley and Whaddon area and as Cheltenham's main library is also within 2 miles of this community, we are proposing that 12 hours will be provided as the council's core opening hours for Prestbury. Increases to these core opening hours could be made possible through active volunteering by the local community and a number of local people have volunteered to work alongside library staff at this library.

Further factors considered: Population size

Of the group of libraries not identified under the four criteria above, two are sited in communities with populations over 10,000 people. These are Churchdown with 15,496 people and Stonehouse with 11,243 people according to 2009 data. Churchdown library is the 14th busiest library in the county in terms of visits and this represents 2.7% of all county library visits. A core of 12 opening hours per week will be provided with opportunities to increase these with input from the local community and these will also be known as local libraries. A number of local people have volunteered to work alongside library staff at this library.

Stonehouse library is 30th in the ranking of visits to libraries and this represents less than 1% of all visits to county libraries. This may be partly because it is on the edge of the town and shopping area. However, the PCs are recording higher usage compared to the county average. Community analysis of Stonehouse shows that there is an average mix of older and younger people but the library catchment area shows one of the higher proportionate concentrations of adult care service users with all three types of disability (physical, mental and learning). All other economic and children's indicators are also slightly below average. A core of 12 opening hours per week will be provided with opportunities to increase these with input from the local community. The nature of the design and build of this library means that on-going maintenance is costly and this continues to rise and cost per visit figures for 2010 - 11 were 10% above the norm for the county. Our strategy is to investigate if an alternative shared location can be found.

Further factors considered: Public sector partnership and co-location

We see every library as an access point to public sector Gloucestershire. We have a number of examples where we have gone beyond this and already co-locate with a partner and this has reduced our operating costs and we want to sustain these lower cost solutions. This also provides the local community with access to a wider range of services from one site. It is proposed that these arrangements continue.

Co-location agreements that are in place in libraries (outside of the libraries covered by the four main criteria) are: 'Police Point' co-locations at Nailsworth, Wotton and Moreton in Marsh with three year agreements.

At Moreton in Marsh, Cotswolds Volunteers Agency (North) and the Registration service also share this site. These partner services at Moreton in Marsh means that longer opening hours have been made possible. Under the strategy the core opening hours provided by the county will be 12 per week but the partnerships mean that at least double this number can be implemented.

At Bourton on the Water, there is an agreement with the Police that the library could re-locate to the Police station and thereby save the constabulary and the council expenditure. There is also the possibility of the library and Police Point moving into a new venue in the medium to longer term, subject to the success of the parish council's plans for the community centre. The premises currently occupied incurs ongoing maintenance problems and hence our strategy is to seek an alternative venue or co-location with the Police and to provide a core of 12 opening hours per week with the possibility of moving to the community centre in the longer term.

These four libraries; Nailsworth, Wotton, Moreton in Marsh and Bourton on the Water together with Churchdown and Stonehouse will also be known as local libraries. Further co-location of new partners, financial contributions from parish councils or others and active volunteering from people living in these communities could mean that library opening hours could be extended above the proposed core offer of 12 hours per week.

The reconfigured network in summary

This reconfigured Library Network has identified 31 locations for provision of static libraries and we believe that this will provide a comprehensive and efficient network of libraries. Opening hours will be sufficient to ensure two libraries or more are open in each of the six districts on any one of six days of the week.

This will mean that people should be able to get to a council run library within a relatively reasonable journey by foot, by public transport or by a short car journey within around 20 minutes, depending on where they live as a starting point.

By working in partnership with others we are aiming to provide county libraries which meet the outcomes we want and also reflect local needs and are able to respond effectively to changes in demand.

The proposed reconfigured network of council libraries includes:

Main Libraries: Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Dursley, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Coleford, Newent and Stow all open 6 days per week.

Local Libraries: Chipping Campden, Tetbury, Fairford, Cinderford, Lydney and Winchcombe, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Charlton Kings, Up Hatherley and Bishop's Cleeve open over 5 days per week and providing between 28 to 40 hours per week.

Local Libraries: Hesters Way, Matson and Tuffley providing a core of 21 opening hours per week in these deprived areas and for these to be extended through partnership with the community.

Local Libraries: Prestbury, Nailsworth, Wotton, Moreton in Marsh, Bourton on the Water, Churchdown and Stonehouse providing a core of 12 opening hours per week to be extended through partnership with the community.

We believe that these 31 libraries will meet the needs of library service users through the library venue and through outreach activity into the community. These outreach services will be in line with the council's priorities for vulnerable people and aims for improving life outcomes and to open up equality of opportunity. All libraries will offer a variety of access means for people who may have specific needs in relation to use of this public service. For example, all libraries will be part of the 'keep safe' scheme for people with learning disabilities, all libraries will either provide library clubs and arrange transport for people with disabilities or mobility difficulties or alternatively offer them volunteers to take books to them if they cannot easily leave their home.

This network of libraries, the outreach services to vulnerable people and the virtual library will form the council's library service.

10. Engagement with communities and volunteers

Community Offer and Community Libraries

The council's Meeting the Challenge programme launched the 'Big Community Offer' in 2010. The council seeks to provide support to enable local people to take over community buildings and tailor services to meet local needs. The offer has included options for purchasing council facilities, for bidding for a share of capital sale proceeds for reinvestment in different venues or leases at peppercorn rents.

This community offer is applied in those communities where our library strategy is not proposing a council run library. This applies to Berkeley, Brockworth, Bream, Minchinhampton, Lechlade, Mitcheldean and Newnham.

Usage of these libraries is generally poor with low visits per opening hour and does not represent good value for money. Details can be found in the '*Context and User Needs*' document.

We believe that the council's provision of library services from libraries in nearby communities will meet the needs of people living in these areas.

Nevertheless, we want to provide interested parties in these seven areas with the opportunity to operate a community library as an addition to the county service. This community offer for libraries, in addition to the core options around asset transfer, will:

- Provide the community group with furniture and a book collection
- Provide and support the library management system for issuing books
- Provide and support People's Network PCs providing library users with access to the Internet and thereby the Virtual Library
- Provide van collection services to deliver and collect books reserved from other libraries
- Provide training with setting up a library and follow up with further advice and guidance during the transition period
- Provide a Community Libraries Support Officer as an ongoing contact for advice
- Liaise with our book suppliers to obtain discounts
- Provide a revenue grant

We will engage with communities to provide support to help them develop and sustain a community library tailored to their specific local needs.

We also believe that there could be greater ownership of the service at a local level with a good understanding of local needs and use of local skills to open up opportunities to broaden the role of the library as a flexible community resource. The council will work with community groups and endeavour to find new community options in the event of a failure of a group. Should this happen a report will be prepared for Cabinet Members' consideration.

Since the library building was vacated in 2009, the community in Painswick has been served by the county mobile service. With support from the county council a Community Library in Painswick (C.L.I.P.) was established as Gloucestershire's first community library in July 2012.

The council believes in maintaining engagement with volunteers and communities so that library services can be shaped at a local level and will aim to establish regular forums for this purpose.

10. Development of partnership with other public sector agencies

We recognise that our library services form part of a wider network of services, including those of council and partner agencies, which contribute to bringing about sustainable and active communities. We want our library services to become a 'front door,' or electronic portal, that provides an access route to other public services. We believe that this will evolve further during the next few years as all parties seek to explore the means to provide access to their services in the most cost efficient way.

Public Sector Services Mobile

One of the first avenues we explored with our public sector partners during the consultation about the library proposals was the possibilities for providing a public sector mobile vehicle to sustain a rural mobile library service as one element of these wider services. We know that this is being done elsewhere in the country.

When we looked into the details about our mobile library services we found that it is one of the most costly ways for the council to deliver a library service but by sharing with partners we believe efficiencies will be achieved. The details about the 5 mobile library services to date are found in the '*Context and User Needs*' document.

Three provide a traditional mobile library service across the county visiting both rural and urban areas mainly in the Forest of Dean, the Cotswolds and Stroud areas.

These mobile library services are being used by around 0.3% of the county population and they are an expensive means of providing a library service.

In total the mobile stops add up to 41 opening hours per week which is £62 per opening hour. In 2010-11, the average cost per visit was £8.90. As use of the mobiles has declined we have removed stops and altered routes. This is one of the reasons why we will develop alternative use for a vehicle with our public sector partners.

We recognise that mobile libraries may be especially valued by people who can not easily access alternative library provision and we are addressing this as part of our strategy. The research has shown us that this may not be a high a number of people and that about 50% of registered mobile library members also use another library.

When we withdraw a stop we offer any individuals affected an alternative if they are older or infirm and cannot travel to other libraries or mobile stops. This being either a volunteer to collect books from a library and deliver them to their home or community transport to bring them into a library club once a month. In June and July 2011, we carried out telephone surveys with mobile library users to see how many people might be unable to access alternative library provision if mobile library service were to be withdrawn. Out of the 1,151 people / families contacted 122 people representing 7% of the mobile users said they would need some assistance.

During the Library Strategy consultation process we have found out more information about what the impact could be if we withdrew mobile library services especially in relation to accessibility and impacts on older people, disabled people and children and families without alternative access to transport. The consultation process also provided us with the opportunity to explore the level of interest from partners in provision of public sector service mobile vehicle and an opportunity to consider the response from the public and library users. There was support for the development of a public sector mobile service and our strategy is to establish such a service.

Homelink and Share- A- Book Mobile Library Services.

The 'Homelink' mobile provides a service to elderly persons residential homes and sheltered accommodation depositing bulk loans of books and DVDs. Its time available for public access is equivalent has averaged 18 opening hours per week. It serves 171 homes in the county and this works out at a cost of £13.24 per visit and £1.03 per issue. This service is focused on serving the needs of older people. Library services to residential homes are not provided by all library authorities.

This strategy proposed that this means of delivering books will be withdrawn and replaced with a personalised service which is focused on meeting the needs of the individual person in the residential home and providing volunteers to deliver books

directly to those who want them. Additionally, in partnership with the residential home arrangements for a 'book box' loan to be collected from one of our libraries will also be offered as an alternative and in some cases the new mobile service will stop near residential homes

The Share-A-Book (SAB) mobile library visits mainly early-years settings in deprived communities to provide a library experience to young children. The service is available for 14 opening hours per week. The cost per visit is £7.24. The vehicle is shared with Library Services for Education (LSE) who are already using this mobile for the other half of the week to provide loans to children's centres and schools.

The strategy proposes that this service through the SAB mobile and through LSE will continue to be part of the means by which we support children and families in the future, through schools and children's centres. This will be combined with the outreach services from the main and local libraries. During the school holiday period, the vehicle will also be used to provide some outreach activities to traveller sites and looked after children and other prioritised groups, subject to resource availability.

11. Summary

A draft strategy formed the basis for the period of deliberative and extensive consultation with residents and library users. Revisions were proposed and the library strategy agreed by Cabinet on 5th April 2012. Seven recommendations were made and agreed by Cabinet. This strategy has been updated in the context of these recommendations. We believe, on the basis of the information we have analysed, and the consultation feedback received that this strategy for future library provision will enable the Council to comply with section 7 of the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 and that in adopting the recommendations of the Cabinet meeting of 5th April 2012, the Council has had due regard to the needs referred to in section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act.

The library strategy is offered in a climate when resource implications cannot be ignored. We believe that by working together with others we will be able to provide a library service that will also enable us to address some of the constraints of a reduced budget whilst responding to the local needs of people in both geographical communities and also to communities of individuals who may have specific needs in relation to access to services. We also believe that the development of virtual library services will help us to build on this and extend library access to more people.

We propose that this strategy will help us to achieve our vision to support individuals and local communities to achieve their aspirations by creating a vibrant, welcoming

library service that provides access to books, information and learning opportunities in a variety of ways and in partnership with others.

During the consultation process we have gathered further information in order to help us to assess how our proposals could impact upon people. We have used this period to test out our proposals, for example, with people who may share one or more of the protected characteristics referred to in section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act. This additional information has enabled the council to have due regard to the three needs set out in section 149 at the point when the decision was made to implement service changes. It has also enabled the council to make a fully informed assessment of the need for library services.

A period of implementation of this strategy commenced from May 2012.

August 2012