

## Library Service Annual Report

To: Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 8 December 2022

From: Head of Libraries, Archives and Culture, Gary Porter

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: For the Committee to be updated on the activities and performance of the Library service in 2022.

Recommendations: It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Supports the continuance of the Cross-Party Working Group;
- b) Endorses The Library Presents - future delivery plan; and
- c) Endorses the Libraries Income Generation Action Plan.

### Officer contact:

Name: Gary Porter  
Post: Head of Libraries, Archives and Culture  
Email: [gary.porter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:gary.porter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706379

### Member contacts:

Names: Councillor Tom Sanderson and Councillor Hilary Cox Condron  
Post: Chair/Vice-Chair  
Email: [tom.sanderson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:tom.sanderson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
[hilary.coxcondron@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:hilary.coxcondron@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706398

## 1. Background

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with an annual update on the activities and performance of the Library Service in 2022 through the lens of key topics considered by the Libraries Cross-Party Working Group.
- 1.2 The Cross-Party Working Group has proved to be a valuable space to examine in more detail the issues, challenges and opportunities facing the Library service during the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Terms of Reference of the group are attached at Appendix 1. It is recommended the Cross-Party Working Group continues to operate.
- 1.3 This report also provides an update on The Library Presents (TLP) programme. Future funding has been secured from Arts Council until 2026 and the Committee is asked to endorse the development of this second era for TLP.
- 1.4 The Library service has developed an action plan focused on income generation as a response to the financial challenges faced by Council services. Members are asked to endorse the approaches detailed in the action plan.

## 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 This report updates members on several key issues and developments in relation to the library service.
- 2.2 The Library service is making strong progress on its post Covid-19 service recovery journey. Performance against key performance indicators agreed in December 2021 is included, along with an update on regional work to develop better practices to understand the impact of the service's work.
- 2.3 The financial challenges facing the service are described. In particular, a review of income generation activities has led to an action plan, which is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2.4 The existing external funding for the Business and Intellectual Property Centres (BIPC) ends in March 2023, but new funding solutions are in place which will see the development of this service which plays an important role in supporting the development of small businesses across the County.
- 2.5 Members previously endorsed the successful Libraries Improvement Fund project in December 2021, and an update on this project is included in this report.
- 2.6 Funding for The Library Presents (TLP), the Council's Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) offer, is due to end in March 2023 after four successful years. The service reapplied to retain NPO status and Arts Council Funding until 2026. This application has been successful, which means that TLP is secured until 2026.
- 2.7 As a community-facing service, the libraries are well placed to support the localism aspirations and some examples of the service's current approach are described (BIPC Shared Prosperity Fund Offers; Libraries Improvement Fund Consultation; Engagement activities with the TLP programme). Going forward the Library service will work even more closely in an integrated fashion with the family of services contained within the Strategy and Partnerships directorate, in particular Cambridgeshire Skills and Communities.

## 3. Issues in Detail

### 3.1 Performance

#### 3.1.1 Quantitative Performance

- (i) Indicator 36: Active Users (Number of Members in last 12 months)  
Actual: 82,564. Target: 107,236. Last Quarter: 79,024. Performance: Improving.

A successful Summer Reading Challenge saw the service add to the number of active users and it continues to reach out in novel ways. The Book Bikes and Mobile Libraries attended several summer events and activities to reach out to new and lapsed members. However, the lower footfall in town centres is seeing these libraries struggle to capture the same number of people they did before the pandemic.

- (ii) Indicator 37: Number of Library Visits (in last 12 months)  
Actual: 340,474. Target: 475,381. Last Quarter: 309,289. Performance: Improving

Visitors are beginning to show a real return to numbers before the pandemic. Again, the Summer Reading Challenge brought in visits, alongside new mindfulness, mental health, and well-being cafes in March, Wisbech and Cambridge Central. The service is looking to roll out this good practice as part of the libraries Warm Welcome Offer during Q3, to help residents cope with a potentially challenging winter in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.

- (iii) Indicator 38: Digital Engagement (Number of Digital Interactions in each quarter)  
Actual: 361,311. Target: N/A. Last Quarter: 336,428. Performance Improving.

Digital engagement continues to be strong, with the new Facebook for Families page continuing to grow strongly. The September period of national mourning did create a significant period of little to no posting on the Council's social media which did affect reach, as several postings needed to be cancelled.

#### 3.1.2 Qualitative Performance.

At its meeting in December 2021, the Committee endorsed the Library service pursuing a new approach to qualitative performance to enable the service to demonstrate the impact of service provision. It is important that the service understands the impact of its work, as well as the numbers accessing its services. As a member of Libraries Connected (East), Cambridgeshire has commissioned Creative UEA (University of East Anglia), to complete an evaluation research report for East of England libraries. Jointly funded by Libraries Connected and a grant from Arts Council, the scope of the work is:

- Digital Inclusion: assessing the impact of providing free access to digital skills and devices on adults and children
- Health, wellbeing, and independent living: assessing the impact of providing activities and events for adults in libraries including the significance for social prescribing models
- Children's literacy and associated outcomes: assessing the impact of targeted library programmes for children and young people that supports literacy recovery following

the pandemic.

This work is just beginning and is due to be completed in Spring 2023. Demonstrating impact is extremely important for library services to make convincing cases to be commissioned by other public services, based on improved outcomes for individuals and more cost-effective uses of public resources.

## 3.2 Service Recovery and Financial Challenges

3.2.1 The Cross-Party Working Group considered performance both before and after the pandemic, and some of the issues facing the Library Service. It identified increasing budget pressures as costs increase (new libraries, inflation and new demands) while sources of income decline (the long-term loss of hire charges and fines from the core library stock and pressures on hiring out space, the service's principal source of income, with restrictions related to Covid-19).

3.2.2 The service has been able to use some previously allocated transformation funds to commission a consultant to provide an external overview of the service's income generation activities. These consultants interviewed a variety of officers and Members, alongside comparing the service nationally to similar services and best practice, to create a report on income generation for Cambridgeshire Libraries. The result has helped to understand the service's needs and priorities, as well to highlight important links to other Council opportunities. The service has devised an action plan, attached at Appendix 2 that can be summarised as:

- Refining and improving the service's venue hire offer.
- Reviewing the service's core systems and processes to maximise income potential such as a shift away from cash.
- Improving the service's marketing; refining core messages and creating a strategy.
- Partnership review – how the service engages with Friends and key funders, such as the Combined Authority and the NHS.
- Taking a longer view at the diversity of income and the future of current sources of income.

## 3.3 Mobile Library Service Review

3.3.1 Cambridgeshire currently has three mobile libraries stopping at 385 locations in villages and communities throughout the County. The service provides a vital connection for rurally isolated, elderly, and low mobility customers. Stops include popular community centres, retirement housing, schools, village greens and are often the first library offer in new communities, such as Eddington. In addition to the core library offer, the vehicles provide access to hearing aid batteries, feral replacement, battery recycling and community information. A review of the service was carried out in 2022.

3.3.2 A review of the mobile library stops was undertaken to ensure new vehicles and their routes reflected new communities and opportunities, while continuing to reach residents unable to easily access the static library provision. It was agreed that the review would:

- Try and ensure as many communities as possible had the opportunity of a stop,
- Include visits to those in sheltered housing and care homes who cannot reach static library provision.
- Ensure new communities had sufficient cover.
- Attempt to use mobile libraries to increase community presence at events and workplaces when possible.
- Convert two cargo bikes to help libraries attend smaller local events such as summer fetes.

3.3.3 As a result of this review, twenty-one additional stops were added and routes were rearranged, enabled by storing vehicles within communities, rather than centrally. Members were asked to provide feedback, and helped link up to existing service offers and promote new stops, such as the popular new Northstowe mobile stop that regularly attracts over 50 visits. Social media, parish noticeboards and newsletters were used to help push the message of the service's offer. A full map of the mobile library stops is attached at Appendix 3 to this report.

3.3.4 The results of changes introduced mean:

- Mobile libraries are available to the public nearly 20% longer - reduced driving between stops.
- Travel has been reduced (over 150 fewer miles travelled a month and so less fuel used).
- The service has visited several events around the County, such as Thriplow Daffodil weekend, Ely and Cambridge Prides, fetes in Sutton, numerous outdoor The Library Presents events, Our Place in Space, and many more summer fetes by local staff using the new book bikes.
- 300 new members May-September, 6,296 visits to the vehicles and over 20,000 items issued (showing a stronger recovery than many of the service's static libraries to pre-pandemic levels).
- Bessie the book bike and partner Jessie the Jubilee bike have attended 12 events to raise awareness for the service (including a royal reception at Cambridgeshire Day).

### 3.4 Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC)

3.4.1 So far this year (April – September 2022) the BIPC Cambridgeshire & Peterborough has had 400 interactions with entrepreneurs across 78 events (made up of one to ones, webinars, coffee mornings and external events delivery). A further 162 enquiries were received within that time.

3.4.2 Building on the programmes previous success, the BIPC team re-launched their [BIPC Jumpstart programme](#), aimed at providing support to new entrepreneurs within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority region. 11 businesses will also benefit from grant funding in December 2022.

3.4.3 The BIPC external funding through the Department for Culture, Media, Sport via the British Library is due to cease on 31 March 2023. To enable a continuation of the service from April 2023 onwards, two funding streams have been confirmed:

- Funding stream 1 – Working Cambridgeshire Skills to provide one year of funding (April 23 – Mar 24). Cambridgeshire Skills and the BIPC will work closely to develop a model of support that will deliver sessions to residents across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority region.
- Funding stream 2 – Working with East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire economic development teams to deliver on UK Shared Prosperity Fund outcomes, as determined by each district. This funding of around £275k will allow the BIPC to provide a more developed service offering for each of these districts for two years from April 2023.

### 3.5 The Library Presents (TLP)

3.5.1 TLP brings quality arts activities to Cambridgeshire. The programme is run by the Council in partnership with Babylon ARTS and is funded by Arts Council England. Cambridgeshire is one of only six Library service 'National Portfolio Organisations' in the country, part of a select group. The programme is now in its fifth year, and the current funding agreement runs from 2018 to March 2023, bringing a total of £878,316 into the County from the Arts Council.

3.5.2 Earlier this year, an application was made to Arts Council England for funding to continue running the programme, further establishing the cultural offer in the County's towns and villages across the County. The bid has been successful, which enables TLP to continue to be funded up to March 2026. This is a tremendous achievement and a credit to the hard work of all colleagues delivering the programme.

3.5.3 The main part of the programme sees performances and workshops over two seasons per year [in libraries across Cambridgeshire](#). Localism underpins the service's approach. The process positively encourages real community choice, and residents are invited to help select content for the next season in their library from a menu of artists/art forms. TLP work across the County, with a focus on locations furthest from cultural opportunity. The programme is delivered in approximately 23 libraries each year, and occasionally in other locations, such as churches and outdoor venues. Programme delivery and promotion relies heavily on staff and volunteers.

3.5.4 The programme is aligned to the social mobility agenda; work is prioritised in communities in the most deprived wards and places with least access to culture. TLP also deliver focused work with priority groups, and are currently delivering activities with additional accessibility.

3.5.5 The inclusive and responsive model which has been created is working. Critical feedback is positively encouraged.

3.5.6 Over the five years, TLP have delivered over 500 events, a mix of performances and workshops across all artforms (theatre, music, dance, poetry, storytelling, puppetry visual arts, digital) with activities suitable for adults, families, young people. There are also Arts

Award programmes for primary and secondary school pupils, and activities in Artsmark schools.

### 3.5.7 Audience numbers

- Year 1 total attendance across all activities 2,399
- Year 2 total 3,563 people were engaged across all activities.
- Year 3 total engagement: 13,672 - 5,879 (43%) estimated as Cambridgeshire based
- Year 4 – total 5,306 (96.7% Cambridgeshire based).
- Year 5, 1,216 in the Spring Season (75% capacity) and the ongoing Autumn Season is looking very positive, with 65% of tickets sold and so far, 26 events sold out.

### 3.5.8 Audience response

According to the feedback surveys, over 90% of respondents rate the quality as very good or good. Questions on pricing reveal that the vast majority think the level is just right. It is important that TLP is accessible to the communities it serves. The service's current focus is on creating a more accessible and inclusive experience for people with disabilities. It is also aware of cost as a potential barrier, and for this reason Time Credits are accepted, 'family saver' tickets are offered, and this year 'pay what you think' tickets are being trialled.

3.5.9 Normal service has been restored following the significant changes required during Covid-19 restrictions. In Autumn 2021, live events resumed in libraries, with very limited audience capacities for events in libraries. In the Spring of 2022, the first programme of events was held in libraries since before the pandemic. This was successful, with 74% of all available tickets sold.

## 3.6 'EverySpace' – Libraries Improvement Fund Project

3.6.1 Cambridgeshire Libraries received £260,000 from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sports, delivered by Arts Council England via the Libraries Improvement Fund. The grant is supplemented by £128,968 of funding received because of new housing developments (housing developers are required to contribute funding for public services on the completion of new homes). This is a twin site project (Cambridge Central and March), but the learning will inform future capital project developments across the County.

3.6.2 EverySpace is centred around adaptable, co-managed spaces that enable the community to connect, share, create and discover. It follows the 'kit-of-parts' model, capturing the flexibility and inventiveness of a pop-up within a defined architectural system.

3.6.3 Working together with the service's appointed architects, Cambridgeshire Libraries has completed Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Phase 1 of the design process. Key highlights of this phase include:

- Extensive key stakeholder engagement being carried out, resulting in a programmatic audit and first draft design. The design collates emerging themes/uses and furniture/equipment needs.
- An interactive design workshop for young people (9+) and their families delivered at both sites during October half-term. Participants created Swiss Army furniture by deconstructing and merging doll's house furniture into new designs, delivering multiple uses.

- Launched Design Mentorship scheme for young people aged 16-18, aimed at those with a keen interest in design. An EverySpace Design mentee has been recruited to shadow the project at each site, supporting design development and project delivery. Each recruit receives professional advice from the architects, as well as an opportunity to visit their London studio to participate in design work.

3.6.4 Public consultation launched on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at both sites, with the architects in attendance. Consultations boards showing concept design and visuals shown with public engagement:

- Presented early engagement and ambition.
- Presented concept design proposal.
- Celebrated young people's participation.
- Built community support and encouraged local ownership.
- Collected feedback on designs.
- Display boards left in situ at both sites for further consultation.

This approach demonstrates a commitment to local engagement and decision making aligned to the Council's localism agenda.

3.6.5 The library service is making excellent progress on its post Covid-19 recovery journey. Where there are challenges, such as income shortfalls, the service is demonstrating creativity and planning to overcome these. The service also continues to be successful in securing external funding, as evidenced by the renewed funding for The Library Presents and Business and Intellectual Property Centres. The service is well placed to face the challenges anticipated in 2023.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

#### 3.1 Environment and Sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### 3.2 Health and Care

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### 3.3 Places and Communities

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### 3.4 Children and Young People

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### 3.5 Transport

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4. Significant Implications

#### 4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

- 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications  
See wording under 4.1
- 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications  
See wording under 4.1
- 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications  
See wording under 4.1
- 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications  
See wording under 4.1
- 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement  
See wording under 4.1
- 4.7 Public Health Implications  
See wording under 4.1

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?

Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement?

Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?

Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

No

Name of Officer:

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

No

Name of Officer:

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?

No

Name of Officer:

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

No

Name of Officer:

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

## 5. Source documents guidance

5.1 None