

Executive Board – 17 January 2023

Subject:	Library Transformation
Corporate Director	Frank Jordan, Corporate Director for Resident Services Hugh White, Director of Sport and Culture
Portfolio Holder(s):	Pavlos Kotsonis, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Planning
Report author and contact details:	Nigel Hawkins, Head of Culture and Libraries
Other colleagues who have provided input:	Stephen Chartres, Performance and Improvement Manager – Sport and Culture Natalie Hallam, Business Development Officer – Sport and Culture Maria Balchin, Senior Commercial Business Partner Simon Yates Strategic Asset Manager Beth Brown, Head of Legal and Governance Emily Jones, HR Consultant – Sport and Culture David Jones – Public Health Consultant
Subject to call-in: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Key Decision: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Criteria for Key Decision: (a) <input type="checkbox"/> Expenditure <input type="checkbox"/> Income <input type="checkbox"/> Savings of £750,000 or more taking account of the overall impact of the decision and/or (b) Significant impact on communities living or working in two or more wards in the City <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Type of expenditure: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Capital	
Total value of the decision: £233,000	
Wards affected: All	
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s): December 2022	

Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:

Clean and Connected Communities
Keeping Nottingham Working
Carbon Neutral by 2028
Safer Nottingham
Child-Friendly Nottingham
Healthy and Inclusive
Keeping Nottingham Moving
Improve the City Centre
Better Housing
Financial Stability
Serving People Well

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Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):

This report provides an update on the findings from the second phase of public consultation exercise undertaken regarding the future delivery and transformation of Nottingham's library service. It also provides recommendations regarding the future of the services having taken account of that consultation.

The consultation process was undertaken over a period of 12-weeks along with additional stakeholder engagement which sought views on the following

1. Transformation Principles:

- Building partnerships and collaboration
- Flexible and adaptable approach to working
- Making the most of technology
- Modernising and rationalising the library network

2. Proposed changes to the library network:

- Closure of Basford Library.
- Closure of Radford Lenton Library; and
- Closure of Aspley Library to the public to re-purpose as a distribution point for Home Library Service, Bookstart, Nottingham Performing Arts Library Service and mobile/outreach services.

The set of recommendations outlined below take account of the consultation and feedback received including:

- The views and concerns expressed by citizens and stakeholders
- An updated review of the financial position of the Library Service
- Factors and opportunities which have emerged since January 2022
- A clearer understanding of the changes to when and how citizens use library services following the pandemic
- The overall need to deliver a sustainable and modern Library Service

Does this report contain any information that is exempt from publication?

No

Recommendation(s)
1. Approve the transformation principles for future delivery of the library service as set out in Appendix 1. "The Next Chapter Nottingham City Council Library Service Transformation, Phase 2 Findings Report, Part 2, REVISED Recommendations December 2022"
2. Agree to the retention of Aspley Library as a publicly accessible library but redesign the space to enable the building to become a stock distribution hub and base for outreach services as detailed in Section 5.1
3. Agree, as an alternative to the library closures, to a change of opening hours across the network. This will result in a reduction in service, the implications of which are set out in section 5.2 & Appendix 1, pg 27
4. Note that the proposals, if approved, will be implemented by the Corporate Director for Communities, Environment and Resident Services in accordance with delegation 18 of the constitution.

1 Background

- 1.1 In March 2021, Nottingham City Council Library Service embarked on a comprehensive piece of work to help better understand what our communities require from a modern library service and to develop a transformation programme for the service. This Library Needs Assessment followed library sector best practice, using engagement and consultation to help shape a transformation programme including an online public survey, stakeholder interviews, public focus groups, strategic partner workshops, staff workshops and discussions with children and young people. Alongside this was the analysis of demographic & socio-economic data, library performance management information, national trend data, and best practice examples from across the sector.
- 1.2 A report 'The Next Chapter' Library Needs Assessment (LNA) was produced and presented to Executive Board on 18 January 2022. It recognised that library usage and the ways people access services is changing. Therefore, this review was not just a cost saving exercise but a longer-term modernisation programme for the service.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Phase 2 consultation was to gather people's views on proposals for change. The Phase 2 consultation exercise took place between 31 January – 26 March 2022. Full details of the consultation and findings are set out in the Library Transformation Phase 2 Findings Report, June 2022.
(Published as a separate document)

2 Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 The recommendations consider feedback given by citizens and stakeholders, including further analysis of the proposals around the closure of three libraries. The analysis of the consultation feedback highlighted a number of consistent themes in relation to the transformation principles.

- 2.2 **Importance of Libraries** - The findings re-emphasised the importance of books and specifically the importance of introducing children to books in support of children's education. People valued libraries even by those who didn't use libraries regularly. Key factors for this view were the need to have a "community hub" and a local, welcoming community space. Having access to services free of charge alongside free access to computers and the internet to support people and families on a low-income were also raised as important factors as to why libraries were important to residents.
- 2.3 **Use of Technology** - The majority said that they would welcome the use of technology as long as physical books and library buildings remain. A large quantity of the responses in favour of developing the digital offer also added that they didn't want the digital offer to replace the current offer, rather that it should be in addition to what is currently provided. The use of Technology Enable Opening (TEO), using swipe cards to access library buildings and self-service options, were only commented on by a small percentage of people but those that did were largely in favour.
- 2.4 **Partnerships** - The majority were in support of partnership work. There were a number of ideas of how and what that partnership work. The main concern raised about increasing partnership working was that there would be less room for books and the potential loss of quiet areas where people could read/study.
- 2.5 **Shared Spaces** - Most respondents understood the opportunity of how council services and buildings could co-locate and make efficiencies through the use of shared spaces. The top suggestion was links with health services, followed by advice and support services.
- 2.6 **Library Closure Proposals** - The majority of responses showed disagreement with the proposals. The main reason cited for disagreement with the proposals was around closing libraries in areas of deprivation. Other issues raised included: reduced access to services with particular reference to digital access; cost of transport and travel to alternative libraries; loss of community facilities impacting mental health and community relationships; and the impact on children and young people's literacy. A number of people also referenced the temporary closures of Sherwood Library and Central Library in reducing options for alternative provision.

In response to the closure proposals, alternative suggestions were put forward. By far the biggest suggestion was to have the library buildings to remain as spaces that could be used by community groups and organisations and for the council to take a holistic approach, working with partners to bring services back into the communities.

3 Revised recommendations in relation to the future library network following phase 2 consultation

- 3.1 Emerging factors, concerns raised during the consultation and analysis of new information has raised further questions affecting both the Council and its residents that needed to be considered alongside the responses and data

already collected. This changing environment, and the new information established are recognised in arriving at the set of recommendations now being put forward in relation to the future network requirements: The key considerations are summarised as follows:

- 3.2 Library financial position - To date a saving of £0.154m has been achieved by a staffing restructure within the service. This has enabled the consideration of other options to achieve the remaining saving required of £0.079m. These options are set out in section 5.
- 3.3 Library Performance The emerging picture of the use of libraries has been heavily influenced by the pandemic. Libraries are back to providing many of their services in person however, there has been a shift towards a more blended service. This has maximised the benefits, flexibility and growth of the digital online offer, whilst retaining physical access to books and the community library spaces for activities and events and providing services. (full details, see Appendix 1)
- 3.4 Excluding the figures for Central and Sherwood Libraries, currently closed for redevelopment, current visits to libraries remain down by 49%, compared to pre pandemic figures for same period (April – September). As libraries have reopened, levels of use of e-resources have declined slightly from their height seen during the pandemic however, figures still remain high. 2021/22 figures show a 146% increase in e-resources use compared to 2019/20 (excluding e-newspapers).
- 3.5 Public computer use is currently 38% below pre-Covid use, excluding Central and Sherwood usage. There are still unknowns post pandemic, but the trends in declining book issues and visits pre pandemic are still continuing. It has been difficult to assess the full impact of displaced usage with Central Library and Sherwood Library being closed for redevelopment. The full picture will only start to emerge in 2023 when these libraries are back as part of the network.
- 3.6 The library sector has also been identified as playing a central role in meeting the needs of individuals and communities who may be struggling to overcome the impact of the pandemic some of these needs include:
 - Economic recovery with help and training for job seekers
 - Helping isolated individuals and vulnerable groups reconnect with their local community
 - Digital inclusion for residents who lack IT skill or have no access to the internet
 - Providing opportunities for welcome warm hubs and targeted advice delivery
- 3.7 A recent report Commissioned by Libraries Connected “*public Libraries and literacy recovery*” (2022) examined the role libraries in raising the literacy skills of children whose learning has been disrupted by the pandemic. This highlighted that the pandemic has exacerbated the literacy gap between

children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers and that libraries are uniquely placed to help narrow this gap reaching disadvantaged communities where literacy is lowest and can support the social elements of literacy through reading clubs, holiday activities and early years “rhyme times”. The report calls for long term partnerships between libraries, schools and early years’ providers to ensure these challenges do not persist.

- 3.8 Cost of living crisis – Currently inflation has soared to above 10%, its highest level for more than 40 years as the rising cost of gas and electricity pushed household energy bills to record level. The escalating cost of food and transport has also contributed to the rising cost of living deepening the crisis affecting families on low incomes and in the most deprived communities in the city. This cost of living crisis has created a perfect storm of increasing public demand for services and support whilst at the same increasing costs for local authorities delivering those services. A key consideration for the council is the role that libraries can play in supporting communities in managing these impacts
- 3.9 Re-opening of New Central - The approval in May 2022 for the completion of the New Central Library is a significant milestone. A new Central Library is considered essential for delivering the city’s overall library service – a view supported by feedback in the public consultation which showed that that Central Library was the most visited/preferred library. Many residents used the Central Library as well as their own local library and value the special function it plays in supporting the whole service.
- 3.10 Further Access Analysis - Response to Overview & Scrutiny Committee (03 August) - The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Planning, delivered a presentation to O&S Committee on the findings from the Library Needs Assessment and Phase 2 Public Consultation. The committee made a number of observations and requests. A formal published response to these is set out in Appendix 1. As part of this response, further analysis of access and travel time has taken place to understand how changes to the network could impact on City residents, particularly those in deprived areas. Key findings included:
 - Current library provision including central library and Sherwood library being operational, means that 83% of residential properties in the city are within 1 mile / 20 minute walking catchment of a NCC library
 - If there were changes to the network, as set in the original proposals, there would be a decrease in the proportion of residents who would be within a 20 minute walk of their nearest library, but only by a limited amount e.g. closing one library this would reduce to 81% and closing all three would reduce to 79%
 - Walk times to the nearest library and the impact of deprivation show pockets of the city where access to a library falls outside a 20 minute walk. This would be further exacerbated if closures were to take place.
- 3.11 Community Opportunities - The Phase 2 consultation raised awareness of the library service transformation and in turn presented new opportunities to explore as partners came forward in response to the closure proposals. Whilst many areas were explored, none of these materialised as guaranteed alternatives that could address and deliver the financial cost savings required.

- 3.12 The library service is currently in talks with the University of Nottingham around opportunities for Student Volunteering which could be centred around Radford and have an impact for the future way students could help support Library provision in this area.
- 3.13 Public Health are currently in discussion with Library Services along with Sport and Leisure to look at partnership approaches and opportunities to maximise the impact the libraries offer can have on population health in Nottingham City. Libraries are key community assets, free and accessible for residents. They therefore offer the potential to improve the health of residents and contribute to Public Health's joint health and wellbeing priorities.
- 3.14 Consideration of Alternatives – Reduction in Opening Hours. The changing social and financial environment has enabled the review of opening hours as an alternative to closures. A full detailed review is set out in appendix 1. Opening hours have been looked at in light of the factors summarised above alongside performance data, the needs of particular groups including young people and vulnerable people and library activity programming so as to reduce the impact on users and residents. Performance data has also been analysed looking at library use per hour to get an understanding of peak and off peak use to help determine where changes can be made to improve operating efficiencies whilst still continuing to offer services at a time when people need them.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The transformation principles and revised recommendations provide a positive response to the views and concerns raised by individuals and communities and the strong opposition to closures. The recommendations still enable the transformation to create a modern library service that remains relevant, whilst still responding to financial pressures facing the local authority and the specific delivery of the savings requirement. In particular these recommendations have carefully considered:
- Community concerns around provision in most disadvantaged wards
 - Access to libraries for families with young children and people with disabilities
 - Ensuring a balance is struck on developing digital service offer but also have access to physical space and books
 - Latest findings on impact of pandemic particularly in relation to children's learning and literacy in areas of social disadvantage
 - Financial position – e.g. savings already achieved and alternative proposals to achieve budget savings through the reorganisation of opening hours in order to minimise impact on individual communities from closures
 - Changes in library use and borrowing patterns

4.2 It is anticipated that through these recommendations, and delivery of the transformation of the library services will enable the following outcomes to be achieved:

- Ensure a comprehensive and efficient service in light of local authority financial challenges
- Growth of the digital service and use
- Responding to and delivering wider community needs and council priorities e.g. literacy and learning, training and support into work, support to operating in a digital world and community health and well being
- Greater opportunity to work in partnership with other public sector agencies and organisation to delivery shared outcomes along with shared use of buildings and resources
- Future proofing the service through targeted resources and activity and becoming more agile and flexible to respond to changing circumstances

5 Options appraisal for recommendations for network changes

In reaching the transformation recommendations a range of options were considered, which are set out below:

5.1 **Option 1 Recommended: Retain Aspley Library as both a publicly accessible library and as the distribution hub and base for the development of outreach services**

This would see the library remain open to the public but with a redesign of the space to also enable the library to be the stock distribution hub for the service and the central point for the development and delivery of outreach services. This delivers the transformation and modernisation of the library service by providing best value through operating efficiencies, use of technology and multi service use of the building space whilst delivering social value by safeguarding the library, in one of the most deprived wards in the City. As a result of the financial saving already achieved, this option can now be considered and has been put forward as a recommendation.

Benefits

- Efficient use of building space, services and resources including savings from reduced staffing level as a result bringing together multiple library services into one building
- Retains a publicly accessible library in Aspley, one of the most deprived wards in the city
- Ensures access to library provision in this part of the city, bridging access to the network between Sherwood Library and Strelley Library.
- Releases community space at Radford Lenton Library from the transfer of Nottingham Performing Arts Library Service (NPALS) enabling potential partnership activity with Public Health to delivery wider, education, training, and well-being priorities for the local community.

Impacts/Considerations

- This will result in a smaller public library space, however the redesign will still accommodate a meeting room, network of PCs and study space and also allow for existing library programme to delivered.
- Access to the full library catalogue will still enable residents to access the full range of library resources
- There are capital costs associated with the redesign of the building estimated at £50K, This one off cost will be funded through an allowance made from with the Central Library transformation project budget allocation

5.2 Option 2 – Recommended - Review of opening hours across the network

After reviewing patterns of use, operational considerations and resources available, this would see alignment of core operating times and other opening hours that are rationalised to better respond to peak and off peak use and changing user habits.

The key changes put forward include:

- Joint Service Centre (JSC) Libraries are currently open 8.30-6.30 to support the 'Ask Here' reception functions for the JSCs however, demand is very low before 9am and after 6pm and it is therefore put forward that the hours can be adjusted with minimal impact on the support for the wider JSC services, including GP surgeries and to JSC users.
- Evening use of libraries is low. Wollaton and Dales libraries are the only libraries currently opening 6pm-7pm. There is low anticipated impact on customers resulting from these hours no longer being offered.
- A number of library half days have been changed to closed days to reflect use
- Where libraries are open half days, changing morning opening to afternoon opening is designed to give customers more choice the week to access their local library
- A reduction in Meadows Library's opening hours is proposed because the current opening hours are disproportionate to the use of the library relative to the wider library network.
- Adjusted Central Library opening hours to reflect the city centre's changed visitor patterns and environment

Benefits

- Achieve the saving required without the need to close a library
- Alignment of opening hours across the network to core hours from between 9am and 6pm
- Recognises the value in retaining the network as is, in this instance and at this particular time and reconsiders usage patterns in the context of the

broader role that libraries play in communities and the importance that residents place on these community buildings.

Impacts Considerations

- There would be a small reduction to community access, particularly for those users wanting use their local library early in the morning or early in the evening as well as on specific days where some libraries will be closed.
- Changes/alternatives maybe be required to library activities that currently take place during the opening hours to be affected. These include, at some of the affected libraries, Totstime, Work Club, Coffee mornings and Games Café. Details set out in Appendix 1, page 27.
- Where activities can rescheduled this will be done in consultation with local users at the libraries affected but may result in activities being relocated to the next nearest library.
- An adjustment of staff contractual hours will be required
- Access to digital and online library resources will still be available.

6. Alternative Options (considered and rejected)

6.1 Option 3: Targeted reduction in opening hours and the closure of 1 library: Basford or Radford-Lenton Library

This option would see a small targeted reduction in opening hours across the network which would release a potential saving of £36K, and would involve a realignment of core hours to be between 9am and 6pm across the whole community network. In addition this would see the full closure of either Radford Lenton or Basford Library making up the remaining saving requirement

Benefits and impacts/considerations for closing or retaining Basford or Radford Lenton Libraries is set out below:

Radford Lenton Library	Basford Library
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catchment overlap with Hyson Green and Central Library• 5,024 households (692 in IMD worst 20%) and 778 library users would have no library provision within a 20 min walk if closed• Annual visits: 19/20: 7,920 pre covid vs 22/23: 6,986 post covid (est. on 6 month actuals)• Operating cost: £41k with estimate £39k maintenance liabilities• Investment has recently taken place at Radford-Lenton Library making the building more sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catchment overlap with Aspley, Bulwell Riverside, Sherwood Libraries• 3,178 households (1,845 in IMD worst 20%) and 544 library users would have no library provision within a 20 min walk if closed• Annual visits: 19/20: 22,680 pre covid 22/23: 10,174 post covid (est. on 6 month actuals)• Operating cost: £37K with estimate £90k maintenance liabilities

<p>with reduced maintenance costs longer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large space at the back of building provides wider opportunities for community activity and partnership development • Safeguards a community facility in the Radford & Lenton area which has already seen the closure of John Carroll Leisure Centre • University of Nottingham Volunteer Coordinator role – discussions taking place to use library as a base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building design limits potential longer term development but opportunity for direct link to Vernon Park outdoor space with capital investment • Community partnership potential explored, but with no emerging opportunities
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Option 4 – Continue with current network of 15 Libraries with no operational changes

This would see no operational changes to the current library network but would require the completion of investment in the New Central and Sherwood Libraries. However, this option is not considered sustainable for the network size current level of use or for providing an effective and efficient service in the long term.

Benefits

No immediate change to the current provision in terms of access for citizens.

Impacts / Considerations

- The saving target would not be achieved without significant further reduction in opening hours, staffing, book resources and library programming and activity
- There would be investment required and unresolved maintenance liabilities on some of the older libraries.
- This does not deliver a modern agile service, and has limited ability to redirect and target resources to changing community need.

6.2 Option 5 – Libraries Transformation as originally proposed with the closure of 3 libraries

The original proposals outlined were developed to create a more agile modernised sustainable service whilst retaining a strong community focus. This recognises the need to maximise the use of technology and to work in collaboration with other community partners around delivery of neighbourhood services.

Benefits

- Would achieve an additional saving of £58K over and above the £79K saving gap required.
- Enables the transformation of the service as outlined in the report.

- Delivers savings over the next three years with further potential sustainable reductions being able to be considered as the programme progresses.
- Ensures that the delivery network mirrors other providers with stronger performance against our benchmarked CIPFA local authority comparators.
- Would remove potential maintenance liabilities on older building stock needing significant repair.
- Would release potential for sale of sites to contribute a receipt back to the authority which can be used for reinvestment.

Impacts / Considerations:

- Does not consider consultation feedback and concerns raised by communities and stakeholders
- Reduced service provision within the most deprived areas of the City
- May limit the opportunity to effectively support communities with emerging issues from post pandemic and cost of living crisis
- Reputation management in terms the potential closure of three library service points.
- Alignment required to a Council wide programme looking at community assets and on other decisions being made on services and facilities in communities.
- Displacement of current users to other neighbouring libraries
- Realignment of local activities affected by closures to other libraries in the network

6.3 Option 6 – Community/Volunteer run Neighbourhood Libraries

This would see neighbourhood libraries partially or fully managed by community volunteers. A number of authorities have followed this route with varying success. Where authorities have been successful this has often been as a result of significant investment in community capacity building a sustainable volunteer network developed over a 3-4 year period.

Benefits:

- Engages citizens directly in providing services in the city.
- Reduce paid staff costs for the service.

Impacts / Considerations

- Limited appetite for resident to run the library service. Many residents feel that that libraries should be run by the authority with paid specialist staff.
- Resource and investment required for the development of, and ongoing support and management of volunteers
- Any savings achieved through the building a sustainable volunteer network and community capacity are unlikely to be achieved with the MTFP timeframe
- Agreements need to be reached around who retains the responsibility for the liabilities of buildings and provision of resources.
- Loss of specialist staff skills and resources.
- Staff redundancies and associated costs

7. Considerations of risks

There are number of risks associated with implementing all or a combination of the recommendations:

- 7.1 Reputational risk with stakeholders and strategic funders - There are a number funding and partnership opportunities for libraries determined by the recommendations being put forward. Whilst the transformation principles will be largely seen by partners and funders as positive, the implications of a reduced library offer, albeit only to operating hours, may mean that Nottingham City Council is less well positioned to apply for additional funding.
- 7.2 Delay in the re-opening of Central and Sherwood Libraries – Because the re-opening of Central and Sherwood Libraries will increase access and provide alternative provision for displaced users, any delay in their completion will impact on ensuring a full network of opportunities for residents.
- 7.3 Risk of Judicial Review / Community Challenge - A more strategic, reputational risk remains for any decision that is made in relation to the transformation of a library service. Any decisions needs to meet obligations set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. They will be considered carefully by Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) if a complaint is made about our provision.
- 7.4 Using evidence to inform proposals and consulting with the community are two important ways to help meet this obligation and defend any challenge. The robust approach undertaken with the Library Needs Assessment over the last 18 months provides strong mitigation against any community challenge or review by the DCMS. The publication of and consultation on the proposals, has ensured transparency of the process, management of messages to the public and encouraged engagement in the future delivery of the Library Service.

8. Finance colleague comments

- 8.1 The 2021/22 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) included revenue savings for the Library Service totalling £0.233m, to be phased over financial years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. The phasing and achievement of this decision is as follows:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Phased budget reductions	-69,790	-130,210	-32,632	-232,632
Cumulative budget reductions	-69,790	-200,000	-232,632	-232,632
Cumulative Permanent savings achieved	-69,790	-153,753	-153,753	-153,753
Gap	0	-46,247	-78,879	

- 8.2 The saving of £0.154m to date, has been achieved by a restructure of front line services. The remaining savings of £0.079m is projected to be made from

the review in opening hours across the network. If these efficiency and operational savings cannot be secured due to delay from any required consultation and engagement with community and staff affected and review of staff contracts, and there is slippage in implementing the recommendations proposed, then there would be a temporary overspend position.

- 8.3 The 2022/23 MTFP included a decision to make £0.468m one off savings for Libraries (reduced expenditure including books and resources of £0.202m, and Sherwood Library and Central Library closure savings during development £0.266m – expected to re-open spring 2022/23 and during 2023/24 respectively). This saving is forecast to be achieved in year and remains affordable.
- 8.4 The recommendation suggested collectively do provide the savings needed to meet the MTFP target of £0.079m. However it should be noted that, with the revised recommendations being put forward not to close library buildings, the ongoing planned and reactive maintenance and other premises related lifecycle costs associated with Radford Lenton and Basford libraries will need to remain within the MTFP.

Maria Balchin, Senior Commercial Business Partner, 13 December 2022

9 Legal colleague comments

- 9.1 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local councils in England have a statutory duty to provide a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it.
- 9.2 In providing this service, councils must, among other things, have regard to encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service and lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.
- 9.3 At a national level, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has a statutory duty to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by local authorities in England and secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them as library authorities.
- 9.4 When drawing up and delivering library strategies and plans Councils should consider the range of legal obligations placed on them by the Equality Act, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, Best Value Duty 2011 guidance, Localism Act 2011, Human Rights Act 1998.
- 9.5 As set out in the Governments ‘Strategic planning of library services: longer-term, evidence-based sustainable planning toolkit’ if the Secretary of State

investigates a complaint about a library service not meeting its legal obligations, he or she will expect that library authority to demonstrate that, in drawing up its strategy, it had: consulted with local communities alongside assessing their needs; and considered a range of options (including alternative financing, governance delivery models) to sustain library service provision in its area undertaken a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of its proposals (Equality Impact Assessment).

- 9.6 In summary, the legislation does not specify the number of libraries to be provided in any area and challenges made to the secretary of state over closures in other cities have confirmed that the meaning of 'comprehensive and efficient' is to be interpreted in the context of availability of resources, it does not necessarily mean that every resident must live close to a library. A review of library services with a view to making major changes to its library services can be achieved in a legally compliant way. Decisions must be based on a robust strategic review which includes a comprehensive needs assessment that must be accompanied by an extensive and inclusive consultation. A failure to do this opens the Council up to the risk of challenge by way of judicial review.
- 9.7 To ensure compliance with this duty, the Library Service has conducted an extensive public consultation exercise and data analysis work in order to understand the current offer. Consultation has also been undertaken on proposals prior to seeking Executive Board adoption of this transformation and moving into implementation from January 2023. The findings from the consultation have also been presented and discussed at Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 05 August 2022 and their views considered.
- 9.8 For openness and transparency, it is recommended that the detailed findings from the Libraries Needs Assessment Phase 2 consultation are published and made available as a key background document as part of the recommendations.
- 9.9 Following on from the consultation the responses have been carefully considered and the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny taken into account. Consequentially the recommendations have been revised to reflect the outcome of the consultation and the proposal is to retain the existing library network with operational changes. Such arrangements in relation to opening hours can be made by the Corporate Director for Environment, Community and Resident Services in accordance with delegation 18 of the constitution.
- 9.10 HR considerations in respect of colleagues affected by amended opening hours will need to be taken into account and relevant processes followed.

Comments Provided by Beth Brown, Head of Legal and Governance. 15 December 2022

10 Strategic Assets and Property colleague comments

- 10.1 The recommended option (Option 1) presented in this document is considered to have minimal property impact. Making more effective use of space at Aspley

Library is supported. If space is released at Radford Lenton Library for community use, regard should be had to the Council's draft Community Asset Policy which sets out the Council's approach to allowing community organisations to occupy and use council-owned property.

- 10.2 In relation to the Alternative Options ("considered and rejected"), these would have a property impact and a disposal strategy should be developed for any libraries to be closed. This would consider options for disposal (sale versus lease), likely sale proceeds/rental income and any issues that will need to be addressed in order to achieve disposal.

Comments provided by Simon Yates, Strategic Asset Manager 15.12.22

11 Public Health colleague comments

- 11.1 Public libraries are free and accessible for residents and can be at the centre of community engagement and education. As key community assets, they offer the potential to improve the health of residents; contribute to our Joint Health and Wellbeing priorities; and improve the reach of health and wellbeing services.
- 11.2 There are opportunities to build on the provision of information by ensuring library staff are skilled in offering brief advice or have the ability to connect people with community groups and statutory service for practical or emotional support. Libraries may also provide non-traditional route for residents to access services and increase reach across the city.
- 11.3 The relationship between libraries and health is complex. It is difficult to measure the impact of the different proposals on population health. Public health will continue to work with colleagues in Sport and Culture to ensure we maximise the impact libraries can have on population health in Nottingham City.

Comments provided by David Johns, Public Health Consultant, 02.11.22

12 HR colleague comments

- 12.1 Should the repurposing of Aspley library result in workforce efficiencies, any affected employees should be consulted with in line with the Restructuring Principles and Redundancy Guidelines.
- 12.2 In respect of a change to opening hours across the libraries service, it is recommended that management ask for expressions of interest in a voluntary reduction of hours in the first instance to mitigate against redundancies. Where the reduction of hours is not achieved sufficiently with this approach, consultation should take place with affected employees in line with the Restructuring Principles and Redundancy Guidelines. Where proposed changes to working hours will affect more than 20 employees, collective consultation must take place through the relevant trade unions and new contracts should be issued to employees accordingly.

Comments provided by Emily Jones, HR Consultant, 15 December 2022

13 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An EIA is attached as Appendix 2 to the report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

14 Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

A DPIA is not required because the phase 2 consultation followed the Council corporate policy guidelines and good practice. In analysing and presenting the findings which have informed this report, no personal data has been used and comments have been anonymised.

15 Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)

A CIA has not been included at this stage, A CIA will be completed as part of progressing/implementation of approved recommendations and next stages of the Library transformation work.

16 List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)

Appendix 1: The Next Chapter Nottingham City Council Library Service Transformation Phase 2 Findings Report Part 2, REVISED Recommendations December 2022

17 Published documents referred to in this report

The Next Chapter – Phase 2 Findings Report, June 2022