LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

To:	**Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee**
Meeting Date:	**13 February 2018**
From:	**Executive Director of Economy Transport and Environment**
Electoral division(s):	**All**
Forward Plan ref:	**2018/024** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose:	**This paper sets out a package of improvements to the Library Service that** • **adds to the Book Fund;** • **increases the range of services available in libraries** • **reinforces the positioning of libraries as the council's 'front door'; and** • **generates new revenue and makes progress towards a more sustainable financial model.** **These improvements provide a firm foundation on which the Library Service will continue to change and innovate over the next year.**
Recommendation:	**The Committee is being asked to:** a) **agree the role and function of the Library Service and endorse the approach outlined in this paper;** b) **agree to the proposals around income generation and commissioning; and** c) **note the ongoing programme of work to transform the Library Service, which will be informed by feedback from stakeholders.** d) **Agree that the Libraries Transformation Members Steering Group has served its purpose and can now be dissolved.**

	Officer contact:		*Member contact:*
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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Cambridgeshire Library Service is currently delivered through 32 libraries and four mobile library vehicles, as well as 24/7 online access to e-resources. In total, our libraries are open for more than 1,000 hours per week, with each of our six major town libraries open for 42 hours per week and the Central Library open for 55.5 hours per week. The Service receives more than 2.5 million visitors annually, with Cambridge Central Library being the fourth busiest library in the country.

1.2 The service currently employs 118.4 FTE staff who are assisted by 911 volunteers in more than 40 different support roles. Altogether the service has over 500,000 books available for loan as well as over 84,000 reference books. It also offers over 55,000 other items for loan including spoken word and e-books.

1.3 The Library Service has been very successful in becoming ever more resourceful over the past eight years, making savings of more than £4 million whilst keeping all libraries open.

1.4 In the 2018-19 financial year we are looking to reinstate £230k of funding into the book fund alongside planning for the long-term financial sustainability of the service, ensuring that the library service continues to develop and thrive.

1.5 We want to retain the trusted 'brand' of the Library Service whilst continuing to develop our network of libraries and the Mobile Library service, as places where citizens can access a wide range of different services and activities within their communities. This approach is supported by *Libraries Deliver* – the new national strategy for libraries – which challenges local government to consider a 'libraries first' approach.

1.6 In August and September 2017 we held a series of stakeholder engagement events across the county to test some early ideas and seek people's suggestions for the service. Throughout the engagement, library users have re-iterated the importance of libraries, both in their 'traditional' role as a place for books, but also as a central location in their local communities that provide a wide range of support and activities that foster a sense of community and belonging.

1.7 Feedback highlighted the need for a local approach to provision and a desire to maintain the service. It also highlighted the importance of library staff and volunteers. A summary of the feedback we received is included at **Appendix A**.

1.8 Through the work that we have done to date we have identified a package of improvements that will drive increased revenue generation for the library service whilst increasing and improving service delivery, promote closer working with and support for the organisation, and enable reinvestment in the book fund.

1.9 The foundation this will provide will enable us to develop and deliver an ambitious programme of work to continue the transformation of our Library Service to support the changing needs of the county.

1.10 Recommendations within this report have been subject to review by a cross-party Members Steering Group which has been in place since July. This group has been able to provide officers with an ongoing-steer and advice regarding the transformation programme.

2. THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE

2.1 As part of the library transformation programme we want to provide a clear and concise statement articulating the role and function of the service for our citizens and for Cambridgeshire County Council. This is supported by the challenge from Libraries Deliver to '*acknowledge and promote the role that libraries play*' and to '*think Libraries first*'.

2.2 As gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in communities. Throughout all of the engagement sessions that we held, a common theme that emerged was the value that people place on this core role for libraries, including the role of the mobile library service in supporting more rural locations.

2.3 Libraries are one of the few – and often only – remaining places in communities where people can go to get free, impartial information, help and support, in a setting which people choose to visit as it offers stimulating activities and resources to enjoy. All of this is available as a citizen's right and forms a vital part of our democratic society. Our starting point for developing the future of the library service is to recognise and promote the service as a great asset, both to the communities of Cambridgeshire and to other public sector services.

2.4 Internally, the library service should be seen as the 'front door of the council'. This means that the library service should be the default:
- face-to-face channel for council services, with increased co-location of council services;
- place where people can engage digitally and both provide immediate help and also improve people's digital literacy
- face-to-face channel for delivering key messages / campaigns / information and community engagement
- place for staff to meet with clients in the community and to hold meetings, rather than external venues when office sites are not available
- provider of the Council's universal preventative offer, providing an expanded offer of preventative work with vulnerable children, young people and adults.

All of these developments will also support the ongoing viability of the core library service.

2.5 To deliver this 'Libraries First' approach we need to ensure that the role of the Library Service is embedded and understood in all relevant council strategies and plans, as well as making sure that staff within the service have the appropriate skills. This will require a change across the Council's organisational culture. In our engagement with staff they have told us that they are positive about the 'face to face' front door of the council role, and already fulfil this to a large extent, but want to ensure they are properly trained and resourced to carry this out most effectively.

3. ENSURING THE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL STABILITY OF THE SERVICE

3.1 Making the improvements outlined in this paper enables us to explore and exploit all options for library service transformation to meet budget challenges in preference to making service reductions. Ongoing financial stability will enable us to continue to develop our library service. To date work has focussed on the opportunities associated with income generation

and commissioning and initial estimates indicate that we will be able to meet our 2018-19 income target in order to reinvest in the book fund.

Income Generation

3.2 The opportunities available for the Library Service to generate income have been reviewed, building on the work previously undertaken by the Income Generation Working Group, and provide a number of options that can be pursued to meet the budget challenge for 2018-19.

3.3 On the whole, participants at the engagement sessions were positive about the idea of the Library Service generating income as means of increasing financial sustainability. There were a number of ideas that participants had for how this could be achieved. Out of 117 comments received regarding charging, 102 participants felt that the service should start charging for services, activities or events that the service already provides and to expand this offer.

3.4 It is important to note that no one stream of income generation could bring in sufficient revenue to guarantee the future of the Library Service. A mixed portfolio approach – likely to generate more income and carry less risk – will be essential.

3.5 Initial income generation opportunities that are currently being actively pursued include:

- **Room and facility lettings** – We are looking to maximise the revenue potential of our meeting rooms and spaces to hire by increasing prices and increasing occupancy levels. To ensure that communities can continue to use these facilities at a reasonable cost, we will make sure that there are different rates for different types of organisations.

- **Library Extra scheme** – Introducing a chargeable 'Library Extra' scheme for library users who want to contribute financially to the Library Service to increase income. The scheme design will ensure that members do not receive preferential treatment over other library services, but would have access to a range of value-added special membership benefits, for example 'premium member receptions'. This would be a way for people to support their local library.

- **Charged for computer access** – We are looking to introduce a £1 per hour charge for computer use by adults in libraries, after an initial half hour free for all users. We will ensure that essential online transactions (for example on Gov.uk sites, including Universal Credit applications and Cambridgeshire County Council online transactions) can be carried out free of charge. Libraries will promote the free courses available from the Skills & Learning service to help people to develop their digital skills, as well as the support available to claimants from the Job Centre Plus. Computer use for children up to 18 will remain free.

- **More charged for events** – The Library Service already organises and delivers events for the local community that people pay to attend, including author talks and arts events. We want to build upon these to increase the frequency and range of chargeable events.

- **Donation boxes** – Encouraging more donations by locating donation boxes in more prominent positions with increased marketing, including a clear message on how donations are used.

- **Fees and Charges** – increasing all library fees and charges by 2.2% for inflation. Increasing the commercial letting rate by 25% across all libraries, however community or partner lettings rate charge across all libraries will only increase by 2.2% for inflation.

- **Co-location of public services** – Sharing more of our library buildings with other public sector partners to create multi-use spaces to not only generate income but also help to meet people's needs more effectively.

- **Charging groups for use** – We are aware that there are some groups – such as language schools in Cambridge – who regularly use of our facilities. We are considering options for how these groups could make a contribution to our running costs.

It is estimated that an additional income of £180,000 per annum can be achieved from these approaches.

Commissioning Opportunities

3.6   Cambridgeshire Library Service currently delivers the Community Health Information Service on behalf of Public Health, the Bookstart book gifting programme on behalf of Children's Services, the Engage programme of activity for older people on behalf of Adult Social Care, and has just been awarded a contract by the Home Office to support online visa applicants. Library services across the country have a proven track record of expanding their offer to deliver wider council and public services.

3.7   When discussing the idea of the Library Service delivering more public services, attendees at the engagement sessions were generally supportive, whilst expressing some concerns about the effect that this may have on the capacity of staff to manage at individual libraries.

3.8   Work with the Commissioning Directorate has identified a new opportunity for the Library Service to support the council's key outcome of helping people to remain independent in their own homes for longer. We propose to use libraries to demonstrate Assistive Technology to vulnerable people who require some support to remain independent in their own homes.

3.9   The library service will work closely with the People and Communities Directorate to continue to explore ways in which the library service can contribute even more towards early help and prevention work, through our trusted libraries and Mobile Library service. Closer working with communities will also help us to identify and prioritise those opportunities that will have the biggest positive impact on them.

3.10   It is proposed that this new way of working, will be piloted in Soham. Soham Library already has an extended offer for the community, being the base for the new Neighbourhood Cares project, a community-based approach to providing support to vulnerable people. We will be exploring ways in which this offer can be extended further.

3.11   The new Assistive Technology and other commissioned services will bring at least £50,000 per annum into the service, therefore the total value of these income generating and commissioning initiatives is expected to meet the short term financial challenge and support

long term financial sustainability. As well as these initiatives we have a pipeline of additional income generating opportunities to develop in the longer term.

Investment required

3.12 Whilst some of these income generation proposals are not new and stem from work previously considered by the Income Working Group, the Library Service has lacked the capacity and specialist skills to take this scale of work forward. Therefore, in order to progress the income generation proposals and to ensure a financially stable future in which new income generation ideas are continually progressed, investment is required to increase the skills and capacity within the Library Service.

3.13 We are bidding for support from the Transformation Fund to recruit a one-year fixed-term role to implement the proposals and support the service to develop an effective marketing, income generation and sponsorship strategy. The role has the potential to become self-funding in future as well as identifying opportunities across a range of different services.

3.14 This investment also responds to a theme that was highlighted repeatedly by participants in our engagement workshops that the Library Service needs to get better at publicising itself and informing people of the wide range of services, activities and events that are on offer.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 The work outlined in this paper is the start of our Library Service Transformation Programme. We are in the process of pulling together a Delivery Plan to bring the plan to action and to enable the culture change that we need to make.

4.2 As part of the Delivery Plan we will continue the conversations and engagement that we have begun and take this as an opportunity to develop our thoughts around the future shape of the service and make sure they are based on the views of our users.

4.3 We will also make sure that the Delivery Plan maps against other strategies – both internal and external – to ensure we are making the best use of our Library assets.

4.4 The Library Service will continue to explore further transformation and any recommendations arising from this work will follow normal committee decision making processes.

5. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:
- By providing access to a range of services, libraries assist people to improve their employment prospects;
- Providing workspaces in libraries help entrepreneurs and small business to start up and also work collaboratively;

- Providing support for children helps to ensure that the workforce of the future has well-developed essential literacy skills, and is equipped to engage in lifelong learning.

5.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:
- The provision of quality information, guidance and advice in libraries helps people to live healthy and independent lives and make well-informed choices;
- Encouraging the reading habit and providing self-help information in libraries supports people to remain independent
- The Library Service helps people to get involved and feel included in their communities.

5.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:
- The primary purpose of the Library Service is to support and protect vulnerable people who are otherwise unable to access the books, information, access to the internet, advice and guidance they need
- Building on the Library@Home service will enable people to be directed to other appropriate sources of advice and information
- Libraries will continue to be safe places in communities where people can meet others
- Commissioning support for vulnerable people through the library service will help services to reach a wider group of people.

6. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Resource Implications

Increased resource will be required to deliver the activity set out in this report. This will be met through a bid for transformation funding and partnership working with the People and Communities and Commissioning Directorate. The investment is one-off and the library service will be required to achieve the additional income on an ongoing basis.

6.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

6.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. Following this approach means that we will remain compliant with the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

A Community Impact Assessment has been completed for new and additional charges, and mitigation measures used wherever possible to reduce the impact on the most vulnerable.

6.5   Engagement and Communications Implications

The Library Transformation programme has already carried out extensive engagement with library users and stakeholders to inform the recommendations set out in this report. Further engagement will be carried out to explore ways in which the service can continue to meet community need whilst achieving greater financial sustainability.

6.6   Localism and Local Member Involvement

Members have already been engaged through the Libraries Member Steering Group, and through a Member Seminar about the Transformation Programme. Further engagement with communities will be carried out on a local basis and local members will be invited to be involved in this process.

6.7   Public Health Implications

When exploring additional support that the Library Service can provide communities, we will expand upon the current Public Health offer. Furthermore, an increased offer of events and activities for citizens will increase social interaction in communities.

This proposal builds on and strengthen the current Public Health initiatives that libraries currently provide though widening access to information and events that engages individuals and communities in taking responsibility for improving their health and affords opportunities to complement commissioned public health services with library services through co-location.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Paul White
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Satinder Sahota
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Tamar Oviatt-Hyam

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Sarah Silk
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Tamar Oviatt-Hyam
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Val Thomas

Source Documents	Location
None	N/A

Appendix A – Feedback from the engagement sessions

Between August and October 2017, 167 people attended a series of workshops for stakeholders of the Cambridgeshire Library Service in the following locations:
- Huntingdon
- Cambourne
- March
- Ely
- Cambridge
- Eastrea
- Histon
- St Neots
- Stetchworth

We would like to thank all the participants for their very helpful feedback at all of the above workshops.

The purpose of these workshops was to share the opportunities and challenges that the service is currently facing and to have a discussion about these, in order to hear people's ideas ahead of developing options and proposals for the future of the service. We are really interested in hearing the ideas of library users and stakeholders and at the workshops we heard a wide range of views and ideas that participants had about the future of the service, specifically in relation to how the service could increase financial sustainability.

This is a summary of these ideas and views that participants shared with us. Wherever possible, the actual words of participants have been used. A list of all comments in full can be found here.

Income Generation

On the whole, participants were positive about the idea of the Library Service generating income as means of increasing financial sustainability. There were a number of ideas that participants had for how this could be achieved. One being that the service could gain corporate sponsorship:
- *'Sponsorship deals for libraries - businesses will want to do this if we show large footfall'*
- *'Corporate sponsorship Co-op, Sainsbury, Tesco'*
- *'Sponsorship from local companies'*
- *'Link with corporate sponsors – e.g. Costa. You could have a pop-up library in Tesco or Costa'*
- *'Biotech Business increasing pressure on local services so they could offer a paid full-time worker at the library in Trumpington.'*

However, some people were cautious about this;
- '*Sponsors may be unwilling to give money to support the library service as defined by the Act – they are more likely to pay for enhancements.'*
- *'Subsidies from large corporations: we need to be cautious of this – another contributor suggests that a trust fund arrangement would make this more transparent (Amazon?!)'*

- *'Corporate sponsorship can feel uncomfortable'*

Out of 117 comments received regarding charging, 102 participants felt that the service should start charging for services, activities or events that the service already provides and to expand this offer:
- *'Charge for events. Try children's events'*
- *'Charge for the bus pass service - small fee'*
- *'Charging for new release e-books. First 6 weeks'*
- *'Charge for out-of-hours access'*
- *'I think this is chicken and egg but a dept/group of people who can bring more events to the library that people would pay for – cultural events (I understand there is a list of these some libraries have)'*
- *'Lend out e-readers / hire e-readers'*
- *'Pop-up cinema in library - film nights'*
- *'The concept of using the library for drama productions'*
- *'Maybe get artists to come out and show work (charge them)'*
- *'Open mic night – poetry'*
- *'London Shows - Top shows on video could be sold or shown in library - charge a fee'*
- *'Use library in evenings for Evening Classes. Charged + franchise possibilities'*
- *'Charge for Author Book Talks'*
- *'Half library, half book shop. Buy a book and then return to get discounts on the next books'*
- *'Charging stations (for a charge)'*
- *'Refreshments at reasonable prices'*
- *'Charge for passport application checks etc.'*

However, 15 comments were received stating that the Library Service should not charge for services, activities and events:
- *'People objected really strongly [to reservation fee] – not charged at Lt Downham Books Café; people would go to Ely.'*
- *'Vital that Rhyme Time and Summer Reading Challenge should be delivered free - so as not to exclude / discriminate against least wealthy'*
- *'Reservations should be free'*
- *'The libraries are a service so should not have to earn money'*
- *'The library service has been cut to the bone. Monetarising this service is out of character and muddies the library brand. We want no more cuts.'*
- *'Charges not supported (apart from out of hours service)'*
- *'Story time should be free but volunteer run - important to keep free as Children are future customers'*
- *'Services with a choice maybe not charge'*

Another recurring theme was for the service to maximise its buildings by hiring out space to other organisations and groups:

- *'Is there a potential to develop spaces that are more multi-purpose?'*
- *'More multi-functional space rather than standard library shelving. Example - Melbourn Hub - foldaway shelving'*
- *'Hire the premises out to other organisations. Need to know the set hiring prices'*
- *'Meeting rooms more accessible - evening lettings'*
- *'Community room in each library, also available out of usual library hours and attracting payment by users'*
- *'Can renting out spaces in some library buildings provide income - outside exercise classes meetings, talks, parties etc. Would also increase knowledge of library services'*
- *'Community spaces for hire - income increasing facility'*
- *'Offer a space for rent in the library to book shops - i.e. Waterstones. Trial pop-up in Hunts and different locations?'*
- *Renting space in the library to companies i.e. travel agents. Dedicated space for commercial enterprises*
- *'A franchising model to other organisations in the library network could provide year on year revenues - this would need to be a company or organisation that is acceptable to our values e.g. coffee provider/independent business rather than a Starbucks or an Amazon - who don't pay their taxes.'*

Some participants also highlighted that they would like to see an increase in council tax to increase funding to libraries:

- *'Put taxes up'*
- *'Lobby for - Raise Council Tax'*
- *'If we raise council tax can we ensure it comes back to libraries?'*
- '*Councillors to increase Council Tax to average allowed, stop cutting.'*
- *'Would you as a council tax payer pay an extra penny to fund your library and reduce cuts. Ring fenced.'*
- *'We want our councillors to know that we think they should raise council tax in order to help pay for the library service we value.'*

Co-locating with Partner Services and Organisations

Participants also commented on the possibility of libraries and partner organisations and services co-locating in the same buildings.

Out of 44 comments received regarding Library Services co-locating with partners, 33 of these were positive about this being explored:

- *'Use space in the library for CAB, Age Concern etc. and other voluntary groups - charge them rent'*
- *'District Council pop-up counter in St Neots library'*
- *'Highways surgery once a month to raise queries face-to-face'*
- *'Have a post office in the Library at Cambourne'*
- *'Relocate One Stop Shop FDC to the library—extend it's open hours and save rental'*

- *'There should be a library at Addenbrookes.'*

However, 11 comments were received highlighting some concern around this:
- *'Parents might be nervous of Children's Centre activities taking place in libraries'*
- *'If we do co-locate we need to maintain a defined library space – don't want to lose the library brand'*
- *'Issues around shared spaces i.e. Gamlingay'*
- *'Joint use library could be exciting and economically viable. Depends on the demographic of the community; new communities unlikely as they are mainly young families – St Neots'*

Staff and Volunteers

Another recurring theme highlighted by participants at the workshops was the value of staff and volunteers.

56 comments were received regarding staff and volunteers in the Library Service. Out of these, 26 participants stated that they would not want to see further reductions to paid staff:
- *'We don't want to lose our librarians'*
- *'Would not like to see any more loss of staff - very important for lonely, alone community members'*
- *'There is a limit to how much more the staff can be cut. It is a very busy library and the staff are always helpful and cooperative and vital to the operation of the library.'*
- *'DON'T LOSE STAFF'*
- *'Would be very unhappy to lose face-to-face contact with staff'*

10 comments highlighted the need for the service to recruit more volunteers:
- *'Need volunteer recruitment - list of all the opportunities - do a story of one volunteer - use local newspapers'*
- *'How do we get the volunteer message out? Letting people know full range of jobs, case studies, local recruitment, using local newspapers and magazines'*
- *'Increasing volunteer recruitment as a way of providing 'over and above' services'*
- *'Business to offer their staff to volunteer as more sustainable people (they will not leave volunteering if a job came up as they already have a job'*

However, 26 participants showed some concern towards the stability of a volunteer workforce, what is being asked of volunteers and issues around recruitment:
- *'How much can we keep asking volunteers to do? Is there a point where they can't take on more?'*
- *'I value and appreciate the passion and enthusiasm of volunteers but we need to protect professional, qualified librarians'*
- *'Don't rely on volunteers'*
- *'Unsustainability of reliance on volunteers in longer term – rise in pension age, declining economy, people working longer & less time to volunteer'*
- *'Volunteers don't necessarily have skills and expertise of paid staff'*

- *'In villages you can get a core group of people to take community ownership. But you can only ask so much (only 4 people have attended this event) – Eastrea'*
- *'Problems of continuity with volunteers who may come and go and not be as able to commit over longer periods of time.'*

Communication and Publicity

A theme highlighted repeatedly by participants was that the Library Service needs to get better at publicising itself and informing people of the range of services, activities and events that are on offer:
- *'Improve communication'*
- *'Go to Parish Council meetings and promote the service'*
- *'Advertise the services you can get from the libraries'*
- *'Advertise using annual events, social media, through other organisations that people will visit. e.g. G.P.s'*
- *'Big problem, make people aware libraries exist and what we offer'*
- *'Individual Facebook pages for each library – people will look for these spaces.'*
- *'Libraries at home needs to be publicised more; should link with Age UK to get more customers'*
- *'There should be a promotional film showing all the good things which happen in libraries, talk to local groups, film workshops like this.'*
- *'Need better marketing and promotion - the world has changed and don't think people fully understand the service today'*

More specifically, participants felt that the service could be doing more to attract young people:
- *'We need to find ways to attract teenagers into libraries'*
- *'Publicity with young people at colleges, especially in 6th Forms'*
- *'Visit sixth forms and year 11 to get their ideas on how they want to use libraries'*

Some participants also felt that communication to volunteer-run libraries could be improved:
- *'CCC needs to improve their communications and countywide initiative especially with LAPs [Library Access Points] to ensure that everyone 'sings from the same hymn sheet''*
- *'Make sure same information to council libraries goes to LAPs'*

Approach towards Reviewing the Service

Some general comments were received from participants about how the Council should be approaching this process including the need for a local approach and a desire to see no further cuts to the service:
- *'be flexible in transforming services - one model may not work for all libraries'*
- *'Offer should depend on the needs of the location'*
- *'Not a one size fits all, appropriate for local communities'*
- *'I feel strongly that we should be INVESTING money in libraries, rather than cutting funds (probably means increase in tax, council tax)'*
- *'Hope that library closures don't happen'*

- *'Engaging political leadership around the future of libraries'*
- *'Anything new we do should be kept going for at least 3 years so we know if it is working.'*
- *'Prioritisation of ideas is key. Should have a 'top X' and them a rollout plan for the coming years'*

We also shared with participants some of our early thinking around the things we could explore to secure the future of the service and this is what people told us.

1.   Providing more public services

One way in which the service could become more financially sustainable is by delivering additional services for the citizens of Cambridgeshire on behalf of public sector partners. Delivering these services would attract additional funding. Nationally, local and central government have been challenged to 'Think Libraries First' when it comes to the provision of local community services. Library services across England provide a wider range of information and support that is often taken for granted or its potential not fully realised. This includes support around healthy lifestyles, social isolation, employability skills, digital skills and much more.

When discussing the idea of the Library Service delivering an extended offer of public services, a total of 26 out of 95 comments showed favour towards this approach:
- *'Home visiting paid for by relevant department - feeding back any problems etc.'*
- *'Foodbanks or other services to get people into the buildings'*
- *'Carers' Mornings'*
- *'Substitute DWP with libraries—people complain bitterly about having to travel to Job Centres.'*
- *'Cost savings of reducing social isolation - preventive service'*
- *'Good to have other services delivered through libraries'*
- *'I had a positive experience of services for children and families being delivered alongside library services that worked well but it does need additional resource to make this work.'*
- *'Drop-ins with police to support the community (and other services providing a similar drop-in)'*

However, 40 comments showed some concern towards this way of working:
- *'Front door service - people behind the 'door' must have knowledge/training of CCC services/signposting'*
- *'Hard for the library to be a one stop shop for the council - hard for one person to know it all'*
- *'Risk of alienating voluntary sector if delivering same service as them. E.g. Carers Trust'*
- *'Accountability needs to be thought through when making library assistants responsible for other services'*
- *'How can single-staffed libraries cope with being a 'front door' as well as dealing with customers?'*
- *'Will library staff be out of their depth if people's health issues are too extreme?'*
- *'Shortage of library staff in some locations – and lack of specialism/training for additional services (i.e. Blue Badges) – St Neots'*

- *'Not generally keen on wider range of services but would accept this in order to have standardised Opening Hours (e.g. 9-5 daily) across Council'*

2.   Library access outside of staffed hours

In recent years, a number of library services across England have introduced technology that allows users to access libraries during non-staffed hours.

This technology has allowed library services to maintain or extend library opening hours. On the whole, this has been met with positivity at a time when many libraries have had to reduce their opening hours to reduce costs.

Implementing this technology does have a cost and therefore savings or significant additional income would have to be generated for this to be possible.

When discussing the possibility of implementing this technology, a total of 69 comments were received. Of these, 14 were generally in favour of the idea:
- *'Ramsey Library would be interested in Open+'*
- *'Cambridge Central - put in Open+'*
- *'Many people in Cambridgeshire don't work 9-5 anymore so Open Plus is an interesting option'*
- *'Participants at this table all agreed that they were ok with Open+ but not if it means cutting staff'* – Cambridge Central Library
- *'Works well in Peterborough or Netherlands - why not here?'*

However, 35 participants showed concern about this technology including the safety and security of buildings and people and the need to make savings to implement this technology:
- *'Don't reduce staffed hours but open to sources of revenue to increase staff hours'*
- *'I would be worried about access to some libraries when not staff in some areas of the county. In rural areas would there be enough take up?'*
- *'Why consider putting in technology and open a library out of hours when it will mean reducing staff who are a valuable resource and the knowledge of the library.'*
- *'How to stop damage to stock / people sleeping in the libraries after hours?'*
- *'Would be very unhappy to lose face-to-face contact with staff'*
- *'Don't want to cut staffed hours at Whittlesey Library to fund Open+'*
- *'Security a key concern, particularly for Cambridge Central Library, which would require additional safeguards e.g. CCTV, at least one member of security staff etc.'*

3.   Community-led Libraries

Cambridgeshire currently has 11 volunteer run libraries and the majority of these have been sustained for 15 years. These libraries receive support from Cambridgeshire County Council but are run day-to-day by volunteers.

We want to explore whether any other communities would be interested in taking more of a leading role in the running of their local library.

A total of 61 comments were received relating to the idea of increasing community leadership in libraries. Out of these, 11 participants highlighted an interest in this:

- *'Papworth library as a Community Library'*
- *'Happy to share our experience'*
- *'Community run libraries are a very good idea but perhaps not in this area. (March)'*
- *'If the alternative is closing them yes – depending on the community and support available'* – St Neots
- *'Not opposed to more community run libraries'* - Histon

A further 22 participants showed some concern around this idea:

- *'Not at all in favour of volunteer-led/run library in Cambourne. Maybe in a small setting'*
- *'Volunteer libraries - not keen'*
- *'Can't offer the services we want to from a community run library'*
- *'Community run library does not seem a possibility in March'*
- *'Don't impose community leadership on people - this will create ill feeling'*
- *'Community led no substitute for qualified staff'*

A number of people also stated that they felt the branding of Local Access Points could be improved:

- *'Library Access Points are just libraries in the eyes of the public and should be called libraries and be a part of the Cambridgeshire Libraries family'*
- *'People see LAPs as libraries. Should they change their names? What is the benefit of this?'*

4.   Other ways to deliver library services to more isolated communities

Rural and more isolated communities are currently served by a Mobile Library Service. We are interested in exploring whether there are other ways in which library services could be delivered to these communities in Cambridgeshire. For people who cannot get to a static library, this service is a lifeline. However, there may be other ways in which the same outcomes can be met in a more efficient way.

Some of the ideas that we wanted to gain feedback about were:

- *Pop-up libraries using existing community buildings in isolated areas, e.g. churches, village halls, pubs etc.*
- *The Library@ Home service (volunteers delivering books to people's homes)*
- *Where and how often the current Mobile Library Service stops*

85 comments were received when discussing the possibilities of looking into alternative ways in which library services could be delivered to isolated communities. Out of these, 23 participants liked the idea of a 'pop-up' library providing books to rural communities:

- *'Use book boxes in smaller communities operated by volunteers where not economic to serve by mobile library. This used to work well in the past when I was a child in a small village far from the nearest town.'*

- *'Pop-up libraries at Park and Ride sites '*
- *'Have library in shop in rural villages to bring libraries into these areas and help local business'*
- *'People like pop-up libraries'*
- *'Really liked the idea of pop-up libraries.'*
- *'Like to idea of pop-up libraries – i.e. in telephone boxes. Would need stock rotation'*
- *'Pop up libraries in pubs and churches and telephone boxes are a good idea'*
- *'Looking at new delivery sites, including pubs (a book and a pint, pub quiz), care homes, and supermarkets'*

However a total of 4 comments were received that showed concern towards using this approach to provide books to people in isolated communities:
- *'Pop ups possibly part of solution but don't get drawn into managing too closely or spending too much money on it.'*
- *'Pop ups should not replace mobile library service.'*
- *'Pop-up book exchanges are no replacement for a library or mobile library. Books not good enough - no stock control'*

Additionally, 10 participants highlighted the need to review the stops that are currently carried out by the mobile service:
- *'Save money by not putting mobile library on green at Waterbeach at same time as library is open!!'*
- *'Review usage of mobile library services - remove where underused and instead fund communities where there's no library provision. Pilot a few new routes and review?'*
- *'Take it [Mobile] to dormitories - Housing estates with no services/facilities, shops. Target mobile to them. Combine toys and book. Half the problem lack of advertising'*
- *'Do not park Mobile Libraries where there are existing Independent Community Libraries / LAPs'*
- *'Look at mobile routes more carefully - only go to rural isolated communities.'*

Participants also highlighted other ways in which library services can be delivered:
- *'Instead of home visitor delivering books, as in hospital – volunteer to take those who do not have mobile library to a library.'*
- *'Smaller mobile libraries to really access disabled/limited mobility. Not central village location'*
- *'If you have the volunteers to do this (Increase Library at Home Service) – I was one of the first LAH Volunteers, both get a lot from it.'*
- *'Can we use services that move around for other means? E.g. mobile cafes?'*
- *'Using existing delivery services; i.e. GP's. Opportunities to be more joined up with other groups'*
- *'Encourage care homes to get online access for residents, or weekly deliveries from the libraries'*
- *'Using CCC staff - i.e. Social Workers when going out on visits could take/collect books (in their homes and in care homes) - linking internally and externally'*

In addition to the stakeholder workshops, we also undertook three trips out on the mobile library service to speak with users and obtain their feedback.

We asked users the following questions and this is what they said:

What do you value about the mobile library service?

Of the 28 people we spoke with, 26 valued the convenience of the mobile library, 14 valued the availability of booked, 5 valued the opportunity to socialise and 2 said it was good for children.
- *'Handy – come to you. Good choice of books and very helpful' – Littleport*
- *'Love it, have a nice chat with drive. Local, right outside the door. It's the only time some people communicate' – Huntingdon*
- *'Comes to nearby area. Lots of choice of books. Good staff' – Cambridge*

Why do you use this instead of a library building?

A total of 28 people answered with 16 stating they used the mobile library service because they had no transport. 5 people said they did also used the library building.

How did you get here?

Out of 38 people asked, 24 had walked, 11 said the stop was directly outside their residential home, 2 people drove and 1 person cycled.

Do you have any ideas about how this service could be delivered to less mobile people and people in isolated communities?

There was some divided opinion about the benefits of both "pop up" libraries and Libraries@Home+. Below are some of the comments and suggestions that we received:
- *'I can understand if it went – not enough people use it. I would be sad though'*
- *'There are books in the social room but not as much choice. I would use the library at home service is this closed down'*
- *'Pop-up libraries in community buildings good idea. Library at home good if you can't get out and about'*
- *'Library at home doesn't have all the things MLS does and you need to know what books you want - you can't browse. Could be an online options but not everybody can do that'*
- *'Lots of people can't get into towns as the transport isn't there, so either need to provide the transport of MLS'*
- *'Pursue mobile library service but do more to advertise it'*
- *'Don't want MLS to be stopped but liked idea of delivering books to people in their homes. Didn't realise it existed but back idea'*

We also spoke with two groups of young people between the ages of 6 – 13 and 13+ to gather their comments about how and why they use libraries and their suggestions on how we can encourage people to go to libraries.

It should be noted that we have not yet spoken separately with young people actually using the library; this would have provided some balance to the below views.

Junior Group 6 – 13 yrs

Of those asked, 7 have been to a library solely to take out books but have only been once or twice. 6 young people stated that they would not go back as they could use a computer at home, however 1 said they go regularly to get books.

In response to ideas on how to make people go to a library the group suggested that they should be accompanied so that they could be shown around. They didn't like having to be so quiet and suggested having areas but to be able to speak. Another suggestion was to have bean bags.

Senior Group 13+

Of those asked, 11 have been to a library before when they were young but have not visited in over 5 years. The reason for this visit was for books ad to use the computer. 7 had never been to a public library, except school, and did not know where their nearest local library was.
- *'You can get everything on the internet now so no point going to a library'*
- *'It's for old people or small kids*
- *'It's boring, why would you want to go?'*
- *'It's just for books'*

In response to ideas on how to make people go to a library, suggestions were to provide free food and free use of computers.