



Cabinet

6 March 2018

Appendix 7

Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy

Technical Appendix 1

**National and Local Context (including the
Statutory Duty)**

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1 Purpose of the Technical Appendix

Introduction

- 1.1 This Technical Appendix sets out the national and local context in which the East Sussex Library and Information Service is provided. It includes information about the statutory duty under which we provide the service, latest Government policy direction and the relationship between the services that the Library and Information Service provides and local priorities.
- 1.2 This is one of a number of documents, Technical Appendices (TA), which form the evidence base that supports the draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy. These documents are as follows:

Draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy						
Appendix 1 Rationale and Impact Assessment for the Proposed Needs Based Library Service						
Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment.						
Appendix 3 Summary of Technical Appendices						
Technical Appendix 1	Technical Appendix 2	Technical Appendix 3	Technical Appendix 4	Technical Appendix 5	Technical Appendix 6	Technical Appendix 7
National and Local Context	Needs Assessment	Service Description and Analysis	Property Assessment	Accessibility Analysis	Strategic Outcomes and Gap Analysis	Delivery Model Options Appraisal

- 1.3 The draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy aims to create a modern, affordable Library and Information Service for East Sussex, which prioritises the needs of the county and is able to adapt to future needs. The term 'needs', in this context includes the general requirement that people have to access reading materials, information and the range of other resources that the Library and Information Service offers, for the various benefits that this can provide. It also takes account of the particular needs of different communities (both of people and place) who face greater disadvantage than others whether directly or indirectly.
- 1.4 For many people the obvious focus would be around reading and literacy when considering the needs that a library service can meet, however, in developing these Technical Appendices and the draft Strategic Commissioning Strategy, we have set out to identify the wider needs that the Library and Information Service may be well-placed to help meet, either on its own or in partnership with others, within the resources that are available. The development of the draft Strategic Commissioning Strategy also takes into account our legal responsibilities for providing a library service. This

approach, and the detailed process of review that has been undertaken, are described in this and in the other Technical Appendices.

- 1.5 An affordable and adaptable Library and Information Service means that it will be able to respond to a number of common challenges facing library services across the UK, including:
- the significant financial challenges facing councils
 - shifts in consumer behaviour (both for paid and public services)
 - a decline in demand for traditional library services
 - the changing needs of a growing and ageing local population
- 1.6 The Strategy has been produced according to the Strategic Commissioning Framework, our business planning process for all East Sussex County Council service redesign.

2 Impact of library services

Background

- 2.1 Libraries are part of the common landscape of public service provision, with each upper tier and unitary council area having a statutory duty to provide the service. All library services provide, by law, free reading materials available to borrow by anyone who lives, works or studies (full-time) in the local area. However, there has been a common desire, within local authorities and government, to maintain a broader universal offer than books alone.
- 2.2 Public libraries in the UK were established by the *Public Libraries Act 1850*, as part of wider social reform. They were conceived as places where people could go to pursue their own personal improvement, for free. Libraries experienced widespread growth across the UK with the aid of philanthropic giving, notably by the industrialist Andrew Carnegie. The universal provision of libraries that we experience today was established with the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*.
- 2.3 Since then, various reviews of public library provision have been commissioned by government. The latest of these is the Independent Library Report for England commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and presented to the Government by William Sieghart and an expert panel on 18 December 2014. Sieghart made three major recommendations:
 - a. The provision of a national digital resource for libraries, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities
 - b. The setting up of a task force, led by local government, in partnership with other bodies involved in the library sector, to provide a strategic framework for England, and to help in implementing the following:
 - c. The task force, to work with local authorities, to help them improve, revitalise and if necessary, change their local library service, while encouraging, appropriate to each library, increased community involvement.
- 2.4 According to the Libraries Taskforce¹, nearly 60% of the English population holds a current library card, although it is important to add that a lower decreasing number of people are using library services (further detail on which is provided in section 4). The Libraries Taskforce also states that in the financial year 2014 to 2015, libraries in England received 224.6 million physical visits, more than visits to Premier League football games, the cinema,

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>

and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined. Libraries also received 96 million website visits in 2014 to 2015, more than three every second.

- 2.5 Libraries offer a wide range of services, either universal or targeted, for a range of different needs. It is common for people to use library services for different purposes at different stages in their lives, through infancy and early childhood with parents, entering into independent study, finding work and progressing careers, and into retirement. Many people use libraries completely independently, on a self-help/self-service basis, identifying and accessing the resources they need on their own. Other people have a need for support from the library, whether this is help from a member of staff to locate an item, or a much more structured programme of help like a course to help people improve their reading, numeracy and ICT skills.

Universal Offers

- 2.6 The Universal Offers² are a set of core services that around 90% of library services nationally have signed up to, working through the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL). They aim to provide people with a clear idea of what is on offer within their local library service. The Universal Offers are:

- Reading
- Information
- Digital
- Health
- Learning
- Culture

Reading

- 2.7 Libraries provide free access to reading materials for pleasure and to support personal development. Their support for literacy, beyond formal educational settings, supports the local economy and people's ability to lead independent lives. Libraries support young children and their families to enjoy reading and wider cultural participation.

Information

- 2.8 Libraries provide free access to reference materials and general information. This includes local history and personal interests, but also general information. Where reference materials and information have moved online by default, libraries provide free access to computers and to the internet, including access to resources like online dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and newspapers and magazines that library users would otherwise have to pay for if they accessed

² http://goscl.com/wp-content/uploads/sj11_07-SCL-Universal-Offers-poster-2016_v-3.pdf

them at home. Libraries signpost people to other public services and also to other community resources.

Digital

- 2.9 As with Information, libraries provide free access to computers and to the internet. This is increasingly important as more commercial and public services move online by default. Although many people are able to access the internet at home and on mobile devices there is a need for public access, either due to affordability or, to a lesser extent, poorer quality digital infrastructure. Libraries also, increasingly, offer free support to help people use and get the most out of digital technology and the internet.

Health

- 2.10 Libraries provide free access to reading materials, and other cultural activity, which is known to support personal health and wellbeing. Libraries increasingly support individuals and health practitioners to manage health conditions, for example by offering 'books on prescription'. Libraries are free, community spaces that some people use to fulfil basic social needs. Many libraries offer a home library service, visiting and taking materials to those who cannot get to libraries for a variety of reasons, such as physical or mental health and caring responsibilities.

Learning

- 2.11 Libraries provide free access to reading materials and other resources that support personal development and self-led learning. Libraries offer personal support to help job seekers find work, increasingly via online searching and applications. Libraries also offer opportunities to gain informal and formal skills and qualifications.

Culture

- 2.12 The new Culture Offer was announced in October 2017 Libraries provide the space for culture and enable creative enrichment, to inspire imagination. Library staff are catalysts for activity, empowerment and exploration.
- 2.13 The Library and Information Service works to support and deliver the Universal Offers, as well as the Six Steps Promise for people with visual impairment and the Children's Promise. A programme of activity is coordinated each year to promote them within East Sussex, aligned to the national SCL Universal Offers calendar³.

³ <http://goscl.com/wp-content/uploads/SCL-Universal-Offers-Calendar-2017-V6-1.pdf>

3 Statutory responsibilities

The legal requirement for library services

- 3.1 East Sussex County Council is one of 151 local councils in the UK with a statutory responsibility (a legal duty) to provide a local library service in accordance with the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*. The Act requires each local authority to provide a library service that is 'comprehensive and efficient'. It is for local decision how the library service best meets this requirement practically, including how many libraries there are, where they are, when they are open and what each one offers.
- 3.2 Local authorities who are proposing to alter their library provisions are required to produce a needs assessment to demonstrate that they will continue to comply with the terms of the statutory duty. The requirement to provide a 'comprehensive' library service does not mean that the County Council has a duty to guarantee every resident access to any or all of the library services it provides at any cost, in the same way that people have a right to a postal service or electricity supply under 'universal service obligations'. Recent case law where local authorities have been challenged over their proposed changes has clarified that library services should be accessible to everyone using reasonable means, which includes access to services via the internet, and they take into account constraints such as available budgets, which the authority is facing. This is the 'efficient' part of the 'duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service.
- 3.3 Local authorities are also required to demonstrate that they have considered, and mitigated where necessary, for the impact of service changes on any groups with protected personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender, disability), in accordance with the *Equality Act 2010*. Local authorities are also required to consult fairly on any proposals that they put forward.
- 3.4 More information about libraries as a statutory service is available on the Government's website⁴.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service>

4 Changing demand

National context

- 4.1 Libraries remain a popular service. However, in the past decade or more, there have been changes in the way that people use their library service and in the overall numbers doing so. This change has been seen locally, nationally and internationally. Overall, fewer people are visiting libraries and borrowing books.
- 4.2 Analysis of results from the Taking Part survey⁵ in 2016, showed that over ten years, between 2005/06 and 2015/16, use of library services had reduced from roughly one half to one third of all UK adults. A survey and associated report published by the Carnegie Trust in 2017⁶ reported higher levels of use, with 46% of people surveyed saying they had used a library service in the past 12 months, down from 50% in 2011.
- 4.3 Against this backdrop of an overall reduction in people using library services, of those adults who had still used a library service, the proportion using a library service website rose from 8.9% to 14.2% between 2005/06 and 2015/16. There was an increase in those people using the library website to complete a transaction, such as reserving or renewing an item or paying a fine for an overdue loan (up from 28.1% in 2006/07 to 39.7% in 2015/16). However, the proportion of those using a library website to search and view online information or to make an enquiry fell (from 75.5% in 2006/07 to 67.4% in 2015/16)⁷.

Local context

- 4.4 Data on usage of East Sussex libraries are taken from our visitor counters and our library management system rather than surveys. This data is not directly comparable, therefore, to national surveys which interview individuals, as data on visits to libraries will include multiple visits by the same customers. In 2006/7 there were 2.52 million visits to East Sussex libraries. In 2016/17 this number had fallen to 1.48 million, a decrease of 41.5%.
- 4.5 We do not have details of the make-up of this reduction, but it is likely to comprise both a reduction in the number of people visiting East Sussex libraries, and a reduction in the frequency with which some customers visit. This change can be seen in Figure 4.2, which shows that the rate of reduction in visits to East Sussex libraries has accelerated since 2014/15. There has been a 35% reduction in visits since then. Technical Appendix 3, Service

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>

⁶ <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/shining-a-light/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>

Description and Analysis, provides further analysis of the trends in visits to East Sussex libraries.

Figure 4.2 Visitors to East Sussex libraries 2006/7 – 2016/17

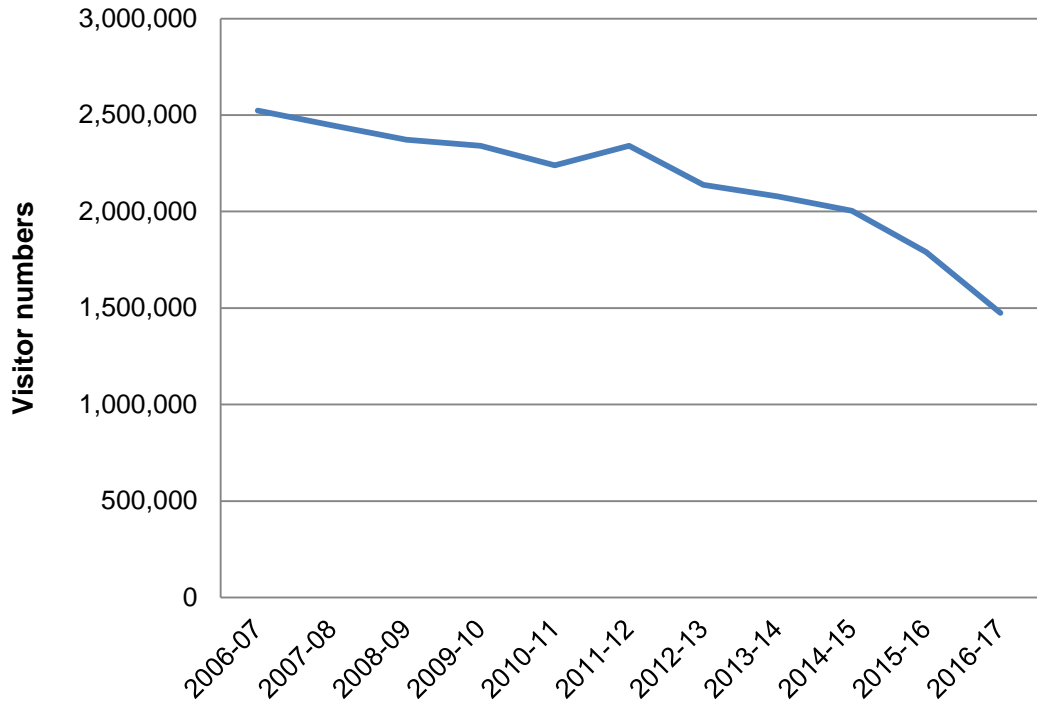
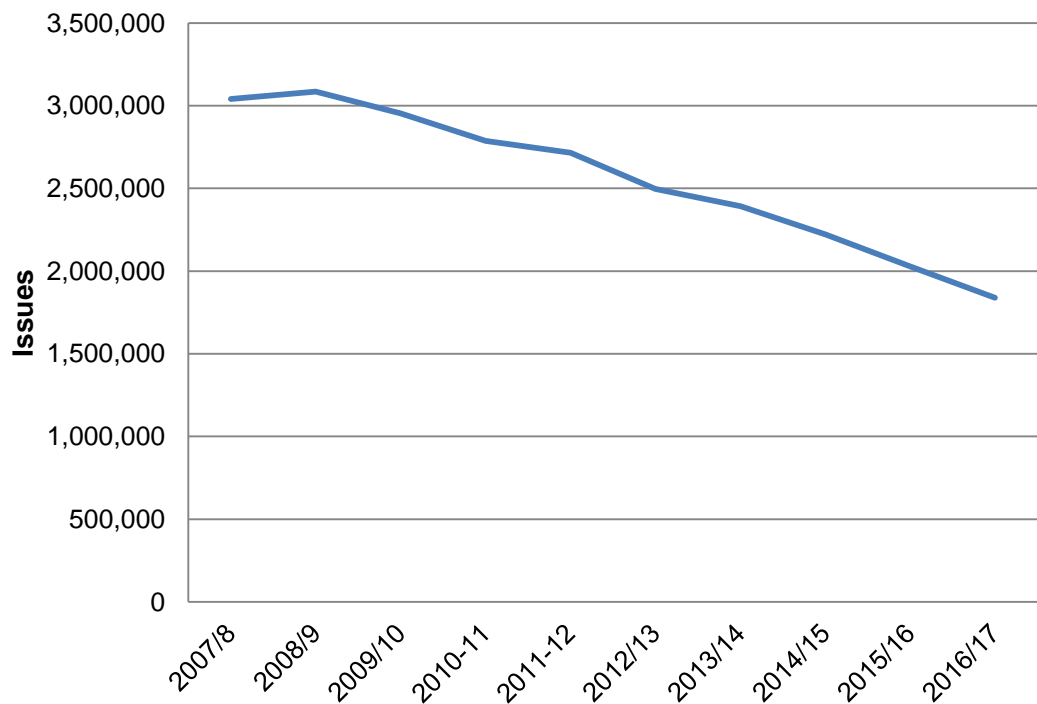
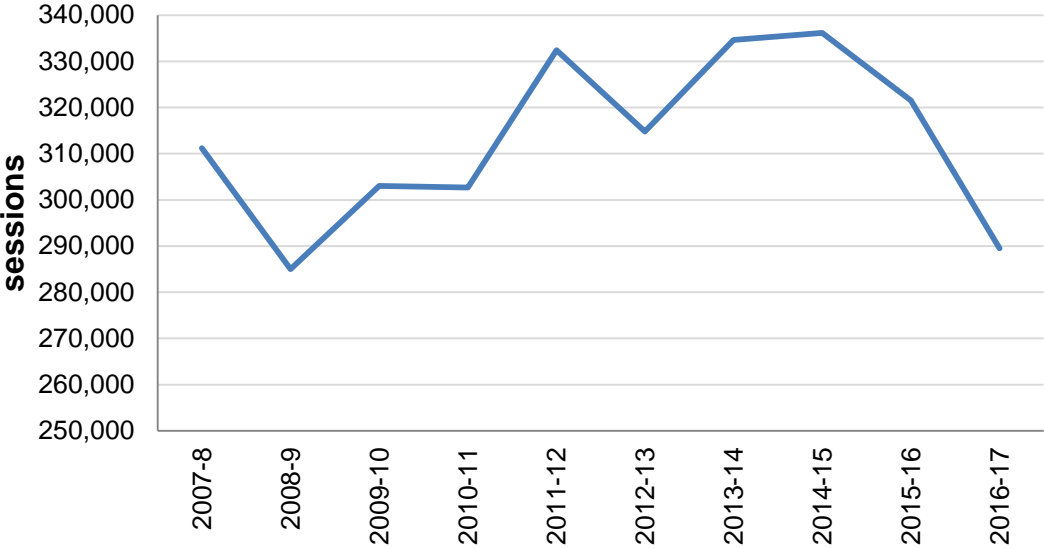


Figure 4.3 Items issued from East Sussex libraries 2007/8 – 2016/17



- 4.6 Figure 4.3 shows that the number of items issued or renewed from East Sussex libraries has followed a similar pattern of decrease to that of visitor numbers. In 2007/8 there were 3.04 million items issued or renewed. In 2016/17 this number had fallen to 1.84 million, a decrease of 39.5%. Electronic items such as eBooks, eMagazines and eAudiobooks were issued for the first time in 2011/12, and are included in the data from that period.
- 4.7 Use of the free People’s Network computers and Wi-Fi in East Sussex libraries, on the other hand, showed an overall increasing trend since 2007/8, with over 311,000 sessions in 2007/8, rising to a peak of just over 336,000 sessions in 2014/15. There was a 3.4% decrease in the number of sessions in 2015/16 compared with the previous year and a further 10% decrease from 2015/16 to 2016/17.

Figure 4.4 Use of East Sussex library computers and Wi-Fi 2010/11 – 2016/17



Why are libraries being used less?

- 4.8 There is a lack of published evidence as to what is behind these changing use patterns, however some of the factors behind the decline in library usage are probably self-evident. For example, widespread availability of affordable or free information and reading materials via the internet means people can now get easy access to something they would previously have had to make a visit to the local library’s reference section to look up.
- 4.9 The ending of the Net Book Agreement in 1995, whereby publishers and retailers set agreed prices for new books, and the development of the internet have also made the market for new books highly competitive, making books more affordable overall. The internet has also enabled a huge online marketplace to develop for cheap second hand books. Equally, the ability to provide more library services, particularly reading materials, online without the

need for a hard copy, challenges the traditional notion of a library service being identifiable only with the library building or mobile library.

- 4.10 As we have pointed out earlier in this Technical Appendix, although there has been a decline in the usage of libraries, they remain a very popular service. Interestingly, the Carnegie Trust found that 72% of people think that public libraries are important for communities whilst only 40% of people said that libraries were important to them personally. This raises the question of whether people's needs are increasingly being met elsewhere or whether people are unaware of the services that are available through library services that could be of benefit to them.
- 4.11 The Carnegie Trust report asked those surveyed whether or not a number of potential changes would encourage them to make more use of library services. The most frequent suggestion to this question was to provide better information on what services are on offer, and one of the report's conclusions was that there was an 'urgent need to improve communications and branding: many people are unaware of what public libraries offer'⁸. Among non-users the most popular improvement was 'providing other council services in library buildings'.
- 4.12 Some have argued that the usage of libraries has decreased because libraries have been closed or had their opening hours reduced. However, we know that, locally at least, that is not the case. In the period 2006/7 to 2015/16, when the number of East Sussex libraries open to the public remained the same, and before the County Council made changes to library opening hours, there was a 29% decline in library visitors. In this same period the County Council invested approximately £22m in new libraries and refurbished existing ones. With some of the library refurbishments or new libraries, we have seen an increase in visitor numbers and issues. However, it is often the case that this is a temporary reversal, and visitor numbers decline again after a couple of years.
- 4.13 A key opportunity within the Strategic Commissioning Strategy, therefore, is to seek to ensure that the Library and Information Service provides clear information about what library services are on offer, how people can make the most of what is available to them, and to help people choose to use libraries because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so. There is also an opportunity to explore whether providing other services in libraries would help meet people's needs better through a more 'joined-up' offer.

⁸ <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/shining-a-light/>

5 Ambition for libraries

The Libraries Taskforce

- 5.1 Government responsibility for libraries is held by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DMCS) and the Minister for Civil Society.
- 5.2 A Libraries Taskforce was created following the Independent Library Report for England⁹. It reports to Ministers via DCMS and the Local Government Association (LGA).
- 5.3 The priorities for the Libraries Taskforce are:
- making the case for investment for libraries: advocacy
 - raising public awareness of what libraries have to offer
 - identifying and showcasing good practice and supporting innovation
 - supporting workforce development
 - supporting development of the digital offer of libraries
 - monitoring and reporting on progress

Libraries Deliver

- 5.4 On 1 December 2016 the Libraries Taskforce launched *Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England*¹⁰, endorsed jointly by Rob Wilson MP and Cllr Ian Stephens (Chair, Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, Local Government Association). Libraries Deliver identifies 7 Outcomes that library services contribute toward, that it considers are critical to the individuals and communities in their areas, as follows:
- cultural and creative enrichment
 - increased reading and literacy
 - improved digital access and literacy
 - helping everyone achieve their full potential
 - healthier and happier lives
 - greater prosperity
 - stronger, more resilient communities

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>

Libraries Opportunities for Everyone Innovation Fund

- 5.5 As part of the launch of Libraries Deliver, a £4 million innovation fund was announced to pilot library service projects that provide people with opportunities that they might not otherwise have. On 22 March 2017 it was announced that 30 local authorities had been awarded grants, including just under £130,000 to East Sussex County Council toward a programme with a total value of £150,000.
- 5.6 Our successful bid, Advantage East Sussex, is a coordinated programme of transformational new initiatives delivered through our Library and Information Service to support some of our most disadvantaged residents and groups, with a focus on our most deprived places, specifically:
- those with visual impairments
 - those who are more vulnerable to mental health deterioration
 - those who are digitally excluded from employment
 - refugee families
 - children and young people
- 5.7 Advantage East Sussex activity includes:
- new hardware, software and training to help people with visual impairment to use library services
 - wellbeing boxes to provide stimulus and discussion
 - support to help people into employment
 - support for small businesses
 - social inclusion for people who do not speak English
 - literacy activities for children and young people
- 5.8 *Advantage East Sussex* will be delivered between April 2017 and March 2018. The programme will be evaluated and the results used to inform development of library services at both the national and local level.

6 Our contribution to local strategic priorities

ESCC Council Plan

6.1 The library service in East Sussex operates within the Council's four overarching priority outcomes:

- Driving economic growth
- Keeping vulnerable people safe
- Helping people help themselves
- Making best use of resources

Examples of how the service supports these include:

Driving economic growth

- Helping people to get the qualifications and skills they need to get into employment, by providing online learning (in partnership with Learndirect and others). Learning can be informal or may lead to qualifications
- Providing jobs hubs in libraries where people can find information to aid job seeking
- Providing MyWorkSearch apps and software in all libraries which help people to write CVs, search for work and link to the Universal Jobmatch site
- Providing materials and resources to help improve adult literacy
- Delivery of our *IT for You* project, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Arts Council England, and supported by volunteers to support people into employment, with tailored learning packages

Keeping vulnerable people safe

- Providing services which contribute to health and wellbeing e.g. Books on Prescription, health literature and promotions, Older Peoples Day
- Our Home Library Service, which takes books and information to people who are housebound

Helping people help themselves

- Helping people to get online and reduce digital exclusion with help from our volunteer computer buddies
- Providing free access to computers and the internet, enabling people to access information and services which can support self-reliance

Making best use of resources

- Taking part in national initiatives to achieve economies of scale e.g. the Summer Reading Challenge for primary-age children to encourage them to keep reading over the summer holidays and reduce learning loss
- Being part of the Central Buying Consortium to purchase stock, achieving best value through a larger purchasing budget.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Libraries Transformation Programme

6.2 The Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy is the final part of a wider Libraries Transformation Programme that has been designed to deliver a modern and sustainable library service. The Libraries Transformation Programme has a target to seek to identify £2 million of savings by the end of the current Medium Term Financial Plan period in 2018/19. This is additional to the £1.1 million of savings delivered in the financial year 2014/15 and is part of overall savings plans by East Sussex County Council of between £70 and £90 million,

6.3 The Libraries Transformation Programme consists of:

- A reduction in management and 'back office' costs which has already saved £500,000 per year
- A reduction in spending on books and other materials, to reflect changing demand, and to bring East Sussex into line with other local authorities, which will save £250,000 per year
- A reduction in library opening hours, by around 25% from 28 November 2016, which has saved £500,000 annually
- The draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy which, subject to public consultation and approval by the County Council's Cabinet, aims to identify £750,000 of further savings and income, by prioritising resources where the need for library services is greatest, whilst ensuring that we continue to deliver a comprehensive and efficient service for the county.

Savings delivered from 2014/15 to present

6.4 By the end of the 2016/17 financial year, savings of £2.1 million have been achieved by the Library and Information Service. A further £250,000 of savings will be achieved in the financial year 2017/18. If the full £750,000 savings target for the Strategic Commissioning Strategy is delivered as proposed, a total of just over £3 million of cost will have been cut from the Library and Information Service's budget between 14/15 and 18/19.

Targets and Performance measures

- 6.5 The Library and Information Service contributes key service targets towards the Council Plan and, additionally, the Communities, Economy and Transport Portfolio Plan and other key local strategies. This is summarised in the table below.

Council Plan
<p>Target: In partnership with Learndirect and other funding organisations provide online learning (including skills for life and ICT courses) in libraries (subject to contract) (CP)</p> <p>Measure: Number of courses completed</p>
Communities, Environment and Transport Portfolio Plan
<p>Target: In partnership with Learndirect and other funding organisations provide online learning (including skills for life and ICT courses) in libraries (subject to contract)</p> <p>Measure: Number of courses completed Measure: Number of sessions on library computers (the People's Network)</p>
ESCC Corporate Employability and Skills Action Plan 2016-18
<p>Target: Support a network of providers to deliver CEIAG in Libraries across the county. Provide a variety of support services to improve the skills and confidence of job seekers, such as face to face and online services. (Target 2 in Community Services Portfolio Plan)</p> <p>Measure: Job Hub network sustained to provide CEIAG in specified Library locations, supported by partner organisations and trained staff. Measure: Number of internal referrals to the offer. Measure: Number of Learndirect courses completed Measure: Number of learners</p>
Safety, Prevention, Access, Choice & Early Intervention (SPACE Action Plan
<p>Target: Improve learning for older people about dementia prescription drugs</p> <p>Measure: Maintain and/or improve on the take up of the dementia strand of the Books on Prescription Scheme offered in East Sussex libraries from baseline to specified number of items issued</p>

7 Conclusions

Key findings

- 7.1 The draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy is the final part of a wider Libraries Transformation Programme that has been designed to deliver a modern and sustainable library service which prioritises the needs of those who live, work and study in East Sussex, and which is able to adapt to future needs. The Libraries Transformation Programme has a target to seek to identify £2 million of savings by the end of the County Council's current Medium Term Financial Plan period in 2018/19, part of overall savings plans by the County Council of between £70 and £90 million.
- 7.2 By the end of 2017/18 the Libraries Transformation Programme will have delivered £1.25 million of the £2 million savings target, through a reduction in management posts and cutting back office costs, a reduction in spending on books and other materials to reflect changing demand, and to bring East Sussex into line with other local authorities, and a reduction in library opening hours by around 25%, which took effect in 2016.
- 7.3 The draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy which, subject to public consultation and approval by the County Council's Cabinet, aims to identify £750,000 of further savings and income, by prioritising resources where the need for library services is greatest, whilst ensuring that we continue to deliver comprehensive and efficient library services for the county.
- 7.4 In developing the Technical Appendices and the draft Strategic Commissioning Strategy, the County Council has set out to identify the range of needs that the Library and Information Service may be well-placed to help meet, either on its own or in partnership with others, within the resources that are available. This includes the particular needs of different communities (both of people and place) who face greater disadvantage than others.
- 7.5 The development of the draft Strategic Commissioning Strategy also takes into account our legal responsibilities for providing a library service and has been developed according to the Strategic Commissioning Framework, our business planning process for all East Sussex County Council service redesign.
- 7.6 The current regulatory framework for public libraries is set out in the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*. East Sussex County Council is one of 151 local councils in the UK with a duty under this Act to provide a local library service that is 'comprehensive and efficient'. All library services must provide, by law, free reading materials available to borrow by anyone who lives, works or studies (full-time) in the local area. Apart from this requirement, it is for local decision how the library service best meets the duty to provide a

'comprehensive and efficient' service in practical terms, including how many libraries there are, where they are, when they are open and what each one offers.

- 7.7 Under case law, it has been made clear by the courts that the requirement to provide a 'comprehensive' library service does not mean that the authority has a duty to guarantee every resident access to any or all of the library services it provides at any cost. Rather, library services must be accessible to everyone using reasonable means, including access to services via the internet, taking into account constraints such as available resources.
- 7.8 Local authorities who are proposing to alter their library provisions are required to produce a needs assessment to demonstrate that they will continue to comply with the terms of the statutory duty. In addition, the impact of service changes on any groups with protected personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender, disability) must be considered in accordance with the *Equality Act 2010*, and any impacts must be mitigated where necessary.
- 7.9 Libraries today offer a much wider range of services than those envisaged under the 1964 Act, most obviously through the provision of access to the internet and IT resources in library buildings and through a wider range of electronic services such as online library catalogues and information resources, eBooks and eMagazines. A series of core services, called Universal Offers, has been established, that around 90% of library services nationally have signed up to. They aim to provide people with a clear idea of what is on offer within their local library service.
- 7.10 The Universal Offers are Reading, Information, Digital, Health, Learning and Culture. Through the Universal Offers and other library services, the East Sussex Library and Information Service, supports the County Council's four overarching priority outcomes of driving economic growth, keeping vulnerable people safe, helping people help themselves and making best use of resources.
- 7.11 The Universal Offers aim to support reading for pleasure and personal development, recognising also that literacy supports the local economy and people's ability to lead independent lives. Libraries offer resources and personal support to help job seekers find work, increasingly via online searching and applications, and can help people identify and develop new skills and qualifications.
- 7.12 In our information age, where many materials and information resources have moved online, and as more commercial and public services have become digital, libraries provide free access to computers and to the internet to enable people to get online. Free internet access to computers and to the internet remains important. Some people are still excluded from the online world because of the cost of a broadband connection or mobile data package, or because they do not have the digital skills to use the internet.

- 7.13 Many people use libraries completely independently, on a self-help/self-service basis, identifying and accessing the resources they need on their own. Other people have a need for support from the library, whether this is help from a member of staff to locate an item, or a much more structured programme of help like a course to help people improve their reading, numeracy and ICT skills.
- 7.14 Libraries remain a popular service. Nearly 60% of the English population holds a current library card and in 2014/15 libraries in England received almost 225 million physical visits, more than visits to Premier League football games, the cinema, and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined. However, in the past decade or more, there have been changes in the way that people use their library service and in the overall numbers doing so. This change has been seen locally, nationally and internationally. Overall, fewer people are visiting libraries and borrowing books.
- 7.15 The Taking Part survey in 2016, showed that in the ten year period from 2005/06 to 2015/16, use of library services reduced from roughly one half to one third of all UK adults. A survey and associated report published by the Carnegie Trust in 2017 reported higher levels of use, with 46% of people surveyed saying they had used a library service in the past 12 months, down from 50% in 2011. Against this backdrop of an overall reduction in people using library services, of those adults who had still used a library service, the proportion using a library service website rose from 8.9% to 14.2% between 2005/06 and 2015/16 and the use of a library website to complete a transaction, such as reserving or renewing an item or paying a fine for an overdue loan was up from 28.1% in 2006/07 to 39.7% in 2015/16).
- 7.16 In East Sussex there has also been a decline in usage of libraries. In 2006/7 there were 2.52 million visits to East Sussex libraries. In 2016/17 this number had fallen to 1.48 million, a decrease of 41.5%.
- 7.17 There is a lack of published evidence as to what is behind these changing use patterns, however some of the factors behind the decline in library usage are probably self-evident. Widespread availability of affordable or free information and reading materials via the internet means people can now get easy access to something they would previously have had to make a visit to the local library's reference section to look up. The market for new and second hand books has become more competitive in the past fifteen to twenty years, and the development of the internet has also enabled a huge online marketplace to develop. The ability to provide more library services, particularly reading materials, online without the need for a hard copy, challenges the traditional notion of a library service being identifiable only with the library building or mobile library.
- 7.18 The Carnegie Trust found in a recent survey that 72% of people think that public libraries are important for communities whilst only 40% of people said that libraries were important to them personally. This raises the question of whether people's needs are increasingly being met elsewhere or whether people are unaware of the services that are available through library services

that could be of benefit to them. When people in the survey were asked what would encourage them to make more use of library services, the most frequent suggestion was to provide better information on what services are on offer. Among non-users the most popular improvement was 'providing other council services in library buildings'.

- 7.19 Some have argued that the usage of libraries has decreased because libraries have been closed or had their opening hours reduced. However, we know that, locally at least, that is not the case. In the period 2006/7 to 2015/16, when the number of East Sussex libraries open to the public remained the same, and before the County Council made changes to library opening hours, there was a 29% decline in library visitors. In this same period the County Council invested approximately £22m in new libraries and refurbished existing ones.
- 7.20 A key opportunity within the Strategic Commissioning Strategy, therefore, is to seek to ensure that the Library and Information Service provides clear information about what library services are on offer, how people can make the most of what is available to them, and to help people choose to use libraries because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so. There is also an opportunity to explore whether providing other services in libraries would help meet people's needs better through a more 'joined-up' offer.