



December 2021

Update of Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy

Technical Appendix 3

Property Assessment

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1 Purpose of the Technical Appendix

Introduction

- 1.1 This Technical Appendix sets out the current properties from which the East Sussex Library and Information Service delivers its functions and reviews the effectiveness of existing library buildings, in order to ascertain how the current buildings should be used to support delivery of the draft Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy and how these assets can best be used by the wider community.
- 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:

Updated version of Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy		
Appendix 1 Review of implementation of Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy		
Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment.		
Technical Appendix 1 Needs Assessment	Technical Appendix 2 Accessibility Analysis	Technical Appendix 3 Property Review

- 1.3 The purpose is to:
- provide an overview of the buildings from which the Library and Information Service operates
 - set out the running and upkeep costs of these buildings
 - review the efficiency of the current library estate and identify where there are opportunities to deliver the service in a more cost-effective way and/or deliver a better service in conjunction with other services.
 - identify whether there is scope to release space for joint working or for activities that could generate income for the Library and Information Service or to deliver services on behalf of someone else as a source of income generation.

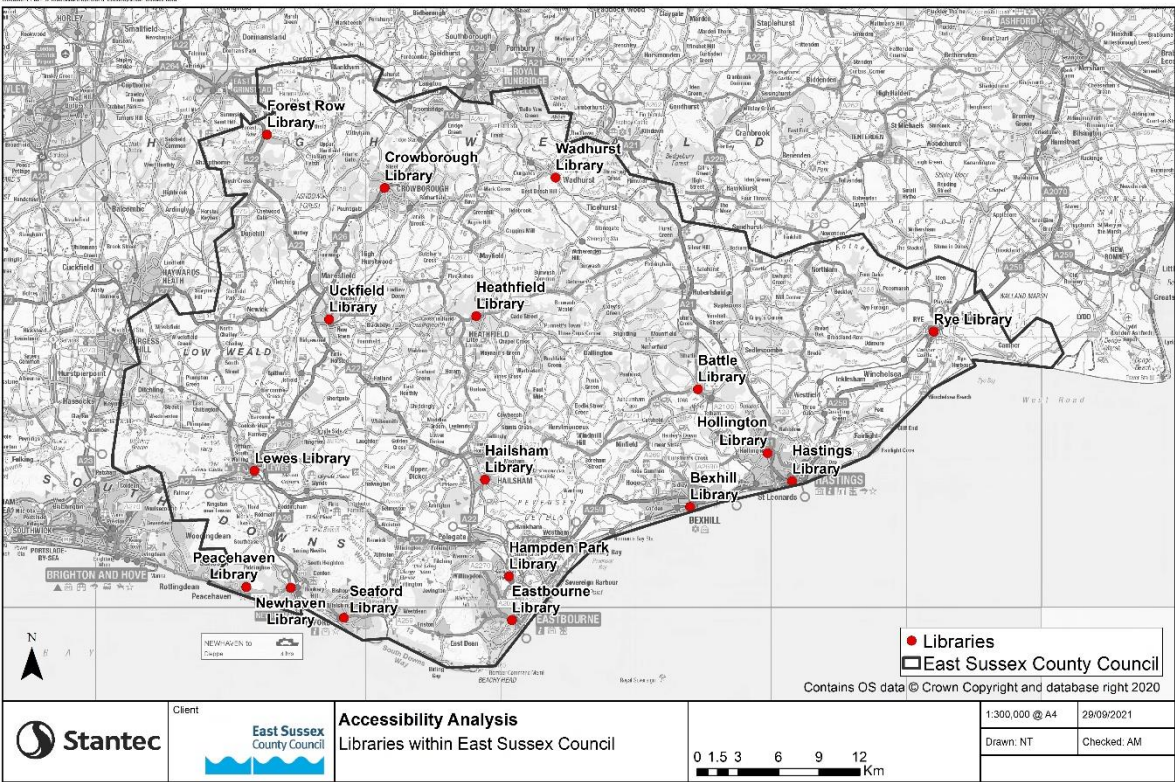
- confirm that we will work with Property Services to work towards the Council's target of achieving carbon neutrality from activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050.

2 Building information

Introduction

- 2.1 The East Sussex Library and Information Service currently has a network of 17 public library buildings. In 2019/20 over 1 million visits took place in these buildings. In addition to the services provided by the Library and Information Service some of our libraries offer services delivered by, or in partnership with, other organisations. The location of the 17 libraries can be seen in Figure 1.
- 2.2 The County Council owns 12 of the 17 libraries freehold. The remaining 5 libraries are leased. A list of the East Sussex libraries, with their freehold/leasehold status is provided in Annex 1 to this Technical Appendix.
- 2.3 The Library and Information Service also leases Ropemaker Park, a modern warehouse unit located in Hailsham, which is the central storage and distribution point for library stock and base for some library service staff, including Librarians and Bibliographic Services. Ropemaker Park is also the County Council's records centre and provides office space to some other County Council services.

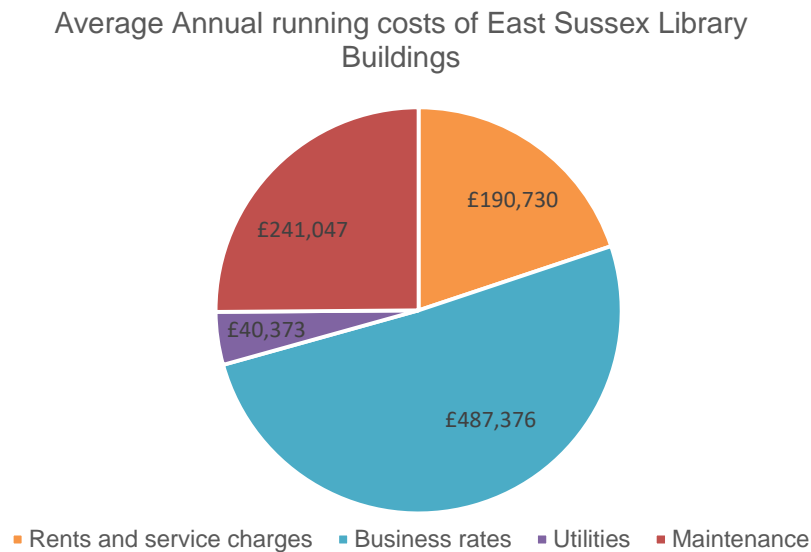
Figure 1: Map of East Sussex library service buildings



Running costs of Library and Information Services buildings

- 2.4 The total running cost of our buildings, excluding Ropemaker Park, is approximately £959,000 per year. This excludes staffing costs and any income which each library generates from fees and fines, and the costs of refurbishment, new furniture etc., which is detailed separately in the next section. A breakdown of the building costs for the Library and Information Service as a whole can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Average annual running costs of East Sussex Library Buildings



Capital expenditure on libraries

- 2.5 With over 1 million visitors annually, wear and tear on library buildings, furniture and fittings is inevitable, and can cost a considerable amount of money over a number of years. Worn and damaged items can quickly pose a risk to the health and safety of customers and staff or become damaged beyond economic repair.
- 2.6 Of the £959,000 annual running costs of the Library and Information Service's buildings, there is expenditure each year of £241,000 on repair and maintenance. This covers both small repairs such as fixing leaks to much larger scale repairs such as replacing old windows and re-roofing areas of the building. This figure also includes residual servicing costs for libraries that have now closed which were paid in the period 2018/19-2020/21.
- 2.7 On top of this annual maintenance expenditure, the County Council has spent approximately £12.1 million over the last decade on major refurbishment of East Sussex library buildings. This investment in library buildings, as opposed to the paying for the annual running costs, is known as 'capital expenditure'.

- 2.8 East Sussex County Council has committed a capital program of expenditure for libraries until 2030. Each year we work on projects for our libraries to ensure they are safe, in a good state of repair and that they meet the needs of our customers. It is estimated that for the 17 library buildings the service currently operates from this will cost around £2.6 million over the next five years or approximately £513,000 per year. This is in addition to the annual maintenance costs of around £241,000.
- 2.9 The above estimate is based on items associated with general building maintenance and items frequently replaced during a building's lifetime. This includes:
- Repair and replacement of CCTV, security and personal safety items as they fail or become obsolete and beyond economic repair.
 - Replacement of worn and damaged floor coverings and furniture including desks, trolleys, map cabinets etc.
 - Changes to signage, both internal and external to reflect changes in service delivery and opening times.
 - Dilapidations and lease responsibilities arising from any library buildings currently leased or rented.
 - Repair and replacement of equipment specific to the library service such as self-service kiosks and security gates
 - Repair and replacement of furniture needed to respond to statutory requirements for public and staff, such as Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant desks, chairs and adapted technology.

3 Review of library properties

Opportunities for partnership working or delivering commissioned services

- 3.1 Library buildings are spaces from which a range of different services are provided to the public, in addition to the core library functions. The range of ways in which the Library and Information Service currently works with partners is described in more detail in Appendix 1 Review of the implementation of the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy. This section of the Technical Appendix looks at the different ways in which we use library properties in order to meet local needs, looking particularly at the cost effectiveness of the current buildings and opportunities to increase income or share the costs of running them.

Making better use of libraries when they are closed

- 3.2 All of the libraries in East Sussex are closed for periods of time, for example on one or more mornings, afternoons or whole days per week. Many libraries also have movable shelving and furniture which enable the layout to be changed for a few hours to accommodate a wide range of different uses.
- 3.3 Libraries offer opportunities for community groups, voluntary sector organisations, the private sector and other parts of the public sector (including other parts of the County Council) to make more use of these spaces when the Library and Information Service is not using a building to deliver its services. The service welcomes any enquiry for use of its space, subject to government guidelines (Covid-19), any applicable planning permissions, or lease conditions of each building. During the last five years the Library and Information Service has worked with a number of partners to help to reduce financial pressures on the service whilst maximising the use of the spaces available to support local groups or services. This income is directly reinvested into the service to allow teams to continue to deliver services to meet local needs or used to mitigate budget pressures.

Library capacity

- 3.4 During the implementation of the strategy in 2018, it became apparent that shorter individual bookings of the meeting rooms do not always make best use of the library assets.
- 3.5 Libraries have instead explored and entered into longer term leases of parts of the buildings to ensure the sustainability of the arrangement, obtaining longer term income to the service. This means that office spaces, meeting rooms and other available space in the libraries are used continuously, ensuring the sustainability of the space and the income that a particular partnership brings.

3.6 Additionally, there are still a number of meeting rooms which are available in two libraries within the county. They are primarily hired on an hourly or session basis (morning, afternoon or full day) although there is the potential to hire the space on a weekly, monthly or other agreed duration period. Meeting rooms can be hired when the library is closed, by prior arrangement. The meeting rooms have a variety of facilities and are located as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Current meeting room provision in library buildings

Library	Meeting Room detail	Facilities
Newhaven	Meeting Room 1 @ 6m ²	Wi-Fi, toilets, power, DDA compliant, hearing loop
	Meeting Room 2 @ 6 m ²	
	Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 can be joined together	
Eastbourne	The Grove room @ 30m ²	Wi-Fi, toilets, power, DDA compliant, interactive screen, hearing loop
	The Ivy room @ 8m ²	
	The Grove and Ivy rooms can be joined together	

3.7 From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020, meeting rooms at Newhaven and Eastbourne libraries generated approximately £5,000 of income. The global pandemic meant that no income was collected in 2020-21 as libraries closed intermittently throughout the year following national lockdown guidance. The Library and Information Service will continue to review the meeting rooms spaces during this next phase of the strategy to ensure that the spaces are being used in the best possible way, maximising income generation opportunities for the service. Typically, rooms are booked for a wide range of uses including business meetings, health programmes, language courses, training, and individual use.

3.8 In Newhaven, where the meeting rooms are in the main library space, consideration will also be given to opening them up to library customers, for example for use as study spaces or areas where customers can access library Wi-Fi using their own devices.

Opportunities to release library space for alternative use

3.9 Since the implementation of the Strategy in 2018, it has become apparent that the way customers use the library space continues to change. Visitors to libraries and the number of books borrowed from library buildings continue to decrease and use of online services continues to increase.

The Library and Information Service will continue to assess space within our libraries to ensure they are used to their fullest potential. The LIS has worked with other agencies to lease library space:

- Heathfield
- Uckfield
- Eastbourne
- Bexhill
- Hastings
- Lewes
- Rye
- Seaford

Agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), National Health Service (NHS) and East Sussex County Council's parking enforcement staff have all leased space within these libraries. The service is committed to continue to seek out new partnership opportunities to ensure that each of the library buildings are being used in the most efficient way possible.

- 3.10 This continuous review of our buildings, space and partnership opportunities means that rental income can be generated and used either as a saving or to be reinvested within the service. Partners have actively helped offset running costs of libraries, whilst reducing property revenue expenditure for themselves at the same time. The service has an overarching view of space available, so we will continue to assess and seek out opportunities to utilise these in the best way possible.
- 3.11 As a result of continued partnerships and leases of library space, we have generated approximately £300,000 per annum which has been used directly to support the service in a sustained, pragmatic way.

Further efficiencies

- 3.12 As identified above, the reduced footfall in libraries and the decline in the number of issues means that libraries need less space than previously required. There is no current evidence to suggest that this trend will stop or reverse in future. With rising rents and business rates, the Library and Information Service will need to continue to identify whether library services could be delivered in the same locality in a more cost-effective way.
- 3.13 In addition to considering the release of space within library buildings as an opportunity for the Library and Information Service to share costs or generate a rental income, there may also, in future, be the potential for library services to be delivered from different locations, in order to reduce costs or to deliver a better service in conjunction with other services, or both. We will monitor how the global pandemic changes the requirements of the service, and aim to adapt to meet the needs of the community. For example, we will assess whether an increase of study spaces would provide adults and young people a safe, comfortable environment in which to work or study.

- 3.14 The County Council continues to work with SPACES partners. SPACES (Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex) aims to identify and realise opportunities for co-location and collaboration between community and voluntary sector partners. Partners include East Sussex County Council, the borough and district councils in the county, the emergency services, representatives from the voluntary and community sector, the NHS and some central government services such as the Department for Work and Pensions. We will continue this dialogue to identify any prospective opportunities that may present as employers across all sectors review their space required for teams, the location of offices and the delivery model of their services.
- 3.15 East Sussex County Council has committed to become a carbon-neutral council as soon as possible and by 2050 at the latest. We will work with Property Services to continue to ensure buildings are as energy efficient as possible. We will seek opportunities to improve energy efficiency for library buildings whenever possible.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The East Sussex Library and Information Service has a network of 17 public library buildings, which host around 1 million visits annually. Many libraries also offer services delivered by, or in partnership with, other organisations. The County Council owns 12 of the 17 libraries, and the remainder are leased from landlords. The Library and Information Service also leases Ropemaker Park in Hailsham, which is the central storage and distribution point for library stock and base for some staff. Ropemaker Park is also the County Council's records centre.
- 4.2 The total running cost of the Library and Information Service buildings, excluding Ropemaker Park, is approximately £959,000 per year, excluding staffing costs, refurbishment costs and income. Around £487,000 is spent on business rates, £241,000 on maintenance and £191,000 on rents and service charges. Utility costs make up the remainder of around £40,000 per year.
- 4.3 With 1 million visitors annually, wear and tear on library buildings, furniture and fittings is inevitable. Worn and damaged items can quickly pose a risk to the health and safety of customers and staff or become damaged beyond economic repair. In the past decade the County Council has spent approximately £12.1 million on major refurbishment of East Sussex library buildings.
- 4.4 East Sussex County Council has committed a capital program of expenditure for libraries until 2030. Each year we work on projects for our libraries to ensure they are safe, in a good state of repair and that they meet the needs of our customers. It is estimated that for the 17 library buildings the service currently operates from will cost around £2.5 million over the next five years or approximately £513,000 per year. This is in addition to the annual maintenance costs of around £241,000.
- 4.5 All of the libraries in East Sussex are closed for periods of time, for example on one or more mornings, afternoons or whole days per week and many have movable shelving and furniture which enable the layout to be changed to accommodate a wide range of different potential uses.
- 4.6 This continuous review of our buildings, space and partnership opportunities means that rental income can be generated and used either as a saving or to be reinvested within the service. Partners have actively helped offset running costs of libraries, whilst reducing property revenue expenditure for themselves at the same time. The service has an overarching view of space available, so we will continue to assess and seek out opportunities to utilise these in the best way possible.
- 4.7 Meeting rooms are available for public hire by individuals, small businesses, charities, local organisations, service providers, partners and private enterprises in two libraries. We will continue to monitor these spaces to ensure we are maximising the opportunity with these resources.

- 4.9 With decreasing visits and issues of items, there are also opportunities to release space within libraries for other organisations to use, so that costs can be shared and a rental income generated for the Library and Information Service.
- 4.10 As a result of continued efforts to maximise the opportunity for leases and medium term rentals with local partners and other East Sussex County Council teams, the Library and Information Service will generate approximately £300,000 per year through a combination of efficiencies and the rental of library space.
- 4.11 The Library and Information Service will continue to identify whether library services could be delivered in the same locality in a more cost-effective way. The Service will also continue to seek out new partnerships to share accommodation with other organisations, in order to reduce costs or to deliver a better service in conjunction with other services, or both.

Annex 1 Freehold/Leasehold status of East Sussex libraries

Library	Ownership
Battle	Freehold
Bexhill	Freehold
Crowborough	Leased
Eastbourne	Freehold
Forest Row	Leased
Hailsham	Freehold
Hampden Park	Freehold
Hastings	Freehold
Heathfield	Freehold
Hollington	Freehold
Lewes	Freehold
Newhaven	Freehold
Peacehaven	Leased
Rye	Leased
Seaford	Freehold
Uckfield	Freehold
Wadhurst	Leased