

Library Strategy Development Briefing Note 01 August 2022

Introduction:

- The current library strategy is over 10 years old.
- A new Dorset Council Library Strategy will guide how we develop and deliver our statutory library services over the next 10 years; shaping our services around local need and Dorset Council's strategic priorities.
- Our approach to developing a new library strategy has been community led, evidence based, and partnership focused. We thank our valued Town and Parish Councils for their contributions and promotion of this important work.

Community led:

- We are developing the new Dorset Council library strategy based on two phases of public consultation.
- Phase one took place in October 2021 to January 2022 and we ran three #LetsTalkLibraries surveys and a range of engagement workshops.
- The results and analysis of the three consultation surveys are [available to read here](#).
- This open conversation with our communities, stakeholders and partners allowed us to hear what library customers valued, what would encourage non library users to use the service in the future and what opportunities there are to work collaboratively with partners.
- The findings of this work, in terms of identified need and recommended action, is presented in a research [report available here](#) and its [accompanying appendix here](#).

Evidence based:

- Dorset Council are committed to working in partnership with communities and stakeholders, placing residents at the heart of service design and delivering services around local need.
- This approach is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Library Strategy for England¹.
- In recognition of the broad range of interventions which a library service can help support, we have taken a range of measures which indicate need across the breadth of society and an individual's life course. These include:
 - demographic information (including population growth)
 - education
 - deprivation indicators
 - health (including mental health and loneliness)
 - digital exclusion

¹ DCMS, 2018 [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- local economy
- crime
- library demand
- A draft Strategic Needs Assessment will accompany the draft Library Strategy.

#OneTeam and Partnership focused:

- We want to use the development of this library strategy to reposition the library service as a strategic delivery partner for a range of council and community priorities.
- Libraries can work within strategic partnerships to deliver outcomes which help to:
 - close the education attainment gap
 - help break the cycle of poverty and reduce inequality
 - tackle the mental health crisis
 - close the digital divide
 - tackle social isolation
 - improve wellbeing
 - promote environmental awareness
- Activity in these areas are all part of our core library offer², but we can amplify our impact by delivering in closer partnership with others.

Latest Developments and Next Steps:

- Analysis of phase one consultation survey responses have been brought together with the findings from engagement workshops and evidence around local need, to inform a draft library strategy, [available here](#). The [draft Strategic Needs Assessment](#) and [draft Equalities Impact Assessment](#) and also publicly available via the Committee process.
- We plan to consult our communities, stakeholders and partners on the draft strategy in the autumn, with phase two Let’s Talk Libraries consultation running for 12 weeks.
- Responses and feedback received to phase two consultation will help to refine the final strategy and explore delivery opportunities. We will ask our communities to help us prioritise, we need to understand what strategy outcome is most important for them and what delivery could look like in their communities. This then allows us to prioritise resources as a service and develop delivery action plans by spring 2023.

Background:

- As Dorset Council, under the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964 we have a statutory duty³ to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for all those who live work or study in the authority area.

² Libraries Connect, 2018 [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#).

³ DCMS, 2022 [Libraries as a statutory service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- Our statutory library service is made up of: 23 council run libraries, a 24/7 online library service and a home library service, which delivers services to house bound residents.
- In Dorset we also have a proud history of community managed libraries. We support⁴ eight community managed libraries who provide library services outside of the statutory service, resulting in a rich network of 31 libraries across the Dorset Council authority area. We value our community managed libraries as key stakeholders and community-based delivery partners.

⁴ DCMS, 2016 [Community libraries in Dorset - Case study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)