

Library Strategy Development DAPTC Briefing 29 September 2022

Introduction:

- The current library strategy was created under a predecessor authority and 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 and will align with community need and Dorset Council's strategic priorities - to deliver a modern, sustainable, efficient and relevant library service.
- Our approach to developing a new library strategy has been community led, evidence based, and partnership focused.
- We are developing the new Dorset Council library strategy based on two phases of public consultation.
- Phase one "Let's Talk Libraries" consultation ran October 2021- January 2022. We received over 7,500 survey responses and carried out a range of engagement workshops.
- Phase one consultation was designed to be an open conversation with our communities and partners and 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.
- 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 offer¹, but we can amplify our impact by delivering in closer partnership with others.
- The results and analysis of phase one consultation feedback is [available to read here.](#)

Draft Library Strategy and Phase Two Let's Talk Libraries:

- By listening to all our communities' views during phase one consultation, we have developed a draft library strategy, with our mission to: "To Inspire, Connect and Enable our communities through our services".

¹ Libraries Connect, 2018 [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected.](#)

- This next phase of public consultation will refine the draft strategy. We will ask our communities and partners to help us prioritise outcomes and explore what delivery could look like in their communities.
- Within the consultation we propose a new way of working which includes the classification of three types of Dorset Council run library² (each type with standardised opening hours):

1. Library

A library which delivers our core library offer

2. Library+

A library which delivers an enhanced core library offer

3. Library Connect

A library hub which delivers an enhanced core library offer including co-located partner services

- All Dorset Council libraries will provide a core library service offer that is designed to meet the needs of all communities. The draft core library offer has been informed by phase one consultation feedback and is subject to further feedback during phase two consultation.
- 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.
- Phase one consultation feedback identified a range of services which the library service could deliver. Unfortunately, we are not able to deliver all of these, and we need to tailor what's possible in line with community needs, available resources and the financial constraints of the council.
- This approach is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Library Strategy for England³.
- We have analysed the level of community need for each library catchment to understand where community need is greatest. Community needs have been identified via a needs assessment, which looks at a range of data including population size, educational attainment, health and wellbeing data and library demand data. This analysis is publicly available [on our webpages](#).
- This has allowed us to identify libraries in higher areas of community need and those in relatively lower areas of need.
- This evidence, coupled with our proposed operating model principles has allowed us to provisionally allocate our existing library estate (23) across the three types of Dorset Council library: a library, Library+ and a Library Connect.

² Community managed libraries are a fourth type of library in Dorset. They are community led libraries, supported by Dorset Council. Dorset's eight community managed libraries are not part of this phase of consultation.

³ DCMS, 2018 [Libraries deliver ambition for public libraries in England](#).

- We propose:
 - eleven libraries classified as a “Library”
 - seven libraries classified as a “Library+”
 - the enhanced service offer provided by a Library+ is proposed in library catchments with relatively higher levels of community need
 - five libraries classified as a “Library Connect”
 - Library Connects are to be strategically located to serve the needs of a broad catchment area of Dorset: North, South, Central, East and West.

Key Messages

- This phase of consultation allows our communities and partners to feedback on: the draft library strategy, the proposed classification of their local library, it allows them to say when they would like their local library to be open and what services they would like to be available.
- We want to hear our communities’ feedback about these proposed changes (including the impact of any changes). This data will form part of the strategic evidence base used to refine the library strategy and resulting operating model.
- No decisions have been made; this is an open consultation with our communities.
- Please encourage your communities to take part.

Next Steps

- The next phase of public consultation launched on Thursday 29 September and will remain open for 12 weeks, closing on 22 December 2022.
- There are 3 surveys:
 - Children’s survey (5-15)
 - Public survey
 - Employee, business and partner survey (this is the survey we ask Councillors and Town and Parish Councils to complete as it allows for more detailed responses)
- Surveys are held on an accessible online consultation platform, and library teams can support resident complete it online. If residents need help in completing the survey, please call 01305 221000. Alternative formats including paper copies can be requested at your local library.
- Once consultation closes, responses will be analysed and will refine the draft strategy; an updated strategy and delivery options will be presented to Joint Overview Committee and Cabinet and we will seek strategy sign off in Spring 2023.