

## Proposed Libraries Services Vision and Delivery Model

### Context

1. Swindon has historically been a pioneer for library services. Predating the first public lending libraries in the 1850s, a lending library was established in 1843 when toolmakers in the Great Western Railway works organised the circulation of donated books. In 2016, Swindon's Library Service currently comprises 15 Libraries and a Mobile Library Service, including a brand new Central Library opened in 2008. The service supports over a million visits per year and around 36,000 registered Library users. Swindon's Library service ranks in the top quartile of near neighbours in the total number of libraries, and number of libraries per 100,00 population and its revenue expenditure on the service is around average.
2. The library service is in the top quartile of its comparator authorities (4<sup>th</sup> out of 16) in terms of active borrowers and engaging with library users and the service has continued the tradition of innovation in service delivery. This includes 24/7 online services, e-books, e-audio and e-magazines, self-service technology, free wifi, and improving life opportunities through the Universal Offers (Reading, Information, Digital Literacy, Health, and Learning)
3. Across the UK, patterns of Library usage are changing, and the role Libraries play in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is subject to debate at national level. Recent reports (the independent Library Report for England of 2014, the DCMS Libraries Ambitions publication of 2016 and others) have all highlighted common themes regarding the future role and relevance of Libraries in supporting literacy and learning, promoting digital inclusion, supporting community health and wellbeing, and as important venues for social interaction in communities, all of which contribute to achieving Council's Vision for Swindon
4. At the same time, as with all Council services, Libraries are facing unprecedented financial pressures in the context of Local Government financing. Swindon's financial context has been set out in recent Cabinet reports, and the Cabinet report of 10 February 2016 described the detailed implications for Swindon's Libraries and set out a requirement to achieve savings in the service of £1.5million by 2020, reducing service costs from £2.6m to £1.1m.
5. The same report of 10 February also set out a detailed needs assessment for Library services, proposed an emerging model for Swindon's Library Service which identified services that support participation in Swindon's growing economy as a particular driver arising from the needs assessment.
6. In responding to these drivers, and following extensive public engagement that has taken place since February 2016, this strategy sets out a vision of Swindon's Libraries that responds to need in Swindon, and proposes an innovative delivery and resourcing model that through partnership, aims to secure a sustainable future for Library services in Swindon.

### Swindon Libraries Vision

7. In the context of the Council's Vision for Swindon, and its Priorities and Pledges, the Swindon's Library Service vision is:  
*To build communities through literacy and learning, to encourage a love of reading, and to provide access to information that inspires enjoyment and learning, and that increases health, wellbeing and economic participation. We will connect communities by providing welcoming spaces to meet, socialise and learn through a core network of Libraries, and support a wider network of community-led provision and resources. By 2020, we aim for Swindon's Library services to be recognised nationally for the quality of its services, innovation in the way services are delivered, cost effectiveness and the outcomes it achieves for early years, for adult learners, for active citizens and for active ageing.*

## Delivery Model

8. The Libraries vision will be delivered through a core provision comprising:
  - A network of 4 Libraries of Central, West Swindon, Highworth and North Swindon, supported by investment in technology that allows self-service access beyond staffed hours.
  - Professional Library services, delivered by professional Librarians and trained Library staff including service development, learning and outreach, local studies, information and digital literacy, stock management and volunteer co-ordination
  - Enabling support to develop community-led local Library services, including transitional funding, a menu of optional free and paid-for services
9. The Council is committed to sustaining and developing a network of Library services in Swindon, and it is clear that with pressures on its resources, it cannot do it on its own. Achieving this requires a radically different delivery approach to that which exists today and depends on the active contribution of partners, local communities and volunteers. This will require change both in the Council's approach, and in the role of the users and communities that Libraries serve. This strategy sets out how the Council proposes to work with Library users, communities, partners and all stakeholders to bring wide resources and contributions to the service, and collaboratively develop Library services over the months and years ahead.
10. The strategy and delivery model is founded on a principle of partnership in the design and delivery of Library services, and to secure their ongoing sustainability. The Council will fund expert, professional and innovative Library services, supported by local partnerships and income generation that help meet the costs of the service. This builds on a number of recent discussions where partners have stated their willingness to work with the Council to develop solutions that secure the accessibility of Library services. This principle is also consistent with the aims of the Council's Community Assets Review that is exploring a range of options for the co-location of services and income generation for the Council's community buildings.
11. The delivery model proposed for Library services has been informed by the needs assessment and emerging model for the service published in February 2016, and the results of subsequent public engagement. In developing this model, the Council has sought to balance competing criteria of (i) service reach and accessibility (ii) community need and (iii) affordability. This model proposes some amendments to the previous emerging model in terms of core provision and sets out additional measures to support its implementation.
12. The delivery model comprises the following:

### *Core Network*

- Library Services will be directly delivered from a core network of Libraries comprising Central, West Swindon, Highworth and North Swindon. The proposed core network of Libraries meet 74% of current visits, and means 80% of current Library users and 85% of Swindon's households live within 2 miles of a Library.
- Opening hours of the core network of Libraries will be maintained or extended through the adoption of self-service technology that enables Libraries to be accessed at times when Libraries are unstaffed

- Staffed hours have been costed at 47.5hrs per week for the Central Library, and the equivalent of 15 hours per week at West, Highworth and North. The distribution of those staffed hours will be determined in partnership with local communities based on the analysis of when services are most accessed, local priorities and efficient staffing requirements

### *Professional Library Services*

- The services will be delivered by a core staff comprising professional Librarians and trained Library staff, learning and outreach services, local studies, professional stock management and volunteer co-ordination
- Libraries staff will develop a hub of reading, information, digital, health and wellbeing, and learning offers that will continue to support valued services ranging from story and rhyme time, Read Ahead, summer Reading Challenge, reading for pleasure, books on prescription, free e-books and magazines, access to information, provision of IT to support benefits applications, housing bids and job searches, free wi-fi, adult and community learning, visitor information, cultural and heritage activities.
- The core Library service will include dedicated work to more effectively support literacy and learning in those communities with higher levels of deprivation, and lowest levels of education, skills and training. The Library service will develop need-led, targeted literacy and learning programmes via repurposed learning and outreach services. These programmes will be developed in co-ordination with service users and partners and develop in ways that meet the needs of local communities
- Depending on demand from users, the Library service will also develop a paid for reserved item delivery service to enable books reserved online or by telephone to be delivered and returned to defined community locations across the Borough. This service will be self-funded through charges for reserved items, and developed in conjunction with local communities.
- The Library Service will work with RVS to sustain and develop the home library service to ensure that people with limited means at all of accessing library services can continue to do so

### *Enabling services for Community-led provision*

- The Council is committed to enabling community-led provision to be self-managed, resourced and operated by local communities, partners and volunteers, as part of co-located offers in public and community buildings.
- The Council will support community organisations who wish to sustain local libraries in their communities by providing transitional funding that supports the development community-led local arrangements and:
  - Professional guidance and support to new and existing “Friends of” and volunteer groups who wish to maintain library services in their communities to develop viable plans for local action
  - Connections to other community venues and groups to enable Library provision to be dovetailed to other community activity at local level
  - Advice on forming and constituting community groups
  - Support with financial planning, income generation and fundraising
  - Transitional funding to support the development of local solutions

- A free donation of a core collection of books to community locations
- Paid for services can include a regular refresh of new book stock for community (eg a rolling top up of recent or most popular books), to community locations at c£3,000 per location, per annum and options to extend Public Network IT access at cost

## **Implementation**

### *Stage 1 – 2017/18*

13. New arrangements for core provision to be implemented between April and July 2017. Where partners and communities wish to contribute funding that helps sustain and complement the Council's core provision, the Council will work with those partners to ensure a common implement timetable.
14. The Council will actively seek, encourage and support the development of local arrangements that ensure continued access to Library services. Transitional funding of £500k has been reserved to support this work, which may be used to support the one-off costs of establishing local solutions, for example, to meet equipment costs, IT investment, the temporary funding of facilities whilst local funding arrangements are sought, and the training and development of local organisations and volunteers.
15. To progress the development of new forms of local provision, in parallel with the public consultation on this strategy, discussions will take place with ward councillors, local partners, community organisations, and local residents to identify and initiate local interest in establishing the provision of community-led services, with a view to local solutions taking effect from 1 July 2017.
16. Council funding will not extend to maintaining book stock, building costs, public network IT or paid staff in Libraries beyond the four Libraries proposed in this delivery model. Given the pressing need to reduce Library costs, it is envisaged that funded services will be withdrawn from all other Libraries with effect from 30 June 2017.

### *Stage 2 – 2017-2020*

17. For the Council's core provision, consideration will be given to different governance models, additional shared services and the generation of additional income streams to further reduce costs to ensure services are delivered within the Council's 2020 affordability limit of £1.1m.