

## Foreword

Hertfordshire libraries are well used and highly valued by residents of all ages, and the County Council wants to see them thrive into the future. Over the last few years, through our 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy, we have continued to invest in the development and improvement of services, despite the constraints on funding for local government. This document includes examples of the range of services our libraries provide.

However, ongoing pressure on the County Council budget means that we have to consider further budget savings across all services. In order to achieve our ambitions for 'Inspiring Libraries' within a reduced budget, and put ourselves in the best position to grasp future opportunities, we need to identify the most appropriate way of managing the library services in the years ahead, and we welcome your views.

You can help us by **reading this document and completing the online questionnaire**. Your feedback will help council members to make a final decision in the spring of 2018.

*Terry Douris, Executive Member for Education, Libraries and Localism*

## Inspiring Libraries

Hertfordshire County Council launched its 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy in 2014, following an extensive public consultation, which attracted more than 15,000 responses.

'Inspiring Libraries' aimed to set a vision and direction for the service over the next 10 years, based on three main themes:

- The library as a **vibrant community asset** – shaped with local people and partners to reflect local need, support sustainability and enrich communities.
- The **digital library** – a service that is ambitious in its use of technology and digital formats for the benefit of residents.
- The library as an **enhanced gateway** to reading, information and wellbeing.

### Reading and Literacy

More than 21,000 children participate in the annual Summer Reading Challenge.  
98% of Hertfordshire babies receive a Bookstart pack through the Library Service.  
Hertfordshire libraries support more than 450 reading groups across the county.

## Our achievements

Since 2014, the implementation of 'Inspiring Libraries' has led to significant changes in the Library Service:

- Improvements to **library buildings**, including new libraries at Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, and major refurbishments at Watford, Hitchin, Abbots Langley and North Watford.
- Innovations in **technology**, including new CreatorSpaces at Watford and Hemel Hempstead offering library users and community groups the opportunity to explore a range of creative technologies from coding to 3D printing.
- Developments in **online services**, including the Library App, the loan of e-books and e-magazines, and the use of social media to promote the service.
- The reorganisation of Hertfordshire's 46 libraries into three tiers, based on usage and population served.
- The introduction of **Community Libraries**, managed in partnership with local volunteer groups at Chorleywood, Redbourn, Goffs Oak, Kings Langley and Wheathampstead, with plans to roll-out to a further eleven communities.
- Expansion of the **Home Library Service** for people with disabilities and mobility difficulties and their carers, when the mobile library service was withdrawn.

### Library Usage

Usage figures demonstrate the continuing popularity of library services, with the total number of library visits increasing by 10% since 2014.

*Figures in thousands*

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Physical visits</b>	3,832	3,842	3,665	3,574
<b>Online visits</b>	1,279	1,549	2,045	2,055
<b>Total Visits</b>	<b>5,111</b>	<b>5,391</b>	<b>5,710</b>	<b>5,629</b>

*Online Library visits include visits to the Libraries website, the library catalogue and online functions, the e-Library and the Online Reference Library.*

## Our ambitions

Over the next three years, from 2018 to 2021, we want to build on these achievements in the next phase of the Inspiring Libraries strategy:

- **Improving library buildings**  
Our ambition is for Hertfordshire library buildings to be bright, attractive, welcoming, flexible, tech-enabled spaces in convenient locations. To achieve this, we aim to continue our programme of investment in the improvement of library buildings.

- **Extending access**

Our ambition is for Hertfordshire libraries to be open to residents for longer hours. To achieve this, we aim to seek opportunities to introduce swipe-card access and other self-service options in our 30 busiest libraries in order to extend access to the service beyond core staffed hours.

- **Developing technology**

Our ambition is to use technology and digital solutions to improve service delivery, to support digital inclusion, and to empower citizens. To achieve this, we aim to extend access to CreatorSpace technology to all our largest libraries, and to develop LibraryLink – our video link between libraries – to provide professional support for self-service access and volunteer-supervised libraries.

- **Maintaining service delivery**

Our ambition is to ensure that Hertfordshire libraries continue to provide a range of services to support reading, learning, access to information, digital literacy, health and wellbeing, cultural enrichment and participation in community life. We will achieve this through our workforce of skilled and trained library staff, supported, where appropriate by local volunteers.

#### **Digital Access and Literacy**

All Hertfordshire libraries offer self-service public access to computers and printing, including Wi-Fi printing. Our larger libraries offer tablet taster sessions for people who lack skills and confidence in using technology. 88 volunteer IT champions are available to assist members of the public in accessing digital services.

### **The financial challenge**

Due to ongoing reductions in national funding for local government, and increasing demand for key services such as social care, the County Council budget has been under great pressure over the last few years.

The implementation of the Inspiring Libraries strategy was expected to achieve £2.5 million in savings from the annual revenue budget for Libraries over a three year period. More than £2 million has already been saved, and the remainder will be achieved through the roll-out of volunteer-partnered community libraries in smaller communities.

However, continuing pressure on funding for public services means that the County Council needs to find new ways to deliver more flexible and cost-effective library services in order to find an additional £500,000 in annual budget savings, over and above those already identified, by 2019/20.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Our Reading Well: Books on Prescription collections offer medically approved titles to help people suffering from long term illness and mental health problems to manage their conditions. Reminiscence collections support dementia sufferers and their carers. Libraries provide venues for health events and promotions.

### **An alternative delivery model?**

'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for the Public Libraries in England 2016-2021', published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2016, and endorsed by the Local Government Association, challenges local authorities "to explore alternative forms of delivery and financing for library services before making any reductions in library services." In Hertfordshire, we now need to consider the best operating model to achieve the ambitions of the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy within a reduced budget.

There are a number of local authorities, similar to Hertfordshire, which have successfully created independent, not for profit organisations with charitable status to deliver library services under contract to the County Council; for example:

- Suffolk Libraries
- Libraries Unlimited South West (Devon)
- Inspire Nottinghamshire

The County Council believes that an alternative delivery model could be a bold and positive way forward – an expression of confidence in the future of the library service and the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy in challenging times.

### **Potential benefits**

Delivery of library services through an alternative delivery model may:

- Enable the service to be more flexible and responsive, as it would be independent from the County Council, with a clear single focus on libraries.
- Enable the library service to access grants and alternative sources of funding that would not be available to the County Council.
- Enable the service to make some immediate savings in rates relief, and potentially some further long-term savings in overheads and administration costs.
- Allow the service to work more easily with partners across county borders, which could potentially bring efficiencies.
- Help to root the service in the communities it serves, by including community seats on the governing body.
- Enable the service to be more innovative, and respond more rapidly to market opportunities and changes in customer demand.
- Enable the service to develop more commercial behaviours and to take advantage of sponsorship and closer working with businesses.

If the decision is taken not to pursue an alternative delivery model, then the County Council will have to consider other options for making £500,000 savings from the Libraries budget.

### **Types of alternative delivery model**

There are a number of different ways of organising and delivering library services, which are summarised in the Alternative Delivery Models Toolkit, published by the DCMS in March 2017. These include:

- Keeping the service in-house – run by the County Council.
- Operating the service through a Local Authority Trading Company.
- Transferring the service to a Public Service Mutual – a not for profit organisation, created and commissioned by the County Council to run the service.
- Outsourcing the service to a third party – an independent organisation or business.
- Operating the service through a joint venture – a partnership between the County Council and a third party organisation.

Appendix A provides a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each option, based on the DCMS Toolkit.

### **Next steps**

Over the next few months we will be further exploring the pros and cons of creating an alternative delivery model for Hertfordshire Libraries, including the costs of establishing an alternative organisation, the business case and the governance arrangements.

### **Your views will form an important part of this work.**

This exploratory work and feedback from this consultation exercise will enable the County Council to make a final decision on whether to adopt an alternative delivery model in the spring of 2018. If the decision is to go ahead, then a timetable will be set out with a view to launching the new organisation in 2019.

**Appendix A**

**Options' advantages and disadvantages (based on Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 'Alternative Delivery Models Toolkit' – March 2017)**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Retain service in-house</b>	100% county council	Within county council	Local public sector services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No set up costs</li> <li>Full county council control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No rates relief</li> <li>Service reductions required to make budget saving</li> <li>Limited opportunity for new funding streams</li> <li>No added flexibility</li> </ul>
<b>Local Authority Trading Company</b>	100% county council	Designed for flexibility/autonomy Council appointed Board. Service level agreement (SLA) with county council.	Flexible, but most services delivered on behalf of county council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No procurement</li> <li>Full county council control</li> <li>Added freedom to pursue commercial opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up costs</li> <li>Limited opportunity for new funding streams</li> <li>Income from non-statutory service limited to 20%</li> <li>Limited opportunities for community involvement</li> <li>VAT and corporation tax liability</li> </ul>
<b>Public Service Mutual</b>	Variety of options – county council/ community/ staff.	Designed as required Board membership dependent on ownership SLA/contract with county council.	Flexible – can deliver services to councils, private or voluntary and community sector customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community involvement</li> <li>Opportunity to identify new funding streams</li> <li>Most flexible model</li> <li>Savings from rates relief</li> <li>Opportunity for cross-border working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up costs</li> <li>Need to disentangle central services – HR, IT, Property, Finance, etc.</li> <li>VAT and corporation tax liability</li> </ul>
<b>Outsourced to Third Party</b>	100% 3 <sup>rd</sup> party	Arranged under contract	Contracted services on behalf of county council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tap into expertise of larger organisation</li> <li>Increased purchasing power</li> <li>Potential savings from economies of scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of poor performance</li> <li>Risk that income is not reinvested in service</li> <li>Need to disentangle central services – HR, IT, Property, Finance, etc.</li> <li>Limited opportunity for community involvement</li> <li>VAT and corporation tax liability</li> </ul>
<b>Joint venture</b>	Potential for joint ownership - council and 3 <sup>rd</sup> party.	Designed as required SLA/contract with county council	Flexible – can deliver services to councils, private or voluntary and community sector customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various from the list above, depending on the model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various from the list above, depending on the model</li> </ul>

# Inspiring Libraries - the next phase

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**1. We set out our ambitions for the next phase of 'Inspiring Libraries' on page 2 of the [consultation document \(http://preview-hcc.cloud.contensis.com/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/public-consultation-document-2018-final.pdf\)](http://preview-hcc.cloud.contensis.com/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/public-consultation-document-2018-final.pdf). Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about these ambitions? Do you:  
(please tick one box)**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**2. Do you have any further comments about our ambitions? Is there anything missing? If there are any other services that you would like to see delivered in Hertfordshire libraries, please tell us here:**

**3. Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about our proposal to establish an alternative delivery model for the library service in Hertfordshire? Do you:  
(please tick one box)**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**4. Please let us know the reasons for your choice:**



**5. If you agree that Hertfordshire should adopt an alternative delivery model for library services, which model would you prefer:**

**(please tick one box)**

- Local Authority Trading Company
- Public Service Mutual
- Outsourced to a third party
- Joint Venture
- No preference

**6. Please let us know the reasons for your choice:**

**7. Are you completing this questionnaire as an individual or on behalf of a group/organization?**

**(please tick one box)**

- As an individual
- For an organisation
- Please state your organisation:

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