

Shropshire Library Strategy

2022-27



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Executive Summary

Our **Vision** is for library services in Shropshire to be at the heart of our communities making connections to improve people's lives.

This will help deliver the vision of the Shropshire Plan; “Shropshire Living the Best Life”.

Our **Mission** is to provide physical and digital library services and spaces that inspire people's learning, imagination and discovery, to connect and fulfil an individual's potential, health and well-being and articulate the value of library services to our communities.

Shropshire Library Service is a major force for community cohesion across the county. Supported by dedicated, multi-disciplined staff and volunteers, we serve a wide range of functions: sources of knowledge; promoters of literacy; sign posters to early intervention; a focus for local events and networks; as well as a force for fun, exploration and friendship. This Strategy describes the changes library services will make to be at the forefront of the council's future relationship with its residents and a critical partner in delivery of the county's priorities.

This Shropshire Library Strategy aims to change the way library services operate so that we can extend our work further into the mainstream of the way the council and its partners work with Shropshire's communities. It will ensure that library services reach the people who need them most and that co-design and partnership delivery serve the priority needs of the county.

The development of this Strategy has been informed by staff and public consultation and work commissioned to help with Library transformation.

The importance of Libraries

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to fund and ‘provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons’ who live, work or study in the area.

Libraries can act as ‘anchor institutions’ as a vital part of the social infrastructure that supports local communities. They provide a county-wide platform where people will find help, inspiration, access to knowledge and learning, connections, community and fun.

Over 900 people responded to our initial draft Library Strategy consultation that ran during October/November 2019. 90% of respondents were identified as current users. During National Libraries Week we engaged over 400 library users with our quick snapshot survey and Library Roadshows. Feedback through community consultation over the summer 2022, demonstrated strong support for the Library Strategy.

The key themes suggest we need to balance the needs of our ‘traditional’ users alongside the potential needs of new users. Developing services to attract new users is essential to ensure that libraries stay relevant in the future.

Our Priorities

We have identified six **Strategic Priorities** to achieve our vision for the next five years:

- 1. Improved opportunities for reading, literacy, culture and creativity**
Reading, Literacy, Culture and Creativity are increasingly important parts of library services, we will create relationships that ensure libraries enhance people's lives as a place of discovery, diversity, and interactivity.
- 2. Improved health and wellbeing of Communities**
We will strengthen our role in the co-delivery of health and wellbeing interventions for people living in the county. Explore opportunities for greater collaboration with Adult Social Care,

Health, Children's Services and external partners, including the voluntary sector to deliver commissioned services.

3. **Promote Economic Recovery and Growth**

We will support the development of small, medium businesses, entrepreneurs and job seekers. Deliver digital technology for internal use and for loan. We will seek funding to develop business hubs following the British Library Business and IP model which will offer, business information, free and low-cost access to business intelligence, market research, 1-to-1 training, innovative spaces and intellectual property support.

4. **Communities that are resilient and inclusive**

We will highlight the key role we play in building stronger, resilient and connected communities. We will, with technological support provide services events and pathways that help address health needs, contribute to tackling inequalities in individuals, families and groups across all ages.

5. **Library services that are more innovative and sustainable**

We will increase our contribution to Local and National cross cutting aims for reducing social isolation, living independently and addressing the challenges of rurality. Utilise technology to free up staff interventions to work creatively to support an improved quality of life and sustainable communities.

6. **People are enabled to discover the digital world**

We will provide a 21st century service that enables people of all ages to get online, and ensure they have the skills to engage with the digital world safely and effectively. Help to build digital confidence for day-to-day life as part of community and workforce development.

Who will we focus on?

Libraries are for everyone and are accessible to all. Our future library services will proactively target needs and support our corporate aim to deliver a 'Healthy Economy, Healthy People, Healthy Environment and Healthy Organisation'. This means that in addition to providing library services that are available across Shropshire, the priority will be to use resources to target people who stand to benefit most, and work with other organisations to support the following key areas..

- ❖ **Public Health, Adult Social Care and Health** – commissioned to develop services with adult social care and health teams. Our social prescribing offer has been recognised nationally placing libraries at the heart of improving health and social care for all, opportunities include:
 - Becoming part of the day care offer for people with learning disabilities, with culture and leisure services.
 - Support to Shropshire's 33,000 informal carers.
 - Hubs for people to see and try out assistance technology.
 - Joint information provision events for NHS and public health staff.
- ❖ **Children's Services** – we have a long tradition of providing space for exciting learning activities, including Rhyme Times, creative workshops with musicians and poets, reading groups, class visits and craft events. We have recently supported and provided activities funded by the national Holiday Activities and Food Programme to enrich the school holiday experiences. Libraries can build on their contacts to help in reaching more families who may need support.
- ❖ **Economic growth** – building on our role in supporting small businesses, with advice on digital, environmental and sustainability issues through the *Let's Do Business in Shropshire* programme. We will offer support to job creators and businesses, by providing spaces with access to professional and academic databases, market research, patents, trademarks, design and copyright.

- ❖ **Digital Support** - provide free high-quality digital support for those living in Shropshire to equip them with the digital skills they need for life and work. Provide free tablets and connectivity for people in greatest need.

Foreword

Shropshire Libraries are a vibrant service at the heart of our communities. We provide environments that allow people to feel safe, where generations of people meet freely in a public space and where learning, discovery and innovation are encouraged. Shropshire has a strong tradition of communities coming together when the need arises, and this has been evident with the Covid pandemic when working in partnership to deliver their local public services.

This library strategy outlines our promise as Shropshire Council and sets out the priorities we will focus on to deliver a collaborative, contemporary and adaptable community service for the future.

It outlines our vision and strategic objectives, highlights the importance of libraries within the community, describes our core offer and provides a clear direction for the future of Shropshire Libraries. We see corporate and community collaborations as being integral to the long-term sustainability of the service. We will invest in and work together with our friendly, highly skilled and experienced staff, to build on our offer around Reading, Information, Digital, Health, Learning, Culture and Creativity. In that sense libraries are an integral part of delivering our new Shropshire Plan.

“Our Library Service forms an important part of a broader culture and community offer, which is now positioned within our Place Directorate. Shropshire Libraries are the first choice of the Council and community partners for providing information, assistance, and services within local communities.”

Councillor Rob Gittins Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital

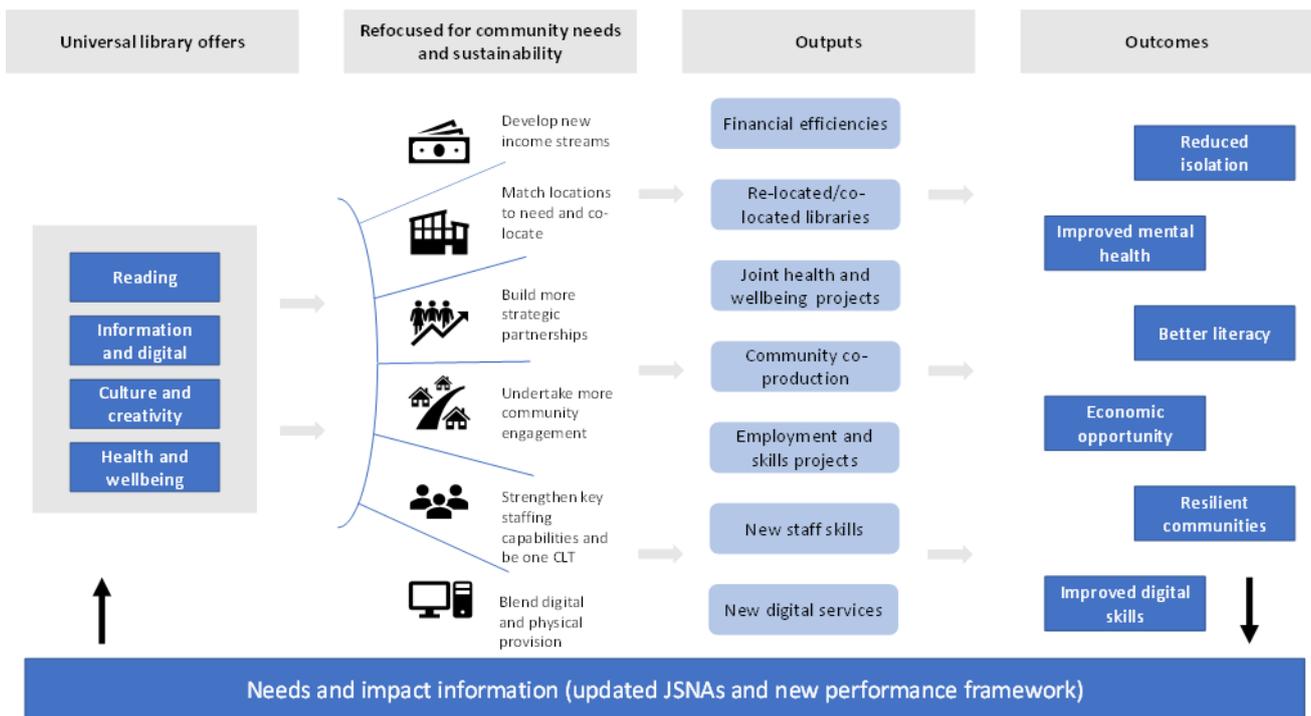


1. Introduction

Shropshire Library Service is a major force for community cohesion across the county. Supported by dedicated, multi-disciplined staff and volunteers, we serve a wide range of functions: sources of knowledge; promoters of literacy; signposters to early intervention; a focus for local events and networks; as well as a force for fun, exploration and friendship. This Strategy describes the changes library services will make to be at the forefront of the council’s future relationship with its residents and a critical partner in delivery of the county’s priorities.

This Shropshire Library Strategy aims to change the way library services operate so that we can extend our work further into the mainstream of the way the council and its partners work with Shropshire’s communities. It will ensure that library services reach the people who need them most and that co-design and partnership delivery serve the priority needs of the county.

The changes represented in this Strategy are summarised in figure 1.



The development of this Strategy has been informed by staff and public consultation and work commissioned to help with Library transformation.

The Vision, Mission and Priorities highlighted in this Strategy reflect these findings.

2. The Shropshire Perspective

Shropshire Library Services, through the delivery of this strategy, will better meet the needs identified in the Cultural Strategy and the Shropshire Plan.

2.1 Vibrant Shropshire, Cultural Strategy 2021-31

Our vision by 2031, Shropshire's vibrant culture will be inspiring more people, both local communities and visitors alike, to explore, create, be active and enjoy themselves. It will enhance lives and nurture the environment for all our futures.

Our shared cultural ambition over ten years, is to create a place where extraordinary and everyday cultural experiences are a source of inspiration for all. We want the importance of culture to quality of life, health and wellbeing, and the economy to be reflected in happier and healthier communities, and for cultural venues and activities to lead the way for climate and environmental change mitigation.

2.2 The Shropshire Plan

Shropshire Council has recently launched the new Shropshire Plan. The key priorities delivered through this Library Strategy are shown below:

Healthy People

- ❖ We will tackle inequalities and poverty in all its forms, enabling children, young people, adults and families to achieve their full potential.
- ❖ We will provide early support and interventions to Shropshire's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and adults, reducing risk and enabling them to achieve their potential and enjoy life.
- ❖ We will work with partners to develop, commission and deliver the right services and support that meet needs of children, young people, adults and families in the right place, at the right time, that are high quality and value for money.
- ❖ We will support Shropshire residents to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, choosing healthy lifestyles and preventing ill-health, reducing need for long term or hospital care.



Healthy Economy

- ❖ We will provide access to lifelong learning, supporting people and our communities to prosper, and through providing the right skills developing greater productivity and improved wages.
- ❖ We will develop Shropshire as a vibrant destination for people that attracts people want to live in, work, learn and visit.
- ❖ We will deliver excellent connectivity and infrastructure, increasing access to social contact, employment, education, services and leisure opportunities.

Healthy Environment

- ❖ We will deliver the Council's Corporate Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- ❖ We will enable safe, sustainable, diverse and inclusive communities that pull together by reducing anti-social behaviour and risk of harm; ensuring services and purchased products are safe; and adopting the waste hierarchy to reduce, reuse, recycle and recover from all household waste.
- ❖ We will maintain, protect, and enhance our outstanding natural environment, promoting positive behaviours and greater biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
- ❖ We will promote the means to tackle climate change and reduce the carbon footprint including the adoption of low carbon energy for council's assets and for communities.



Healthy Organisation

- ❖ We will work with partners and people to achieve shared priorities to meet current and future need and deliver improved outcomes, with children, young people, adults and families voices influencing change.
- ❖ We will communicate clearly and transparently about what Shropshire Council delivers, signposting to the right places for services and support.
- ❖ We will put our resources in the right place using accurate data, insights, and evidence to support the delivery of the organisation's priorities and balance the books.
- ❖ We will enable a happy, skilled, healthy, empowered, and proud workforce that influences and leads change.
- ❖ We will focus on diversity and inclusion for the workforce, addressing any inequalities.
- ❖ We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council.

3.The Importance of Libraries

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to fund and ‘provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons’ for all those who live, work or study in the area. In providing this service, Councils must, among other things, encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service and lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

The best library services enable, empower and equalise:

- Enable communities to fulfil their potential and live fuller lives
- Empower them to make informed decisions
- Equalise through supporting residents, regardless of background

Libraries can act as ‘anchor institutions’ as a vital part of the social infrastructure that supports local communities. They provide a county-wide platform where people will find help, inspiration, access to knowledge and learning, connections, community and fun. This platform is central to the health and wellbeing, economic support and cultural offers of the council and its partners.



Library services are for all Shropshire’s communities, but actively seek to reach those who stand to benefit most, many of whom are amongst those the services do not yet reach and are in most need.

The Local Government Association (LGA) (2017) has produced a report that considers the future priorities for libraries. The report suggests libraries should be:

- Seen as genuinely integral to the delivery of local Council’s broader corporate strategies.
- Increasing impact, by working in partnership with other agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Considering the adoption of new service delivery models to reduce costs, share risks and generate new sources of income.

However, they also agree that reading and borrowing books and other resources are a key reason why people use libraries and that any other roles for libraries should not undermine this.

4. Shropshire's Library Offer

Shropshire Library service operates through a network of twenty-one static libraries, a prison library, three mobile libraries, digital and development services which together provide access to library services in every market town and most parts of a very rural and sparsely populated county.

- ❖ 6 Principal market town libraries run by Shropshire Council: Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Whitchurch, Market Drayton
- ❖ 7 Local market town community libraries run by Shropshire Council: Gobowen, Church Stretton, Bayston Hill, Wem, Library at the Lantern, Pontesbury, Much Wenlock
- ❖ 8 Local market town community libraries run by local community groups / Town Councils, etc.: Albrighton, Bishop's Castle, Broseley, Craven Arms, Highley, Shifnal, Cleobury Mortimer, Ellesmere
- ❖ 3 Mobile libraries run by Shropshire Council cover 274 stops on a fortnightly rota
- ❖ Stoke Heath Prison Library Operated under fully funded contract from Her Majesty's Prisons



The overall picture of Shropshire's library locations is one where resources are thinly spread across a high number of branches:

- ❖ It has one of the highest numbers of libraries amongst its statistical neighbours. It has 24 service points, of which three are mobile libraries compared to an average of 17 libraries across the group¹.
- ❖ Its total revenue expenditure for 2019/20 was lower than the national average and the average of its statistical neighbours.
- ❖ It has 13,463 residents per branch, which is considerably lower than the national average of 25,526 and is lower than the average of its statistical neighbours.

This needs to be seen in the context of the county's rurality. There is a need however, to review the library locations to maximise potential and to allow them most easily to respond to need.

¹ Statistical neighbours as per CIPFA Stats Comparative Profile, 2018-19 Actuals and 2019-20 Estimates are: Herefordshire, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Wiltshire, Central Bedfordshire, North Somerset, Stockport, York, Isle of Wight, Calderdale and Solihull and cover service points open for more than 10 hours a week.

5. What do Shropshire Libraries do for us?

Despite services being severely restricted by Covid, in 2020/21 Shropshire Libraries provided.....



A network of

21

LIBRARIES that received **130,000** visits (851,000 in 2019/20)

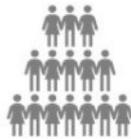


Virtual Rhyme Times attended by over **2,400** children and adults.

Over **326,000** Items in library stock that generated **237,000** Loans (748,000 in 2019/20)



Information to over **39,000** subscribers via library e-bulletins.



3 mobile libraries serving smaller and rural communities, stopping at **274** locations

77,700 e-book and e-audiobook loans to over **14,000** users via the CLOUD LIBRARY



Over **10,000** sets of Ready Reads click & collect book selections. That's around **40,000** books carefully chosen by library staff



2,863 hours of computer access for those who were most in need (52,000 in 2019/20)

1

PRISON LIBRARY

630 reassurance phone calls to vulnerable people during lockdowns

Free WI-FI in every library



45,520 books and other items for customer requests



Online resources that were used **82,000** times

11,500 new books added to library stock

Support for **148** people to complete the CENSUS online



The online COMMUNITY DIRECTORY which received **179,000** views

A **countless** number of things that made POSITIVE IMPACTS on people's lives during the most difficult of years.



Shropshire Libraries are a vibrant service at the heart of our communities. We provide environments that allow people to feel safe, where generations of people meet freely in a public space and where learning, discovery and innovation are encouraged.

Libraries in Shropshire are increasingly at the heart of their communities, providing safe, trusted spaces which host a huge range of services and activities that support Shropshire residents to lead full and healthy lives.

Our ambition and commitment are to continue to unlock the huge potential that library services have to impact positively on individuals' lives whilst at the same time delivering local priorities.

Libraries already provide:

- ❖ Quality information and digital support ensuring staff have the skills to support services.
- ❖ e-services that enable individuals and communities to develop skills to find answers and to inform life choices and feel safe online.
- ❖ Accessible resources that embrace technology.
- ❖ Bookstart, which is a national programme for parents and carers to enjoy books with their children from any age.
- ❖ Universal Reading Offer, which supports the growth of a literate, empathetic and confident society.
- ❖ Health and Wellbeing partnerships to promote healthy living provide support and engagement opportunities supported by inclusive spaces; signposting and information to reduce health, social and economic inequalities.
- ❖ Work with the business, education, culture and health sectors to facilitate economic growth with appropriate developments for communities
- ❖ Investment in spaces that are flexible, inclusive and attractive vibrant multi-functional spaces.
- ❖ Training for staff in line with development strategies to ensure a flexible, confident work force equipped to respond to any future needs of our communities.



6. Draft Library Strategy feedback

Draft Shropshire Library Strategy 2022-2027 Consultation Feedback

The draft Library Strategy 2022-2027 sets out a vision, priorities for the coming years and key milestones including the development of a new approach to performance management and action to develop an implementation plan. To obtain feedback on the draft strategy, a consultation was undertaken. Feedback was gathered through an online survey and stakeholder engagement. The engagement ran for 12 weeks from the 12th May to the 3rd August 2022, and shared online and through local newsletters and networks.

176 survey responses were received and combined with other feedback. The results are summarised below. A full report is available. 87% of survey respondents were members of Shropshire Libraries.

80%

80% either agree or strongly agree with the draft vision and 78% either agree or strongly agree with the mission statement.

Top strategic priority:

Communities that are resilient and inclusive



76 Survey respondents expressed concerns.

The top 3 concerns were:

- The draft lacks clarity/detail
- Worry about service cuts and aims to save money
- Concerns that the traditional library service offer isn't well promoted.

Other concerns related to:

- Requests to focus on books
- Fears that library services will find income generation distracts them from their main purpose.
- Self-service and digitalisation may mean loss of staff or human connection.



126 commented on what libraries mean to them.

Positive feedback included:

- Importance of books, research, information and learning for children.
- Libraries provide social interaction and wellbeing
- Libraries as community hubs in rural areas

Positive feedback on the draft included:

- Reflects the needs of rural communities
- Supports commitment to retaining libraries
- Highlights importance of partnership working and bringing local partners into libraries.

Feedback themes

Mobile libraries	Partnerships	Digital	Income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think the mobile services are crucial in this rural area..." • "In a rural community with a high proportion of elderly residents and children, the continuing presence of a mobile library service is an essential part of our community. Many less mobile residents rely on its continued presence for their general wellbeing." • "Consider locations and van set up to help people with poor mobility make use of mobile libraries." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "More use of the space in the evenings, e.g. with local interest groups being able to meet." • "As there are no longer children's centres, perhaps a way to introduce something for younger children to access...toys etc." • "One-stop shop role for public and other local authority services." • "IT literacy support for those who require it to access services..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I would use the facilities but human contact is vital too." • "I don't use self service machines in shops. I have lived in an area where self service machines were introduced into libraries. There was an instant breakdown in communication with the public, a lack of knowledge of individual customer needs and the loss of friendly community interaction." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Libraries are the heart of communities and should not be about generating income. Their value lies far beyond monetary value." • "The economic/business approach to running libraries is concerning, they are not commercial enterprises but rather a public service." • "Make better use of library opening hours...I'm sure there are some activities that could use the space..."

Produced for Shropshire Libraries by the Feedback and Insight Team, Resources, Shropshire Council October 2022

Feedback on the draft Library Strategy is shown below. The strategy has been amended to reflect the results of the consultation.

7. Vision

Our **Vision** is for library services in Shropshire to be at the heart of our communities making connections to improve people's lives.

Our **Mission** is to provide physical and digital library services and spaces that inspire people's learning, imagination and discovery, to connect and fulfil an individual's potential, health and well-being and articulate the value of library services to our communities.

We have identified six **Strategic Priorities** to achieve our vision for the next five years:

- 1. Improved opportunities for reading, literacy, culture and creativity**
Reading, Literacy, Culture and Creativity are increasingly important parts of library services, we will create relationships that ensure libraries enhance people's lives as a place of discovery, diversity, and interactivity.
- 2. Improved health and wellbeing of Communities**
We will strengthen our role in the co-delivery of health and wellbeing interventions for people living in the county. Explore opportunities for greater collaboration with Adult Social Care, Health, Children's Services and external partners, including the voluntary sector to deliver commissioned services.
- 3. Promote Economic Recovery and Growth**
We will support the development of small, medium businesses, entrepreneurs and job seekers. Deliver digital technology for internal use and for loan. We will seek funding to develop Business hubs following the British Library Business and IP model which will offer, business information, free and low-cost access to business intelligence, market research, 1 to1 training, innovative spaces and intellectual property support.
- 4. Communities that are resilient and inclusive**
We will highlight the key role we play in building stronger, resilient and connected communities. We will, with technological support provide services events and pathways that help address health needs, contribute to tackling inequalities in individuals, families and groups across all ages.
- 5. Library services that are more innovative and sustainable**
We will increase our contribution to Local and National cross cutting aims for reducing social isolation, living independently and addressing the challenges of rurality. Utilise technology to free up staff interventions to work creatively to support an improved quality of life and sustainable communities.
- 6. People are enabled to discover the digital world**
We will provide a 21st century service that enables people of all ages to get online, and ensure they have the skills to engage with the digital world safely and effectively. Help to build digital confidence for day-to-day life as part of community and workforce development.

8. Who will we focus on?

Libraries are for everyone and are accessible to all. Our future library services will proactively target needs. This means that in addition to providing library services that are available across Shropshire, the priority will be to use resources to target people who stand to benefit most, and work with other organisations to deliver this. An Equalities Assessment is available (appendix 2). Targets include:

- ❖ **Public Health, Adult Social Care and Health** – commissioned to develop services with adult social care and health teams. Our social prescribing offer has been recognised nationally placing libraries at the heart of improving health and social care for all, opportunities include:

- Becoming part of the day care offer for people with learning disabilities, with culture and leisure services.
- Support to Shropshire’s 33,000 informal carers.
- Hubs for people to see and try out assistance technology.
- Joint information provision events for NHS and public health staff.



- ❖ **Children’s Services** – We have a long tradition of providing space for exciting learning activities, including Rhyme Times, creative workshops with musicians and poets, reading groups, class visits and craft events. We have recently provided and co-ordinated activities funded by the national Holiday Activities and Food Programme to enrich the school holiday experiences. Libraries can build on their contacts to help in reaching more families who may need support.
- ❖ **Economic growth** –Libraries are an essential part of local recovery and a launchpad for a range of services to support small businesses, help with employment skills as well as advice on the cost of living, digital, and environmental issues. For the unemployed, skills development, and business support is seen as a key priority post-covid. Library staff are skilled at supporting people and sharing information and digital skills We will provide through the Let’s Do Business in Shropshire programme support for business development and in partnership, signposting for jobseekers.
- ❖ **Digital Support** Provide free high-quality digital support for those living in the Shropshire to equip them with the digital skills they need for life and work. Provide free tablets and connectivity for people in greatest need. We will develop a marketing strategy to ensure our services are promoted to our target audiences using a variety of mediums including social media, events and visits. We will continue to market Library services to the wider community

9. Our Priorities

1. Improved opportunities for reading, literacy, culture, and creativity

We have a unique position within our communities, offering a wide range of services that are available to all. Reading, Literacy, Culture and Creativity are important to create relationships that ensure libraries enhance people's lives as places of discovery, diversity, and interactivity. Reading and literacy are fundamental life skills that enable families to be healthier, happier, more self-assured and more resilient. This also empowers greater investigation and innovation allowing us to move towards expanding the services we give our customers and the commercial opportunities offered through a range of high-quality activities.

We will explore direct delivery and partnership opportunities to...

- ❖ Develop a marketing strategy to deliver professional, targeted library campaigns
- ❖ Further develop inclusive family learning activities to support the home learning environment and lifelong learning, encouraging reading for pleasure and literacy
- ❖ Maintain and extend library materials in response to circumstances to ensure inclusivity of access to literature and creative opportunities.
- ❖ Enable staff, customers, entertainers and the curious to envisage how culture and technology could be used to make library services more accessible.
- ❖ Empower staff, people and communities to experience and co-create cultural enrichment.
- ❖ Embed opportunities for a wider range of arts, culture events and performances, allowing staff to own projects and share their experiences and knowledge with their teams and communities.

2. Improved health and wellbeing of Shropshire communities

Shropshire Library services play an important role in supporting and maintaining quality health and wellbeing outcomes of people in the county. Our partnership work within health and wellbeing is recognised and shared on a national level as an example of good practice.

Partnerships with Public Health, NHS, the voluntary and community sector will be strengthened through new ways of working, through the Integrated Care System. As part of this collaboration, we will help support complex individual needs. To enable this, we will strive for investment in health and wellbeing resources, fit for purpose environments and trained professional staff expanding on the possibilities of people centred support.

Highlighting national, regional and local drives gives us focus to involve people around their health and wellbeing in a meaningful, friendly and non-clinical way.

We will work with partners to...

- ❖ Expand work with Public Health, NHS, GPs, voluntary, community and other professional organisations to deliver health and wellbeing support in the community through Social Prescribing and other health related initiatives
- ❖ Invest in health and wellbeing resources to lower the health inequality gap
- ❖ Increase staff confidence through training and development

- ❖ Engage communities to explore living well in a creative way to generate curiosity and aspiration
- ❖ Expand on opportunities to deliver library service benefits to the most vulnerable and/or living in the most rural areas
- ❖ Support wellbeing of families and individuals throughout different stages of life
- ❖ Provide accessible environments, activities and resources for people with specific needs, such as visually impaired, hard of hearing, people living with dementia, autism and other needs

Case Studies

Social Prescribing

Shropshire Libraries Social Prescribing shortlisted for LGC awards 2019, involves tailor-made client focused library inductions. By introducing clients to helpful resources like Reading Well Books on Prescriptions, local community help groups, library social groups, volunteering and other related supportive information, the client can participate in a variety of activities that support recovery and social inclusion.

Aim:

- ❖ Strengthen resilience of communities and empower individuals regarding their health and wellbeing
- ❖ Improve the wellbeing of residents through social interventions
- ❖ Reduce GP patient appointments



How do libraries fit in?

- ❖ Support equality of health information through resources and local knowledge
- ❖ Provide a neutral, free, friendly, warm and non-judgemental environment
- ❖ Have events, advice sessions, groups and clubs to support wellbeing
- ❖ Have friendly knowledgeable staff to encourage social interaction

Rhyme Time Volunteer



Volunteering at Shrewsbury Library has helped one of our library assistants to pursue her aspirations as a teaching assistant. After leading the half-hour Rhyme Time sessions at the library with up to 60 attendees. She was able to receive a reference from Shropshire Libraries that supported her application to volunteer in a Primary School, assisting in classrooms. Utilising her training for Excellence in Story and Rhyme Time she helped to innovate delivery in the library. Her new-found skills enabled her to secure a place as a trainee teaching assistant as well as a fully funded level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education.

Grace is looking forward to qualifying as an Early Years Educator we have been delighted to help support her in achieving her goals. She has been a fantastic volunteer who was very popular with the Rhyme Time attendees and who really helped lessen the workload for staff here at Shrewsbury Library.

3. Promote economic recovery and growth

Libraries are an essential part of local recovery and a launchpad for a range of services to support small businesses, help with employment skills as well as advice on the cost of living, digital, and environmental issues. We will provide through the Let's Do Business in Shropshire programme support for business development and in partnership, signposting for jobseekers.

We will...

- ❖ Support the help and training for job seekers and entrepreneurs in partnership with economic growth, private sector, community providers, and DWP.
- ❖ Secure funding to deliver digital technology for internal use and for loan, business information, free and low-cost access to business intelligence, market research, 1-to-1s, training, innovative interactive spaces and intellectual property support.
- ❖ Develop strategic community library business hubs following the British Library Business and IP centre model as focal points for business owners and entrepreneurs who are seeking the relevant information, support, and knowledge needed to grow.
- ❖ Provide access points to free business support and resources in partnership with the Marches Growth Hub and other partners to provide:
 - Practical advice to help get your business off the ground, from business plans to market research.
 - Provide information on intellectual property and how to protect products, websites and brands.
 - Provide up-to-date quality information on intellectual property and tools for researching key industries, with professional expertise.
 - Provide confidential sessions to enable individuals to discuss ideas, helping to develop business ideas and plans.
 - Work with partners to support local businesses through the 'Let's Do Business in Shropshire' programme
- ❖ Support the Visitor Economy through information, events, Visitor Information Centre's and volunteers

4. Communities that are resilient and inclusive

Library services have a key role to play in building stronger, resilient and connected communities. We provide services and events that help address health needs, impact upon the wider factors of health and contribute to tackling health inequalities in individuals, families and groups across all ages whilst improving confidence and reducing social isolation. As trusted, safe and welcoming community spaces, libraries offer a route for public services to reach communities, providing access to information and signposting, creating social spaces for people to come together and access services that encourage learning and ambition, improve skills and self-confidence, promote wellbeing and individuality and reducing loneliness and isolation.

We will:

- ❖ Enable people to protect and improve their mental health, and to support those with mental health conditions to prevent escalation whilst encouraging recovery to live healthy and happy lives.
- ❖ Understand loneliness and deliver services to help lessen its effects by providing services that enable people to connect.
- ❖ Encourage understanding and tolerance between generations within our spaces
- ❖ Create space to allow kindness to be talked about and experienced.
- ❖ Identify and promote sustainable and effective mobile services to meet the needs of our communities.
- ❖ Develop environmental, social and economical workable services that meet local community needs.
- ❖ Maintain and improve visits and digital networks to ensure that we are relevant for business, innovation and entertainment.
- ❖ Ensure energy use is mitigated to reduce the impact on climate change and wider environment.
- ❖ Continue to work with Town, Parish councils and local organisations to deliver community focussed and managed services.
- ❖ Work with internal and external partners to identify and target those at risk and provide pro-active arrangements that support communities.
- ❖ Work with and support the development of volunteers to support and enhance library services

5. Libraries that are more innovative and sustainable

Increasingly our Libraries are contributing significantly to National and Local cross cutting aims such as reducing social isolation, living independently and addressing the challenges of rurality. This is vital to supporting an improved quality of life and sustainable communities in Shropshire

We will:

- ❖ Embed Libraries firmly within the Shropshire Plan, the Cultural Plan and the Community and Rural Strategy.
- ❖ We embed Libraries within programs to create models of good practice and develop skills and knowledge within the creative sector to deliver new programmes.
- ❖ Increase employability by supporting skills and learning, and helping people back into work
- ❖ Expand the visitor information and tourism offer to grow visitor economy through enhanced connectivity and innovation
- ❖ Invest in Library spaces so they are flexible and attractive vibrant flexible spaces
- ❖ Explore further opportunities for co-location
- ❖ Seek funding to invest in our IT infrastructure digital equipment and invest in staff our training

- ❖ Continue to invest in Staff Development in line with the Public Library Skills Strategy, Shropshire Council's Workforce Strategy to ensure a flexible, confident work force
- ❖ Identify new funding streams for innovative services and explore ways of increasing income generation e.g., through hire of spaces, commissioning by partners to provide targeted services,
- ❖ Develop a marketing strategy to promote our spaces and services
- ❖ Work with volunteers to provide activities and services particularly suited to the local area
- ❖ Continuously assess our ability to respond effectively to unplanned circumstances, altering our services to reflect the restrictions in place whilst ensuring high quality delivery

6. People are enabled to discover the digital world

In the 21st century it is vital that people of all ages can get online, that they have the skills to engage with the digital world safely and effectively.

Basic digital confidence is essential for day-to-day life and to thrive within our workforce.

Beyond the basic level the digital world offers incredible opportunities to connect with others, to engage with cultural, creative experiences, and broaden learning and understanding. Effective digital engagement has the potential to improve a person's employability, improve mental well-being and to help people stay independent for longer. We play a key role to enable digital access, to give people the skills they need, and to provide digital services that people want to use. We want to build on this role by developing a 'digital strategy' to further enable people to participate in the digital world.

We will...

- ❖ Support free access to, high-quality learning to equip communities with the digital skills they need for life and work.
- ❖ Ensure our IT and digital services and equipment are robust, up to date and relevant for our customer needs.
- ❖ Ensure our staff have the skills to deliver services that reflect the digital needs of communities and individuals.
- ❖ Work with partners to deliver digital projects or include digital elements that complement our physical services.
- ❖ Explore new ways of creating and sharing our digital content to further develop a vibrant online community.
- ❖ Look for innovative and emerging technological solutions to transform and deliver services.
- ❖ Work with partners, staff and volunteers to place library services at the heart of digital support and learning.

10. Operations

Partnerships

Achieving sustained impact requires working with communities to understand their needs and working strategically with partners to support the outcomes that matter most to Shropshire. Library services will work more closely with other parts of the council and partner organisations, across health and care, economic growth and climate change agendas.

Venues

We will retain a network of Shropshire Council and Community Libraries across the towns and rural villages of Shropshire supported by a mobile service, where possible, covering the more rural areas ensuring everyone has access to resources relevant to their needs.

Each library location will be reviewed, taking account of potential to serve areas of greatest need; proximity to other Libraries; patterns of use; and suitability of buildings. This may lead to some co-locations with other services. This will involve working with community organisations and Town and Parish Councils to explore service delivery options.

Technology

Self-service kiosks will be installed in all libraries, alongside counter services and the adoption of contactless payments. This is part of Shropshire Councils savings, shifting staffing from routine customer service tasks to service and community development reflecting national best practice.



Opening Hours

Opening hours will also be reviewed, aiming to target opening times at periods when the service is most able to reach and attract those with the greatest needs, to support study, learning, family activities and enrichment, exploring technologies to extend use of our buildings.

Staffing

The focus on meeting priority needs will require strengthening of some of library services' capabilities, in particular: service development (including partnership building and income and grant generation); community engagement; data and intelligence; digital; and marketing and communications. This will be enabled by a more collaborative approach across Culture, Leisure and Tourism Services and the release of some staff capacity from processing transactional services, following the introduction of self-service.

This should be associated with a change to the current library services structure, supported by a clear workforce strategy. This will enable Library staff to further shift their focus from reactive transactions to proactive community engagement.

Shropshire Local

The council is exploring the extension of its Shropshire Local contact model, Libraries will be integral to this. Shropshire Local recognises how digital services offer increasing opportunities to navigate Council services in a self-service manner. It aims to offer assisted digital support and to develop customers' own skills so that they can "self-serve" for future needs.

11. Resources

Due to continued pressure on public finances, there is a need to ensure that all Services provide value for money. This Strategy examines opportunities to reduce ongoing public subsidy for services, whilst increasing income. Investment will be required to realise benefits. Opportunities are summarised below.

Opportunities for subsidy reduction:

- ❖ Review all library locations, potentially making savings through some building consolidation and co-location.
- ❖ Libraries may host Shropshire Local. Further work is being undertaken to consider community and financial impacts of this.
- ❖ Exploration of changes to opening hours.
- ❖ Savings on frontline transaction processing by installing more self-service machines.
- ❖ Enhance staff roles to better enable new ways of working.
- ❖ Exploring opportunities to reduce subsidies for community Library Services.

Income generating opportunities include:

- ❖ Co-produce services with Adult Social Care and Health, Job Centre Plus and Children's Services.
- ❖ Explore opportunities to maximise returns from space in buildings.
- ❖ Increased external funding for specific activities.

Investment requirements include:

- ❖ New library management system.
- ❖ Self-service machines.
- ❖ Digital equipment to provide community support for digital skills.
- ❖ Building refurbishment to create flexible spaces including booths for private internet use and equipment for business meetings with flexible shelves.
- ❖ Recruitment, training and skills development associated with new approach.

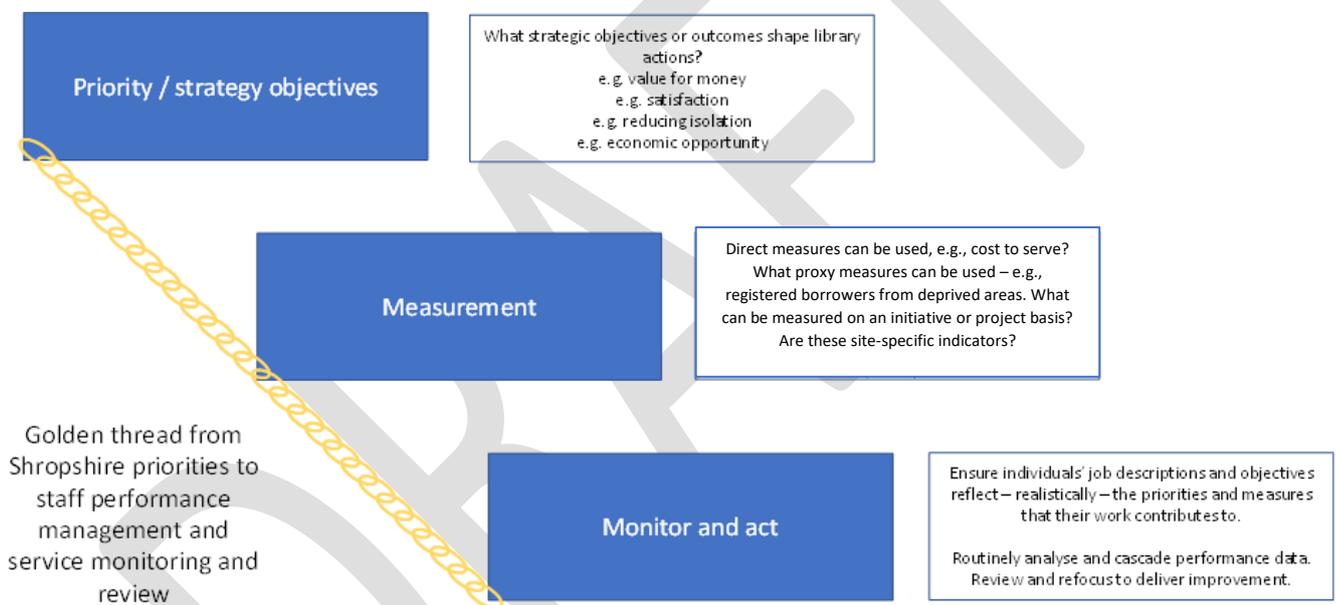


The subsidy reduction will depend on local circumstances with each library considered in turn. It is not possible to specify the financial impacts at this stage, but it is anticipated that over the duration of this strategy savings will be made. Any savings would aim to retain community access to library services by identifying efficiencies, as outlined above.

12. How will we measure success?

The diagram below outlines a new approach to Performance Management, which will be developed over the next 12 months. Building on existing monitoring, the key aim should be to find indicators of impact. These will be aligned with delivery partners and their priorities. This could include measures such as:

- ❖ Usage of the Library Services by adults in most deprived areas.
- ❖ Usage of the Library Services by young people entitled to free school meals.
- ❖ Percentage of Library Service users who have been supported by library staff to access/use library IT services or equipment in the last 12 months and agree/strongly agree that their ability to access and use online resources/services has improved due to support provided by library staff.



13. Implementation Plan

A detailed implementation plan will be developed and delivered to address the priorities highlighted in this Strategy. This will be a three-year working document, which will be updated as required.