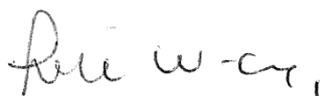


Date of issue: 22 February 2022

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL</b> Councillor Begum Councillor Muvvala Councillor Ajaib Councillor Ali Councillor Hussain Councillor Kaur Councillor Minhas Councillor Mohammad Councillor Sandhu Pollard Matharu	Residents Panel Board
<b>DATE AND TIME:</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY, 2ND MARCH, 2022 AT 6.30 PM</b>	
<b>VENUE:</b>	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL</b>	
<b>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER:</b> (for all enquiries)	<b>NICHOLAS PONTONE</b> <b>07749 709 868</b>	

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



**JOSIE WRAGG**  
Chief Executive

**AGENDA**

**PART I**

**AGENDA  
ITEM**

**REPORT TITLE**

**PAGE**

**WARD**

Apologies for absence.

1. Declarations of Interest

*All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.*

**CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2022 1 - 8

3. Member Questions

*(An opportunity for panel members to ask questions of the relevant Director/Associate Director, relating to pertinent, topical issues affecting their Directorate – maximum 10 minutes allocated.)*

**SCRUTINY ISSUES**

4. Learning Skills and Employment: OFSTED Outcome 9 - 20

5. Priority Three: Strong Healthy & Attractive Neighbourhoods 21 - 26

6. Library Service Consultation Results 27 - 130

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

7. Forward Work Programme 131 - 134

8. Members' Attendance Record 135 - 136

9. Date of Next Meeting - 6 April 2022

**Press and Public**

**Attendance and accessibility:** You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

**Webcasting and recording:** The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services

Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

**Emergency procedures:** The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

**Covid-19:** To accommodate social distancing there is significantly restricted capacity of the Council Chamber and places for the public are very limited. We would encourage those wishing to observe the meeting to view the live stream. Any members of the public who do wish to attend in person should be encouraged.

Note:-

**Bold = Key decision**

Non-Bold = Non-key decision

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**Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 25th January, 2022.**

**Present:-** Councillors Muvvala (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Ali, Minhas, Mohammad and Sandhu

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Gahir

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Begum, Hussain, Kaur and Pollard

**PART 1****14. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

**15. Minutes of the joint Panel/Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on 8th December 2021**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2021 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Councillor Sandhu was present at the meeting.

Members asked that relevant officers update Members regarding the follow up actions arising from the December meeting of the Panel.

**16. Member Questions**

There were no Member questions.

**17. Customer & Community Directorate Draft Budget 2022/23 Update**

The SBC Director of Place and Community gave a presentation which provided an update on the 2022/23 savings proposals for his directorate.

He advised that the Libraries consultation had been extended by a week to enable Ward Councillors to respond. To date, approximately two thousand responses had been received and were being collated and analysed. An update report would be presented at the March meeting of the Panel.

Members asked the following questions and made the following comments and received the responses set out below.

- Had the consultation been circulated internally? What were the time frames involved?

## Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22

The SBC Director stated that the communications team had emailed the consultation internally. The results of the consultation would be reported at the 2 March 2022 Panel meeting and then would be submitted to Cabinet.

- Residents would probably prefer to keep libraries open. The Council had recently passed a motion rejecting the closure of libraries. How could the proposed £400k saving be made without closing libraries?

The SBC Director stated that he could not yet provide a definitive answer. It would depend on a number of different factors and the need to fully conclude the consultation process and collate the responses. Any new strategy would be informed by the consultation results and available budgets. Going forward, it may be that libraries would be converted into multi-function spaces offering a number of different services to residents.

He added that the Council received a management fee from its outsourced leisure services contract. However, due to covid related issues, this had not been paid the previous year. Nevertheless, following extensive discussions with the provider, he was confident that the provider would be in a position to make the payment, particularly since people were now returning to gyms.

He added that the Community and Leisure team were in discussions with the Community Development team regarding youth work and analysing all discretionary spends. For example, it was important to fund initiatives such as the Prevent agenda as youth work had implications for public safety, the benefits of which were difficult to quantify. Public Health had undertaken to fund some wellbeing work carried out by the Community Development team. They were also exploring whether Community Development work could focus on housing tenants and be funded from the HRA (Housing Revenue Account). Recently, a significant number of staff had left the Council and there were not enough staff remaining to cover the remaining roles. Rather than incur redundancy costs, making use of the cross over skills of staff and re-aligning work streams were being considered in this way those teams and their skills could be retained.

- How confident was he that the monies owed to the Council for leisure services would be paid?
- How would the £1.6M be covered? Would the general fund cover this?

The SBC Director stated that the Council was not in a legal dispute with the leisure provider and was engaged in commercial discussions with them. In his view, the matter was unlikely to go to court as the provider had indicated their intention to pay and were contractually obliged to do so. There was a back stop position in the contract should the provider choose to default on the payment. If this were the case, then a significant saving would need to be made elsewhere to cover this potential loss.

- How much funding was available from Public Health and what would it cover?

### Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22

The SBC Director advised that £90k of public health funding was to be made available for health related community development work. The money would be available for a year in the first instance, and, if the pilot project was successful then it may be extended further. He explained that this money was not new, public health had opted to focus on this initiative instead of something else, and he was confident of positive outcomes from the pilot project, for example, initiatives to tackle obesity, etc.

- What was included in the youth work for 160K? What progress had been made to date and how long would the funds be available?

The youth work team and youth voice had five full time equivalent posts funded by discretionary spend from the general fund. Officers had been unsuccessful so far in obtaining alternative grant funding but would continue to work to do so.

- Members would like to see the final version of the proposal. When would this be circulated?

The SBC Director advised that the final proposals would be submitted to Council for decision.

With regard to Customer Services, there were a number of options going forward. As more people were accessing council services online, there were plans to implement further channel shift by reducing the number of call centre staff and improve the IT infrastructure to support this move.

- Some Members expressed concern about the adequacy of the Council's IT infrastructure and the impact of a channel shift on vulnerable or disadvantaged residents.

The SBC Director stated that the situation was under review and the balance between call centre and online provision would be monitored closely to ensure the correct balance. Some call centre staff had left and their posts had not been refilled. Some areas were experiencing a surge in demand and this data was being analysed. The Council was working hard to improve its online offer, however, there was more work to be done in terms of trial and error and improving the process.

- Channel shift would cause difficulties for disadvantaged and vulnerable residents.

The SBC Director stated that different work streams and resident cohorts would have different needs. Phone access would continue to be offered, albeit in a reduced capacity while residents would be encouraged to go online wherever possible. The localities hub model would provide an opportunity for additional access and a range of options, within budgetary constraints, would be offered. Whatever changes were implemented, the aim was that the level of service offered should be adequate and appropriate.

## Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22

- Why not increase capacity at the call centre for the vulnerable cohort?

The SBC Director advised that the cost of employing additional staff at the call centre would be much higher than investing in channel shift, which was a one off cost. The Council would continue to encourage residents to become more self-sufficient and use online self-service options.

- Would residents be provided with support to access services online e.g. at libraries?

The SBC Director stated that this would be available at libraries and hub buildings. Data showed that a high proportion of people in Slough stated that they had online access and this figure was on the rise. Final decisions would be based on the results of the consultation. The SBC Director advised that any decisions would be based on survey results regarding IT connectivity.

- More work needed to be done in certain service areas such as housing, where a large number of complaints were received regarding the lengthy call waiting times at the call centre.
- How many staff currently work at the call centre?

The SBC Director stated that as part of the savings plan, there were currently 30 full time equivalent staff at the call centre. The performance of the call centre and call waiting times were being monitored.

- What were the responsibilities of the deleted Customer Excellence Lead post and who was now responsible for this area of work?

The SBC Director advised that this not a well-established role. It had been a new post created as part of the Transformation project, however, the officer appointed to the role had left after two months in post. The role was now being covered by the general manager.

He added that there was a high turnover of staff at the call centre and his team were focussing on training to ensure staff were better equipped to deal with complex cases and to ensure speedier call handling.

- Were there any statistics regarding the call centre and any risks associated with the reduction in staff? How was the reduction in staff and move to online being communicated to residents?

The SBC Director undertook to provide this information after the meeting. He added anyone phoning the Council would hear an automated message encouraging them to access services online.

The SBC Director gave a brief outline of the joint archive arrangements with Berkshire authorities. If the Council withdrew from this agreement, then it would be in breach of the agreement. It was important to protect good working relationships with other Berkshire authorities. An element of the fee,

## Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22

£25k of the £75k, was fixed and therefore it would not be possible to make a saving on that bit. All archived boxes would need to be checked to see what items could be discarded and which needed to be retained as some documents needed to be retained under law.

If, SBC chose to provide its own storage it would require staff to maintain it and the venue would need to be fire proof and temperature controlled. It should be noted that the service plan was at odds with the recent asset disposal strategy, in that Council owned properties were being sold off and could not be used for storage.

- A Member speaking under Rule 30 asked about the cost of storage. He understood that some documents, for example, leases had not yet been located.

The SBC Associate Director advised that the annual charge was £75k and that alternative storage venues were being explored. Council owned buildings were to be disposed of as part of the asset disposal strategy and it would not therefore be possible to use these ones for document storage. He added that there were costs associated with checking and discarding documents.

- The inventory of documents was found to be inaccurate and incomplete. Some documents may be at other sites such as the old town hall.

The SBC Director advised that many of the deeds had been located, however, a few were yet to be located. If they were not found, there were other methods to prove ownership, however, there was a cost associated with this. The index log of documents was found to be incomplete and inaccurate, so officers had been sent to physically verify documents.

- Were the savings in accommodation achievable?

The SBC Director advised that the savings in accommodation related to the general fund. There was a move from generalist to specialist team which would ensure better use of the workforce and optimum use of grant funding.

- Was the £561k saving in accommodation achievable?

The SBC Director stated that the lack of availability of temporary accommodation was an ongoing issue. Housing managers had good knowledge of the housing market and additional temporary accommodation providers were now available on the market leading to a reduction in the cost per unit. However, this was a demand led service and teams were working to improve processes and reduce costs.

- What percentage of the homelessness budget was grant funded and how would it impact on homelessness in Slough?

## Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22

The Council received approximately £1.8M to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping through a series of grants for different things. Certain elements of this funding could be used to fund temporary accommodation for a specific cohort and within specified criteria.

- He had concerns about exploitative private landlords and any reduction in temporary accommodation would impact the most vulnerable residents.

The SBC Director advised that it would be preferable to spend grant monies rather than depending on the general fund to tackle homelessness.

- What impact would this have on rough sleepers – the Council had a statutory responsibility to house the homeless.

The SBC Director responded that it would depend on whether they fulfilled the criteria. The intention was to support rough sleepers to return to mainstream ways of living, where possible.

- How would the archiving costs be covered in the budget?

The SBC Director stated that restructure proposals for the Place and Community Directorate would help to balance any shortfall in the £75k savings target.

**Resolved** – That the presentation be noted.

### 18. HRA Rents & Service Charges 2022/23

The SBC Interim Housing Specialist presented the report HRA Rents and Service Charges 2022/23, which were agreed by Cabinet on 17 January 2022. He advised that the proposed increases to rents, service charges and ancillary charges were in line with government guidance and the Rent Standard published by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Members asked the following questions and received the responses below.

- What was the £8M figure in the HRA budget?

The SBC Interim Housing Specialist advised that the £8M figure was the projected balance of HRA reserves. This had reduced from £18m in 2020/21 following an exceptional repayment of debt in the current year, some of which related to the financial management issues and projects/costs that capitalised in error in the past. This had now been rectified through an accounting adjustment from the revenue budget. However, this adjustment had created a deficit of £9.2M in 2021/22, which would begin to improve in 22/23 with a £2.7M projected budget surplus.

- How were services charges calculated?

## Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22

The SBC Interim Housing Specialist advised that it was custom and practice to raise the annual service charge by a set rate, based on services provided, labour and material costs, etc. Government regulations encouraged local authorities to reduce service charges. While continuing this approach for 2022/23, the new housing IT system due to be implemented by Quarter 2 2022/23 would enable charges to be set on a block by block basis for all tenures.

- When had the charges last been increased?

The SBC Interim Housing Specialist advised that this was an annual process undertaken at the beginning of the year and the proposals were then submitted to Cabinet for approval and implemented in April.

- Was the Council building new social housing?

The SBC Interim Housing Specialist responded that this was under discussion. The Council was considering options for the future delivery of additional homes, including delivering schemes jointly with partners. He added that new social housing all operated under the same rent regulations.

- How many Council owned properties had been sold under the 'right to buy' scheme?

The SBC Interim advised that typically between 70-100 properties were sold each year, and that these were not being replaced, hence, there was a deficit but that this variance was reducing. There was a slowdown in applications proceeding to completion during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

- The increase in rents and service charges would affect those on low incomes and the most vulnerable.

The SBC interim advised that for those receiving housing benefit or universal credit their benefits would increase to cover any increase in their rents or service charges. Those on borderline income levels may be able to access benefit support. All clients suffering financial difficulties were signposted to relevant support services.

- Many residents were dissatisfied with the new housing IT system and with the service charge provisions. Was it on target for quarter 3?

The SBC Interim replied that the implementation of the new housing system was progressing well and it was on target for completion by quarter 3. The leasing system and spreadsheets were not yet fully integrated. The method for calculating service charges was not easily understood by tenants. Going forward, tenants would be able to see their account information and charge calculations online. Some tenants had been dissatisfied with the annual review of charges and the issues with delays in service delivery which were related to the pandemic. The quality of service delivery continued to be closely monitored.

**Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 25.01.22**

- With regard to £3.5M allocated refunds to tenants for water condensation, were there sufficient monies in the contingency fund to cover these?

The SBC Interim Housing Specialist advised that the scope of refund calculations had been based on the life of the agreement with Thames Water using a complex formula. The likelihood was that the full amount allocated for refunds would not be paid out as not everyone who would have been entitled to a refund will claim.

The SBC Director added that Council rents were relatively low in comparison to private sector rents. The Council was doing a good job of providing and maintaining its rental properties.

**Resolved** – That the report be noted.

**19. Forward Work Programme**

**Resolved:** That the Work Programme be noted and that the following items be added to the work programme for 2021/22:

1. Learning & skills
2. Community & Neighbourhoods

**20. Members' Attendance Record**

**Resolved** – That the attendance record be noted.

**21. Date of Next Meeting**

2 March 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.46 pm)

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel
<b>Date:</b>	2 March 2022
<b>Contact officer (s):</b>	Liz Jones – Group Manager Localities & Neighbourhoods Baljit Mann – Interim Community Learning and Skills Manager
<b>For all enquiries:</b>	(01753) 875500
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All

### Part I

#### For comment & consideration

#### East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills OFSTED report

**1. Purpose of report**

To update the Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel on the outcome of the OFSTED inspection of East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills Service (EB CLASS).

**2. Recommendation(s)/proposed action**

The Committee is requested to note the report.

**3. The Slough joint wellbeing strategy, the JSNA and the Five-year plan**

The [Slough joint wellbeing strategy](#) (SJWS) details the priorities agreed for Slough with partner organisations. The SJWS has been developed using a comprehensive evidence base that includes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

**3a. Slough wellbeing strategy priorities**

East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills Service supports the delivery of two of the priorities in the Slough Wellbeing Strategy; priority 3 (Strong, Healthy and Attractive neighbourhoods) and priority 4 (Workplace Health).

Health and wellbeing are influenced by a range of different factors, including socioeconomic issues such as education, skills, and employment. Having a good job, with a reasonable wage, provides security and allows individuals to thrive.

**3b. Five-year plan outcomes**

East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills Service supports the delivery of outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay; and outcome 2: “Our people will healthier and manage their own care needs”.

#### **4. Other implications**

(a) Financial

East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills Service is funded via an external grant (Education & Skills Funding Agency grant) so there is no pressure on the General Fund.

(b) Risk management

Risks associated with the delivery of the East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills Service will be monitored by the Shared Committee for CLASS (joint membership from Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Slough Borough Council as the service covers both council areas).

(c) Human rights act and other legal implications

There are no direct legal or Human Rights Act implications.

(d) Equalities impact assessment

There is no requirement to complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) in relation to this report.

(e) Workforce

There are no workforce implications in relation to this report.

#### **5. Supporting information**

- 5.1 EB CLASS provides adult learning and skills training for residents of both Slough and Windsor & Maidenhead. The service also commissions local providers to deliver more targeted learning across the two boroughs. This service is inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) to ensure the quality of the service provision.
- 5.2 In both June 2016 and January 2018 the service was inspected and received a rating of "Requires Improvement". In September 2018 Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit and out of the four themes considered only 2 had shown reasonable progress.
- 5.3 In early 2019 the service was restructured and had a change in management which resulted in operational improvements to bring service delivery in line with Ofsted's new Educational Inspection Framework. The new Framework required all learning providers to focus on having clear intentions in what courses are being delivered to which learners, clear lesson planning and implementation plans from tutors and increased emphasis on the impact the learning had on the lives and outcomes of students.
- 5.4 From March/April 2020 the service was impacted by Covid related restrictions. CLASS responded to the lockdowns by implementing a "hierarchy of accessibility"

model to support learners undertaking a remote learning course. It also focussed on delivering of training and personal development opportunities for tutors and support staff. Very soon after the lockdowns began the service was able to shift to delivering on-line only learning for the majority of their courses. In December 2020 Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit and were impressed by the feedback they received from learners, the way tutors and support staff had shown great flexibility to move on-line so quickly, and the level of support provided by the council to ensure this service could continue with minimal disruption.

5.5 By April 2021 both learners and tutors were raising concerns about “online fatigue” and in response service managers moved to introduce a hybrid model with an increasing proportion of face-to-face learning. By October 2021 the majority of all teaching was (and continues to be) delivered face-to-face.

5.6 In November 2021 Ofsted carried out a full inspection of the service. The results of this inspection led to Ofsted assessing East Berkshire Community Learning and Skills Service as “good” which is a significant improvement on the previous assessments.

5.7 Summary of Ofsted report (inspection November 2021)

The inspection assessed the service against 5 criteria and for each one the service was rated as “good”:

Criteria	Rating
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good

5.8 Three areas for improvement were identified.

a. All learners need to benefit from individual careers information advice and guidance. Learners are all offered individual careers information and advice at the start of their course and those that requested further advice received good quality information. However, Ofsted want to see that this further advice is provided to all learners and not simply those who ask for it. The service is supporting tutors to ensure that all learners are given progression information and supported onto employability courses.

b. Strengthen quality assurance processes to improve focus on the impact of courses on learners. Across the adult educational sector there is an acknowledged challenge of tracking learners once they have completed their training to carry out robust assessments about the impact the learning has on their lives. EB CLASS will continue to work with other local learning providers and seek out best practice from elsewhere to improve this area of service delivery.

c. Improve oversight of all sub-contracted provision to ensure consistent standards of teaching. Service managers have already begun to implement more robust and consistent oversight of how third-parties are delivering teaching and have strengthened the understanding about the importance of having clear intent, implementation, and impact measurement of all learning.

5.9 In response to the Ofsted inspection the leadership team have updated its quality improvement plan to include actions from the inspection and will work with the Governance Committee to implement these improvements.

**6. Comments of other committees**

None.

**7. Conclusion**

EB CLASS have risen to the challenges presented by a change in the inspection framework and the impact of Covid to deliver an improved service that is now rated as Good by Ofsted. The inspection report makes recommendations for future improvement, and these are now part of a service delivery plan to ensure that EB CLASS retains it's Good rating and aspires to achieve an Outstanding rating at future inspections.

**8. Background papers**

Ofsted report (Slough Borough Council) published January 2022

# Inspection of Slough Borough Council

Inspection dates: 9 to 12 November 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
<hr/>	
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

Slough Borough Council (SBC) provides adult community learning to adults in Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Learners access courses in venues which are in their own communities. The aim of the provision is to improve residents' employability and quality of life.

At the time of the inspection, there were 265 learners studying a range of courses from pre-entry level to level 2. Most learners study English for speakers of other languages, English, mathematics and digital skills. SBC currently work with four subcontractors that deliver courses in family learning, personal development, entry-level media skills and community interpreting.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Learners benefit from a calm and friendly learning environment which encourages a culture of support and tolerance. Learners have high levels of respect for each other. They share willingly their previous difficult life experiences and are extremely accepting of diversity among their peers and in the community.

Learners' attitudes to learning are very positive, and their commitment is consistently high. They attend their courses well in most cases and are on time. Learners are curious and keen to learn more. They support each other well by sharing their learning and helping each other to understand key points.

Learners gain confidence and resilience on the courses they attend. For example, learners on digital skills courses had a fear of using computers prior to joining the course. Tutors supported these learners to dispel any misconceptions, and they gently encourage them to use computers independently.

Learners rightly value the staff and the teaching that tutors provide. All staff support learners well, and they ensure that learners join the right course. Learners understand how the courses will benefit them. For example, learners can communicate more confidently, their well-being is improved, and they are better prepared for work or further learning.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and managers work collaboratively with their community to ensure that the education provided meets the needs of the local residents and the borough council's economic plan. They have strong links with job centres, employment and skills groups, community cohesion groups and local employers. For example, the local football club identified a need for volunteers at events, and SBC have developed a course for volunteers to learn about spectator safety.

Leaders and managers are ambitious for their learners. They plan the courses to ensure that they link to meaningful progression opportunities. For example, managers work closely with local social care providers to ensure that learners gain the right level of spoken English needed to gain work in the industry.

Tutors are well qualified and skilled in teaching. They have benefited from useful training to help them and their learners identify the purpose of their learning and what it will prepare them for. Tutors now use teaching techniques successfully. For example, they develop the use of language in different situations, build skills over time, and use games and debates effectively in order to help learners to learn more and remember more.

Tutors support learners well to identify how the course can help them. They take the time to adapt their teaching to ensure that learners are able to use their learning

effectively. For example, tutors repeat lessons if learners struggle with any key concepts so that learners can remember their learning and use it competently.

Learners develop a range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours which help them to move closer to employment or enrich their lives. For example, English functional skills learners can confidently communicate in formal and informal situations, such as speaking with their children's teachers at school.

Managers and tutors promote citizenship activities which prepare learners for life in modern Britain. Learners develop their understanding of equality through learning about fundamental British values and how they can contribute to their community. For example, they have learned about environmental issues, child exploitation and slavery.

Tutors use a good range of useful strategies to assess learning and plan additional tasks. They check learners' understanding through highly effective questioning, discussions and written work. For example, in English, tutors ask learners what they have learned from an activity, how the learners will apply this learning and what they will do next. Most tutors provide most learners with useful feedback, which helps them to improve.

Tutors at Thrive 365 develop learners' confidence on their personal development course. They focus learners on their strengths, transferrable skills and the positive aspects of their lives. For example, because of their improved confidence and self-esteem, some learners have completed a mentoring course which enabled them to volunteer at a local clinic that supports people who have addictions.

Leaders and managers use well-planned activities to quality assure the courses, such as classroom walks, progress monitoring and scrutiny of data. As a result, they have a good understanding of the strengths of the provision and the improvements needed. Leaders use the knowledge they gain to plan relevant and effective training for staff.

Governors bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and links with the community and local authority to the provision. They support and scrutinise senior leaders to improve the learners' experience and to meet the needs of employers, community groups and residents.

Leaders do not focus the actions they take to improve the provision on the impact they will have on the learner. They do not know enough about how the courses support learners to make progress towards their goals. As a result, there are inconsistencies in how tutors teach courses and the support they give to learners. For example, some tutors do not use the 'Progress and progression' booklets to consistently track the progress of their learners.

Leaders maintain oversight of the sub-contracted provision, but this is inconsistent. As a result, they do not know the quality of the education that all the learners

experience. Some sub-contractors receive regular and thorough scrutiny, whereas others receive very little scrutiny and are left for long periods of time unchecked.

Leaders and managers do not plan careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) well enough. Learners who are proactive in seeking CIAG receive useful information about what they need to do to move towards their goals. However, staff do not ensure that all learners are offered individual careers information, advice and guidance. For example, some learners who had requested information about becoming teaching assistants had received useful CIAG. However, learners in the same group had not received this information but were also interested in this career.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners feel very safe in the community venues and while learning online. They know how to report concerns and are very aware of the types of risks to their own safety, both online and in the community.

Leaders and managers have established effective links with local authority safeguarding teams, external partners and community leaders which help them to keep up to date with local issues. Tutors have an excellent knowledge of these topics and teach them through relevant discussions with their learners.

Leaders keep detailed records of safeguarding incidents which provide information about the actions they have taken, the subsequent resolution or referral and the lessons they have learned to improve ongoing practice.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should ensure that all learners benefit from individual careers information advice and guidance so that they are able to prepare well for their next steps.
- Leaders should ensure that their quality assurance processes and their actions to improve focus on the impact that the provision is having on learners' ability to achieve their goals.
- Leaders should ensure that they maintain consistently efficient levels of oversight of all sub-contracted provision so that they know that all learners experience high-quality teaching and learning.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54429
<b>Address</b>	Observatory House 25 Windsor Rd Slough SL1 2EL
<b>Contact number</b>	01753 476 611
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.slough.gov.uk/communitylearning">www.slough.gov.uk/communitylearning</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Baljit Mann
<b>Provider type</b>	Local authority
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	16 to 19 January 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Thrive 365 Achieving for Children Resource Media Productions Building Futures Together

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the curriculum manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Emma Leavey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Emma Barrett-Peel

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fadia Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

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## Slough Borough Council

**Report to:** Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 2 March 2022

**Contact officer (s):** Liz Jones – Group Manager Localities & Neighbourhoods  
 Kam Birdie – Locality Lead

**For all enquiries:** (01753) 875500

**Ward(s):** All

### Part I

#### For comment & consideration

#### Strong Healthy Attractive Neighbourhoods

##### 1. Purpose of report

To update the Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel on the progress of embedding a Locality model of working across the council and with partner agencies, and to feedback on the roll-out of Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods. The report also considers the future delivery of Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods in light of the Section 114 Notice and response to the council's actions plans from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

##### 2. Recommendation(s)/proposed action

The Committee is requested to note the progress made on embedding Locality working, the current roll out of the Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods initiative and comment on the future delivery of this workstream.

##### 3. The Slough joint wellbeing strategy, the JSNA and the Five-year plan

The [Slough joint wellbeing strategy](#) (SJWS) details the priorities agreed for Slough with partner organisations. The SJWS has been developed using a comprehensive evidence base that includes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

##### **3a. Slough wellbeing strategy priorities**

Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods is priority 3 of the Slough Wellbeing Board.

Health and Wellbeing is influenced by a range of different factors, including socioeconomic factors such as education, employment and income and the quality of the built environment. Some areas of Slough have pockets of severe deprivation and poor environmental quality, with the built environment, open spaces, and air quality all suffering. These factors all contribute to the health inequalities seen across the borough. Mortality rates of people under 75 years are

significantly higher in areas such as Britwell & Northborough, Chalvey and Foxborough.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, many neighbourhoods and communities in Slough came together to respond to the pandemic. The collaboration and sense of community developed during the crisis has the potential to develop into long-lasting local partnerships.

### ***3b. Five-year plan outcomes***

The strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods' initiative cuts across all of the Councils five Year Plan Outcomes; however, it has a particular focus on Outcomes 2 & 3

*Outcome 2: Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs*

*Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay*

## **4. Other implications**

### **(a) Financial**

The strong healthy and attractive neighbourhoods' initiative aims to make better use of existing resources. The model provides a more focussed way of identifying and addressing need and working in a collaborative way to ensure intended outcomes and impact are achieved. However, the dedicated Council posts which deliver this work are all currently 100% from the General Fund and this is not a statutory service that the council has a legal duty to provide. This means that funding from Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has been secured for 2 Community Development Officer posts for a 12-month pilot to focus Strong Healthy Attractive Neighbourhood (SHAN) work on reducing health inequalities. More detail is within the body of this report.

### **(b) Risk management**

Risks associated with the delivery of the SHAN initiative will initially be monitored by relevant operation and strategic groups as well as being reported to the Slough Wellbeing Board.

The main risk associated with this initiative is the lack of funding to allow this work to continue. However, this has been mitigated for 2022/23 with the securing of partner funding for a pilot scheme. To mitigate this risk for future years close partnership working is in place between Slough Borough Council and Frimley CCG (and specifically the Slough Primary Care Networks, PCNs) to agree action plans and key performance measures to demonstrate the benefits of this work in reducing health inequality.

### **(c) Human rights act and other legal implications**

There are no direct legal or Human Rights Act implications.

### **(d) Equalities impact assessment**

There is no requirement to complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) in relation to this report. EIAs will be completed for specific aspects of the programme as required. A key principle of the model is to address inequalities.

(e) Workforce

If no alternative funding source for the work can be secured after 2022/23 and Slough Borough Council still faces the current financial challenge, there may be workforce implications. However, the progress of the work and any potential impacts on workforce will be regularly reviewed by Slough Borough Council, Frimley CCG and other Wellbeing Board partners.

## 5. Supporting information

5.1 The Locality model is about bringing increased efficiency and effectiveness to what the council and its partners deliver for local people and how this is delivered. Our model is focussed on 3 key outcomes:

- Helping individuals, communities and businesses become more *self-supporting* and relying less on services delivered directly by the council.
- Helping individuals, communities and businesses become more *resilient* and able to react to, and recover from, challenges and issues they face.
- Developing effective interventions at the right time to *prevent* challenges faced by individuals, businesses, and communities becoming so significant that urgent, reactive steps are needed which often represent poor value for money.

5.2 Underpinning these outcomes are three assumptions:

- a) The majority of transactional requests made to the council by individuals and businesses will be delivered digitally. Locality working will help deliver the council's "digital by default" agenda.
- b) Delivery of transformational projects and workstreams will be driven by evidence of need (data insight) so there is clarity and transparency about why resource from a number of partners is being focussed on particular geographical areas or particular work-streams.
- c) Local community partnerships and voluntary groups will be enabled, strengthened and developed to deliver services to support the 3 key Locality outcomes.

5.3 The Strong, Healthy, and Attractive Neighbourhoods (SHAN) initiative will be the way in which the Locality model engages with, collaborates with, and supports individuals, existing community groups and new community groups to support the 3 key outcomes. SHAN works with Primary Care Networks and other key stakeholders (including residents, businesses, ward members and other agencies) to deliver transformational projects focussed on reducing health inequality. SHAN delivery is led by the council's Community Development Officers who are now managed by the Locality Lead.

5.4 SHAN pilot to reduce health inequality: Since the Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2021 a pilot partnership between Slough Primary Care Networks and Community Development has been agreed to start in April 2022 for 12-months.

The pilot partnership recognises the shared outcomes around reducing health inequality between the CCG and Community Development. The CCG leads on providing health care to reduce health inequality and Community Development leads on tackling the wider determinants of health inequality.

- 5.4.1 The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities ([wider determinants](#)) highlight that wider (or social) determinants of health have a “strong and persistent link between social inequalities and disparities in health outcomes. Variation in the experience of wider determinants (i.e., social inequalities) is considered the fundamental cause (the ‘causes of the causes’) of health outcomes, and as such health inequalities are likely to persist through changes in disease patterns and behavioural risks so long as social inequalities persist. Addressing the wider determinants of health has a key role to play in reducing health inequalities, one of PHE’s (*Public Health England’s*) core functions”.
- 5.4.2 In Slough, our locality work has facilitated a unique opportunity across Frimley CCG to innovate and work more collaboratively with the Primary Care Networks (PCN’s) to tackle the wider health inequality determinants which can lead some residents to have a very high level of engagement with their GP. In many instances the GP has relatively limited knowledge, time, and capacity to help these individuals with support beyond health care.
- 5.4.3 Building on the firm foundations in our communities created via the SHAN work, Community Development Officers will work with PCNs to address wider health determinants like poor housing, poverty, physical inactivity, or loneliness etc. They will be able to do this by proactively supporting high need individuals and linking them to existing community networks. The Community Development Officers will also identify ways to both support these existing networks (e.g., helping them bid for grant funding to maintain or expand provision, helping them attract new members or volunteers, linking them with new partners etc) and help new organisations set up to address gaps in service provision.
- 5.4.4 The pilot will test the hypothesis that together PCNs and Community Development Officers can work in localities to deliver a new way of engaging and changing behaviour of the highest need residents. This holistic partnership with health providers will support and direct residents to use community and council services where they live to help them manage their health and care needs more effectively.
- 5.5 Together the Community Development Team and Locality Lead have access to the wide and broad ecosystem of voluntary and community services across the borough and have good partnership connections to enable a community led approach to local issues and concerns. Over the last 2 years the SHAN workstream has delivered the following projects in specific wards:
- Chalvey – Supported the creation and development of the Chalvey Community Partnership and delivered a comprehensive local consultation to produce the “Strong Healthy Attractive Chalvey Plan”. The delivery of actions in the Plan are now led by the Chalvey Community Partnership and member agencies and the Community Development Team have tapered off their direct support to encourage community led (rather than council-led) solutions.

- Colnbrook and Poyle – Delivered a robust community consultation in partnership with Colnbrook Parish Council. The results of the consultation allowed the Community Development Officer to co-create a Strong Healthy Attractive community plan for this neighbourhood which is being delivered by Colnbrook Parish Council. Ownership of the plan by the Parish Council has led to them funding a 12-week youth services pilot to reduce community tension in the area.
- Britwell – Led on the delivery of a health focussed public engagement process to gather information about how the community felt about the new health centre at Britwell Hub. The results of this engagement are being used to devise a new Strong Healthy Attractive Britwell and negotiations with the Parish Council are taking place to agree ownership of delivery.
- Baylis and Stoke – The Community Development Officer is currently managing a community consultation. They will then use the results and work with local community groups to develop a Strong Healthy Attractive plan which will be owned by a of local community groups.

5.6 A key feature of SHAN and the Health Inequality pilot is the support and develop communities to be self-supporting, resilient, and able to work effectively together and with other partners to prevent issues arising or getting worse. This cultural change can be challenging for communities where in the past there has been a heavy reliance on the council leading programmes and delivery.

## **6. Comments of other committees**

The Health and Wellbeing Board considered the general feedback and update about the SHAN workstream and heard about the proposal to seek funding from Frimley CCG. Future Health and Wellbeing Board meetings will consider the progress of the pilot scheme.

## **7. Conclusion**

The Locality model continues to be rolled out, and the work to embed the 3 priority outcomes is developing. Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhood initiatives continue to be delivered across the borough and a new pilot scheme to deliver projects to reduce health inequalities will be in place throughout 2022/23.

## **8. Background papers**

None

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## Slough Borough Council

**Report to:** Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 2 March 2022

**Contact officer (s):** Richard West – Executive Director Place & Community  
 Liz Jones – Group Manager Localities & Neighbourhoods

**For all enquiries:** (01753) 875500

**Ward(s):** All

### Part I

### For comment & consideration

## Slough Library Service Plan and new delivery model

### 1. Purpose of report

To update the Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel on the results of the public consultation about the future delivery model for the council's library services and to consider the new strategic service plan (Appendix A) for the library service.

### 2. Recommendation(s)/proposed action

The Panel is requested to consider the consultation responses and the draft strategic service plan and consider whether they think the service plan meets the statutory need to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service.

### 3. The Slough joint wellbeing strategy, the JSNA and the Five-year plan

The [Slough joint wellbeing strategy](#) (SJWS) details the priorities agreed for Slough with partner organisations. The SJWS has been developed using a comprehensive evidence base that includes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

#### **3a. Slough wellbeing strategy priorities**

Slough library services support the delivery of two of the priorities in the Slough Wellbeing Strategy; priority 1 (Starting Well) and priority 3 (Strong Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods).

Library services support children to start school with a good level of health and development so they are more likely to go on to succeed in later stages of education. Library services also support strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods which are built around people, place, local pride and strong collaborative working between the community and its partners. People in strong, healthy and attractive communities are part of a shared local identity and are empowered to have the skills and opportunities to take part in local life

### 3b. Five-year plan outcomes

The strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods' initiative cuts across all of the Councils five Year Plan Outcomes; however, it has a particular focus on Outcomes 1, 2 & 3

*Priority 1: Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy, and successful.*

*Priority 2: Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs.*

*Priority 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work, and stay*

## 4. Other implications

### (a) Financial

The proposed strategic service plan for library services sets out the strategic aims for the future service. The service has a savings target of £400,000 for 2022/23, however the Council's financial position means that there may need to be further savings from this service and therefore it is important to focus on the key aims of the service and whether it meets the requirements of a comprehensive and efficient library service.

### (b) Risk management

The following key risks have been assessed and are included in the directorate risk register.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Residual risk</b>
Co-location opportunities are not taken up by other services or organisations.	Medium	Delegated authority to Executive Director to explore opportunities and report back to Cabinet.	Medium
The Library Service does not provide a comprehensive and efficient service and the council.	Medium	Throughout the process of carrying out the Needs Assessment, EIA and consultation there has been close liaison with HB Public Law. There have also been regular discussions with Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport to receive guidance on how to deliver a robust plan.	Low

		The EIA Action Plan commits the service to carry out regular, light touch surveys of each library building and on-line resources to test and evaluate if usage is being affected.	
Increase in waiting times for publications to be available due to limited stock.	High	Identifying good practice from other councils in the most similar group to implement in Slough. This could include, for example, book donation schemes.	Medium

(c) Human rights act and other legal implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications.

Library services are provided under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, section 10 of which places a duty on the library authority to provide a: “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. Further detail is provided in the Act as follows:

*library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability -*

*(a) of securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and*  
*(b) of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it.*

Case law has interpreted what a “comprehensive and efficient” library service may mean in practice. This includes confirming that it does not mean that every resident lives close to a library, instead meaning that the service is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service should make best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, whilst recognising the constraints on council resources. Any decision about the library service should be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws on evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the area. The availability of resources is highly relevant to the question of what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service and where reductions are required due to a financial crisis, whether on a local or national level, this should be considered in any review of library services.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has published guidance, which should be considered and followed. The guidance makes clear that a

comprehensive and efficient library service will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. It is the role of councillors and local officials to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their services, but this must be done:

- In consultation with their communities
- Through analysis of evidence around local needs
- In accordance with their statutory duties (these being wider than the specific duty set out above and including wider statutory duties, including duties under the Equality Act and best value duties)

When making public law decisions, the Council should take account of all relevant information, including the statutory framework, the financial position of the Council, the consultation results and the equality impact of the decision. When proposing to change and in particular reduce services it is not uncommon for the majority of respondents to disagree with the proposal. Cabinet should take these views into account but must make a decision that is reasonable taking account and balancing of all relevant information.

#### (d) Equalities impact assessment

The library service carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in September 2021 as part of the Needs Assessment. This EIA included an action plan to ensure that any equality implications were mitigated and managed. The EIA was updated in light of the public consultation (Appendix B).

If the council continues to operate the library service in the current buildings, this will address the concern raised by users who were unable to drive or easily use public transport that not having a library within walking distance would reduce their access to the service. If library services could be delivered from other community locations will consider the ease of access for all sections of the community in the final decisions about any new locations.

Adoption of the strategic service plan will ensure that the service seeks out more volunteers to allow an expansion of the Library at Home service for residents who have disabilities that mean they are unable to leave their homes.

Reductions to the publications budget will mean that careful consideration about what resources to buy to ensure a good range of material for children and babies, non-English readers/speakers, and material for users with sensory impairments (large font, Talking Books etc.) will have to be made. The service management team will continue to seek out best practice from other councils and professional bodies to make sure our service is making appropriate choices of material to stock.

#### (e) Workforce

The recommendations in this report will have workforce implications. These implications include the deletion of some posts, the creation of new part-time and full-time posts and the creation of new job descriptions and person specifications to ensure the new workforce reflects the new service.

## **5. Supporting information**

5.1 The Needs Assessment (Appendix C), Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix B) and public consultation (Appendix D) provide a wealth of information that has allowed the library service to create a robust strategic framework for delivering the service over the coming 5 years. The strategic service plan describes how eight workstreams will support the delivery of 3 overarching aims.

5.2 The three overarching aims of the library service over the next 5 years are to:

- Support improved literacy and love of reading for all residents
- Deliver affordable services available to all users
- Support levelling up opportunities for all residents

5.3 These will each be supported by the following workstreams:

- High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.
- Make sure the right library services are delivered in the right way in the right locations ensuring that the physical building spaces and events are fully accessible, supporting those with additional needs.
- Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.
- Increased range and diversity of on-line resources and support for residents to use these virtual resources, making sure that no resident is excluded from accessing the on-line world.
- A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.
- Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.
- Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.
- Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.
- We provide and spend a publications budget in line with councils in our most similar group and review our building opening times to ensure value for money.

5.3 The overarching themes and workstreams have been created by considering the results of the Needs Assessment (and Equality Impact Assessment), the public consultation results and financial constraints.

5.4 In addition to the formal responses to the consultation a resident started a petition on Change.org ([Petition · Save our library · Change.org](#)) to save the library building in Langley from closure. By mid-February 2022 there were over 1.300 signatories. The petition specifically mentions the benefits local children derive from having the library at the heart of their community, in a prominent position and close to other educational facilities from a nursery, primary and secondary schools. The petitioner also mentions that school libraries are not able to hold the

range of stock that the council library does and that the range of activities held at the library are enjoyed by local children and helps them build friendships outside of their school-based circle.

Questions for scrutiny members:

1. How can we keep the best parts of the alternative ways of working that were adopted due to Covid?
2. What parts of our more traditional ways of working do we need to adapt and build on and how can we do this cost effectively?
3. How do we make sure our library service meets the needs of our residents including current library users and future or potential library users? This includes needs to particular groups, including those for whom English is not their first language, older and infirm residents who may struggle to access library buildings, children and young people.

4. Do the future strategic aims and service plan achieve the following ambition set out by the Library Taskforce:

- (a) Set out the clear benefits of the library service to enable residents to choose whether to use it;
- (b) Set out what library services offer and how residents can make the most of these services;
- (c) Allow residents to be open to new ideas and opportunities, gain confidence and have quick and easy access to tools, skills and information to improve their quality of life;
- (d) Receive trusted guidance and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world.

5. Do the future strategic aims and service plan achieve the following seven outcomes as identified by the Libraries Taskforce:

- (a) cultural and creative enrichment
- (b) increased reading and literacy
- (c) improved digital access and literacy
- (d) helping everyone achieve their full potential
- (e) healthier and happier lives
- (f) greater prosperity
- (g) stronger, more resilient communities

## **6. Comments of other committees**

The draft strategic plan for library services will be considered at Cabinet on 21 March 2022 and the views of the Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel will be included in the report to Cabinet.

## **7. Conclusion**

The council has a legal duty to deliver a “comprehensive and efficient” library service. To facilitate this a Needs Assessment and EIA have been produced and a wide-ranging consultation undertaken. As a result of this work a new Library Service Plan has been developed to ensure that the future library service addresses the current issues facing the service whilst supporting the strategic outcomes set by Department for Digital Media Culture and Sport via the Libraries Taskforce.

## **8. Background papers**

Appendix A: Draft Slough Library Service Plan

Appendix B: Slough library service Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Slough library service Needs Assessment

Appendix D: Slough library service public consultation results (D1 to D4)

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# Library Service Plan

Customer & Community Scrutiny Panel 2 March 2022



# Library Service Plan

## Introduction

- Incremental changes to our library service, impact of Covid and the current financial situation means the time is right to make sure our library service is fit for the future.
- The **Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964** states that the council has to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service.

Page 36

Guidance from government (**DCMS**) and case law has determined that any changes to library service delivery must only be implemented after a fair process has been followed and this includes:

- A robust **Needs Assessment**
- A thorough **Equality Impact Assessment**
- Public and stakeholder **consultation**
- Clear, informed decisions taken by **Cabinet**

# Library Service Plan

## Needs Assessment

- Needs Assessment is at **Appendix C**.
- It outlines Slough's **demographics**, current library service **usage** and the **national context** to in relation to the delivery of library services.
- It includes 3 **recommendations**
  - ✓ Ensure that library services are affordable and **deliver value for money**
  - ✓ Ensure library services are accessible and **meet local needs**
  - ✓ Support and promote **good use of technology** including digitalisation of services where appropriate

# Library Service Plan

## Equality Impact Assessment

- An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is at **Appendix B** and has been updated with the results of the public consultation.

Page 38

It considers the **potential impact** of some changes on specific groups with protected characteristics.

# Library Service Plan

## Consultation

- The summary of the consultation responses is at **Appendix D**. This includes responses to the on-line consultation, consultation edition of The Citizen and the main feedback from a series of engagement events for residents (adults, children and young people) and stakeholders.
- Page 39
- The consultation highlighted that our new library service has to accommodate **7 areas for consideration** (key issues for the library service). We asked consultees to rank these key issues in order of importance.
- The consultation also proposed **5 possible models** for how a future library service could be delivered. We asked consultees to tell us which were their top 3 options.
  - The consultation asked people **why** they use our library service, **when** do they use our library service and what would they like to see delivered by a **future** library service?

# Library Service Plan

## Library Service Plan

The new proposed 5-year Library Service Plan identifies 3 overarching aims of the service:

- Improved literacy and love of reading for all residents
- Affordable services available to all users
- Levelling up opportunities for all residents

# Library Service Plan

## Library Service Plan

The overarching aims will be delivered through these workstreams

- ❖ High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.
- ❖ Make sure the right library services are delivered in the right way in the right locations ensuring that the physical building spaces and events are fully accessible, supporting those with additional needs
- ❖ Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.
- ❖ Increased range and diversity of on-line resources and support for residents to use these virtual resources, making sure that no resident is excluded from accessing the on-line world.
- ❖ A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.
- ❖ Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.
- ❖ Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.
- ❖ Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.
- ❖ We provide and spend a publications budget in line with councils in our most similar group and review our building opening times to ensure value for money.

# Library Service Plan

## General questions for Panel members

Panel members are asked to review the consultation responses and the draft strategic service plan and consider whether the proposed service plan meets the need to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service.

- Page 4
1. Does the plan retain the best parts of the **alternative ways of working** we were able to introduce due to Covid?
  2. Does the plan explain that some of our traditional ways of delivering a library service will be adapted and built upon? Does the plan explain how we will do this most **cost effectively**?
  3. Does the plan make sure we **meet the needs of our residents** (current library users and potential new users)?

# Library Service Plan

## Library Taskforce

DCMS set up a Library Taskforce in 2016. The Taskforce produced "Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021".

4. Do the future strategic aims and service plan achieve the **ambitions** set out by the Library Taskforce:

Page 4

(a) Set out the clear **benefits of the library service** to enable residents to choose whether to use it;

(b) Set out **what library services offer** and how residents can make the most of these services;

(c) Allow residents to be open to **new ideas and opportunities**, gain confidence and have quick and easy access to tools, skills and information to improve their quality of life;

(d) Receive trusted guidance and **build the skills needed** to thrive in a changing world.

# Library Service Plan

## Library Taskforce

5. Do the future strategic aims and service plan achieve the following seven **outcomes** as identified by the Libraries Taskforce:

- a) cultural and **creative** enrichment
- b) increased reading and **literacy**
- c) improved **digital access** and literacy
- d) helping everyone achieve their **full potential**
- e) **healthier** and happier lives
- f) greater **prosperity**
- g) stronger, **more resilient** communities

**Slough Library Service Plan 2022-2027**

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1. *Introduction from Lead Member*
2. *Key work areas - what will residents see by 2027?*
3. *Introduction to Slough Library Service*
4. *Our 3 key foundation aims*
  - Improved literacy and love of reading for all residents
  - Affordable services available to all users
  - Levelling up opportunities for all residents

Introduction from Lead Member

Dear residents of Slough,

I am a passionate champion for our library service in Slough. I believe that this service has a vital role to play in improving the lives of our residents over the next 5 years.

Our library service is at the heart of our communities, whether that be in a building or via our on-line library. We want both offers to be welcoming and inviting, inclusive and accessible providing space for people to study, to attend creative clubs, to meet authors, to play and relax. Our library service should allow our residents to access a great range of books, e-resources, newspapers, and magazines. We want our library service to support people of all ages who are looking for work by providing excellent IT facilities and volunteering opportunities to help develop their skills and build their CV. Our library service is a place where residents can learn about their local area and research family history. We want our library service to help young children prepare for attending school, allow students to find a quiet space to study and be a place where residents can access lifelong learning opportunities. We also want our library service to work with our arts and culture partners to enrich creativity across Slough. Our well trained and experienced staff, supported by volunteers, will help you access the services you need.

This is my vision for the library service in Slough. We already deliver lots of my vision already, but this plan will help us focus on making sure we are doing this in the most effective and efficient way possible. Slough Borough Council will continue to face a challenging financial situation over the next 5 years, and we can't commit to continuing to use all of the buildings currently used to provide library services, but we are committed to making sure our library service is comprehensive, accessible, and meeting local needs.

I was so impressed that during 2020 and 2021 when the country was in lockdown, our library service adapted to make sure we could still deliver a service under very challenging circumstances. This has led us to re-think how a modern library service could operate and has taught us a lot about what is possible, from delivering services in different ways, to rethinking which buildings we need and what space we need to dedicate to the library service in those buildings which we are able to continue to provide. This plan makes sure that we just don't go back to where we were before the pandemic, we want to go further and design a service that we can be very proud of. We need to make sure our future library service is modern, vibrant, and sustainable. I want us to find ways to provide library services within our localities and to develop our excellent partnership with organisations across Slough to keep bringing good services to you.

In late 2021 we carried out a thorough Needs Assessment and large-scale public consultation about the future of our Library Service. The results of this work and the Equality Impact Assessment that sits alongside them means we are now in a position to set out our high-level aims for the service and the areas that we will be working on over the next five years.

Your responses to the consultation survey identified that the most important things you look for in a library service are being able to borrow books, including books from the Children's section, and having a library service within walking distance from where you live. You also told us that it was important that our library service was efficient, and this includes spending a reasonable amount on new books as well as seeing if other organisations could work from buildings in which we provide a library service to help spread the cost of running the buildings. The third consideration you wanted us to prioritise was to make sure our library service was open on days and at times that suited you.

Taking all this into account we will now focus on delivering these three high-level aims:

- Improved literacy and love of reading for all residents
- Affordable services available to all users
- Levelling up opportunities for all residents

This plan will summarise how we will achieve these aims by focussing on 8 key work areas.

Key work areas - What will residents see by 2027?

At the end of the period covered by this plan our aim is that residents will see our Library Service delivering the following:

- ❖ High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.
- ❖ Make sure the right library services are delivered in the right way in the right locations ensuring that the physical building spaces and events are fully accessible, supporting those with additional needs
- ❖ Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.
- ❖ Increased range and diversity of on-line resources and support for residents to use these virtual resources, making sure that no resident is excluded from accessing the on-line world.
- ❖ A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.
- ❖ Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.
- ❖ Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.
- ❖ Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.
- ❖ We provide and spend a publications budget in line with councils in our most similar group and review our building opening times to ensure value for money.

*Introduction to Slough Library Service*

This plan is about improving and promoting the opportunities that our library service can offer and placing this at the heart of our community. We are fortunate in Slough to have a strong foundation to build from<sup>1</sup>.

In February 2022 our library service is being delivered from 4 main buildings; The Curve, Britwell Hub, Langley Library and Cippenham Library. Satellite children's libraries are also provided at 3 Children's Centres (Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham). As well as these physical spaces we have an extensive range of resources available on-line; in 2019/20 over 100,000 e-resources were borrowed from Slough library service. Our libraries offer more than just somewhere to borrow hard copy and electronic publications. Over 66,000 hours of computer time were booked by library users during 2019/20 and 67,000 visits were made to attend an event or activity in one of our buildings.

Our on-line resource is available 24/7, but pre-Covid our physical library service was open for over 200 hours per week. Our staff were available at for all of those 200 hours. We also deliver a small "Library at Home" service for users unable to get to a building from which we provide library services supported by a small number of volunteers.

In common with all local councils, we have to make sure that all our services, including our library service delivery best value for money. The current financial challenge faced by the council means that we will have to check more often what we do, where we do it from and how we do it to make sure this service continues to be comprehensive, relevant, and efficient. One of the ways we will do this is to make sure we deliver core services well and that we compare favourably with the library service delivered by our "Most Similar Group" of councils. At the very least we want to be aligned with this Most Similar Group.

The Needs Assessment and public consultation we carried out in 2021/22 has led us to ask ourselves questions about the best ways to deliver a library service in the future. Do we need to change the times our physical library service is open? Do library staff need to be available at all buildings used to provide our Library Service at all times? Can we deliver events and activities from different locations? How can we increase our volunteering opportunities? Are there other council services or partner organisations who could share space in buildings which we use to provide our library service? What more can our library service do to support the council's aspiration to move to "digital by default" service delivery? Should we bring our spend on publications in-line with our most similar councils?

Our plan sets out our high-level commitment to answering some of these questions whilst making sure we continue to deliver a comprehensive and efficient service for local library users now and in the future.

*Our key foundations: **Improved literacy and love of reading for all residents***

Encouraging, enabling, and promoting a love of reading will be at the core of our library service. We will do this by continuing to offer a wide range of books and publications both hard copy and e-resource and by hosting events and activities that help both children and adults who are developing a love of reading and improving their literacy levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Slough Library Service Needs Assessment 2021/22 – Slough Borough Council

It is estimated that around 16% of adults in England have “very poor literacy skills”<sup>2</sup> and the UK government says that this means 16% of adults have a reading age equivalent to that of an 11-year-old<sup>3</sup>. Mencap estimates that at least 1.5million people in the UK have some form of learning disability<sup>4</sup>. For both children and adults these issues can have a serious impact on their wellbeing as well as their ability to access information that can have a serious impact on their life chances such as finding job or support for their health.

Slough library service will build confidence in reading and writing for our residents by providing a safe real-life and virtual spaces where people can develop their literacy skills. The library service will focus on expanding opportunities to work with people who would benefit from additional support.

Our library service will remain inclusive and open to all. We will continue to provide free access to books and other reading materials, IT, events, and activities that inspire and engage residents to improve literacy levels and enjoy reading for pleasure. Slough library service will be a knowledge hub and support residents to connect with other services and organisations.

- ❖ High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.
- ❖ Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.

We will work with early years providers, parents, schools, and community groups to support children to be school ready, develop their literacy skills, support education catch-up and continue to provide a safe space for young people to study and learn outside of the classroom. Our library staff and volunteers will be available to provide support at times that are most popular for users. We will regularly review our opening times to make sure they meet the needs of our residents.

We will partner with a range of organisations which support adults to improve their literacy skills for their everyday lives. This will have a positive impact on job opportunities, aspirations, and independence.

- ❖ Make sure the right library services are delivered in the right way in the right locations ensuring that the physical building spaces and events are fully accessible and support those with additional needs.

We will actively encourage other services to co-locate in buildings from which we provide our library service so that there are a number of reasons for residents to come to a building. Part of the co-location offer will be organisations cross promoting the other facilities and services available at the location. We will also seek out opportunities for library services and events to be delivered from other locations outside of the buildings used for the library service. This will help ensure library services reach out to communities and individuals who may not be current library users.

- ❖ Increased range and diversity of on-line resources and support for residents to use these virtual resources, making sure that no resident is excluded from accessing the on-line world.

Slough’s online collections and resources like Ancestry UK as well as our wide range of e-books, e-newspapers and e-magazines increased in popularity during lockdown, and we will respond to this

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<sup>2</sup> Adult Literacy Trust [Adult literacy | National Literacy Trust](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Simone: dyslexic user - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Learning Disability Research and Statistics | Mencap](#)

change in customer borrowing patterns. Our staff and volunteers will be able to support residents in low-key, informal ways to be comfortable and confident using these on-line resources as well as accessing council services via digital routes. Wherever possible our library service will actively support and promote the work of Community Learning and other training providers to encourage residents to access formal training and up-skilling to use digital, virtual and e-resources.

❖ **A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.**

The library service already runs a wide range of events and activities to encourage residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy reading and use the range of services on offer. We will work with local partners and volunteers to develop relevant and enjoyable programmes of events and activities for all ages, to ensure that our current and future library users can develop a lifelong love of reading and use of the library service.

❖ **Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.**

Our desire to increase volunteering opportunities will help us achieve two important aims. The first is to support our committed staff team in delivering events and activities to inspire a love of reading in our residents. The second is to improve literacy and a love of reading in our increased volunteer cohort and demonstrate to these individuals the benefits to their own wellbeing, health, and employment outcomes of a love of reading and engaging positively with their community.

❖ **Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.**

We will use the data we collect about borrowing and event attendance in Slough, and data from our Most Similar Group of councils to inform our decisions. This could be about what publications to buy and stock, what events to host or which partners to work with and what hours we should have dedicated library staff available to support residents improve their literacy and reading skills.

We will continue to develop and use a variety of methods to provide us with in-depth information about our stock management choices including: our own system data on users' borrowing choices and preferences, information from our suppliers, market analysis on national reading trends, alongside direct engagement, and feedback from residents.

❖ **Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.**

Library users are at the heart of the service. So, it is important that the service we are offering reflects the diverse interests and needs of our residents. We will look at new ways for residents to share their views and get involved in helping to shape the service, help inform the resources on offer, and provide regular feedback and input.

❖ **We spend an amount of our budget on publications aligned to that spent by councils in our Most Similar Group and will review our building opening times to ensure value for money.**

Ensuring value for money is a key consideration now for all council services including our library service. Over the coming 5 years the Council's financial situation will mean that we are unable to aspire to be in the top quarter of our similar councils in terms of spending on library publications (Slough is currently second in our most similar group of councils) but we will aim to align ourselves within the range of spend made by others within our Most Similar Group. Our choice of titles and formats will be carefully considered taking local data, assessments, and insight from residents into account.

We will offer residents a choice of accessing books and attending events in real life, and on-line. Our on-line offer will be available at all times, and the buildings from which we provide our library service will be open at times that suit you. We will publish and promote the times buildings providing library services are open and when dedicated staff will be available to help and support adults and children to develop a love and joy of reading.

*Our key foundations: **Affordable services available to all users***

We have to make sure that we can afford the services residents need. We also have to do all we can to make sure our library services are accessible and available to all of our residents, including those residents who may not currently use libraries.

Our commitment is to keep our core service free at the point of use for all users. For services where we can charge, we will ensure that our charges are reasonable and in line with what other councils who are most similar to us ask for. Where we offer services from buildings, we will make sure that they are accessible to people with reduced mobility or with prams and buggies and that our buildings are open at the times that suit the majority of residents.

As we develop our on-line resource it will be easy for residents to use and navigate through. This will also mean that an increasing amount of content (whether it is publications to borrow, advice or recordings of live events) will be available 24/7 and not restricted to the times buildings used to provide library services are staffed.

- ❖ High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.
- ❖ Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.

Access to books and publications will be free for all library users. Most of our events and activities will remain free to come to because we don't want cost to put people off developing a love of reading. Where there are opportunities for additional funding or resources through things like grant applications, private sector financial support or good quality book donations we will ensure we make full use of these over the next 5 years.

We will continue to offer face-to-face support for children and adults to encourage reading and literacy. However, both specialist support and informal guidance and help will be available at specific times in each building in which we provide library services throughout each week. We will have buildings used to provide our library service open at times when users really need them – this will allow us to offer flexible opening hours including evenings and weekends.

- ❖ Make sure the right library services are delivered in the right way in the right locations.

We will make sure we offer bespoke services to support specific community needs so we do not waste resources delivering un-popular services in locations with little take-up. Our library opening hours, and the times dedicated staff and volunteers are available will be regularly reviewed to make sure they meet local needs.

Staff from other organisations or council services will be able to support library services by helping us keep the buildings used to provide library services safe and carrying out some basic functions to help residents use our library service.

❖ Increased range and diversity of on-line resources and support for residents to use these virtual resources, making sure that no resident is excluded from accessing the on-line world.

In 2022 the cost of purchasing on-line e-publications is not cheaper per item than hard copy. However, over the course of the next 5-years we will be monitoring the costs of items across a range of formats to ensure that we are achieving best value for money and providing good levels of accessibility.

❖ A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.

The library service already includes running a wide range of events and activities to encourage residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy reading and use the range of services on offer. We will work with local partners and volunteers to deliver relevant and enjoyable programmes of events which will always be free to use wherever possible. If specialist events are delivered where a charge can be made these costs will always be reasonable and transparent.

To make sure our library service remains affordable we will seek out more and more options about where we deliver our events programme from. We will bring our library events out into the community and use a range of buildings and locations including parks and open spaces, community centres, schools, health settings, retail, and leisure centres where we can.

❖ Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.

Opening up further opportunities for volunteers may result in the overall library service being delivered more economically. However, volunteers need some management, supervision and support and will also have training needs that will have to be met. An increased cohort of engaged and supported volunteers will provide benefits directly to these residents (often those who are unemployed or under-employed) and give more flexibility to the library service about what services are offered to the community.

❖ Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.

We will use the data we collect about borrowing and event attendance in Slough, and data from our Most Similar Group of councils to inform our decisions. This could be about what publications to buy and stock, what events to host or which partners to work with to deliver an increased level of literacy and love of reading. By understanding how our customers use our services we can better deliver what they need and not potentially waste resources by offering the wrong service to the wrong community or in the wrong location.

❖ Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.

Library users are at the heart of the library service. So, it is important that the service we are offering reflects the diverse interests and needs of our residents. We will look at new ways for residents to share their views and get involved to help us ensure that our services are responsive to the needs of users and, therefore, delivering good value for money.

❖ We spend a similar amount of our budget on publications as councils in our most similar group and review our building opening times to ensure value for money.

Reducing our spending on publications and ensuring that it remains aligned to our most similar group of councils will mean more carefully planned choice of books and resources. In order to

maintain a service that meets the needs of all residents we will commit to regularly engaging with users and non-users about the choice and format of publications to ensure we are able to provide a good range of material for residents.

By offering flexibility around opening times we will be able to make sure our service is efficient. We want to make sure staff and volunteers are available in your community at times that are popular with you, so we don't have the costs of keeping services open at times when people don't want them.

*Our key foundations: **Levelling up opportunities for all residents***

Slough's library service is more than just a place to borrow books, it is a service which brings people and communities together to share culture and creativity. Our service will continue to help people to learn and develop lifelong skills, provide resources and support to help improve their health and wellbeing, and provide places where residents come to access information and support from a range of other organisations.

Our library service will look to work with partners over the next 5 years to provides residents with access to additional services like post-natal sessions, support for people with hearing impairments, programmes to support people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, and programmes to help reduce social isolation. We will forge relationships that allow library services to support and facilitate work with partners and volunteers to run work clubs and skills sessions to help people to improve their employability. Our relationship with Community Learning and other learning providers will mean we remain somewhere where digital skills courses and coding clubs (for young people with an interest in IT development) will be delivered from. Through this new plan for libraries, we will actively seek out opportunities to provide additional support to our most vulnerable communities and those residents in need of extra help.

Wherever possible, our library services will be delivered from buildings where other services are co-located. This will make it easier for those residents who need to work with support staff or advisors, or who have to attend appointments to come to a single location rather than trying to travel across the borough. This should help improve Library membership since those residents who are attending a building for advice or support in another service can have a soft introduction to what library services can offer.

Our library service will continue to play a crucial role in helping our communities to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. The library service helps our residents by improving access to a good quality education, training, and employment plus access to better health and wellbeing for Slough residents.

- ❖ High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.
- ❖ Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.

Our work with partners to support children to be school ready, develop their literacy skills, support education catch-up and continue to provide a safe space for young people to study and learn outside of the classroom helps prevent educational outcome discrepancies for children increase across the borough.

Supporting adults to develop a love of reading and increase literacy skills will break down this barrier to accessing training and employment. Our staff and volunteers will be able to offer informal guidance and training sessions, reading for pleasure sessions and information about more formal training for adults.

❖ **Make sure the right library services are delivered in the right way in the right locations.**

We will analyse data from a range of partners to help us design and deliver services that meet the needs identified in different localities. The library service will benefit from this shared knowledge and resource where co-location is possible. This means the activities and events offered by or facilitated by library staff and volunteers will be closely aligned to the needs of specific communities. This close working will increase the focus of all services on reducing health, social and economic inequalities across Slough.

❖ **Increased range and diversity of on-line resources and support for residents to use these virtual resources, making sure that no resident is excluded from accessing the on-line world.**

There is an acknowledged risk that the increased reliance on on-line service delivery could exclude or leave some residents behind. This could have serious consequences for them in terms of accessing health services, training, employment and benefits, and advice. Library staff and volunteers will provide support and guidance to residents who struggle to use the new digital world. They will promote the benefits of on-line resources (for example, access at times that suit residents), guide users to the most useful sites and help with using search engines and results.

❖ **A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.**

The library service already runs a wide range of events and activities to encourage residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy reading and use the range of services on offer. Each of these events uses literacy, reading and writing as a vehicle to engage with residents. Through this engagement residents can pick up new technical skills and knowledge (e.g., skills to bond with pre-school children through reading or creative writing) or new social skills (e.g., interacting with others to reduce loneliness, reading to reduce mental ill-health). Picking up and practicing these skills form firm foundations from which to reduce inequality.

❖ **Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.**

Our commitment to increase volunteering opportunities will allow a larger group of residents to either experience the world of work for the first time (e.g., school leavers or long-term unemployed), improve skills and confidence (e.g., residents who are underemployed) and improve social interactions (e.g., residents concerned by loneliness or social anxiety). Volunteering can be an end in itself for those residents who are not looking for skills to improve their work CV but can also be an important step into paid work for those who may lack qualifications or experience.

❖ **Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.**

Analysis of library usage data will help not only the library service make decisions based on evidence, but anonymised data can be combined with other data sets to help a range of council services understand the needs of their customers too.

❖ **Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.**

Library users will be encouraged to feedback to us about how the services offered by the service can help more residents have great life outcomes. But our library users will also be encouraged to work with us to promote throughout their local community the work that libraries deliver to drive up library use and membership.

- ❖ We spend a similar amount of our budget on publications as councils in our most similar group and review our building opening times to ensure value for money.

Reducing our spending on publications but ensuring that it remains aligned to our Most Similar Group of councils will mean more carefully planned choice of books and resources. In order to maintain a service that meets the needs of all residents we will commit to regularly engaging with users and non-users about the choice and format of publications to ensure we are able to provide a good range of material for residents.

By offering flexibility around opening times we will be able to make sure our service is available to help residents access information, support and guidance at times that suit them. We want to make sure staff and volunteers are available in your community at times that are popular with you, so we don't have the costs of keeping services open at times when people don't want them.

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## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Equality Act 2010 requires all public bodies, including local authorities, to show “due regard” to the impact their policies and procedures have on people from different groups. This includes gender, race, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We also have a responsibility to foster good community relations. Although they are not a legal requirement, conducting a basic assessment will allow you to look at the possible implications of a policy or procedure, and take any mitigating action if appropriate.

Remember:

- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) should be carried out on **relevant** policies and procedures. Not all policies or procedures will require them. If you are unsure if one is required, please contact the Equality and Diversity Manager on 01753 875069 for advice.
- Assess any potential impacts, positive and negative, in a proportionate way and with relevance
- Make decisions that are justified, evidenced, relevant and identify any mitigating proposals
- Prioritise expenditure in an efficient and fair way
- Have a record showing that the potential impacts have been considered and that decisions are based on evidence

# Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Directorate:</b> Customer and Community	
<b>Service:</b> Library Service	
<b>Name of Officer/s completing assessment:</b> Liz McMillan /Liz Jones	
<b>Date of Assessment:</b> September 2021 and revised February 2022	
<b>Name of service/function or policy being assessed:</b> Slough Library Service - review of services in light of proposals to change service delivery (which included a public consultation).	
1.	<p><b>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</b></p> <p>The library service will be undertaking a review of the way SBC delivers library services to a) ensure they are fit for purpose and continue to be compliant with statutory obligations, b) review the advantages and disadvantages seen through the change in delivery during COVID-19 lockdown and c) achieve value for money by driving out savings to support action associated with issuing of Section 114 Notice.</p> <p>The library service in Slough has four (statutory) libraries: The Curve cultural hub in the heart of Slough town centre; and three community libraries in Britwell, Cippenham and Langley. In addition, there are three satellite non-staffed (non-statutory) libraries in Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham children’s centres. All of our libraries are free at the point of use for all users. We also offer a small Home Library Service supported by volunteers who take library books to the homes of people who are unable to come to a library. During 2020 and 2021 the service was forced (due to COVID-19 restrictions) to close all physical library buildings. The service moved on-line and directed customers to eBooks/eAudio books, on-line “click and collect” and on-line activities and events.</p> <p>Library services provide access to books, online resources, computers with Wi-Fi and Internet as well as a programme of events and activities for adults and children. Britwell and The Curve are also locality hubs which accommodate other services including Registrar Service, Learning &amp; Skills services, Housing Demand and council customer services. The library service also provides outreach events including visits to schools.</p> <p>Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local councils in England have a statutory duty to provide a ‘comprehensive and</p>

	<p>efficient' library service for all people working, living, or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <p>Consultation and engagement activities were carried out over a 12-week period from 28<sup>th</sup> October to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Engagement was through an online survey, a Have Your Say newsletter sent to every household, emails sent to all library users, partners, and networks to encourage participation. In addition, there were both face-to-face and online engagement with users and stakeholders. Face-to-face engagement, reminders via SBC social media and contacts with stakeholders encouraged the participation by people who don't currently use libraries but may do in the future.</p> <p>2522 people responded to the online survey, 595 to the Have your Say paper copy sent to every household and approximately 2,600 people attended engagement events.</p> <p>Accessibility of the consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All documents were made accessible including pdfs and were available on the council website</li> <li>• A hard copy pack of all documents was available at each library as well as on the council website</li> <li>• An easy read document was created and approved by Disabilities Forum and Equalities Monitoring Officer</li> <li>• A consultation video was also created and added to the website and on you tube. This video was captioned/sub-titled <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT592bFZfjQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT592bFZfjQ</a></li> <li>• Paper copies of the survey were available at each library or on request             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 250 paper copies were printed</li> <li>▪ 199 copies were given out at group meetings or in libraries</li> <li>▪ 36 paper copies were returned</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>2.</p>	<p><b>Who implements or delivers the policy, service, or function?</b></p> <p>Library services are funded, delivered and managed by a dedicated team within Slough Borough Council.</p> <p>The service is part of the Locality and Neighbourhoods Group under the Customer and Community Directorate.</p>

	<p>The Service Manager is the Locality Hubs and Library Services Manager who is supported by an Operational Lead and a Children’s and Young People’s Officer. This is the library services management team.</p> <p>The operational delivery is made through a number of Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors, library customer service assistants and volunteers.</p> <p>Early Years Teams based at the Children’s Centres support the delivery of the three satellite (non-statutory) libraries in Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <p>A strategic service plan (incorporating the responses to the consultation, and the implementation of the agreed recommendations) has been created and will be presented to Cabinet with a recommendation to approve it. The delivery of the new strategic service plan will be led by the Libraries management team. Any changes to the staff teams will be consulted on separately and will include a separate EIA. Any staff consultation on proposed changes will involve library staff, HR and Unions and following organisational consultation policy guidelines.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Who will be affected by this proposal?</b></p> <p>The proposal to review and reconfigure how we deliver the library service in Slough will have the potential to affect all residents of the borough as the service is universal and free at the point of use.</p> <p>Sloughs total resident population is 149,539.</p> <p>Total library membership in the borough is 40,000 people and of this, 21,000 are active borrowers (borrowing at least once a year and including on-line borrowing). The total membership accounts for 27% of the resident population and active borrowers account for 14% of the total resident population.</p> <p>Slough currently has 4 libraries the lowest number per population of our CIPFA “Most Similar Group” of 12 other local authorities with the</p>

most similar demographics to us. Reducing that number could have a negative impact on residents' ability to access library services.

These proposals could impact on residents, current library users and potential users of the service who will all fall into one or more of the protected characteristics groups.

Affected groups could include

- all residents of Slough,
- library staff,
- other council and hub staff,
- current library users,
- partner organisations and stakeholders including schools, Early Years provision, and post-16 education, learning and skills services.

**Library Users data**

Age

A high percentage of library users are children and young people. 70% of all resources borrowed across all sites are from the Children's library. All of the attendees of activities such as story reading and, Baby and Rhyme sessions are carers with babies and pre-school children.

Older residents attend libraries to reduce social isolation, borrow books and attend events such as seated exercise sessions and reading groups.

The breakdown of active library users by age:

	<b>% of active library users</b>	<b>Number of active library users</b>
Child (0 – 10 y/o)	20.6%	4,394
Child (11 – 13 y/o)	9.2%	1,970
Young person (14 – 17 y/o)	7.6%	1,630

Adult (18 – 59 y/o)	58.7%	12,480
Senior citizen (60+)	3.6%	777

Sex

A slightly higher percentage of library members are female rather than male.

	Numbers of members	% of members
Female	10,945	55%
Male	8,868	45%

Gender reassignment and gender self-identification

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on gender reassignment or gender self-identification from membership records as this is not a legal requirement to hold this information. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

There is no accurate information on the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people in Slough. Several estimates for the nationwide percentage of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals exist, with the Office for National Statistics estimating approximately 2% of the total UK population (2016). The LGBT Foundation places it higher at between 5% and 7%. The Office for National Statistics has concluded that there is a need for greater information about LGBT individuals and is currently consulting about how best to generate this information.

Sexual orientation

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on sexual orientation from membership records as this is not a legal requirement to hold this information. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

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this information.

Disability

The Library Service does not hold full and comprehensive data on the disability needs of its customers. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

In the 2011 Census, 9,322 Slough residents between the ages of 16-64 reported living with a physical disability. Over 1,350 people were also reported to be living with a severe mental health problem. There are an estimated 2,590 people living with sight loss in Slough and 2,696 adults under the age of 65 live with a moderate to severe hearing impairments (more have a profound impairment). Hearing impairments in younger adults in Slough is expected to increase by 20% over the next ten years. Just over 4% of over 65s in Slough have been recorded by their GPs as living with dementia.

In April 2021 it was estimated ([here](#)) that the un-employment rate for disabled people across the UK was 8.4% (compared to 4.6% for non-disabled) whilst for economic inactivity the rate for disabled people was 42.9% compared to only 14.9% for non-disabled people. This indicates that unemployment, economic inactivity and associated lack of disposable income for items like books, magazines, newspapers and Internet access (all services provided free by libraries) will disproportionately affect people with disabilities. It is fair to assume that reducing or removing access to these services in our libraries will negatively impact residents with disabilities.

In recognition of this the library service provides a range of resources to support residents with disability needs. This includes large print books, Talking Books and on-line resources with the ability to zoom into enlarge print size. We also offer targeted resources including Books on Prescription and “Reading Well” collections that support general health and wellbeing (self-help).

Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

Pregnancy and maternity

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the pregnancy/maternity status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

Anecdotal observations suggest that parents-to-be and new parents are a high proportion of those who use the service in particular Baby Rhyme Time sessions.

Race

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the ethnic status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, from observations of attendance at activities, feedback from library staff and anecdotal observations the majority of those using the service are Asian British, followed by White British and White other. This mirrors the general ethnic breakdown of Slough’s resident population.

<b>Ethnic breakdown of Slough resident population</b>		
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	549	0.6% of population
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	797	0.6% of population
Asian/Asian British: Indian	21,922	15.6% of population
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	7,560	5.4% of population
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	24,869	17.7% of population
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	7,548	5.4% of population
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	3,096	2.2% of population
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other	1,471	1.0% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	4,429	1.0% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	607	0.4% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	1,667	1.2% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed	1,055	0.8% of population
Other ethnic group: Arab	928	0.7% of population
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	2,654	1.9% of population
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern	48,401	34.5% of population

Irish/British		
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller		220 0.2% of population
White: Irish 1,607 1.1%		1,607 1.1% of population
White: Other White 13,825 9.9%		13,825 9.9% of population

**Religion and Belief**

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the pregnancy/maternity status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

<b>Religious belief breakdown of Slough resident population</b>		
Buddhist		743 0.6% of population
Christian		57,726 43.6% of population
Hindu		8,643 6.5% of population
Jewish		87 0.1% of population
Muslim		32,655 24.7% of population
Sikh		14,889 11.3% of population
Other religion		482 0.4% of population
No religion		17,024 12.9% of population

**Library Users data**

A separate Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out with staff if the outcome of the review and consultation results in changes for staff numbers, hours of work, type of role etc.

**Review of EIA after consultation February 2022**

All of the identified groups have been engaged with throughout the public consultation period to ensure their views on the proposed library changes are considered. No group or individual made an alternative proposal for how services could be delivered in the future.

Keeping all 4 libraries open will mean that there will be a library withing walking distance for all identified groups. The top choice for 34% of respondents was to have a library within walking distance. This would have the least impact on any particular group and reduced hours when staff were available would mean moderate impact to the user experience. However, this will be mitigated by maintaining staffed

	<p>hours for 12-month periods and communicating these clearly and consistently to help all groups understand when staff will be available to support them if needed.</p> <p>Additional equalities data was collected as part of the equalities monitoring section in the online survey:</p> <p>Of the 2522 who completed the online survey 93.02% live in Slough and 86.05% are already library members.</p> <p>59.08% of those responding to the online survey walk to the library with 32.81% travelling by car. One of the top requests for the library service to provide was a library in a location within walking distance.</p> <p><u>Gender</u> 62.58% respondents were female and 31.38% male</p> <p><u>Age</u> 15.32% are over aged 60 with 64.42% aged between 25 and 59. 15.44% of respondents were under 24. Parents and carers of children under 13 completed the survey on their behalf. Other forms of engagement were carried out to seek the views of children and young people.</p> <p><u>Disabilities</u> 8.76% of respondents declared a disability and 6% preferred not to say. 85.24% responded to say they did not have a disability.</p> <p><u>Ethnicity</u> Of those who responded to this question the top 3 were Indian 19.65% White British 16.85% Asian British 15.68%</p> <p><u>Religion</u> The top 3 responses were Christian 28%</p>
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	<p>Muslim 18.77%                  Hindu 15.19%                  12.72% had no religion and 13.89% preferred not to say</p> <p><u>Language</u>                  92% said English was the language they are most comfortable using                  Other languages mentioned in the comments were Punjabi, Urdu, Polish, French, Portuguese, and Arabic</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above?</b></p> <p><u>Publication’s budget</u>                  If the Publication budget is reduced there will still be a mix of hard copy and on-line resources available for all users. During Covid-19 restrictions the numbers of items borrowed on-line increased by 300% showing that there is a demand for this type of borrowing.</p> <p><u>Changes to hours the libraries are open/hours that libraries are staffed by library customer service assistants</u>                  If the hours when library staff are available at libraries do change/reduce we will still have a 24/7 on-line offer which proved popular with users over Covid-19 lockdown. Anecdotal feedback has been that some users (unidentified protected characteristics) prefer the anonymity of using on-line resources and reduced interaction with staff rather than coming into a building and interacting with staff. This change may also present further volunteering opportunities for residents to take advantage of which could improve confidence, skills and wellbeing.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b>  <b>Moderate Impacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Positive impact would be still having a local library in each location within walking distance with times throughout the week at every location where staff are available to offer support.</li> <li>✓ Publication’s budget will be in line with other nearest neighbours and will be able to provide a mix of resources physical and online</li> <li>✓ The consultation has provided more detailed information on what people use libraries for, and what services they want to use, and why people do not use the service.</li> <li>✓ This information will help to tailor services in the right way in future.</li> </ul>

	<p>✓ It has provided equalities information in response to specific questions which gives us greater understanding on those with specific characteristics who use library services (<b>see section 3</b>)</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above?</b></p> <p><u>Age</u>          Children and young people make up the highest percentage of our library users both for book borrowing and attending events/activities. Reducing the publications budget could limit the number and range of books/eResources for children and young people. Reducing opening hours could limit the times young people are able to access physical library buildings, especially if self-service alternatives are used that may not be available for children/young people to access. Many of our activities and events are aimed at children and young people and there may be a reduction in the number of events available and/or they may be restricted to one or two libraries rather than being offered from all libraries across the borough.</p> <p>Anecdotal feedback from library staff suggest that older residents often go to a local library as a way of informally socialising with others, reducing their social isolation, and improving their social networks, health, and wellbeing. Feedback from adults using library-based activities (e.g., reading groups, seated exercises) support this staff feedback. Reducing the hours when library staff are available for people to talk to and get advice from could increase feelings of loneliness and social isolation. This would also reduce the availability of staff to work with older users to help reduce digital isolation – currently staff offer hands-on support and guidance to residents who are not confident using or accessing Internet in general and a range of council self-serve service as part of the “digital by default” transformation.</p> <p><u>Sex</u>          A higher percentage of females than males are library users so any reductions in service may have a disproportionate impact on female users.</p> <p><u>Gender reassignment and gender self-identification</u>          Although we have no data specifically on library usage by residents who have had/are having gender reassignment, the reduction in publications budget could have a disproportionate impact on these users and those who don’t identify as gender-binary. A reduced publication budget would limit the range of publications available and would focus on mainstream items. This would reduce the opportunity of stocking resources by, or for people in this group.</p>

Sexual orientation

Although we have no data specifically about sexual orientation of library users or the general resident population, the reduction in publications budget could have a disproportionate impact on LGBT+ users and potential users. A reduced publication budget would limit the range of publications available and would focus on mainstream items. This would reduce the opportunity of stocking resources by, or for people in this group.

Disability

A reduction in the publications budget could affect users and potential users with disabilities as this would limit the number and range of large print, Talking Books and eResources (books where print size can be increased and audio books) available. It may also reduce the number and range of health and wellbeing resources being stocked to allow users to follow a “self-help” route to improve/maintain their own health.

Whilst some users/residents with disability may use on-line libraries/Home Library Service rather than physical buildings (e.g., those with limited mobility), others may find the loss of or reduced opening hours of library buildings more difficult. Residents with early stages of dementia, are neuro-atypical, have some mental health conditions etc. may be able to (and get benefits from) use a familiar library at times when they are less busy. If libraries are closed at quiet times this may disadvantage this group although we have no current library usage data on this issue.

Pregnancy and maternity

Several activities at libraries are specifically aimed at parents/carers of babies (e.g., Baby Rhyme Time, story times etc) to help babies get a first introduction to books and allow socialisation for both them and their parents. Spend on books/publications for babies is relatively high because the items are used often and suffer more wear and tear than books for older users. Free access to a range of books supports early years development. This means that reductions to the publication fund, reduced opening hours for libraries and reduced staff resource to deliver activities would have a specific impact on this group.

New parents also use libraries to collect Bookstart packs for babies. Reduction in opening hours and hours when staff are available could limit the opportunities for parents to collect this resource.

Race

	<p>Almost 1/3<sup>rd</sup> (27%) of our total resident population do not have English as their main language (2011 Census). Reducing the publications budget would limit the range of publications available to allow focus on mainstream items meaning there may be a reduction in publications in languages other than English. Reducing the hours when staff are available to help and guide those who are not confident in reading English may also negatively impact this group.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ For most of the groups there will be no further impacts other than those already identified for each of the groups.</li> <li>✓ Reductions in Publications budget will still mean there may be reduced access to some areas of publications for some groups. This will be monitored to ensure no group is severely disadvantaged.</li> <li>✓ Reduction in opening and staffed hours will mean that some groups may have difficulty accessing at times that suit them. This will be minimised by clearly communicating when staff will be available and to maintain these times for a minimum of 12-months at a time to reduce confusion by having frequent changes.</li> <li>✓ Staff will be impacted by the staff reductions and a separate staff consultation will be carried out.</li> <li>✓ New opening hours will be based on the consultation responses with Saturdays, evenings and afternoons most popular.</li> </ul>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data?</b></p> <p>Data used is from Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). ONS data is from 2011 Census. CIPFA data (most similar groups) is from 2019 report using 2018 data.</p> <p>Where Slough library usage data has been used this has been taken from the library management system.</p> <p>Further, more detailed analysis about impacts of service changes will be carried out after the 12-week public consultation which will include collection of equalities data and asking residents for their assessment of the proposals.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <p>The consultation was extensive and included an online and paper survey, face-to-face and online engagement with a individuals, groups and stakeholders (including children and young people, disability forum, carers support groups and groups specifically for older residents) to gather their views and feedback.</p>

	<p>Question 16 in the online survey was a free text box asking for respondents to add any comments they felt the council needed to take into consideration. 712 comments were received.</p> <p>The general themes of the comments were that users preferred the library to be local, problems anticipated if users had to travel by other means, the value of libraries post lockdown as a way of reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing and valuing libraries as a safe community space.</p> <p>The general theme of comments received from children and young people highlighted that they want libraries to be calm, quiet and peaceful, and that Covid has restricted their ability to go to the library.</p> <p>15 drop-ins and online events were held and over 30 groups were engaged with via face-to-face workshops and online meetings with over 300 adults and 1995 children and young people. 374 handwritten comments from children and young people were received, and 14 emails to the dedicated library consultation email account were received.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results?</b></p> <p>These service changes will be consulted on during a 12-week public engagement exercise. This public consultation will seek current library user's views and the views of people who do not currently use libraries but may do in the future. The consultation will include an on-line and hard copy survey, several face-to-face focus groups at each library (carried out at different times of day) and on-line sessions for residents and stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Information collected from this consultation will be analysed and included in the final recommendations so decision makers can fully understand the impact on different parts of our community.</p> <p>If changes have an impact on staff there will then be a separate consultation exercise with staff affected, other council services and unions. The results of this consultation exercise will be analysed and included in the final implementation plan.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <p>The Service consulted with all identified groups through a targeted programme of drop-ins sessions, online events and workshops with groups including primary and secondary schools, older people's groups, faith groups, disability forum, carers groups, men's health groups,</p>

	<p>women only groups, library users and non-users and staff. There will be a separate consultation with staff on any changes.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</b> As part of the public consultation, we are ensuring that we actively seek the views of community, voluntary and third sector organisations that represent different community groups. We will be encouraging members of these groups to take part in the consultation. In addition, there will be face-to-face and on-line stakeholder engagement sessions to understand the impact of the proposals on community relations.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b> Consultation carried out with an engagement plan that considered views of all community groups, in addition to sharing the survey and consultation documents by email with a wide network of both internal and external groups and individuals</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts?</b> Each option being considered has a detailed mitigations plan associated with it. The mitigations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking the views of residents and stakeholders about alternative proposals to ensure the service is fit for the future and delivers excellent value for money.</li> <li>• Ensuring that there is a robust and transparent process for deciding on the ratio of physical vs on-line resources purchased through the publications fund.</li> <li>• Ensuring there is a robust and transparent process for purchasing hard copy and eResources to mitigate the impact of publications available to users in a protected group (e.g., English language vs non-English language, children/young people vs adults etc.)</li> <li>• Ensuring there is a robust and transparent process for deciding what activities and events will be hosted by libraries and library staff.</li> <li>• Explore alternative venues for hosting library events and services (e.g., Children’s Centres, schools, pop-up community locations etc) and also opportunities for libraries to co-locate in alternative venues and other services to co-locate in library buildings.</li> <li>• Develop a strong volunteer recruitment and retention scheme to support the delivery of events and services including Home Library Service.</li> <li>• Explore the further use of technology to allow library buildings to be accessible without staff needing to be on-site (e.g., Open+)</li> <li>• Develop a multi-media communications strategy to advertise opening hours, staffing hours and where and when activities will be happening.</li> <li>• Ensure that on-line resources remain available 24/7.</li> <li>• Actively seek out and make bids for external funding streams that will allow libraries to deliver specific projects.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for sharing skills and knowledge with staff from other services/organisations to allow residents to still receive support even if not from specialist library staff. Also, explore opportunities for library staff to adopt new skills and knowledge to allow them to work efficiently with possible co-located services.</li> </ul>

	<p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <p>The 12-week consultation has been completed with a robust engagement plan. All the responses and feedback gathered from the online survey, drop-ins, face to face and online meetings have been considered and have informed the recommendations. A strategic service plan will use the consultation data to ensure the service priorities will focus on identified need. These plans include a commitment to co-design services with users and steps will be taken to reduce negative impacts as much as is possible.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><b>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented?</b> (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented).</p> <p>Continue to collect user data via library management system and feed this to CIPFA as requested to allow us to review our services and their impact in comparison to our most similar local authority library services.</p> <p>We will develop a process (on-line surveys, staff feedback and consultation events) to regularly collect feedback from users, residents, staff and stakeholders. This “light touch” EIA process will take place annually.</p> <p><b><u>Review of EIA after consultation February 2022</u></b></p> <p>In addition to comments in previous sections, the Service will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use of the consultation responses to shape the service delivery plan</li> <li>✓ Any changes to opening hours will be monitored and will be reviewed 12 months after implementation</li> <li>✓ An annual light touch review of the EIA will be carried out following any implementation of changes</li> <li>✓ An EIA will be completed for any staff consultation</li> </ul>

<b>What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply</b>	
<b>Outcome 1: No major change required.</b> The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	✓
<b>Outcome 2: Adjust the policy</b> to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	
<b>Outcome 3: Continue the policy</b> despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
<b>Outcome 4: Stop and rethink</b> the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

### Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date
Complete needs assessment using library data and demographics	All residents including library users and non-users	Liz Jones/Liz McMillan	Completed and used to shape consultation and options paper		Sept 2021	Completed
Carry out public consultation to help shape outcomes and	All residents including library users	Liz Jones/Liz McMillan	Completed and clear picture of needs of library users and non-users		December 2021	Completed Consultation

Appendix B

library review and enable full assessment of impact on Slough Community	and non-users and targeted groups with protected characteristics					complete 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2022. Comprehensive engagement plan for all residents and targeted groups
Hold series of face-to-face consultation drop ins at each library and online events and with stakeholder groups and staff to provide feedback – communications plan	All residents including library users and non-users and targeted groups with protected characteristics	Liz McMillan	Completed with good numbers attending and actively engaging.  Feedback analysed and included in final needs assessment and recommendations for SBC decision makers.		February 2022	<b>Completed</b> Comprehensive engagement plan with users, non-users and targeted groups.
Update EIA following consultation	As above	Liz McMillan/ Liz Jones	EIA reflects the findings from the consultation and mitigates negative impacts on protected groups.		January 2022	<b>Completed</b>
Carry out annual “light touch” EIA with service users to monitor the impact of changes	Library users including targets groups with protected characteristics	Liz McMillan/Patsy To/Alison Beer	Ongoing impacts of changes are understood and used to fine tune and/or further review service delivery.		From Sept 2022	<b>Open</b>

Appendix B

Develop a library outcomes and strategic plan	Internal staff, Directors, Cllrs, all residents	Liz McMillan/Liz Jones	New strategic plan linking clearly to Slough future priorities for library service.		Strategic plan to Cabinet approval March 2022 Implementation Plan for next 5 years	<b>In progress</b>
<p><b>Name: Liz McMillan/ Liz Jones</b></p> <p><b>Signed:</b> </p> <p><b>Date: 20th September 2021</b> <b>Date: review February 2022</b></p>						

# Changes to Slough Library Services Consultation 2021 Needs Assessment

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## Executive summary

This needs assessment has been undertaken to inform the future direction of library provision in Slough and the need to continue to provide a service that is compliant with statutory obligations, is focused on the needs of the community and relevant demographic groups and is delivered within the budget available. The needs assessment outlines the status of Library Service provision for Slough residents, highlighting how we are currently meeting our statutory duty. It also identifies where further improvements or changes are required to ensure the Library Service is relevant, sustainable, affordable, and fit for purpose now, and in the future.

This needs assessment, including any recommendations for change will be presented to Cabinet in October 2021.

There will then follow a public consultation on the assessment and the proposed changes. The results of this consultation will be presented back to Cabinet in February 2022.

## Background

The residents of Slough are served by four main library buildings: The Curve cultural hub in the heart of Slough town centre; and three local community hubs in Britwell, Cippenham and Langley. In addition, there are library services offered in Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham children's centres. In line with the Council's localities model, buildings that have library services also have other services offered from them and other uses. There are no mobile library services offered.

Over 600,000 visits are made to Slough's four main library buildings a year, with residents borrowing just under 500,000 items online and hard copy, and 67,000 attending a group reading activity.

## Reasons why a review is required

Over the past 5 years the library service in Slough has undergone several incremental changes. Staff structures have been altered, new teams introduced, and others deleted (see Appendix A). We have seen the opening of The Curve in the centre of the town, and we are currently expanding the Britwell Hub which includes a library service along with a brand-new medical centre (opening early 2022). Of course, the impact of Covid-19 on how we deliver library services has also given us a reason to pause and reflect on how we make sure we meet the needs of current and future library users for the coming 5 to 10 years.

Over the same time frame, Slough Borough Council has reviewed and updated its strategic aims and objectives (see [here](#) for information about Slough 2040 Vision). The council has embedded a locality model for all services, moving away from delivering services centrally from a service-specific building to a model of partnership working from a range of locations close to where the need is. Services in each area are being tailored to the needs of the community, we encourage communities to seek out alternative sources of support (often from within the communities themselves) and to access advice and guidance from the council on-line wherever possible. The council is moving away from a model of directly delivering a broad range of services, to directly delivering focused services and enabling other services to be delivered by partners.

The overarching strategic aims for our new library service will reflect these wider aspirations. We need to ensure that in the future our library service is financially sustainable, based on a locality-based model, delivering a range of services in partnership with others and making full use of the available technology.

During 2021 it became clear that the council was facing extreme financial challenges that resulted in the issue of a Section 114 Notice. The notice was issued because the council did not have enough income and reserves to pay for its planned spending. All council departments are now looking at how they deliver services to the public to ensure that best value for money is being achieved.

Nationally, many local authorities have reviewed the library services that they offer. Other councils have reduced the number of library-only buildings, increased and improved working in partnership with the education sector and voluntary and community groups and made best use of technology. Slough will review and refresh its library service to reflect best practice from elsewhere.

These factors mean that we must make sure our library service is fit for purpose in a changing society by asking ourselves a range of questions including: -

- How can we keep the best parts of the alternative ways of working that were adopted due to Covid?
- What parts of our more traditional ways of working do we need to adapt and build on and how can we do this cost effectively?
- How do we make sure our library service meets the needs of our residents including current library users and future or potential library users?

### **Making any changes**

The library service is run and managed by the local authority. Library services are provided under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, section 10 of which places a duty on the library authority to provide a: “comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. Appendix B provides more details of this duty.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) has produced guidance for councils to refer to when deciding if the library service they offer complies with the law (further information and copies of the guidance can be found [here](#)). The guidance makes clear that a comprehensive and efficient library service will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. It is the role of councillors and local officials to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their services, but this must be done:

- In consultation with their communities
- Through analysis of evidence around local needs
- In accordance with their statutory duties (these being wider than the specific duty set out above and including equality and best value duties)

Local authorities should be able to demonstrate:

- There should be plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including projections of need)
- Consideration of a range of options (including alternative financing, governance, or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area
- A rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposals. A council must be able to evidence the link between the design and delivery of its library service and identified local need.

In 2016 DCMS (via the Libraries Taskforce) published “Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021” (see [here](#) ).

In “Libraries Deliver” the Library Taskforce describe libraries as vital community hubs. They bring people together and give them access to the services and support they need to help them live better. The report lays out an ambition for everyone to choose to:

- ✓ Use libraries because they see clear benefits from doing so.
- ✓ Understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what’s available to them.
- ✓ Be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills, and information they need to improve their quality of life.
- ✓ Receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world.

To achieve these ambitions the Libraries Taskforce identified seven outcomes that are critical to local individuals and communities and that library services should contribute to at a local level:

1. cultural and creative enrichment
2. increased reading and literacy
3. improved digital access and literacy
4. helping everyone achieve their full potential
5. healthier and happier lives
6. greater prosperity
7. stronger, more resilient communities

To deliver the aspirations, set out in the “Ambitions for Libraries” document, local councils are encouraged to address the following principles when reviewing and considering their library service:

- Ensure the legal requirements are met
- Understand local needs and let these shape service delivery
- Focus on public benefits and deliver a high-quality experience for the customer
- Take evidence-based decisions
- Support the delivery of consistent England-wide core library offers
- Promote innovation, enterprise and partnership working
- Make sure public funds are used effectively and efficiently.

Library services in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland are also supported by the Arts Council and by “Libraries Connected”.

## **Arts Council**

The Arts Council role is to develop and advocate for libraries. They do not have any statutory responsibilities for libraries; however, they support and encourage library development under four key headings (see [here](#))

1. Place the library as the hub of the community
2. Make the most of digital technology and creative media
3. Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable
4. Deliver the right skills for those who work in libraries

## **Libraries Connected**

Libraries Connected is the sector support organisation for libraries partly funded by Arts Council. The organisation works to promote the value of libraries, broker national partnership, share best practice and drive innovation throughout the sector.

Key to library support is the [Universal Library Offers](#) which are critical to a 21<sup>st</sup> century library service:

Information and Digital – ensure that local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online.

Reading - build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering, and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.

Health and Wellbeing - support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage, and connect.

Culture and Creativity - enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries.

Whenever a local council is planning and delivering services it must have regard to its wider legal obligations, including the Equality Act 2010 and specifically its public sector equality duty, its Best Value Duty, the Localism Act duties, and the Human Rights Act 1998. This means the council must consider how best to use its limited resources to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and to consider how different people could be affected by the service and make sure that services are accessible to everyone and meets the needs of different people. A separate, detailed Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is available at Appendix C.

## **Who lives in Slough?** (See Appendix D for details by ward)

Age and sex profile: 2011 Census tells us that approximately 150,000 people of all ages live in the borough of Slough. Our population is significantly younger than the England average (our median age is 34.4 years compared with 39.8 years in England). About 10% of our population is aged 65 and over compared to the England figure of approximately 19%. Just over half of our residents are male (50.7%) and just under are female (49.3%).

Ethnic diversity: Slough is one of the most diverse areas in the UK. No single culture or ethnic group is dominant but over 100 languages are spoken.

Disability: In the 2011 Census, 9,322 Slough residents between the ages of 16-64 reported living with a physical disability. Over 1,350 people were also reported to be living with a severe mental health problem. There are an estimated 2,590 people living with sight loss in Slough and 2,696 adults under the age of 65 live with a moderate to severe hearing impairments (more have a profound impairment). Hearing impairments in younger adults in Slough is expected to increase by 20% over the next ten years. Just over 4% of over 65s in Slough have been recorded by their GPs as living with dementia.

Employment: In 2020 the Office for National Statistics estimates that 75% of Slough adults are economically active, compared to 81.6% across the Southeast of UK (and compared to 79.1% across the whole UK). In 2019 the ONS estimates that 10.7% of households in Slough are “workless”, a similar rate for the Southeast (10.2%) and lower than the UK average of 13.9% (see [here](#) for more information).

Education: In 2020 the Office for National Statistics estimates that just over 6% of working age adults in Slough have no formal qualifications, high when compared to other areas in the Southeast of the UK (4.9%). Local people have a lower rate of the higher level qualifications too (NVQ4 and above) at 41.5% compared to both the Southeast (45%) and whole UK (43%) (see [here](#) for more information).

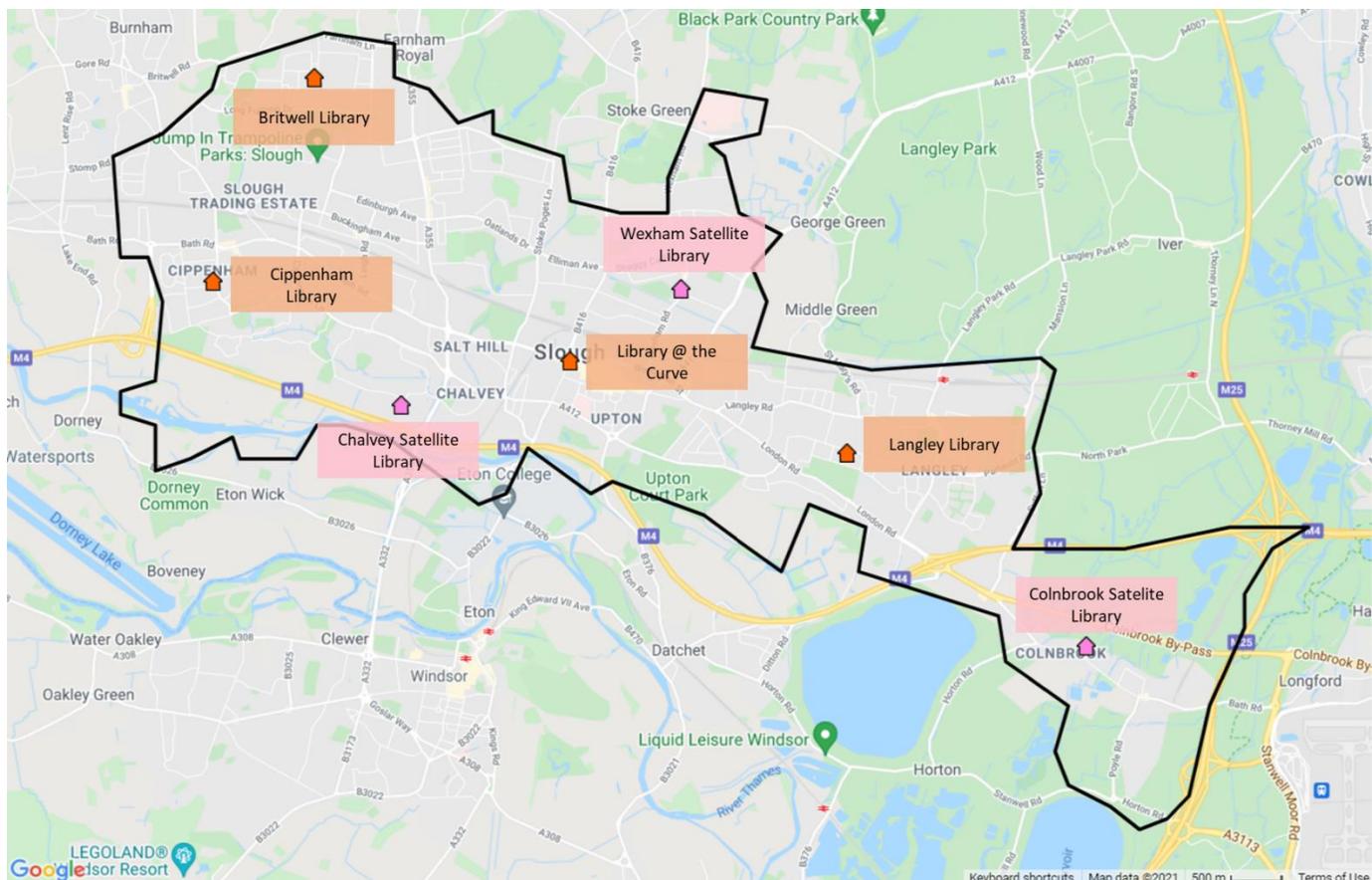
Multiple deprivation: Index of Multiple Deprivation combines seven types of deprivation into a single measure (see [here](#) for more information). This allows us to compare areas with each other across a range of needs and vulnerabilities. Slough has neighbourhoods where there is severe deprivation ranking in the lowest 20% in England. These include areas in Chalvey, Britwell, Elliman and Colnbrook & Poyle wards (see [here](#) for details). The least deprived wards are Langley St Mary’s and Cippenham Green. In general Slough has a higher percentage of children living in poverty compared to the England average and 24% of its older people are living in income deprivation. Poverty, social isolation, and ill-health indicators are all higher than the England average (see [here](#) for more information).

Across England, about ¼ of households have no access to a private car so rely on other forms of transport to move about. In Slough the rate of households without a car is below this England average and sits at just over 23%.

## Current library service in Slough

Currently there are 7 buildings with library services within them. Our main, central library building is at The Curve and our other three main library buildings are at Britwell Hub, Langley library and Cippenham library. Our four main library buildings equate to one library building per 37,385 people. This is a lower number of libraries per population compared to the ratio in areas considered most like Slough (see Appendix E for Slough public libraries report from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy [CIPFA] including information about most similar groups).

The three other buildings where library services are delivered are at Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham Children's Centres. These buildings are subject to a children's centre review. See the map below for locations of buildings where library services are currently delivered from.



The library service in Slough offers free access to:

- Physical books for all ages and reading abilities. There are publications suitable for babies, young children, teens, and adults. Books are available in English and foreign languages and for those with sensory disabilities.
- Specialist “Bookstart” packs for babies and toddlers (see [here](#) for more details)
- Home Library service (see [here](#) for more details)
- Downloadable eBooks and eAudio books for children and adults.
- Online versions of newspapers, magazines, local history and learning resources.

- The internet and Wi-Fi connections through public computers and using personal devices.
- Activities and events for children, families and adults including music and rhyme times, story sessions, the national [Summer Reading Challenge](#) Reading Friends scheme, [BBC Novels that Shaped the World](#) and virtual reality experiences both in-person and online.
- Dedicated study space at The Curve.

Our library services also offer volunteering opportunities, spaces for community use, relaxed seating areas to encourage informal socialising and/or quiet reading, visit to schools and nurseries and staff able to guide people through the modern digital landscape.

**The Curve library** is open 59 hours a week over 6 days (not open on Sundays or Public Holidays).

**Britwell library** is open 48 hours a week over 6 days (not open on Sundays or Public Holidays).

**Cippenham library** is open 48 hours a week over 6 days (not open on Sundays or Public Holidays).

**Langley library** is open 48 hours a week over 6 days (not open on Sundays or Public Holidays).

See Appendix F for details of opening hours of each library.

The table below shows the number of residents living within 1.5 miles of each of our library buildings (2019 population estimates). The children’s centres with library services are shaded blue.

	Residents aged 0 – 15	Residents aged 16 – 64	Residents aged 65+	Total number of residents living within 1.5 miles of the library*
The Curve	9,241	23,100	3,009	35,350
Britwell	7,066	15,477	2,406	24,949
Langley	8,390	20,309	3,796	32,495
Cippenham	5,159	12,403	1,900	19,462
Chalvey Grove	4,074	8,963	1,386	14,423
Wexham	4,687	11,215	1,846	17,748
Vicarage Way	2,917	7,806	1,112	11,835

\*Residents often live within more than one catchment area, so totals add up to more than population

This means that over 80% of Slough’s residents currently live within 1.5 miles of a library building, although some of the buildings offer services targeted specifically at young children and families.

#### Publication’s budget

In 2016 the Press Association estimated (based on FOI requests to every council in UK) that spending on library publications per resident ranged from 5p per head to £1.62 per head. Based on 2020/21 budgets and population estimates, Slough spent £1.47 per head and the median spend per head of population in the UK is 78p per head (Appendix G).

Data from 2018 CIPFA report (Appendix E) suggests Slough libraries spend £1,293 on publications per 1,000 population and this is significantly higher than the councils in the comparator group (average of £982 per 1,000 population). This level of spending puts Slough at 26th highest out of a total of 125 library services across the UK (UK average spend is £1,042 per 1,000 population).

### Supporting outcomes for residents

The table below outlines how Slough’s current library offer supports the 7 outcomes described by the Libraries Taskforce.

<b>Taskforce outcome</b>	<b>Slough libraries offer</b>	<b>Customer outcome</b>
<b>Cultural and creative enrichment</b>	<p>Art exhibitions &amp; activities for children, young people &amp; adults (example: Alexander Sadlo exhibition and National Poetry Day activities)</p> <p>Music events &amp; activities for children, young people &amp; adults (example: Story &amp; Rhyme Time and Little Listeners classical music performance)</p> <p>Local author showcases providing a platform for writers to share their work with an audience and network with each other.</p> <p>Author &amp; poet talks and events (example: Slough Summer Reading Challenge Ambassadors – Berkshire writers delivered events to inspire children and provided motivational videos and quotes encouraging them to join the challenge)</p> <p>The library service is an Arts Award Supporter, Artsmark Partner, and member of Slough Cultural Education Partnership</p> <p>Animation workshops</p> <p>Theatre workshops and performances</p> <p>Local history information and resources.</p>	<p>Increased participation in local community activities.</p> <p>Increased exposure to social networks and increased interaction with social networks.</p> <p>Decreased loneliness and isolation.</p> <p>Improved motivation and confidence to take up social, employment, training, or skills-based opportunities.</p> <p>Opportunities for residents to share skills with the community</p> <p>More likely to volunteer.</p> <p>Providing support for partners to deliver cultural experiences for young people</p> <p>Supporting the local creative sector to thrive</p> <p>Inspiration and encouragement for young people to take up creative careers.</p>
<b>Increased reading and literacy</b>	General & specialist book collections.	Improved literacy skills for children, young people and adults.

	<p>Library at Home service.</p> <p>Targeted literacy programmes.</p> <p>Adult literacy support.</p> <p>Reading groups for all ages &amp; abilities</p> <p>Bookstart gifting scheme</p> <p>Story and rhyme time sessions.</p> <p>Reading and literacy events (example: Summer Reading Challenge and Reading Friends)</p> <p>Library tours and presentations for adult learners</p> <p>Reading recommendations (online and in person) and displays</p> <p>Accessible stock in a range of formats (example: digital, audio, multi-sensory, graphic novels, Pictures to Share)</p> <p>Diverse and inclusive stock collections.</p> <p>Hosting class visits to support the school curriculum.</p>	<p>Increased enjoyment of reading for children, young people, and adults.</p> <p>Improved confidence in reading. Instil a love of words, reading and literacy for babies and young children.</p> <p>Promotes and supports development of children's speech and language</p> <p>Expanded range of parent/child bonding skills by using reading aloud.</p> <p>Staff modelling good practice with sharing books and providing advice and recommendations to encourage and enable families to select appropriate books</p> <p>Children supported and inspired to explore books and make choices.</p>
<p><b>Improved digital access and literacy</b></p>	<p>Delivery of Adult Learning courses from libraries.</p> <p>Staff act as Digital Champions to guide residents in how to access and use digital platforms.</p> <p>Free use of computers and access to Wi-Fi.</p> <p>Interactive whiteboards at The Curve</p> <p>Children's Coding club</p> <p>Access to Hopster early learning app</p> <p>On-line library service offering eBooks, eAudio and eNewspapers/magazines.</p>	<p>Increased confidence in using digital platforms.</p> <p>Increased comfort using SBC website instead of calling Contact Centre or officers directly.</p> <p>Increased confidence to look for work which requires digital literacy.</p> <p>Improved ability to look for work on-line.</p> <p>Enabling independent access to services.</p>

	<p>Showcasing digital technologies (example: virtual reality, augmented reality, and 3D printing)</p> <p>Self-service kiosks and online access to library accounts</p> <p>Free access to online learning and research resources</p> <p>Use of social media to connect and engage with our audience and raise awareness of our services</p> <p>“Magic Table” specialist equipment providing enriching and stimulating activities for people with disabilities and people with dementia.</p>	
<p><b>Helping everyone achieve their full potential</b></p>	<p>Offering reading &amp; literacy support.</p> <p>Signposting to health &amp; wellbeing services/providers.</p> <p>Learning, skills &amp; employability services offered from library buildings.</p> <p>Free access to computers and Wi-Fi to open digital landscape for residents.</p> <p>Quiet study spaces.</p> <p>Volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>Providing advice and resources to learning partners</p>	<p>Increased participation in local community activities.</p> <p>Increased exposure to social networks and increased interaction with social networks.</p> <p>Decreased loneliness and isolation.</p> <p>Improved motivation and confidence to take up social, employment, training, or skills-based opportunities.</p> <p>More likely to volunteer.</p> <p>Improved motivation to study, carry out self-directed learning and research.</p>
<p><b>Healthier and happier lives</b></p>	<p>Offer safe &amp; welcoming community spaces available without booking and free at point of use.</p> <p>Specialist book formats.</p> <p>Self-help book collections.</p> <p>Home Library service.</p> <p>Social activities and groups.</p> <p>Health promotion activities.</p>	<p>Increased participation in local community activities.</p> <p>Increased exposure to social networks and increased interaction with social networks.</p> <p>Decreased loneliness and isolation.</p> <p>Improved motivation and confidence to take up social, employment, training, or skills-based opportunities.</p>

	<p>Dementia and Autism friendly libraries.</p> <p>Some library staff trained to communicate using Makaton.</p> <p>Quiet study spaces available.</p> <p>Volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>Staff Making Every Contact Count trained and provide accurate and appropriate signposting</p> <p>Opportunities to get physically active (example: seated exercise, seated yoga and story dancers)</p>	<p>More likely to volunteer.</p> <p>Improved motivation to study, carry out self-directed learning and research.</p> <p>Residents better informed and enabled to make healthy lifestyle choices</p> <p>Reading increases wellbeing, promotes relaxation, improves confidence and self-esteem, and reduces cognitive decline</p> <p>Story times contribute to positive maternal mental health and wellbeing by providing structure, belonging and routine, reducing stress and increasing confidence and developing social and support networks.</p>
<b>Greater prosperity</b>	<p>Adult learning and skills courses delivered from libraries.</p> <p>Staff act as Digital Champions to guide residents in how to access and use digital platforms.</p> <p>Range of social and wellbeing activities.</p> <p>Free use of computers and access to Wi-Fi.</p> <p>Study spaces.</p> <p>Volunteering opportunities.</p>	<p>Increased motivation to learn and/or look for work.</p> <p>Increased motivation and opportunity to study/carry out research.</p> <p>Increased confidence and motivation and decreased isolation and loneliness increasing likelihood of securing employment.</p> <p>Increased confidence in accessing digital platforms to look for work/training and more likely to apply for jobs requiring digital literacy.</p>
<b>Stronger, more resilient communities</b>	<p>Range of reading &amp; literacy support (formal and informal).</p> <p>Free health and wellbeing reading resources.</p> <p>Staff offering signposting to range of local services.</p> <p>Staff are digital champions encouraging users to be digitally literate.</p> <p>Welcoming and supportive staff and safe, welcoming, accessible and comfortable</p>	<p>Increased participation in local community activities.</p> <p>Increased exposure to social networks and increased interaction with social networks.</p> <p>Decreased loneliness and isolation.</p> <p>Improved motivation and confidence to take up social, employment, training, or skills-based opportunities.</p> <p>More likely to volunteer.</p>

	spaces where people can feel connected to their community.  Libraries promote community events (example: Great Get Together and Fun Day)	Improved motivation to study, carry out self-directed learning and research.  Reading builds empathy – a vital social and emotional skill that increases tolerance and understanding of others.
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### Who currently uses Slough libraries?

To understand how the libraries are currently being used, we have looked at data we have about:

- The number of items borrowed at each library<sup>1</sup>
- The number of people visiting each library building<sup>2</sup>
- The number of active borrowers<sup>3</sup>
- The number of hours public computers are used<sup>4</sup>
- The numbers of people attending activities and events<sup>5</sup>

Across the UK how libraries are used has changed over the past decade. There has been a steady downward trend in borrowing physical books, and in people visiting a library for a variety of reasons including accessing the internet, attending an activity, meetings, and socialising with other people, and using a range of e-resources (Appendix E). Slough's library usage pattern follows these general trends. However, when we compare ourselves to other library services in the 12 most similar authorities (Appendix E), Slough has the third highest number of visits and books borrowed.

The opening of The Curve in 2016 increased the number of visits to our "central library" compared to the library it replaced (located less than 50 meters away but in a 1960s building). The Curve attracts 44% of overall library visits and 54% of all active borrowers take items from here (see Appendix I).

### Items borrowed from each library

In Slough (2019/20) just under 500,000 physical books were borrowed/renewed from all our libraries and 70% of these were from our specialised children's sections of libraries. In addition, over 100,000 eBooks and eNewspapers/magazines were borrowed. In 2018/19 (most recent CIPFA data) we were in the top 3 of our 12 most similar councils for items borrowed.

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<sup>1</sup> Number of physical books and eResources borrowed and/or renewed via a library membership card. E-Resources include eBooks, eAudio, eNewspapers/magazines.

<sup>2</sup> Number of people visiting statutory library location for any reason, captured by electronic counters at entrance/exit doors.

<sup>3</sup> A library member who has visited and borrowed/renewed at least once in a 12-month period.

<sup>4</sup> Number of hours public computers are booked to use.

<sup>5</sup> Number of adults and children attending a specific event organised by library staff.

However, the total number of items available for people to borrow across all our libraries is 150,902 and this puts us 8<sup>th</sup> in our most similar group. The average book stock levels across the group are 1,127 per 1,000 population and Slough's level is 1,012.

Slough is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> highest in terms of total number of books purchased for the service and is second for the number of children's books purchased. In 2017 just over 16% of the publications budget was spent on digital materials. This rose to 26% in 19/20 (£164,690 spent on physical books and £60,500 on digital resources). In 2020/21, with libraries in lockdown, spending on digital materials in Slough rose to 51% of the overall publications budget (£110,274 spent on physical books and £117,983 on digital resources).

Our internal finance systems demonstrate that the average cost for libraries of purchasing a physical book is £8 compared to an average eBook cost of £28. Bulk purchasing discounts for libraries are only currently available for hard copy items and not for eBooks.

A recent report from Libraries Connected highlights (pg. 5 Appendix J) the impact on publications budgets of the cost of digital borrowing. In July 2021 they estimated that the costs of digital borrowing added at least 25% to the cost of lending for libraries. Digital content can be an option to supplement physical resources but are too expensive to fully replace hard-copy publications.

The impact of Covid-19 was dramatic in relation to items being borrowed from Slough libraries. From March 2020 to June 2021 all our libraries were either completely closed or only open on a limited basis. In 2020/21 the number of eResources borrowed/renewed rose from 100,000 items in the previous year to almost 300,000 items. Over the same period the number of physical items issued or renewed (online, or in person) dropped from 500,000 to 54,350. This demonstrates that many of our customers were able to shift from using physical libraries to using on-line services.

Before and during lockdown, The Curve remained the busiest for item lending/renewing accounting for 41% of all items issued. Langley accounts for 24% of all items lent, Cippenham accounts for 21% and Britwell only 14%.

Most items (70%) borrowed across all 4 main library buildings are those for babies, children, and young people (100% of satellite library issues are for children and young people).

#### Number of people visiting each library building

Over 2019/20 the number of people visiting our main libraries increased by 9% compared to the previous year (to a total of 629,922 visits). However, in 2017/18 the total number of visits per year was significantly higher at 705,461.

Our data does not allow us to break down why people visit our libraries or how many individual visitors we had (i.e., we are unable to identify repeat visitors). Cross referencing with data from people attending activities, we know that 67,000 of the 629,922 visits were made to attend an event or activity. Total visits to The Curve will also include people who are visiting the Registrar service, attending a non-library event including exhibitions and productions at The Venue.

The CIPFA comparisons show that in 2018/19 Slough had 4,000 library visits per 1,000 residents which ranks us 3<sup>rd</sup> in our comparator group. The average across our most similar councils was 3,326 library visits per 1,000 residents. The cost per visit for Slough libraries in 19/20 was low at £2.18 compared to the average across the similar group of council libraries of £3.08.

Some of our library users are unable to access our physical library buildings or our on-line offer (due to age and/or infirmity). To cater for this specific group of users we offer a Home Library Service. Volunteers take library services to residents in their homes where they can borrow, return, and renew items. However, the rate of housebound library users (those who access the library via the Home Library Service) is low in Slough (0.1 per 1,000 population, the second lowest in our CIPFA group) compared to our similar areas. The average for our group is 0.9 per 1,000 and is over 2.5 per 1,000 residents in Reading.

We recognise that this is an area of service delivery that can be improved and expanded to benefit the library service but also to spread the benefits of volunteering to residents.

### Number of active borrowers

An “active borrower” is defined as a library member who has borrowed or renewed from a library at least once in a 12-month period. The number of active borrowers in Slough has followed the national trend and declined steadily over the past three years from 20,457 in 2017/18 to 17,347 in 2019/20<sup>6</sup>. However, compared to our CIPFA peers, Slough performs relatively well and is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in this group for active borrowers. Just over half (53%) of the active borrowers in Slough are aged under 18 (this detail is not captured by CIPFA so no comparisons can be made).

54% of active borrowers were from The Curve, 20% were from Langley, 15% from Cippenham and 11% from Britwell.

The table below shows the percentage spread of active borrowers from each library from each ward. The wards highlighted in red are those where a main library is situated. For each library the top 3 wards for active borrowers are highlighted in green.

	<b>The Curve library</b>	<b>Britwell library</b>	<b>Cippenham library</b>	<b>Langley library</b>
<b>WARD</b>				
Baylis and Stoke	8.3%	4.3%	1.6%	0.4%
Britwell and Northborough	3.6%	52.4%	5.3%	0.5%
Central	14%	1.4%	0.8%	5.4%
Chalvey	14.4%	1.4%	6.5%	1.0%
Cippenham Green	3.3%	1.7%	45.0%	0.6%
Cippenham Meadows	6.9%	1.3%	20.5%	0.8%
Colnbrook with Poyle	1.9%	0.5%	0.0%	7.7%
Elliman	10.4%	1.8%	0.9%	1.1%
Farnham	7.2%	17.5%	2.7%	0.7%
Foxborough	1.3%	0.0%	0.2%	7.8%
Haymill and Lynch Hill	2.7%	15.2%	14.1%	0.5%

<sup>6</sup> This is the number of users who have borrowed at least once in the 12-month period as shown by transactions against individual membership cards.

Langley Kedermister	4.2%	0.6%	0.5%	33.8%
Langley St Mary's	3.7%	0.0%	0.4%	24.2%
Upton	9.7%	0.9%	0.5%	14.4%
Wexham Lea	9.1%	1.7%	1.0%	1.3%

The second table (below) highlights the age profile of active borrowers for each library.

	2018/19				2019/20			
	The Curve	Britwell library	Cippenham library	Langley library	The Curve	Britwell library	Cippenham library	Langley library
<b>0-10</b>	2,159 21.4%	1,114 31.7%	925 37%	673 36%	2,395 26%	1,395 40%	1,062 42%	803 43%
<b>11-13</b>	1,383 13%	637 18%	377 15%	349 18.6%	1,188 13%	611 17%	355 14%	333 18%
<b>14-17</b>	1,074 10.6%	403 11.5%	226 9%	225 12%	819 9%	277 8%	179 7%	174 9.5%
<b>18-59</b>	5,028 49.9%	1,247 35.6%	865 35%	584 31%	4,309 47%	1,117 32%	779 31%	489 26.4%
<b>60+</b>	426 4.2%	103 3%	104 4%	45 2.4%	442 5%	113 3%	125 5%	51 3%
<b>Total</b>	10,070	3,504	2,497	1,876	9,153	3,513	2,500	1,850

The number of active borrowers using our 3 community libraries has remained static. However, there has been an almost 10% reduction in the number of active borrowers making use of The Curve. This may be an effect of Covid lockdowns on the town centre; active borrowers using The Curve may have been using the location because of passing-by when they are making use of other town centre facilities.

#### Use of public computers

Across the 4 main libraries we offer 62 public computers. These are free to use for residents and can be booked for 2-hour sessions (the average session length is 1 hour). All the computers have access to the Internet and Microsoft Office programmes (all upgraded to Windows 10 in 2020). Only library members can book computer sessions.

**The Curve** has 37 public computers available across the three floors of the building.

**Langley library** has 10 public computers.

**Britwell library** has 9 public computers.

**Cippenham library** has 6 public computers.

In 2018/19 63,896 hours were booked and of those 71% were at the Curve, 11% at Langley, 8.5% at Cippenham and 9.5% at Britwell. Over 66,000 computer hours were booked in 2019/20. Of these 67% were booked at The Curve, 13.5% at Langley, 10% at Cippenham and 10% at Britwell.

Library members can print documents at all 4 libraries for a small fee (30 pence for A4 black and white). Income from printing in 2018/19 was £19,636 which was 42% of the total library income for that year. In 2019/20 the print income was £22,577 which was 45% of the total income received for all libraries for that year. The Curve in 2018/19 made up 58% of that print income, this dropped to 48% in 2019/20.

Free, unlimited Wi-Fi is also available at all libraries. This allows visitors to use their own equipment in the locations and print from their own devices.

The CIPFA comparison with our most similar councils shows that the number of publicly available computers (called electronic workstations by CIPFA) per 100,000 residents is about average for the group in Slough. We have 56.3 computers per 100,000 residents and the group average is 60 per 100,000.

#### Number attending events and activities

Approximately 67,000 visits to our main library buildings in 2019/20 were primarily to attend an event or activity. These events included:

- Regular, weekly Story and Rhyme sessions for babies and young children
- Lego clubs (at The Curve)
- Summer Reading Challenge activities
- Introduction to “Bookstart” packs and activities
- Author talks
- Poetry evenings
- Reading groups/Book Clubs
- Get Creative and Fun Palace events for children and young people
- Seated exercise programmes
- Choir evenings

Anecdotal feedback from participants describes how these events have helped to reduce feeling of isolation and loneliness. Users comment about how their mental and physical health and wellbeing has been improved by coming to library-based events (Appendix H).

During 2019/20 67,609 adults and children attended library events and activities. Of these, 39% were events at The Curve, 21% were at Cippenham Library, 18% were at Langley and 13% at Britwell.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, Slough library service moved these activities and events on-line. In general, take up of these on-line resources was low compared to face-to-face activities of previous years. An example of the impact of moving events to on-line only was the national Summer Reading Challenge:

- In 2019 (pre Covid) 3,604 children in Slough took part in the challenge offered from all 4 main library buildings.
- In 2020 (during Covid lockdown) only 200 children in Slough took part in the on-line only challenge
- In 2021 (Covid lockdown restrictions lifting) 1,980 Slough children participated in the face-to-face challenge offered from the 4 main libraries.

Supporting our communities through face-to-face events will remain an important part of our service delivery. A challenge we will rise to is developing a programme of library service engagement within our localities model which may mean taking these programmes out of libraries and into other community settings.

## Volunteering at Slough libraries

Slough libraries offer opportunities for volunteering. Volunteers help paid staff deliver services and individual volunteers gain useful skills and health and wellbeing benefits (see [here](#)).

Currently (2021), Slough libraries have 21 volunteers; 17 are general volunteers and 4 specialise in offering a [Home Library Service](#). Our general volunteers offer meeting and greeting at library buildings and offer support at events. In addition to this cohort, we also have several seasonal volunteers who offer their time at specific times of the year. Usually this is school-aged young people completing their Duke of Edinburgh challenge.

Recruiting and retaining volunteers has proved challenging in the past. The Library Service used to have a Volunteer Officer role, but this was removed as part of a council-wide transformation programme in April 2021. The challenge to attract volunteers is not restricted to Slough. Information about our most similar councils reported by CIPFA show that approximately 6% of total hours worked in Slough libraries were worked by volunteers. The average for our group is only 5.6% putting us slightly higher than average.

## Recommendations

Based on the issues discussed in the needs assessment the following recommendations are being made.

### Ensure that library services are affordable and deliver value for money

According to CIPFA, Slough libraries spend on materials is £1,293 per 1,000 population and this is significantly higher than the comparator group average of £982 per 1,000 population. This level of spending puts Slough at 26<sup>th</sup> highest out of a total of 125 library services across the UK (UK average spend is £1,042 per 1,000 population).

The comparisons on staffing costs in the CIPFA report are not as useful because since the data collection the number of full-time equivalent staff in Slough library service has fallen by 25% (from 28.78 FTE to 22.22 FTE). This will place the revenue expenditure on staff per 1,000 population below the comparator group average of £5,437 per 1,000 population.

The CIPFA data for building costs for Slough is missing some information so can't be used as a comparison to similar councils. However, Slough libraries spend £125,900 per annum on building costs (for Langley and Cippenham libraries as these are the only stand-alone library buildings).

The council should consider options to improve value for money in terms of the publications budget which should not exclude the option to reduce the budget from £220,500 per annum to between £117,000 and £147,000 per annum to bring us in line with the average spend across the UK (lower figure is taken from 2016 FOI costs for UK and higher figure is from CIPFA comparator group).

In addition, although staff numbers have declined since 2018 there is still scope for the council to assess whether expanded volunteering and embedding the shift (accelerated through Covid lockdown) to digital and self-serve customer service could allow for a reduction in dedicated staff in all library buildings at all times. Part of this review will need to consider the opportunities for services and their staff to co-locate meaning that staff could be more multidisciplinary and deliver a range of support and guidance services for customers.

### Ensure library services are accessible and meet local needs

As discussed in recommendation 1 above, there is an opportunity to review the current publications budget as part of the move to ensure the library service is still affordable.

Over the Covid lockdown period the volume of on-line lending activity in Slough rose by 300%, demonstrating a willingness from some customers to move to a predominantly on-line service. However, the Library Connected research suggests that moving to a totally on-line offer can make services less affordable. In addition, the participation in events was significantly lower when they were exclusively offered on-line compared to both face-to-face only and a mix of on-line and face-to-face.

In light of this it is recommended that Slough focusses on planning and delivering a hybrid model of service delivery for both material resources and event delivery.

As mentioned in recommendation 1 there is opportunity to expand the volunteer cohort in libraries which would be a critical resource to allow events and activities to be held in face-to-face settings. The activities on offer need to be carefully planned to serve all members of our community and be explicit in how they will support current library users but also how they will attract new users to the library service. One specific aspect of volunteering which needs to be expanded is the provision and marketing of the Home Library Service to bring the library into the homes of residents who are unable to go to a building.

It is also recommended that the library service reviews the range of locations where different lending and outreach activities could be offered from. An expansion to beyond the traditional library setting into more/different Children's Centres, locality hubs, community buildings, health settings, leisure centres etc could result in an increase in library users and an expansion of the range of communities using and engaging with this important resource.

Support and promote good use of technology including digitalisation of services where appropriate.

Slough Borough Council is moving to a general service delivery model of "digital by default". This move will include the provision of library services, but also creates an opportunity for the library service to be a valued gateway into the digital world for customers who are reluctant to embrace this new technology.

This needs assessment highlights that libraries currently play an important role in promoting eResources whether this is by on-line book borrowing, or by running coding clubs for young people or helping adults access the Internet for free. Libraries in Slough are an important resource to ensure residents are not digitally excluded.

It is recommended that this role undertaken by the library service is enhanced. The council should ensure that there is adequate IT equipment available for residents in community locations, including at libraries. Staff and volunteers across the borough in a range of organisations, including libraries, should be able to provide first level guidance and support to a resident who might be struggling to enter the digital world. Libraries and services delivering post-16 skills and training need to build upon existing links to ensure they work effectively together to promote and deliver digital skills opportunities for residents.



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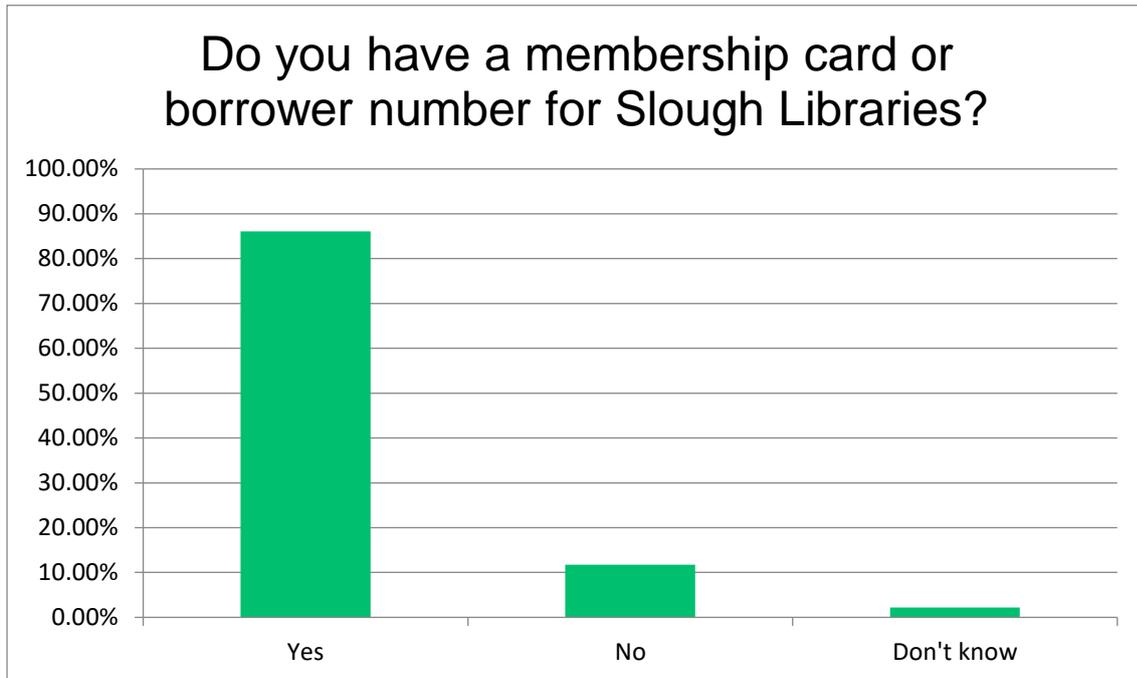
**Library consultation survey results**

2499 on-line surveys plus 36 paper copies (results included in this analysis)

**Q1. Library membership**

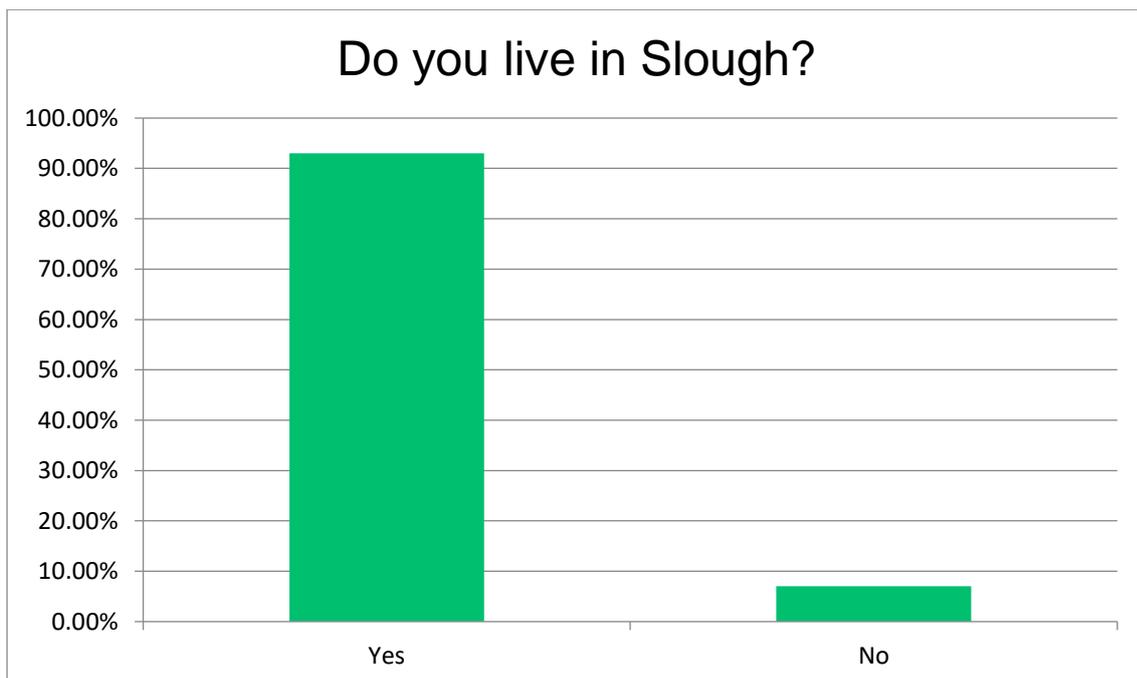
Over 86% (2,175) of respondents were currently members of the library. However, the drop-in sessions and workshops did not specifically capture data about membership from participants.

Just over 11% of respondents were not current library members.



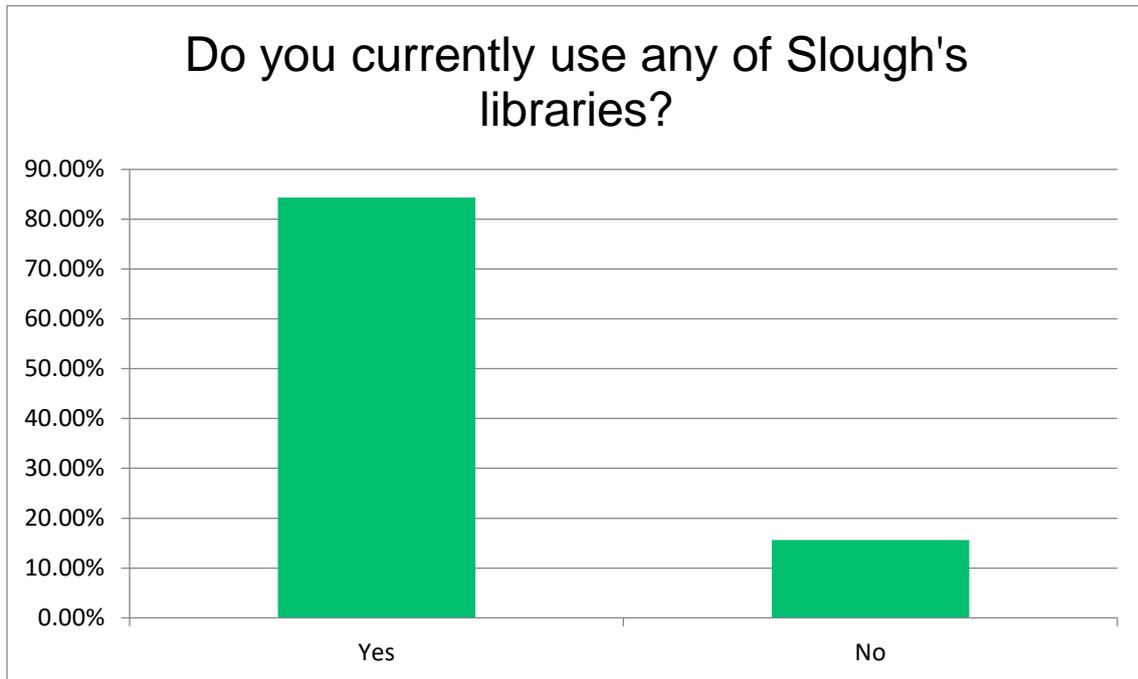
**Q2. Slough resident**

Almost 93% (2,347) of respondents live in Slough.



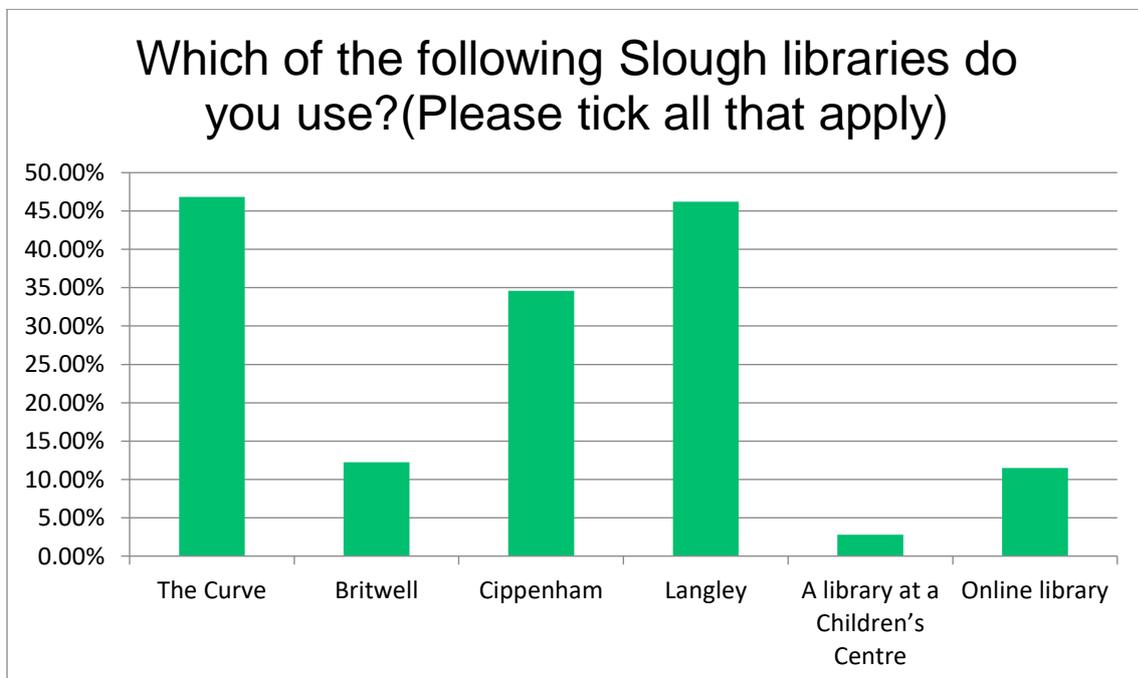
**Do you use Slough library service?**

Approximately 84% of survey respondents do currently use the library service, but just over 15% of respondents are not current users.

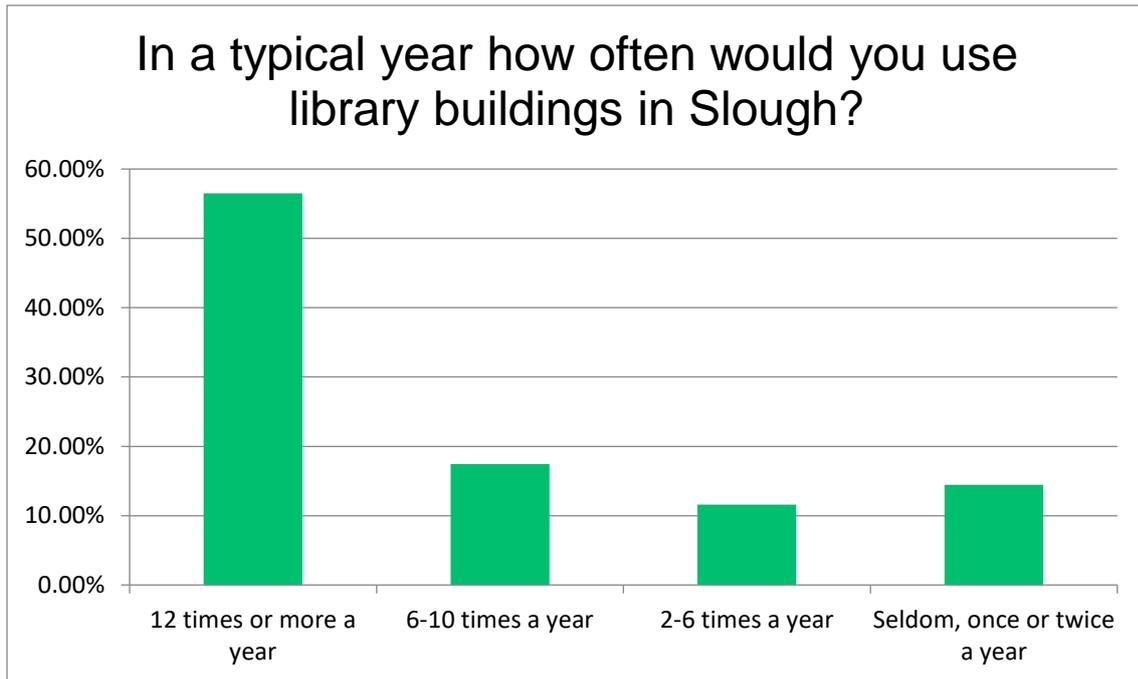


**Q4. Which libraries do you currently use?**

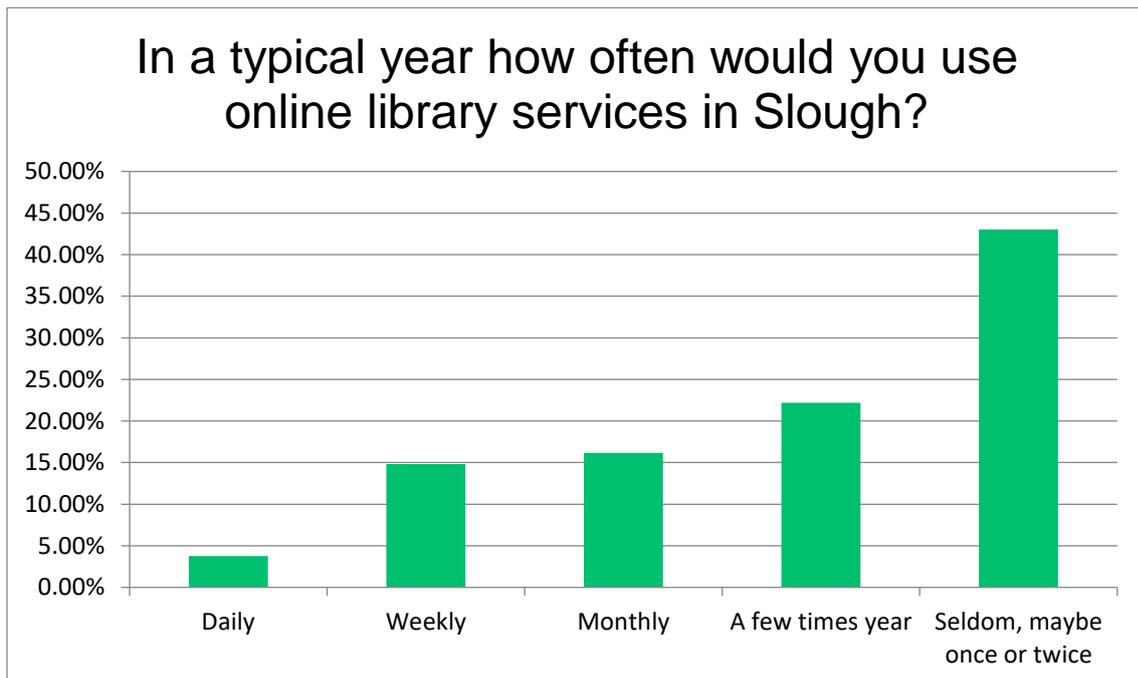
Respondents could tick more than one option.



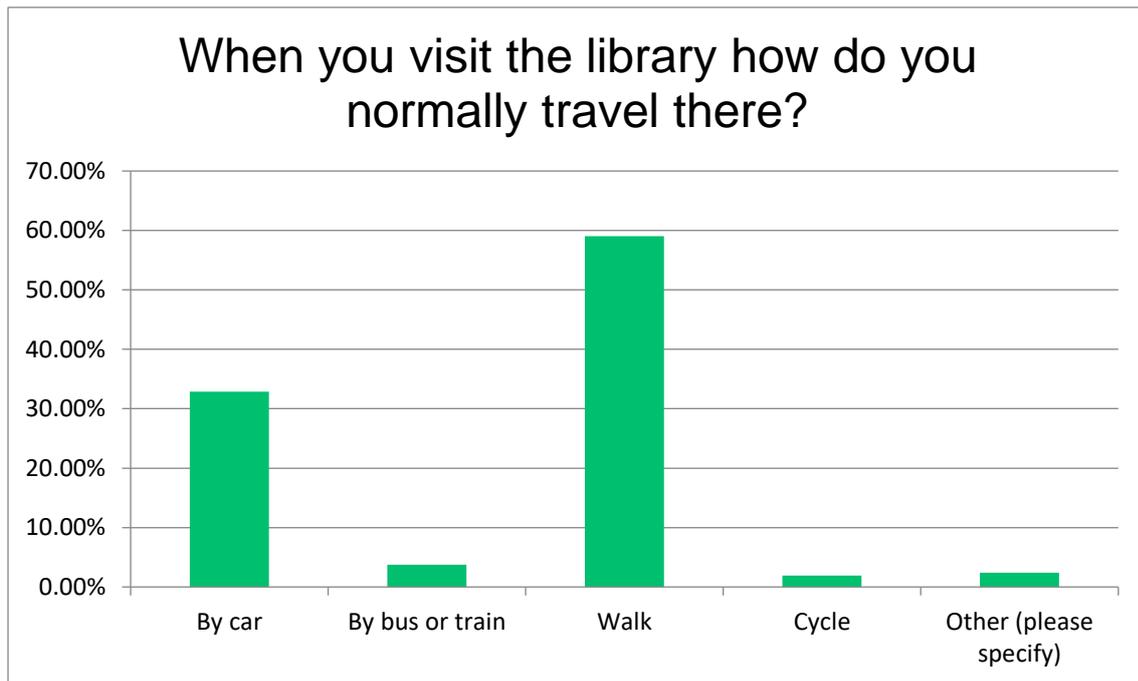
**Q5. How often do you use library services?**



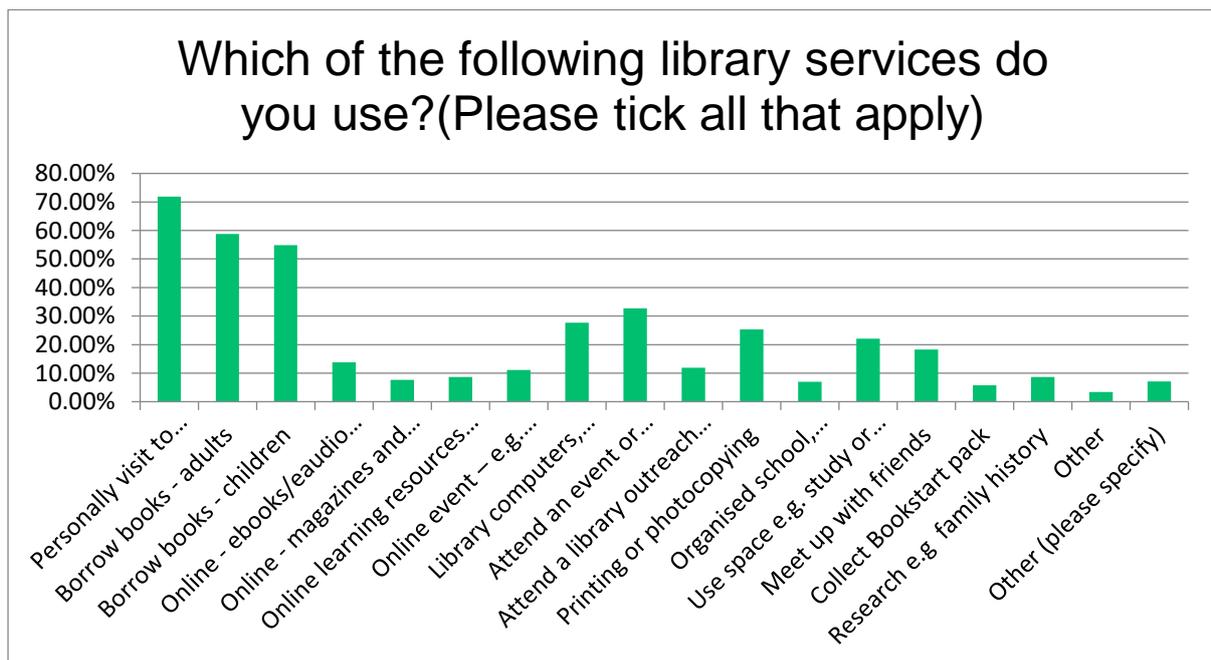
**Q6. How often do you use online library services?**



**Q7. How do you travel to library buildings?**



**Q8. What library services do you use?**



### Q9. If you don't currently use library services, why not?

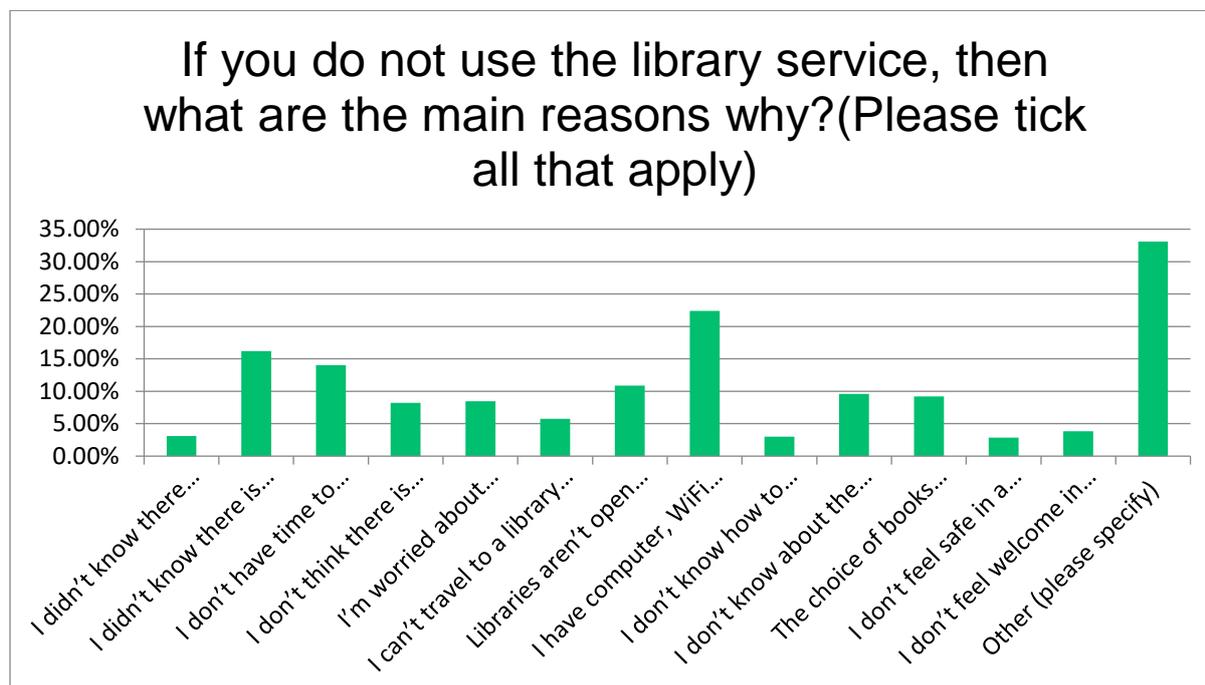
Over 1,200 people responded to this question even though for Q3 only 394 people said they do not use the library service.

Respondents were given 13 options to choose from (they could choose as many options as they liked) plus space to tell us of other reasons. A third of people chose "other" as their response. Of the 13 pre-set options the top 3 reasons for not currently using library services were:

- I have computers/WiFi/Printers at home which I use 22%
- I didn't know there was an online library 16%
- I don't have time to visit a library 14%

From the "other reason" category, the main issues raised were:

- Concerns about using a library (going into buildings, touching books, restrictions about numbers in buildings etc) due to COVID.
- Lack of free and/or dedicated parking (particularly at The Curve).
- Libraries not being open at times that suit busy people (a preference for Sunday opening was mentioned a number of times).
- Inadequate management of "poor" behaviour of people in libraries (ranging from loud talking, general misbehaviour through to anti-social behaviour).
- There are alternative resources available elsewhere – particularly people buying their own books and using on-line resources at home.



### Q10. Which library services do you use now, and which would you use in the future?

Respondents were given 25 options to choose from (they could choose as many options as they liked), plus space to tell us of other reasons.

The top 5 most popular services (from the pre-set options) that are used now are:

- Visit a library to browse/borrow/return publications (general) 88%

- Going to a library within walking distance of my home 85%
- Visit library to browse/borrow/return publications (children’s) 84%
- Going to a library within driving distance of my home 78%
- Go to an event held at a library 72%

The top 5 most popular services that would be used in the future are:

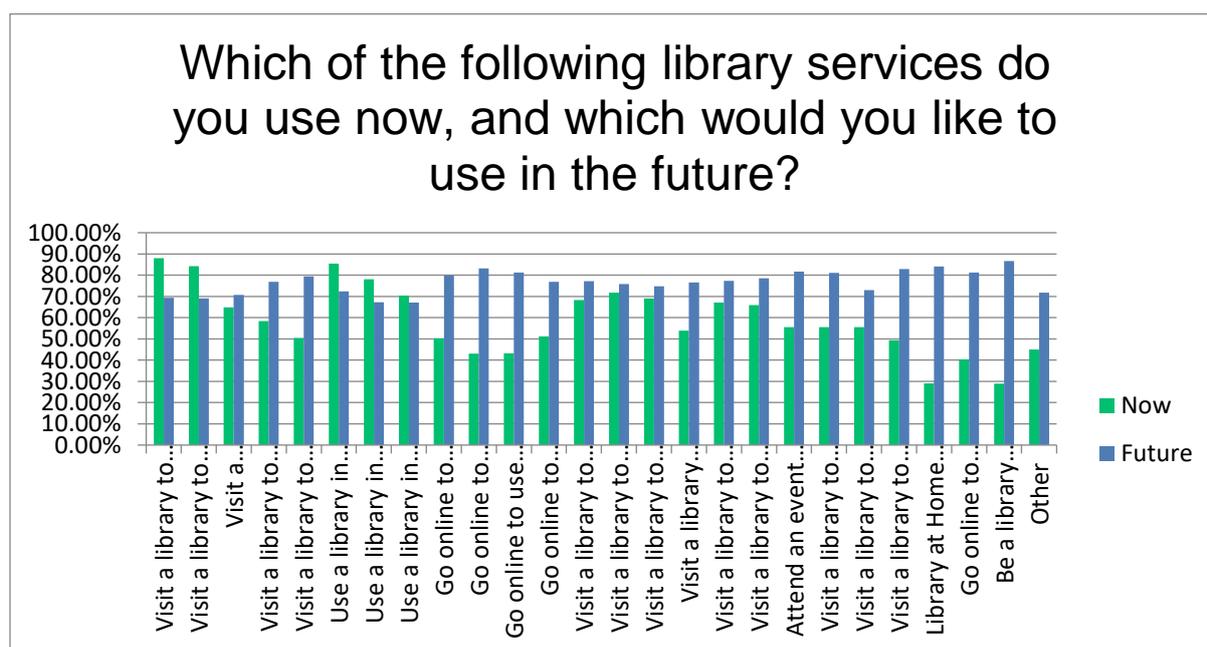
- Be a library volunteer 86%
- Use the “library at home” service 84%
- Borrow e-Magazines/e-newspapers 83%
- Carry out on-line research 83%
- Attend an event at a library 81%

For some options there were significant changes in popularity between current and future usage. The following activities/options recorded decreases in popularity:

- Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books from the general library: decrease of 19%
- Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books from the children’s section of a library: decrease of 15%
- Use a library in a location within walking distance from my home: decrease of 13%
- Use a library in a location that I can get to easily & cheaply on public transport: decrease of 13%

All of the following activities/options recorded the largest increases in popularity between current and future use:

- Be a library volunteer: increase of 58%
- Library at Home service (volunteers bring library books to you): increase of 55%
- Go online to carryout research – e.g., family history: increase of 41%
- Go online to borrow eMagazines/eNewspapers: increase of 40%
- Go online to use learning resources - e.g., Driver Theory Test, Slough History Online, Citizenship learning, learn a new language: increase of 38%



## Appendix D1

From the “other” category free text no clear themes emerged. However, respondents did identify the following range of issues that would impact their decision to use the library now or in the future:

- Accessibility of the library service including how close facilities were to resident’s homes, publications in non-English languages (Urdu newspapers were mentioned), receiving support from staff if a user had a vision impairment and interest in the Library at Home Service.
- Using non-library services such as paying Council Tax, seeing other council advisors and staff, using MyCouncil facilities.
- Provision services and spaces to encourage education, learning and training. This included use of homework clubs, applying for jobs and attending formal education or training.
- Provision of services and spaces to encourage and allow socialising. Some comments mentioned specific services like the Lego club, Chit and Chat club, yoga and reading groups.
- Space for local people and/or groups to use or rent out for other community activities.

### Q11. What do you think are the top 3 priority services/activities we need to provide in or from the library service?

		1	2	3	Total		
Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books from the general library	57.39%	637	26.85%	298	15.77%	175	1110
Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books from the children's library	42.51%	318	42.78%	320	14.71%	110	748
Visit a Children's Centre to browse, borrow or return books	20.86%	34	28.22%	46	50.92%	83	163
Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books that are not in English	22.92%	22	21.88%	21	55.21%	53	96
Visit a library to browse, borrow or return large print/Talking Books	22.45%	11	28.57%	14	48.98%	24	49
Use a library in a location within walking distance from my home	34.75%	254	42.27%	309	22.98%	168	731
Use a library in a location within driving distance (10 to 20-minute drive)	20.24%	34	36.31%	61	43.45%	73	168
Use a library in a location that I can get to easily & cheaply on public transport	12.36%	11	38.20%	34	49.44%	44	89
Go online to borrow eBooks/eAudio books	24.84%	38	30.72%	47	44.44%	68	153
Go online to borrow eMagazines/eNewspapers	15.09%	8	32.08%	17	52.83%	28	53
Go online to use learning resources - e.g. Driver Theory Test, Slough	7.25%	5	34.78%	24	57.97%	40	69
Go online to attend an event – e.g. Storytime, Curve Club, Reading For Pleasure	14.10%	11	23.08%	18	62.82%	49	78
Visit a library to use free computers or to use free Wi-Fi	23.30%	48	31.07%	64	45.63%	94	206
Visit a library to attend an event – e.g. Story and Rhyme, seated exercise	16.13%	30	33.33%	62	50.54%	94	186
Visit a library to do your own printing or photocopying	18.32%	24	21.37%	28	60.31%	79	131
Visit a library with a school or nursery visit	48.15%	13	22.22%	6	29.63%	8	27
Visit a library to use quiet study spaces	31.33%	47	18.00%	27	50.67%	76	150
Visit a library to use the toilets	12.00%	6	30.00%	15	58.00%	29	50
Attend an event taking place in a meeting room at a library	17.86%	10	25.00%	14	57.14%	32	56
Visit a library to have an informal meet up with friends	16.67%	12	23.61%	17	59.72%	43	72
Visit a library to collect a Bookstart pack	18.75%	3	50.00%	8	31.25%	5	16
Visit a library to carryout research – e.g. family history	26.09%	12	23.91%	11	50.00%	23	46
Library at Home service (volunteers bring library books to you)	20.83%	5	29.17%	7	50.00%	12	24
Go online to carryout research – e.g. family history	21.74%	10	34.78%	16	43.48%	20	46
Be a library volunteer	28.30%	15	20.75%	11	50.94%	27	53
Other	43.75%	7	12.50%	2	43.75%	7	16

The top 3 services/activities are:

- Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books from the general library (64% of people put this in their top three)
- Visit a library to browse, borrow or return books from the children’s library (43% of people put this in their top three)
- Use a library in a location within walking distance from my home (42% of people put this in their top three)

The services that featured in the top 3 choices least often (so are the least popular activities/services) are:

- Visit a library with a school or nursery visit (1.5% of people put this in their top three)
- Library at Home service (1.4% of people put this in their top three)
- Visit a library to collect a Bookstart pack (0.9% of people put this in their top three)

**Q12. What are your preferred times for visiting a library?**

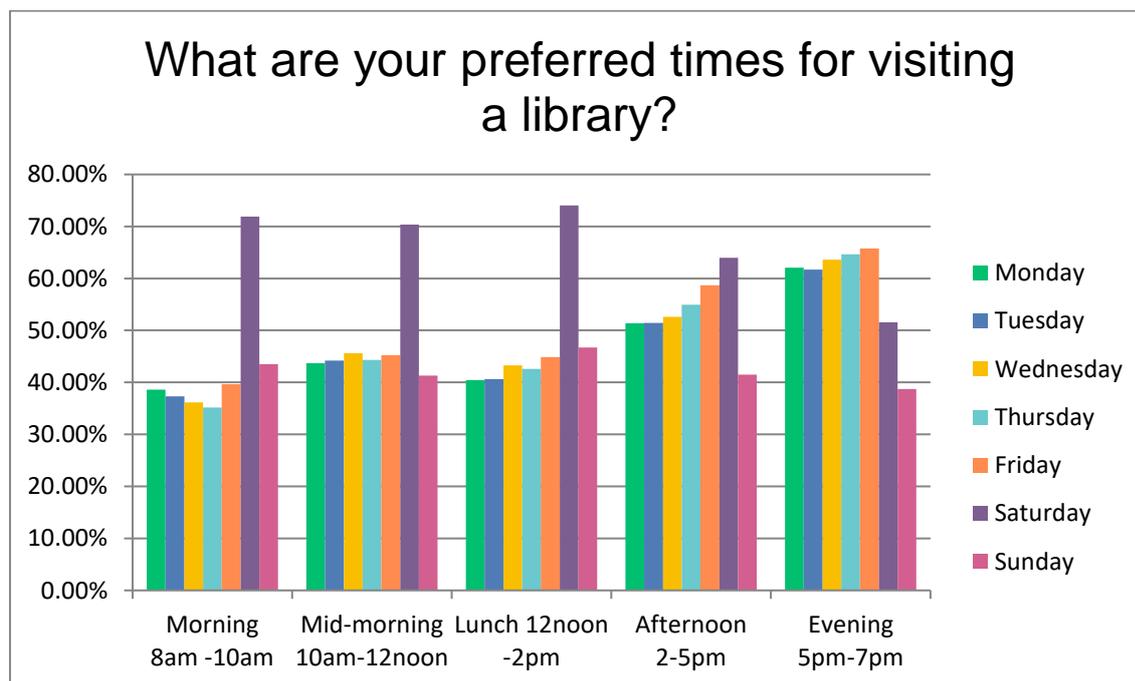
The days of the week which were most popular are ranked below with 1 being the most popular, down to 7 the least popular:

- 1 Saturday
- 2 Friday
- 3 Thursday
- 4 Wednesday
- 5 Monday
- 6 Tuesday
- 7 Sunday

On average across all days of the week, the most popular time to have a library open are ranked below with 1 being the most popular and 4 being the least:

- 1 10am to 12 noon
- 2 2pm to 5pm
- 3 12 noon to 2pm
- 4 5pm to 7pm

Saturday day-time (10am to 5pm) is by far the most popular time to visit a library and Sunday afternoon and evening (2pm to 7pm) is the least popular time. In general afternoon (2pm to 5pm) and evening (5pm to 7pm) are the most popular times Monday to Saturday.



**Q13. We may be able to offer self-service times in our libraries. There would be no library staff available at these times. What times you would prefer to have a self-service offer?**

The days of the week which were most popular to have self-service on offer are ranked below with 1 being the most popular, down to 7 the least popular:

- 1 Saturday

Appendix D1

- 2 Friday
- 3 Sunday
- 4 Thursday
- 5 Wednesday
- 6 Tuesday
- 7 Monday

On average across all days of the week, the most popular time to have self-service only are ranked below with 1 being the most popular and 4 being the least:

- 1 2pm to 5pm
- 2 10am to 12 noon
- 3 5pm to 7pm
- 4 8am to 10am

Respondents were given the opportunity to add free text to this answer and 139 people took the time to add a comment. The overwhelming majority of free text comments were clearly stating that they did not want to use a library service with no staff available (approximately 66%). About half of the people that commented that they would be unhappy with self-service mentioned concerns around lack of safety with no staff in a building, and the other half were concerned specifically about not having staff available for specific reasons (to ask advice from, to help with computers, to talk to).



**Q14. We think we need to take 7 specific considerations into account when designing our future library service. Please tell us how important each of these are to you.**

Respondents were asked to rank each of the 7 considerations into an order of priority with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least. The list below ranks the overall results:

## Appendix D1

- 1 Make sure the amount of money spent on buying new hard copy books is in line with the average amount spent by other councils which are most like Slough.
- 2 Make sure that library buildings are used efficiently. This will include seeing if other services can be offered from library buildings with, or instead of the current library service.
- 3 Ensure that library services are open and available at times when they are most needed and understand that this may reduce the numbers of hours physical libraries are open each week.
- 4 Make sure the amount of money spent on buying new eResources is in line with the average amount spent by other councils which are most like Slough.
- 5 Make sure that there is careful consideration of all opportunities to deliver library services from other locations in communities if this is efficient and effective.
- 6 Ensure that library staff are available to deliver services at times when they are most needed, and that this may reduce the numbers of hours library staff are available each week whether that is online or in person.
- 7 Make sure that wherever possible and practical, services are provided virtually and online

**Q15. Listed below are 5 possible ways we could continue to deliver a comprehensive, affordable library service that meet our considerations. Please choose the 3 models that you think are the best ones to try to deliver.**

The top 3 delivery models, in order of popularity, were:

- 1 Keep all library buildings but reduce the hours they are open, the hours they are staffed, and the space dedicated to the library. Attract other users to rent space in the building alongside a reduced library (co-location) (81%).
- 2 Keep all the main library buildings open but reduce the opening and staffed hours at Langley and Cippenham and reduce the staffed hours at The Curve and Britwell libraries (74%).
- 3 Reduce the money available to spend on buying publications (both hard copy and eResources) (52%).

The remaining two options were variations on closing current library buildings and these both received about 15% approval each.

In addition to the main survey, this question was asked in the Citizen magazine which was sent to all households in the borough during December 2021. This question was one of a range asked about a number of different council services. This question was responded to by 595 residents (we do not know if these people also completed the on-line survey question too). The ranking of the 5 suggested models was the same for the paper copy responses as the on-line ranking.

### Q16. Are there other issues you think we need to consider?

This question did not offer any pre-set options and asked respondents to write free text. Just over 700 respondents did take the time to add comments. The main themes from these are:

**Accessibility and inclusion:** these issues were commented on by most respondents (38%). A strong theme in the comments about accessibility of services referenced loneliness and that keeping physical library buildings open were important to combat this. Respondents frequently commented on the benefits to having a library within their own community, local to where they live and within walking distance. Problems with other forms of transport (including cost) were mentioned a number of times as a reason for not being happy having to travel to access a physical library building. Library buildings are also seen as valuable community assets which could help to build social inclusion and cohesion.

**Children, adult, and family interaction:** this theme was mentioned by about 23% of respondents. Residents commented on the benefits of parents, grandparents and wider-family groups taking children to local libraries. Many comments highlighted the joy and improvement in reading, but a significant number also talk about the importance of having community spaces where human interactions can take place; many referenced the impact of Covid restrictions in making them realise the importance of social and sociable activity. There were also some comments about how important library buildings are for some people to study and learn.

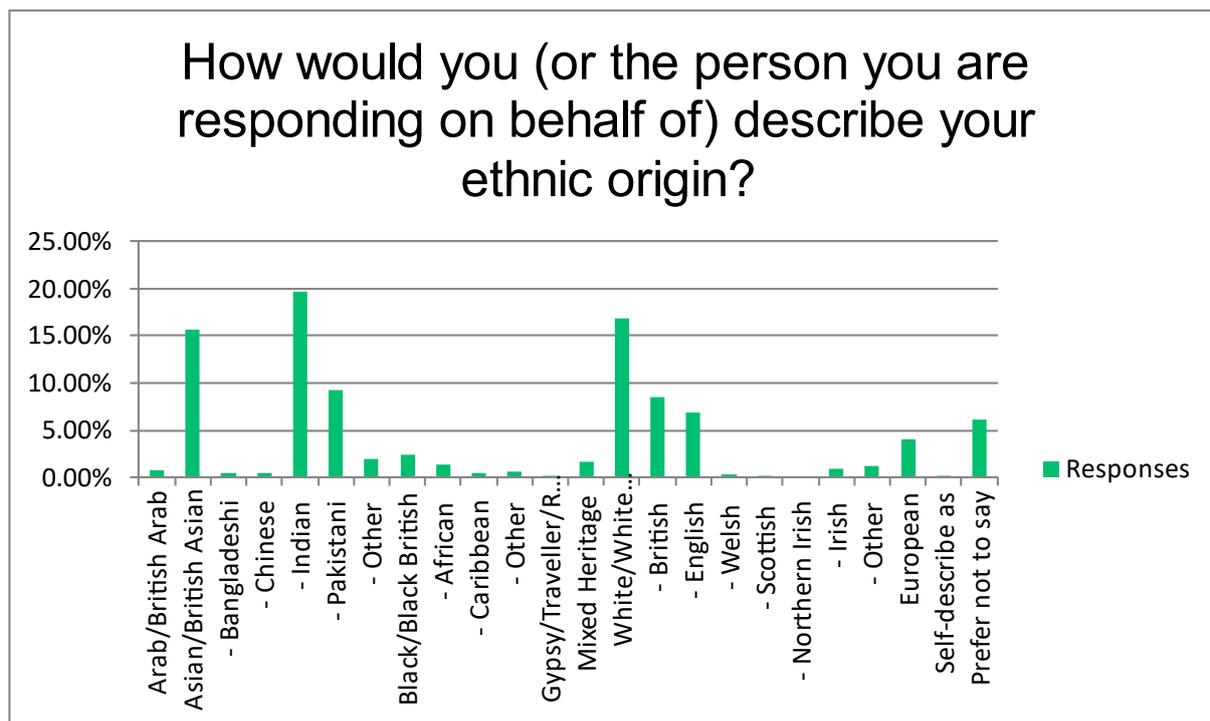
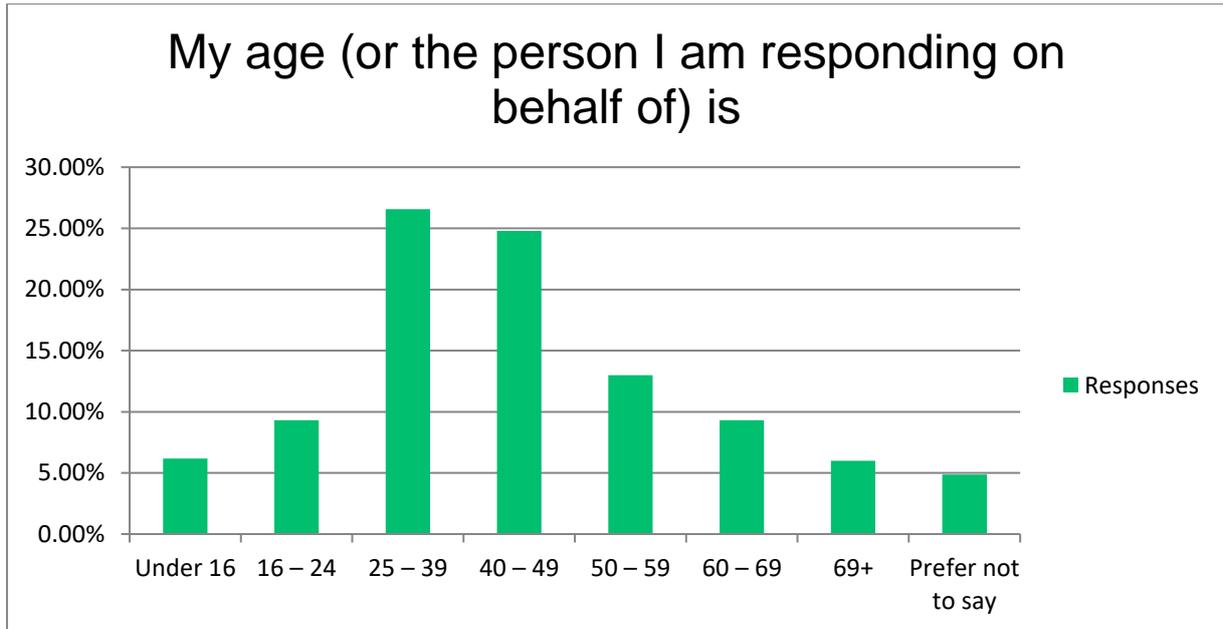
**Digital exclusion:** a small number of respondents stated that they like to use the library buildings because they do not have access to the internet in any other location like home or work. However, the picture around this is unclear as most respondents to the survey say they do have access to the internet in locations outside of library buildings.

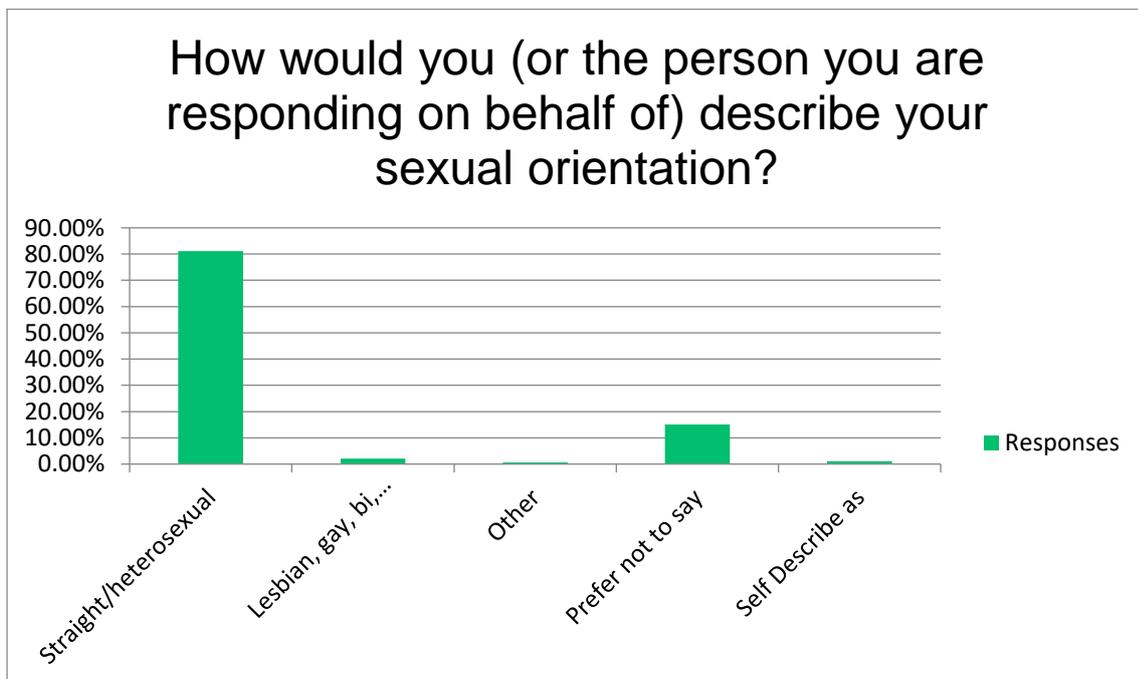
#### Who completed the survey?

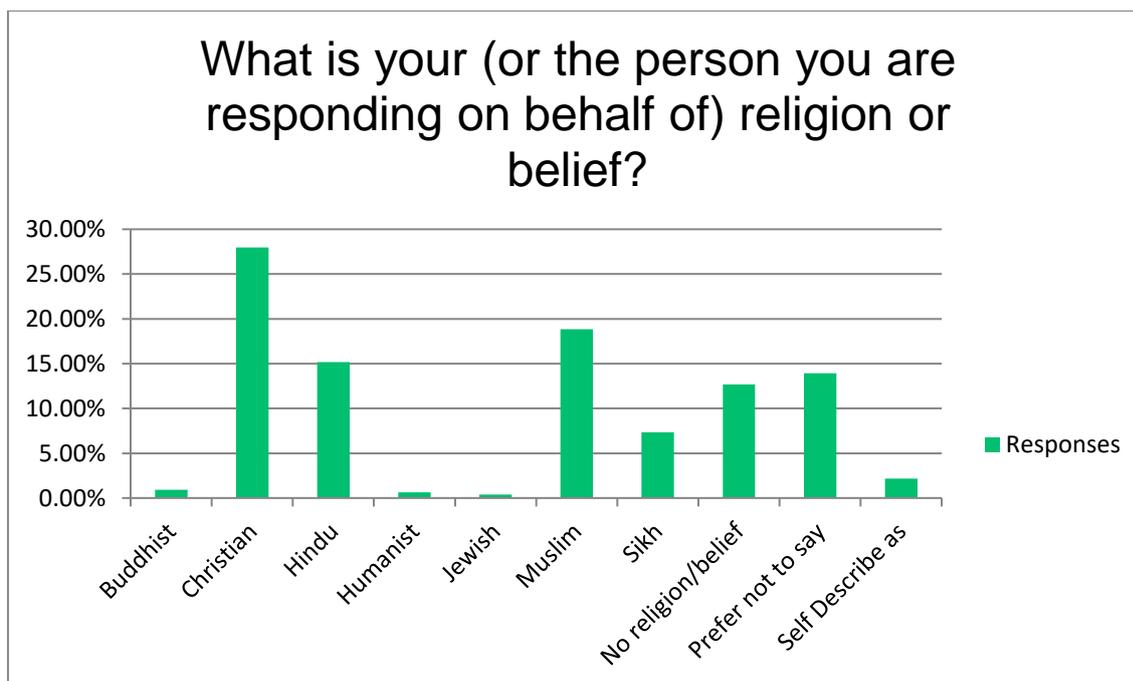
An individual (adult)	64.33%
A parent/guardian/carer for someone else	26.44%
A representative of a group, school, nursery, business	3.70%
Other (please specify)	3.53%
An employee of Slough Borough Council	1.14%
A library volunteer	0.63%
A local councillor/MP	0.23%

I (or the person I am responding on behalf of) describe my sex as	
Female	62.57%
Male	31.40%
Prefer not to say	6.03%

Is your gender (or the person you are responding on behalf of) the same as that assigned at birth / your sex assigned at birth?	
Yes	98.08%
No	1.92%







<b>Do have any regular access to the Internet?</b>	
Yes	91.67%
No	8.33%
<b>Do you have access to the Internet at home?</b>	
Yes	92.01%
No	7.99%

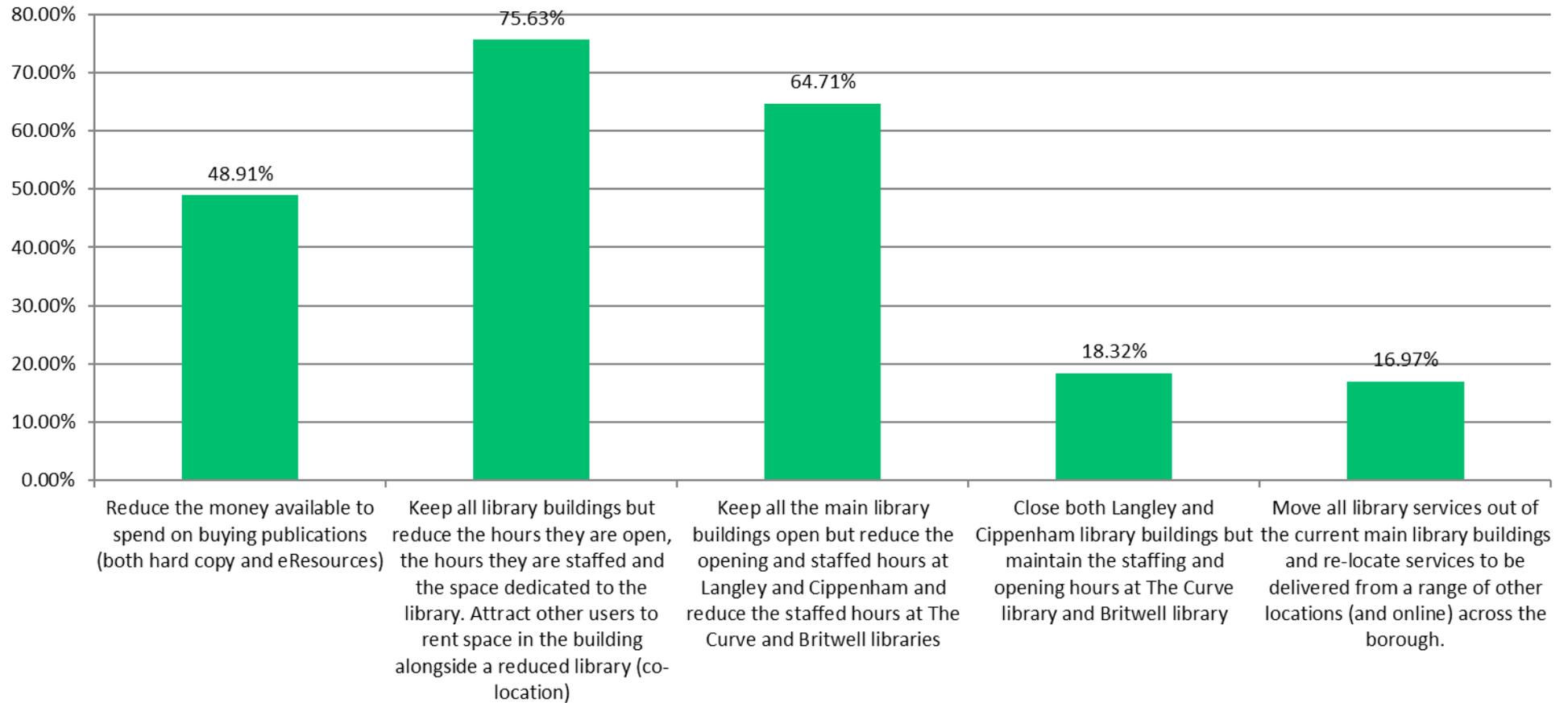
<b>How do you connect to the Internet? (choose all that apply)</b>	
Computer/smart phone/tablet at home, work, or school	87.99%
Your own laptop/smart phone/tablet using library Wi-Fi	20.54%
Public computer or laptop at a library using library Wi-Fi	15.66%
Your own laptop/smart phone/tablet using Wi-Fi somewhere else like a coffee shop	12.01%
Other (please specify)	2.94%

## **SECTION 2**

In December 2021 the “Citizen” magazine was delivered to every home in Slough. Included in this edition was a stand-alone question about the proposed future models of library service delivery. The results of this are below:

**“Listed below are five possible ways we could continue to deliver a comprehensive, affordable library service that meets our consideration. Please choose the three models that you think are the best ones to try and deliver.”**

Listed below are five possible ways we could continue to deliver a comprehensive, affordable library service that meets our consideration. Please choose the three models that you think are the best ones to try and deliver.



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## Slough Museum – stakeholder response to Slough Libraries consultation

January 2022

### Overview

Slough Museum is an independent museum and registered charity. Charity number 285211

Slough Museum Trust was founded in 1982 by a group of local people who wanted to create a museum to share knowledge about local and general history, topography and archaeology of Slough and surrounding districts.

<https://sloughmuseum.co.uk/>

Our mission today is to build a sense of pride in Slough. We develop imaginative and inclusive projects and displays and encourage people to share their stories and knowledge of Slough as a place of pioneers and innovators.

We are the only organisation in Slough that has a remit to collect, conserve and communicate the town's heritage. We explore and celebrate Slough's past, present and future.

Slough Museum's Charity's objects are: To advance the education of the public in local & general history, topography & archaeology by the provision, maintenance and administration of a Museum for Slough & the surrounding district.

The Collection covers a period of around 10,000 years – from woolly mammoths to the present day and charts the development of the town of Slough, its public, social and domestic life, developments in science, technology, agriculture and industry and the impact of these on the town in the past, present and the future.

Since collecting began in 1985, Slough Museum has acquired around 3,500 objects and documents (consisting of prints, paintings, drawings; maps; numismatics; documents; decorative art; costume; geology; archaeology; occupational tools and equipment; Slough-made products & packaging; toys and other juvenilia) and 7,500 photographs. The Museum also holds approx. 32,000 negative packets and strips from Slough Observer newspaper and a small quantity of oral history recordings, video tapes and film reels.



## Slough Museum at The Curve

**Slough Museum are responding to the Slough Borough Council Library consultation as a key stakeholder in the town and particularly in The Curve. This partnership with Slough Libraries at The Curve includes Museum Pods, The Curve Gallery and community activity.**

### Museum Pods

Slough Museum is proud to have eight Pods in The Curve, the central library and cultural hub for Slough. These Pods were fundraised for by the museum to be in place when The Curve opened five years ago.

These themed Pods, located over three floors, explore the heritage of the town, focusing on its nationally important industrial heritage and the history of its pioneering, vibrant community. They feature the people of Slough, from the Herschel Family, who made significant advancements in astronomy, to the people living here today; focussing on domestic and community life, from important places and leisure activities, to community endeavours during the war periods. Pods include sound, visuals and short films.

Schools visit the Pods as part of tours and the museum has fundraised for several community projects to be delivered in partnership with Slough Libraries themed on the Pods.

### The Curve Gallery and display space

In addition to the Pods, Slough Museum have fundraised to use The Curve Gallery space and the space upstairs for several community projects to be delivered in partnership with Slough Libraries.

This includes *100 Women*, a project with a Slough young person who took photographs of one hundred Slough women to celebrate their lives and stories as part of the centenary of women's right to vote; *Light The Candles* an exhibition of Slough objects relating to the First World War to mark the centenary of Armistice Day which involved story telling and craft workshops to create a poppy wall of remembrance.

Slough Museum supported Slough young people to create their own exhibitions in The Curve Gallery leading to their achievement of Arts Award, a national qualification recognising leadership.

Slough Museum are currently displaying items from our collection in The Curve Gallery.



## The Curve Community Activity

Slough Museum have also fundraised for several community projects to be delivered in partnership with Slough Libraries for Slough residents.

This has included *Past/Present/Future – The Spirit of Dickens in Slough* marking 175 years since Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* was published (Dickens had a Slough based publisher at The Mere). This winter festival included workshops delivered by the museum and our partners from The Dickens Museum, London. It also included a giant Peace Poem installed outside The Curve.



*Spark Festival* focused on the heritage of Slough based 18th century astronomical pioneers the Herschel family with lantern workshops and a street procession starting from The Curve.



Other projects have included a focus on literacy, reading, storytelling, craft and local history.

In 2018 BBC Radio Berkshire brought their 80 Things Slough has given the World exhibition to The Curve in partnership with Slough Museum. Slough Museum also run Make with the Museum at The Curve Club on the last Saturday of the month, taking this online during lockdown and delivering ten sessions via Slough Libraries Facebook. We are currently delivering a story writing project in partnership with Slough Libraries to culminate in public sharing at The Curve.

**Slough Museum urge Slough Borough Council to consider resident wellbeing, connectedness, and the pride in our town that Slough Museum located at The Curve can bring, along with significant proven leverage for community projects. The Curve fully open and staffed is the cultural hub people from Slough and beyond deserve. It offers Slough Museum the opportunity to be part of that cultural offer and have a presence in the heart of the town. We believe the only consultation option is therefore: Reduce the money available to spend on buying publications.**

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When telephoning please ask for: *Thomas Rhodes*



PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

**To:**

**UNISON SOUTHEAST**

Ranger House  
Walnut Tree Close  
Guildford  
Surrey GU1 4UL

20 January 2022

Telephone No. 07817 121377

E mail: [t.rhodes@unison.co.uk](mailto:t.rhodes@unison.co.uk)

Website: [www.unisonsoutheast.org.uk](http://www.unisonsoutheast.org.uk)

## **SLOUGH LIBRARIES PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

UNISON has a number of concerns it would like to raise in response to the Slough Libraries Public Consultation. These concerns are listed below.

### **Stock:**

- We would like to see more detail on the proposed book fund and the proposed spend on e-resources. How are the reduced funds to be distributed? The book fund is very heavily skewed in favour of children's fiction (which is already cheaper than any other type of book), presumably as this issue well. Will the cuts impact even further on non-fiction and adult fiction?
- We were unable to identify a stock policy in the paperwork. Does the service have a basic policy on how stock is selected, how its evaluated and disposed of or replaced? How is this accounted for in the book fund? Have book donations also been considered?
- How is stock selected and distributed amongst branches? Is this done by supplier selection or do staff have input into the process?
- We appreciate one source of income is book reservations and this is likely to be through new publications. Has a cost-benefit analysis been done on waiting for paperback copies to be released and reducing the number of hardback fiction? Have shorter loan periods been explored? It would be good to see figures around hardback fiction take up and revenue from book reservations.
- How are eBooks and e-audio books selected? If the service is to be more reliant on e-resources, have the costs been explored? In the case of popular books, where publishers may limit the number of times a licence can be loaned, has the cost of buying more licences been considered?
- Slough are part of SELMS consortium, does the consortium also cover e-resources? If so, does this mean costs for fees, titles and licences are shared across the consortium? What impact does this have on savings?

- The proposal that eBooks are a solution to physical libraries being open seems to be based upon use during covid when borrowers had no alternative. It also doesn't take into account people who don't have a device to access them or who have no or limited internet access. Although e-resources can be more accessible to some readers with disabilities they do not suit everyone, and they only save money if they are well used.
- Looking at the library website, the e-resources do not seem well advertised, and the layout isn't as accessible as it could be. Making e-resources easily accessible should be a priority. It's all available via the library catalogue, so clearly marking this on the main page could make this clearer.

#### **Staff:**

- Staffing figures seem to be from 2019, is it possible to get up to date figures?
- The consultation paper does not seem to give a fair representation of what library staff actually do. The public often have a misconception that library staff just shelve, issue and return books, which makes 40 members of staff across 4 libraries seem quite high. However, outreach activities and regular rhyme times and children's events tend to be staff intensive and require preparation.
- UNISON would like to query if Slough do have 3 FTE librarians.
- Obviously, the majority of staff will be frontline, and we wouldn't expect to see more than one manager per branch, with maybe a couple of extra supervisors in the Curve to cover absence across the service. Do managers work on the public desks?
- With the information given, it does not seem that a random member of the public would be able to give a fair and informed opinion on library staffing.

#### **Volunteers:**

- UNISON would like to see a volunteer policy or any proposed. A Labour council should not have volunteers doing the work of paid staff and that should be clearly laid out from the start. Volunteers should not issue and return books, they should not shelve books, and they should not open or close libraries. Any volunteer work should be an enhancement and not a replacement for staff.
- UNISON would like to know more about the recruitment process for volunteers and what training they have. What checks are in place? It seems that volunteers are given access to personal data (via the library management system). What is done to ensure that library users are safe?
- A volunteer run library would still require building and IT maintenance as well as access to library materials so it's not likely to provide a huge saving.

### **Building and opening hours:**

- Closing or reducing hours to a library when the nearest alternative is 20 minutes away by public transport will disadvantage elderly and disabled users, as well as mums with very young children, younger users, and anyone on low income. It's not clear from the EIA that the groups with protected characteristics are being properly consulted.
- The library service doesn't just issue books, it should provide a place to study, access to research materials and internet, and computer access. Reducing access to these things will be of greater detriment to the most disadvantaged residents.
- Open+ may allow staff-less libraries, but there are many potential H&S risks, and the system does not cater to under 18s who may struggle to travel to another branch. It also ignores the needs of library users who require social interaction or physical help to make use of the service. There is no explanation in the documents of how this would work or what the system is likely to cost.

### **Income generation:**

- Library fines and fees don't provide a great deal of money and are viewed by many as a deterrent to library use. Large fees are more likely to lead to loss of expensive stock and debts are not actively pursued.
- What other forms of income have been explored? Has hire of buildings been maximised? Do library management apply for grant funding for events and projects? Have sale of local history prints or charges for research been explored? Do the libraries sell withdrawn stock and unwanted donations? A button for cash donations on the webpage? Are all events free or are some ticketed? Do they charge for materials for activities?

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We look forward to your reply.

**Thomas Rhodes**

Area Organiser | UNISON Southeast

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## **Narrative feedback from focus groups**

### **1. Engagement with children and young people**

We responded to Cabinet’s concern that our original engagement plans did not do enough to encourage the voice of children and young people. We carried out the following engagement activities.

Children and young people who visited each library were asked to write down their views about the library service (or they could do a drawing). Their comments and drawings were displayed on boards in the library. **150** children responded in this way.

Eleven outreach events were held in local schools (primary and secondary), with older young people (e.g., Creative Academy), local community groups (e.g., Aik Saath) and Youth Parliament. These events gained responses from almost **2,000** young people.

#### **Comments and feedback from primary aged children**

##### **Why do you use the library?**

The most popular reasons were:

- 46% to borrow and/or read books
- 13% to use the computers and/or printers
- 11% because it’s peaceful and quiet
- 10% for doing homework

Of the children that borrowed or read library books, 60% read fiction and 40% read non-fiction/factual books.

##### **Why don’t you use a library?**

The most popular reasons were:

- 32% my family doesn’t have time to go to a library
- 20% because of Covid/lockdown
- 10% I have lots of books at home
- 8% my parents don’t think about taking me
- 8% the library is too far away

##### **What library events and activities have you attended?**

- 47% Summer Reading Challenge
- 16% LEGO
- 13% Code/Computing clubs
- 10% Arts and crafts (e.g., Pumpkin carving, design a T-shirt, drawing challenge etc)

**What do you like about libraries in Slough?**

- 26% the books (quality and quantity)
- 19% it's calm, quiet and peaceful
- 14% reading
- 8% having fun there
- 4% doing activities
- 4% using the computers/printers

**What do you think libraries in Slough should do differently?**

- 13% Have more books and comics
- 13% Have more activities
- 10% Have space to play and/or ways to borrow computer games
- 10% Have somewhere to eat
- 10% Have a way to tell you where on the shelf your book is/have someone to suggest what to read next
- 8% Not have to be quiet all the time

Comments and feedback from secondary school students

**Why do you use the library?**

- 32% space to study
- 32% attend events and activities
- 20% read/borrow books
- 12% to use computers/printers

**Why don't you use a library?**

Have a lot of books at home

Too tired

Use Kindle/e-readers

Access is difficult, especially at The Curve because there's nowhere to park

**What other services could libraries offer/what could they do differently?**

Recommendation service	5 comments
Offer reading challenges	2 comments
Bring books to readers	1 comment
Readers to recommend which books to buy	1 comment
Have a wider range of books	3 comments
Later opening in the evenings	1 comment
Private study spaces	3 comments

Comments and feedback from young people (post 16)

**What do you use the library for?**

- Reading/borrowing books
- Studying
- Using computers and printers
- Attending events, workshops, and meetings

**Why don't you use Slough library service (at all, or not very much)?**

Opening times don't suit me/I don't have the time	7 comments
Buy my own books/books available at my place of study	2 comments
The computers are next to the Children's library (too noisy)	1 comment
Too quiet	1 comment
I have IT at home	1 comment
No free parking at/close to The Curve	1 comment
Concerns about unfriendly staff	1 comment

**What could Slough library service do differently?**

More space for group study	3 comments
Have vending machines/place to eat and drink	2 comments
Wider range of books (audio and hard copy)	2 comments
More co-location of other council services	1 comment
Play soothing background music	1 comment

## Appendix D4

Machines that read books to you	1 comment
Sessions for younger children to read to adults	1 comment
Other activities (slides/climbing wall/zip line)	1 comment
More public events	1 comment
More private study areas	1 comment
Specific revision resources linked to exams	1 comment
Online ordering to bring books to you (at a cost)	1 comment
Drop-boxes to allow books to be returned without paying for parking	1 comment

### Ranking of the suggested future models

1 <sup>st</sup> (most popular)	Keep all library buildings but <b>reduce the hours they are open, the hours they are staffed, and the space dedicated to the library</b> . Attract other users to rent space in the library building alongside the reduced library (co-location).
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Keep all the main library <b>buildings open</b> but <b>reduce the opening and staffed hours</b> at Langley and Cippenham and reduce the staffed hours at The Curve and Britwell libraries.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Reduce the money available to spend on buying publications (both hard copy and eResources)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Close both Langley and Cippenham library buildings but <b>maintain the staffing and opening hours</b> at The Curve library and at Britwell library.
5 <sup>th</sup> (least popular)	Move all library services out of the current main library buildings and <b>re-locate services</b> to be delivered from a range of other locations (and online) across the borough

## 2. Engagement with residents and stakeholders at workshops/drop-in/presentations

### 50+ forum

#### Suggestions about future use/service delivery

- Can library services be delivered from the industrial estate? Could this central location be a base from which outreach work could be delivered?

#### Comments about current library services

- Why have Langley and Cippenham been singled out for possible closure and the other two libraries weren't? We explained about the other services were currently delivered from Britwell and The Curve which makes even considering closing these buildings more challenging.

- The issue of difficulty parking at The Curve was raised
- Number of comments about the valued role of libraries to support communities.
- There were questions about the financial situation of the council.

### Men's lunch club Langley

#### **Suggestions about future use/service delivery**

- Hosting a chess club was a popular suggestion.

#### **Comments about current library services**

- One participant said he found it difficult to locate the books and information he wanted at The Curve and found the old library better laid out.
- Two participants said they didn't use the library service as it doesn't stock the technical books they wanted.

### Carers' Rights information day

#### **Suggestions about future use/service delivery**

- Events, services, and activities should cater for residents who don't speak English as a first language.

#### **Comments about current library services**

- Some passionate current library users commented that they had completed the survey and library services were very important to them.
- Some participants said they had stopped using the library service because of Covid and now didn't know when the libraries were open and weren't aware of the on-line offer.

### Langley Library drop-in (December 2021)

#### **Suggestions about future use/service delivery**

- Some concerns were expressed about how safe it would be to use a library if there were other services operating from the same building.
- Can Thames Valley Police locate a police desk in Langley library to help make up for the closure of Langley police station?

#### **Comments about current library services**

- Local residents have started a petition specifically about keeping Langley library building open.
- Passionate support for the library service and some residents spoke about specific benefits they had felt from using the library.

## SCVS Community Network on-line workshop

### Suggestions about future use/service delivery

- Keep library locations open so activities can be run from there.
- Cippenham library has a good range of services for all ages.
- Activities like “seated exercise” at The Curve are popular.

### Comments about current library services

- Health Watch run community events from libraries, and these are very popular.
- Allowing partner organisations to share the space will be important.
- A lower publications budget will need careful thought to strike the right balance between on-line and hard copy books.
- Will library service offer an on-line music service? Social Plugger was mentioned ([Social Plugger](#)) as a good offer for sound-based mindfulness.
- Whatever happens to the library service the new services must be well publicised.
- Include health and wellbeing support. Could be offered on-line and may be simple awareness raising or on-line chats.
- Could community/volunteer groups run the library service? They could offer their usual service but help people borrow and return books. Local groups could also run or support activities and events.
- Concern that alternatives like Open+ wouldn't work due to possible crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Community groups could work from or use facilities, but charges would need to be lower (or be offered for free).
- How can library buildings pay for themselves to make sure running the buildings are cost effective?
- Will corporate sponsorship from organisations like Circo be considered to keep a library building open?
- Suggestions were made to see if a coffee house chain could operate from libraries but there was a discussion that this has been tried and not enough money is made for it to be interesting to the business.
- Having somewhere to buy lunch in the library might encourage people to stay longer.

## On-line library workshops (November & December)

### Suggestions about future use/service delivery

- On-line library is good if you don't have a library close to where you live (Manor Park was mentioned).
- Can there be a library closer to Manor Park?
- Visiting a library is an important part of childhood.
- Could there be more opportunities for volunteering to keep a library service?
- The library service has to modernise and make more of e-books.
- Could people who work from home or run small businesses rent hot desks in the library to generate income?
- Could each library have a specialist theme?

- Could there be a focus on delivering children's libraries especially in the areas where there are lots of children who use the library?
- Libraries should ask for book donations to reduce spend on new books.

#### Comments about current library services

- On-line library is good if you don't have a library close to where you live (Manor Park was mentioned).
- The old reference library was very useful.
- Having limited time-slots (due to Covid restrictions) is not good, felt rushed.
- Maidenhead library provides a better customer experience.
- The library is essential to parents who are home-schooling.
- Britwell library is in a good location and is within walking distance of the shops and where people live.
- Libraries are keeping our communities alive.
- Parking to use The Curve is very difficult.
- Some people like going to the libraries because they are vulnerable and meeting people there gives them comfort. Where will these people go?
- BorrowBox facility is not good – there is not a good enough choice of books.
- PressReader facility is excellent as it makes newspapers accessible to everyone.

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**SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Customer & Community Scrutiny Panel

**DATE:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Manize Talukdar  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
**(For all Enquiries)** 07871 944199

**WARDS:** All

**PART I**  
**FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

**CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

1. **Purpose of Report**

For the Panel to discuss its work programme for 2021-22.

2. **Recommendations/Proposed Action**

That the Panel review the work programme and potential items for scrutiny in 2021/22.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3.1 The Customer & Community Scrutiny Panel, along with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and other Scrutiny Panels combine to meet the local authority's statutory requirement to provide public transparency and accountability, ensuring the best outcomes for the residents of Slough.

3.2 The effective scrutiny of the council's decision making and work in the area of health and social care underpins the delivery of all four of the Joint Slough Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Starting Well
- Integration
- Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods
- Workplace Health

3.3 The work of the Panel also reflects the following priorities of the Five Year Plan:

- Our residents will have access to good quality homes

#### 4. **Other Implications**

##### **(a) Financial**

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

##### **(b) Risk Management**

There are no risk management implications of proposed action.

##### **(c) Human Rights Act and other Legal Implications**

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

##### **(d) Equalities Impact Assessment**

There are no Equalities implications arising from this report.

#### 5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 This work programme should cover all aspects of the Scrutiny Panel's remit:

- Customer Services
- Revenues and benefits
- Community & Neighbourhoods
- Learning, Skills & Employment
- Accommodation

5.2 The work programme is a flexible document which will be continually reviewed throughout the municipal year. It will be updated to take into account requests for consideration of issues from members of the Panel.

#### 6. **Conclusion**

This report is intended to provide the Panel with the opportunity to review its upcoming work programme and make any amendments it feels are required.

#### 7. **Appendices Attached**

A – Draft Work Programme for 2021/22 Municipal Year

#### 8. **Background Papers**

None.

**CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022**

Meeting Date
2 March 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Library Service Consultation Results</li><li>• Learning Skills and Employment: OFSTED Outcome</li><li>• Priority Three: Strong Healthy &amp; Attractive Neighbourhoods</li></ul>
6 April 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Management of the Osborne contract</li><li>• Licensing of Homes of Multiple Occupation Update</li><li>• Temporary Accommodation (requested at December Audit Committee)</li></ul>

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**MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD 2021/22**  
**CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL**

<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b><u>08/07/21</u> <u>CANCELLED</u></b>	<b><u>21/10/21</u> <u>MOVED TO</u> <u>09/11/21</u></b>	<b>09/11/21</b>	<b><u>08/12/21</u> <u>Joint with</u> <u>O&amp;S</u></b>	<b>25/01/22</b>	<b>02/03/22</b>	<b>06/04/22</b>
Begum (Chair)			P	P	Ap		
Muvvala (Vice-Chair)			P	P	P		
Ajaib			P	Ab	P		
Ali			P	P	P		
Hussain			Ap	Ap	Ap		
Kaur			P	P	Ap		
Minhas			P	P	P		
Mohammad			P	P	P		
Sandhu			P	P	P		

P = Present for whole meeting    P\* = Present for part of meeting    Ap = Apologies given    Ab = Absent, no apologies given

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