

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Library Services
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Christine Hulme - Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Richard West
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Liz Jones
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Key Decision:</b>	YES
<b>Exempt:</b>	NO
<b>Decision Subject to Call In:</b>	YES
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>Appendix A</b> – Library Service Plan 2022-27 <b>Appendix B</b> – Equalities Impact Assessment <b>Appendix C</b> – Library building staff rota 2023/24

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The March 2022 Cabinet Report - Slough Library Service Plan and new delivery model, agreed a **Library Service Plan 2022-27 (Appendix A)** based on the findings of a public consultation. In summary it was agreed to provide a reduced hours Library Service from 4 buildings within the borough largely attended by Library staff and to reduce the library publication budget to deliver an overall saving of £400,000. Due to the need to test the changes in terms of sharing buildings and income generation, the model was agreed on an interim basis and for a report to be brought back to Cabinet in 12 months to provide further recommendations on how best to deliver library services within the Council's constrained financial position in 2023-24.
- 1.2 This report recommends that in 2023-24 we deliver a predominantly self-service library service from 4 buildings within the borough (The Curve, the Britwell Hub, Cippenham Library and Langley Library) with the amended operating hours set out in paragraph 2.16.1, maintain an on-line library offer and refresh and expand volunteering opportunities in the Service to deliver a further budget saving of £276,000.

## Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to: -

- a. Approve a library model of predominantly self-service library service from 4 buildings across the borough (The Curve, Britwell Hub, Cippenham Library and Langley Library) with the opening hours set out in paragraph 2.16.1.
- b. Receive a report at July 2023 Cabinet to review the performance of the library service in the first 2 months of the 2023/24 operating model, including performance against planned opening hours and the blend of footfall across the opening hours.

### Reason:

This operating model will allow the Council to meet its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and its best value duty.

## Commissioner Review

*Commissioners have no observations on this report.*

## 2. Report

### Introduction

- 2.1 Councils have a statutory duty to provide library services as described in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This duty requires councils to deliver a “comprehensive and efficient” library service. There are no prescriptive definitions in the Act about what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient service. However, case law has determined that if any significant changes are made to how a library service is delivered, the council must follow a fair process to locally determine what a comprehensive and efficient library service looks like and what it delivers. This includes considering local needs and consulting with the public when devising a new way of delivering services.
- 2.2 A 12-week public consultation concluded on the 20 January 2022 and informed the March 2022 Cabinet agreement to the **Library Service Plan 2022-27 (Appendix A)**. The key findings of the library consultation were that:
  - The library service is highly valued by library members.
  - More than 80% of library transactions take place through self-service kiosks.
  - 70% of all items issued (hard copy and e-resource) are from the children’s library.
  - Respondents like the idea of co-locating other Council services with the current library buildings.
  - Young People value study space, where they can talk about issues, and access on-line materials.
  - Our on-line service is growing but is not widely known about.
  - People would value the opportunity to become volunteers in the library service.
  - The library service should consider the diverse needs of the population, including use of the library at home service, the availability of materials for residents for whom English is not a first language and the options of outreach work.

2.3 The consultation results demonstrate the need to publicise online resources and improve volunteering opportunities, as well as ensuring that effective services are delivered in buildings.

2.4 The strategic aims in the Library Plan, agreed at March 2022 Cabinet, were informed by public consultation. The model adoption last year was approved on an interim only basis and Cabinet is now being asked to make further changes following a review of that model. The original consultation responses have informed this review, and the new model continues to deliver on the strategic aims set out in the Library Plan: -

<b>2022 – 2027 Library Plan work areas</b>	<b>Impact of proposed model (February 2023)</b>
<p>High quality support for adults and children to support literacy and encourage a love of reading for pleasure.</p>	<p>Library staff will be available at 3 current library locations throughout each week (with a rota of staff availability on Saturdays) to provide high quality literacy support to residents. In-library events to promote a love of reading will be delivered and, where appropriate will be enhanced by the addition of volunteers to provide more 1-on-1 support to residents who require this.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Library services will be available at all 4 current library building locations. Library staff will be available in-person at consistent and planned times at 3 locations throughout the week. Britwell Hub library will be predominantly self-service with library staff available by phone if other SBC staff overseeing the library area are unable to support customers with library specific queries.</p> <p>All Library staff have had training in using basic Makaton to communicate with residents and the EIA will be used to identify other training needs associated with supporting residents with additional needs. This will include reviewing customer flow to identify “quiet times” at library buildings and advertise these so residents who find busy spaces challenging know when they may find it more comfortable to access the building.</p>
<p>Encourage residents of all ages to make use of our library service to improve their wellbeing and personal development.</p>	<p>The Library Service will still participate in the UK-wide literacy programme “Summer Reading Challenge” aimed at children and young people. This has been our premier engagement event for driving both library</p>

	<p>membership for young people but also to increase borrowing by this age group.</p> <p>Focussing on volunteer recruitment will allow the service to deliver a range of events like book clubs, poetry clubs etc. to encourage adults to use the library service.</p> <p>Further promotion of the on-line library resource will also encourage adults who are working when the library buildings are open to still borrow books and magazines etc.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The publications budget will remain at £90k per annum allowing the Library Service to continue to purchase a range of physical books and on-line resources.</p> <p>Focussing on recruiting volunteers will also increase the capacity of the service to offer low-level and informal support for residents needing guidance and confidence to access the digital world.</p>
<p>A range of exciting, relevant and enjoyable events hosted by library services.</p>	<p>The service will continue to deliver a Summer Reading Challenge each year specifically aimed at school-age children.</p> <p>Staff working with volunteers will also be able to continue to host events such as “Rhyme Time”, storytelling, book clubs etc. The new model includes a focus on securing additional external funds (sponsorships and grants) to support the delivery of literacy-based events.</p>
<p>Increased opportunities for volunteering in our library service and highly professional volunteers working with all library users.</p>	<p>Operational challenges in 2022 meant that the recruitment of volunteers did not take place. The 2023/24 service delivery model includes a staff post with a clear remit to work with partners to recruit, retain and engage with volunteers.</p> <p>Clear volunteer role descriptions are being developed for each of the service areas that would benefit from and be of interest to volunteers (Library at Home service, library events and library digital support).</p>
<p>Improved collection and use of data to make sure our decisions are based on evidence.</p>	<p>The proposed model maintains various software licences which allow the service to efficiently collect data about footfall in</p>

	each library, borrowing activity and use of IT equipment.
Strong engagement with residents to help us shape the service and promote events, activities, and library resources.	In addition to quantitative data collected electronically, the new model will also allow the service to implement a regular series of light-touch customer engagement activities to help the service flex in response to customer demand.  The proposed model also strengthens the relationship between the library service and other services delivered from these buildings so anonymised customer feedback can be shared.
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.	The publications budget will remain at £90k per annum which maintains Slough's position as being in-line with the spend per head of population of councils in our most similar group.

## 2.5 The following tables evidence that:

- The number of library visits is half that enjoyed pre-pandemic but is growing.

Library visits	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Dec 2023	Pro-rata Apr 2022 to Mar 2023
Library visits	629,222	90,752	229,287	226,520	302,027

Note: A two-week manual visit count took place in December 2022 at the 2 libraries open till 7pm, the Curve and Cippenham. From 5pm at Cippenham and 6pm at the Curve visit figures dropped by an average 92%. While this is only a small sample over 2 weeks this is supported by staff comments across the year and visible evidence in each library site

- The % use of self-serve has grown and is currently 93%
- The % of books issued to children is stable at around 75%

Library book issues	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Dec 2023	Pro-rata Apr 2022 to Mar 2023
Total book issues	363,433	54,350	257,686	228,179	304,239
Self serve and online issues	325,989	0	223,844	212,361	283,148
% self serve to total issues	90%	0%	87%	93%	93%
Children's book issues	266,361	39,001	197,828	171,002	228,003
% children's to total issues	73%	72%	77%	75%	75%

- New customers joining the library each year is growing towards pre-pandemic levels

#### New customers joining the library

New members	
2019-2020	7,621
2020-2021	0
2021-2022	4,832
April 2022- Dec 2022	4,835
<b>Pro-rata Apr 2022 to Mar 2023</b>	<b>6,447</b>

- The summer reading challenge (July to September) remains an important part of what we do.

Year	Participants	Budget spent	Comments
2019	3,604	£13,785	
2020	200	£550	Covid lockdown so online offer only. Limited success
2021	2,533	£9,410	
2022	1,976	£3,375	Theme was Science which did not prove as popular as expected
2023			Theme is Sport and games bringing partnership opportunities with active communities and community development teams

Population figures latest census 0-15 years is 39,828 which is 26% of total population of Slough 149,577. Attainment at KS1 (age 7) for reading, literacy maths and science are lower than across the South East 15.9 compared to 16.2. Approximately 23% of children 0-19 are in relative low-income families compared to 19% across England. Approximately 55% of under 5s achieve the expected development compared with 63% South East and 58% across England.

2.6 The council's Corporate Plan includes two priorities which are supported by the decisions described in this report:

- **A council that lives within our means, balances the budget, and delivers best value for taxpayers and service users** – the proposal in this report balances the views of residents with the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service while contributing a saving of £276,000.
- **A borough for children and young people to thrive in** – the proposals in this report will ensure that the library service continues to promote and deliver a love of literacy for young people in the borough. The proposals will also help support the aspiration to support more of our residents to access better paid jobs by improving skills and reducing barriers to employment.

2.7 Options considered: -

Option	Description
<b>A</b>	<b>Provide the 2022/23 Libraries operating model in 2023-24</b> To provide library services from 4 library locations (The Curve, Langley, Britwell and Cippenham), largely attended by dedicated library staff, at the opening hours agreed in the March 2022 Cabinet Report. Provide a publications budget of £90,000 and develop our on-line library offer and the use of volunteers.

	<p>This option meets the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, but it does not address the ongoing financial pressures faced by the council. There would be no 2023/24 library savings. The Council has a duty to demonstrate best value in its services and this should be measured by reference to social, environmental, and economic value. As this model does not deliver any further savings, it is arguable that it is not meeting its best value duty to continuously improve and deliver cost effective services.</p> <p><b>This option is not recommended.</b></p>
<b>B</b>	<p><b>Proposed 2023/24 Libraries operating model</b>  To deliver a predominantly self-service library service from 4 buildings within the borough (The Curve, Britwell Hub, Cippenham Library and Langley Library) at the amended opening hours set out in paragraph 2.16.1</p> <p>The Principal Libraries Outreach Officer will prioritise recruitment, retention, and co-ordination of library volunteers in addition to sourcing external resources, including sponsorships, grants and partnership working, to support services to improve literacy.</p> <p>Volunteers will complement both the outreach programme (especially the Library at Home service) and the building-based offer.</p> <p>A publications budget of £90,000 will be provided and the on-line library service will be developed.</p> <p>This option meets the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and contributes a saving of £276,000. It also meets the Council's best value duty by delivering a saving and takes account of residents' views of the value of library buildings in different localities within the Borough.</p> <p><b>This option is recommended.</b></p>
<b>C</b>	<p><b>Option C – Close Cippenham Library but otherwise adopt Option B</b>  The library service is not dependent on specific buildings. Cippenham Library has been identified as a building which may be attractive to the property market and could be sold. The decision to sell or to retain the building is yet to be determined. Option B proposes a meanwhile use as a building with a library area within it with the option to locate other staff and other services into it should that be the outcome of the Office Accommodation Strategy which is yet to be finalised.</p> <p>There would be additional savings of c£40,000 in library staff salary costs should we close Cippenham Library in 2023/24 or if, like Britwell, a predominantly self-service library supported by staff from other services (non-library staff) was provided. We have been unable to get commitment from other services to permanently locate their staff in this building for 2023/24 at the time of writing as other services are themselves working on budget savings.</p> <p>There would be additional savings to the building management budget of c£70k/annum if the building was closed (less security costs of c£10k while it remains an SBC building) and the Council would receive a capital receipt for the sale of the building. See Section 3.1 for building costs for each of our buildings which currently include a library area.</p>

## Background

- 2.8 The Council must deliver significant levels of savings over the next few years, as well as disposing of surplus assets to reduce its borrowing levels. We have started work on a comprehensive estates strategy which will explore the condition costs and uses of all Council operational buildings. As part of this work we will shape a long-term plan for the delivery of services including libraries. Whilst this work is progressing best use will be made of the available buildings and the library service will operate from The Curve, Langley Library, Cippenham Library and the Britwell Hub subject to long term decision on these buildings utilisation.
- 2.9 Under our Asset Disposal Strategy, the Council needs to rationalise its buildings and look to use them for multiple uses. This may reduce the amount of floor space to be dedicated to library areas and increase the number of officers from other services who can support the opening, closing and day-to-day operation of the building, however no decision has been made about this at this time.
- 2.10 Library services are a statutory service delivered by local authorities under the duty described in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This duty requires councils to deliver a “comprehensive and efficient” library service. There are no prescriptive definitions in the Act about what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient service. However, case law has determined that if any significant changes are made to how a library service is delivered, the council must follow a fair process to locally determine what a comprehensive and efficient library service looks like and what it delivers. This includes considering local needs and consulting with the public when devising a new way of delivering services.
- 2.11 In 2021 the council carried out a robust assessment of local need, consulted the public about how library services could be delivered in the future and completed an Equality Risk Assessment. Analysis of the results of all these exercises informed the production and agreement to the Library Service Plan 2022-27 (Appendix A) which highlights the following key aims for the service to deliver: -
- Improved literacy and love of reading for all residents
  - Affordable services available to all users
  - Levelling up opportunities for all residents
- 2.12 The Library Service Plan 2022-27 goes on to describe how these key aims will be implemented and what residents can expect to see by 2027:
- ✓ 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.

2.13 Several local authorities have experimented with unattended, remotely overseen libraires, using technology to replace staff. Library members are given swipe cards to get in and out of the building and CCTV surveillance provides security. These trials have been problematic for several reasons including: -

- Failure of door entry systems either locking Library members in or out.
- Theft and damage – CCTV cameras only provide an element of deterrence.
- Fear of attack and actual attack - CCTV cameras only provide an element assurance.
- Automated systems are designed to not allow under 16s to access on their own for safeguarding reasons, but this is not fool proof.
- The cost to equip a library with the necessary technology is c£100k per building and requires ongoing revenue budget to maintain equipment and capital provision to replace equipment in the future.

2.14 For the reasons above, remote, electronic monitoring of our libraries does not fit our current circumstances. However, limited intervention/oversight of library areas by core library staff and/or limited intervention/oversight of library areas by staff from other services located in or adjacent to a library area could provide an alternative low-cost approach.

2.15 A reduced number of library staff, together with a commitment from other services to locate staff within library buildings, would support a predominantly self-service library service from 4 library buildings in 2023/24 during the amended hours set out in paragraph 2.16.1. Staff from other Council services will assist the small number of borrowers who are unable to use the self-service kiosks or who are unable to access digital services using the publicly available IT when Library staff are not present. Clear process guides are being reviewed by library staff to ensure that customers receive a good level of library service regardless of which staff member they speak to. The self-service library opening hours set out in paragraph 2.16.1 are dependent on officers from the services set out below: -

- Building Management, Community Learning & Skills and the Registrar Service continuing to locate staff at The Curve. This has been agreed with the services as a continuation of current practice for the time being.
- Building Management, Customer Service and the Housing Need Service continuing to locate staff at the Britwell Hub. This has been agreed with the services as a continuation of current practice for the time being.

## Proposed 2023-24 Library services operating model

2.16 It is recommended that the Library Service Plan 2022-27 (**Appendix A**) be delivered through 4 mechanisms: -

2.16.1 **The first** is to deliver a predominantly self-service library service from 4 physical libraries within the borough for an average of 141 hours/week at the actual times and with the dependencies set out below. **Appendix C** provides further detail on library staff numbers supporting these opening hours and what additional support and contingency is available to mitigate library staff absences due to holidays and sickness. This addresses the lessons learnt during 2022/23 and provides assurance of a robust operating model in 2023/24.

2023/24	The Curve	Britwell	Langley	Cippenham
Monday	9am-5pm Part other officer dependency	9am-5pm Full other officer dependency	10am-5pm	Closed
Tuesday	10am-6pm Part other officer dependency	9am-5pm Full other officer dependency	10am-5pm	10am-5pm
Wednesday	9am-5pm Part other officer dependency	9am-5pm Full other officer dependency	10am-5pm	10am-5pm
Thursday	9am-5pm Part other officer dependency	9am-5pm Full other officer dependency	Closed	10am-5pm
Friday	9am-5pm Part other officer dependency	9am-5pm Full other officer dependency	10am-4pm	Closed
Saturday	10am-5pm Part other officer dependency	10am-4pm* *Last Saturday of the month only	10am-4pm* *Last two Saturdays of the month only	10am-4pm* *First 2 Saturdays of the month only
Sunday	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

*For comparison the self-service hours in the intended 2022/23 operating model were an average of 152 hours per week at the times set out below: -*

2022/23	The Curve	Britwell	Langley	Cippenham
Monday	8am-5pm	9am-5pm	2pm-7pm	Closed
Tuesday	8am-7pm	9am-5pm	9am-1pm	12pm-7pm
Wednesday	8am-7pm	9am-5pm	1pm-5pm	9am-1pm
Thursday	8am-7pm	9am-7pm	1pm-5pm	1pm-5pm
Friday	8am-5pm	9am-5pm	1pm-5pm	1pm-5pm
Saturday	10am-5pm	12pm-4pm	12pm-4pm	12pm-4pm
Sunday	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

- **The Curve**, William Street Slough SL1 1XY is Slough's iconic cultural centre, right in the heart of the town. It currently houses a library, Slough Museum pods, performance space (The Venue), community learning spaces, computer suites, exhibition space, office accommodation for library and community learning staff and the Register Office including a purpose-built wedding room.

The building has a large footprint and 3 floors. Facilities Officers open and close the building and a minimum of 1 Facilities Officer is permanently in attendance while the building is open. The presence of these staff allows a predominantly self-service Library service to be provided with a reduced number of dedicated library staff also in attendance.

- **The Britwell Centre**, Wentworth Avenue, Slough, SL2 2DS is a community centre incorporating a library, office accommodation, Council services, meeting rooms, learning opportunities, community activities, café, volunteering opportunities and a community garden. A medical centre also operates from the same site.

Facilities Officers open and close the building and a minimum of 1 Facilities Officer is permanently in attendance while the building is open except on Saturdays. A Customer Services Agent is in attendance in the foyer area from 9.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday. The presence of these staff allows a predominantly self-service Library service to be provided without the need for dedicated library staff to be in attendance.

- **Langley Library**, Trelawney Avenue, Slough SL3 7UF currently houses a library, customer service access point, interview room and small workroom / staff area.

Facilities officers open and close the building but are not in attendance while the building is open. Customer Services currently offer appointments from this location, but this is subject to cancellation. At the time of writing, the library can only open for a predominantly self-service Library service when we have library staff in attendance since no staff from other services consistently work from the building. Library staff will attend and be present in this building for the hours advertised unless and until officers from other services become available to assist.

- **Cippenham Library**, Elmshott Lane, Slough SL1 5RB is a library which includes a Play and Learn Room and an Activities Room which were funded by the Big Lottery Communities Lottery Fund and provide safe indoor and outdoor play areas for children's activities.

Facilities officers open and close the building but are not in attendance while the building is open. Customer Services currently offer appointments from this location, but this is subject to cancellation. At the time of writing, the library can only open for a predominantly self-service library service when we have library staff in attendance since no staff from other services consistently work from the building. Library staff will attend and be present in this building for the hours advertised unless and until officers from other services become available to assist.

2.16.2 The proposed 2023/24 opening times have taken responses from the public consultation and the evidence from library staff over the past 12-months and pre-Covid into consideration: -

- Although the consultation responses suggested that “evening” openings would be popular, the experience of library usage both pre-Covid and over the last 12-months is that there is very limited use of the library buildings after 6pm. The

Curve remains the busiest location at later times and the community libraries were the least used. It is proposed that the library area at the Curve will stay open to the public until 6pm once a week.

- The afternoons are consistently the busiest times for active library borrowing, private study time and use of IT.
- More than 70% of all borrowing is from the children and young people's section of the library and this tends to take place after 3pm on weekdays and on Saturdays.
- Literacy events are usually hosted in the morning (e.g. school groups, parent & toddler activity etc) which is why it is important to retain buildings being open and accessible between 10am and lunchtime where we can. There is increased borrowing when these activities take place.
- The Council must deliver both a *comprehensive* service (meeting the needs of residents) and an *efficient* service (provides best value for money). The service has identified the optimal times to keep the buildings open balancing best use of existing staff with those times when the libraries are most visited. At the current time Cippenham and Langley libraries will not be open every weekday. The proposed operating hours make best use of existing staff and reduce dependency on limited hour's part time staff during the week. This provides a robust and reliable operational model but means that we are not able to keep all libraries staffed and open 6 days a week. We will extend opening hours if we are able to secure formal co-location of other services into buildings with library areas during 2023/24 and/or where we are able to sustain a reliable cohort of volunteers who can work alongside other staff during these extended hours.
- With the reduced library staff cohort and the absence of staff from other services to support Saturday opening we propose to open on Saturdays as follows: -
  - The Curve will be open every Saturday. This is the main central library in the borough and drives customer footfall to support the wider town centre economy.
  - Britwell library will be open on the last Saturday every month.
  - Cippenham will be open for the first two Saturdays each month.
  - Langley will be open for the last two Saturdays each month.
- In addition to allowing library activities on Saturdays these openings will also allow activities like councillor surgeries to take place in local communities, reinforcing these buildings as important community assets.
- The frequency of Saturday openings will be reviewed considering future availability of volunteers once a strong pool has been established. Our priority will be to increase Britwell Hub openings to two Saturdays every month as soon as we can.

- All library openings on Saturday are currently dependent upon Facilities Officers opening and closing buildings.

2.16.3 **The second** is to use library staff to deliver community events to improve literacy, promote the on-line library offer and drive-up membership of the library service. The team will work with partner organisations across Slough including schools, nurseries, Children's Centres, Adult Social Care, Everyone Active, Home Slough and other voluntary and community groups, to deliver a programme of literacy-based outreach events and activities such as Rhyme-time, storytelling, poetry clubs, book clubs and Summer Reading Challenge. The service will also deliver and promote the Library at Home service for residents unable to get to an event or permanent building (this will be a significant part of the service supported by volunteers).

2.16.4 **The third** is for library staff to review and enhance the on-line library offer to ensure accessing on-line publications is easy, that reserving or renewing hard-copy publications and joining on-line is easy, that using self-service kiosks is easy and by constantly updating and refreshing information and guidance about the on-line offer.

2.16.5 **The fourth** delivery mechanism is to focus the role of the Principal Libraries Outreach Officer to prioritise recruitment, retention, and co-ordination of library volunteers in addition to sourcing external resources, including sponsorships, grants and partnership working, to support services to improve literacy. The aim will be to deploy volunteers into each library building on each day to augment the predominantly self-service library offer. Volunteers will also support the delivery of outreach events, especially the Library at Home service.

2.16.6 The service level described in this report will be delivered using paid library staff. Volunteers will not be used to replace staff but will be able to help deliver additional value. For example, library staff may be able to offer a short period of time to customers who need help to access specific digital services, but volunteers will be able to offer more time and help the customer gain confidence in accessing a range of digital services. Where staff deliver a literacy event the addition of volunteers will mean all attendees can receive additional input and have a more interactive experience.

2.16.7 Because volunteers are not required to deliver core services, we have not set a recruitment target. The Library Service will be testing two volunteer recruitment methods. The first is direct recruitment by the service, specifically by engaging with the residents who expressed an interest via the public consultation. A small number of volunteers is likely to be recruited by the end of 2022/23 with a larger number specifically wanting to support the Summer Reading Challenge in 2023. The second method is to work with a voluntary sector partner which will act as a volunteer agency on behalf of the Library Service. It is anticipated that another cohort of volunteers will be secured via this route in early 2023/24.

2.17 The budget for purchasing publications (hard copy and e-resources) will remain at £90k annum to maintain spend just within the CIPFA most similar group.

### 3. Implications of the Recommendation

#### 3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 This report is seeking approval of the proposed 2023-24 Library operating model which will see adoption of a predominantly self-service Library service in 4 buildings (Local Access Points) with library areas in them overseen by library officers and/or officers from other services to ensure safety and security.
- 3.1.2 The available budget for 2022/23 for Library services is £958k. This is made up of staffing costs of £834k and non-staffing costs of £124k. The library staff budget needed to run the predominantly self-service Library service in 2023/24 is £558k (supported by occasional use of staff from other services to intervene/provide oversight at zero cost to the library service) + non staffing costs of £124k = £682k. This gives a saving to the library budget of £276k.
- 3.1.3 The savings will be made by not recruiting to vacant library officer posts. There will be no redundancies.
- 3.1.4 The library service is not dependent on specific buildings. No building management financial savings or asset sale receipts have been assumed in these proposals. However, it should be noted that if any current building including a library area is permanently closed this would bring building-based savings including repairs, maintenance, business rates, insurance, utility costs and facilities officer's time. Indicative building management costs are set out in the table below: -

Location	Repairs & Maint.	FO Costs & Mgt Fee	Business Rates	IT Asset Costs	Heat, Light & Power	Total
<b>Langley Library</b>	£24,422	£8,884	£26,112	£11,977	£14,729	<b>£86,124</b>
<b>The Curve</b>	£167,792	£86,801	£386,560	£44,241	£261,690	<b>£947,084</b>
<b>Britwell Hub</b>	£43,190	£59,026	£66,560	£12,157	£37,704	<b>£218,638</b>
<b>Cippenham Library</b>	£22,155	£9,138	£15,843	£11,977	£14,219	<b>£73,332</b>

Note - if a library area is discontinued, then the building costs remain unless the building is closed/sold. Costs to keep a building secure would be incurred should services be removed before a building is sold.

#### 3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 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.*

3.2.2 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 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.

3.2.3 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)

3.2.4 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 from 2021/22, and the equality impact of the decision. When proposing to change and to 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.

### 3.3 Risk management implications

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>
As the Council closes buildings in the future and relocates office-based staff into remaining buildings, the floor space available for library areas	High	The library service is not dependent on specific buildings. Alternative options for providing a physical library can be explored including use of	Medium / Low

Risk	Rating	Mitigation	Residual risk
in The Curve, The Britwell Centre, Cippenham Library and the Langley Hub may need to reduce.		foyer areas at Leisure Centres and other retained community buildings.	
Facilities Officers and/or Customer Services staff are withdrawn from Britwell Hub so are unable to support the predominantly self-service Library service by providing occasional intervention and oversight of library areas	Medium	A Corporate approach needs to be taken to where savings are best taken and if the collaboration with the library service proved to conflict the opportunity to make a bigger saving for Facilities or for Customer Services then consequential changes to the library service may need to be agreed as part of these proposals.	Low
Facilities Officers are withdrawn from The Curve so are unable to support the predominantly self-service Library service by providing occasional intervention and oversight of library areas	Medium	A Corporate approach needs to be taken to where savings are best taken and if the collaboration with the library service proved to conflict the opportunity to make a bigger saving for Facilities, then consequential changes to the library service may need to be agreed as part of these proposals.	Low
The Library Service does not provide a comprehensive and efficient service and the council.	Medium	<p>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.</p> <p>The EIA Action Plan commits the service to carry out regular, light touch surveys to test and evaluate if usage of library services is being affected.</p>	Low



<b>Risk</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Residual risk</b>
Increase in waiting times for publications to be available due to limited stock. Mitigated by managing expectations through communications.	High / Medium	Identifying good practice from other councils in the most similar group to implement in Slough. This could include, for example, book donation schemes.	Medium / Low

### 3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 The benefit of being able to walk to a local library was mentioned by many respondents to the consultation. Keeping the four buildings to provide library service and promoting the on-line services available will reduce the need for users to drive to locations to receive library services. The public consultation exercise found that 60% of library users walk to library buildings (Q7 of consultation). Some residents did raise concerns about lack of parking at The Curve, but this location is well served by public transport being less than a 5-minute walk from Slough Bus Station and Train Station. Bus stops are also close by on Wellington Street, High Street and Windsor Road.

### 3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The library service carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in September 2021 as part of a Needs Assessment. This EIA included an action plan to ensure that any equality implications were mitigated and managed. The EIA was updated considering the public consultation for the March 2022 Cabinet Paper and has been updated again for this Cabinet Paper (Appendix B).

3.5.2 The recommendation to operate the library service in four buildings, The Curve, The Britwell Centre, Cippenham Library and Langley Hub addresses 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 (see 3.4.1 above with 60% of library users walking to a library building).

3.5.3 The recommendation to adopt the service plan will ensure that the service seeks out more volunteers to develop the overall service offer to allow an expansion of the Library at Home service for residents who have disabilities that mean they are unable to leave their homes. Work to understand in detail the actual demand from residents to volunteer in the library service began in 2022. Initial drop-in information sessions for residents who responded to the public consultation expressing an interest have been held. Work is now beginning with Slough Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS) to refine the volunteer recruitment process.

3.5.4 Maintaining a publications budget of just £90,000 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 including procurement options such as consortium purchasing.

### 3.6 Procurement implications

Not applicable.

### 3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 The recommendations in this report will not see redundancies. The savings will be made by not recruiting to vacant library officer posts.

### 3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 This proposal is recommending that all current buildings which include a library area continue to provide a library area as part of the shared services collocating in the building unless or until the building is sold.

3.8.2 As the Council closes buildings in the future and relocates office-based staff into remaining buildings, the floor space available for library areas in The Curve, The Britwell Centre, Cippenham Library and the Langley Hub may need to reduce.

## 4. **Background Papers**

- None