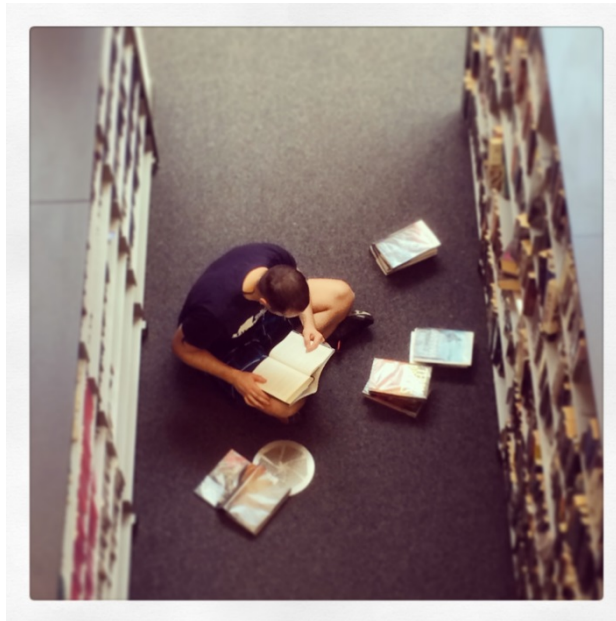


Transforming Our Libraries 2017 – 2021



**Delivering innovation and creativity across
the Library Service, supporting our
communities and their aspirations**

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1.0 Purpose of Library Strategy

The core purpose for developing a Library Strategy is to ensure there is clarity in the relationship between the Library Service and Wigan Council's overall strategy, goals and objectives.

The Deal for the Future 2020 sets out the Council's vision for Wigan Borough to be a confident place with confident people. By the close of 2016, Wigan Council has realised savings of £115m, without using any Council's reserves to prop up the budget. This has been achieved by making difficult decisions and thinking creatively to transform services rather than cutting them.

This same approach is being used to transform the borough's Library Services, helping to shape and provide an effective service at the heart of our communities. Working with those same communities, the Library Service will offer a more joined-up, asset-based customer journey with service enhancements made possible through *The Deal*.

1.1 Drivers of change

A number of drivers have led to a need for Wigan's Library Service to review the way it operates, the services it provides and the methods of delivery. Since 2011 Wigan's Library Service has been following the strategic direction as laid out in *The Next Chapter*. This vision for delivery of the service introduced a tiered service and, following additional refinements in April 2013, included standardised library hours.

In November 2014, Wigan's Library Service transferred out of Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (known at that time as WLCT), and was brought back under the control of Wigan Council, sitting within Customer Services.

The direction of travel for the Library Service remained true to the principles laid out in *The Next Chapter* report. As part of the reintegration of the service into the Council, it was recognised that closer integration of services could be achieved, bringing cost efficiencies, and an improved customer journey. The importance of technology and digital access brings clear synergies between the Library Service and other customer-facing functions within Customer Services.

With a need to release overall savings of £1.4m from the library budget for 2017/18, the opportunity for an innovative approach has presented itself. *Transforming Our Libraries* demonstrates how a new direction of travel can deliver a service that meets the financial challenges, whilst also providing a service for our residents and customers that enhances the overall offer.

1.2 Listening to our residents

The innovative proposals that underpin *Transforming Our Libraries* seek to protect library provision across the borough and avoid library closures. This approach is very different from that taken by many other local authorities and underpins the importance Wigan Council places on its Library Service as a natural meeting place for communities, building social connectedness and raising aspirations through a holistic service model.

Through consultation surveys and events, the feedback of customers and residents are integral to the informing of our future service delivery and shaping the transformed service. This

transformation programme will see a simplification in library tiers, offering 'Central' library provision (at Leigh and Wigan) and 'Community' library provision at all other libraries. Access to other services will form part of the library offer at all sites, wherever practical, and Customer Services will continue to seek out opportunities to increase this when and as they arise.

Transforming Our Libraries provides the blueprint for future Library Service provision within Wigan borough, whilst being flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances to maximise future opportunities. Wigan's Library Service will continue to evolve in line with changing customer need, offering increased access to services and an enhanced customer journey.

1.3 A phased approach

It is recognised that the changes necessary to strengthen the role of libraries as natural enablers in our communities will require some element of flexibility, as the requirement of our libraries and the library staff members continues to evolve.

Phase 1 of this work seeks to align service provision to the results of the consultation as closely as possible, and to bring about the transformation necessary to deliver overall fiscal savings of £1.4m for the 2017/18 financial year.

Phase 2 could see further efficiencies being required, alongside the need to continue to seek the potential for further improvements, based on the principles held within Phase 1. This is likely to include strengthening the way in which some of the library buildings are used, and working to improve access to services to a standardised level across all our communities.

Phase 2 will be about refining the values of *Transforming Our Libraries* and building agility and sustainability into the Library Service, ensuring that the offer is able to continually adapt to changing customer demand and usage patterns, ensuring that as well as being 'efficient and comprehensive' that Wigan's Library Service is fit for purpose and representative of the communities it serves.

2.0 Current position and challenges

The Library Service within Wigan borough is a statutory service, provided by Wigan Council (Customer Services). The Public Libraries and Museums Act¹ general duty of library authorities' states:

'It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'

In 2015/16, Wigan Libraries had 868,911 visitors, issued 566,519 items and answered 151,661 enquiries. In the same period, 192,196 people used the public access computers for a total of 118,854 hours.

Current library provision in Wigan borough comprises of 15 libraries (2 Central Libraries, 6 Local Libraries and 7 Express Libraries). Additional Library Services for the public are provided through the Home Delivery Library Service, which provides a book delivery service for those customers for whom access to a library is difficult. Educational establishments are

¹ The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

supported through the Schools Cultural Service, which operates on a subscription customer model.

2.1 Provision of service

Wigan's Library Service provides core library functions in 15 communities across the borough, which are identified by Wigan Council branding. Two of these libraries are community-led. The core library functions can broadly be grouped as follows:

- The Reading Offer Book lending and free internet access
- The Information Offer Non-fiction books and free internet access
- The Digital Offer Free to use computers, digital support and printing facilities
- The Health Offer Regular events and activities for everyone, building 'social connectedness' and special group events, such as Dementia Sessions and reading groups for people with visual impairments

- The Learning Offer Courses and access to information to build skills and self-reliance

Libraries provide school readiness for younger children, and help to improve attainment levels for older pupils. Alongside this, free computer access enables children access to IT equipment for homework and study purposes, and activities in libraries also provide opportunities for children and young people to increase their digital skills and abilities, through creative sessions which include coding and work on mobile devices.

For adults, as well as being a place to learn and develop new skills, libraries also help to combat social isolation, and dementia sessions at a number of libraries also offer improved wellbeing for those living with dementia and their carers. For those who are seeking work, the network of free to access computers provides an essential tool to enable them to become self-reliant. Sessions for residents for whom English is not their first language help to engage all aspects of our communities, making libraries social connectors.

Our libraries already have a number of volunteers who support staff in the provision of services, and who facilitate the opening of a number of sites (Aspull and Hope Libraries, and Saturday opening at Shevington Library).

The Next Chapter encouraged partnership working, and *Transforming Our Libraries* looks to take this to the next stage. Working alongside The Deal (including Deal for Communities Investment funding), volunteering provides opportunities for the local community to look at ways to develop services to ensure that the offer fits the community it serves. For example, enhanced opening hours could be facilitated by volunteers, as could the provision of additional services.

2.2 Fiscal savings and income generation

The proposals that inform *Transforming Our Libraries* include a combination of fiscal savings and income generation.

Fiscal savings includes the integration of library staff with customer facing staff, and bringing Life Centre provisions out of other buildings and into libraries wherever possible. These

savings are made possible through the reintegration of Library Services into the Council, and offer opportunities to improve and simplify the customer journey.

A number of income generation opportunities have been identified, alongside opportunities to reduce the footprint of some of the larger library buildings. This provides the ability to bring in other partners, especially at Leigh Library where the vision is to develop an offer that mirrors that provided at Wigan, with Life Centre, library and other partner services sharing the building.

The Library Service continues to have close links with Greater Manchester Libraries and the Society of Chief Librarians, bringing opportunities for closer working, such as the North West Libraries Consortium, which continues to offer an effective stock procurement solution.

2.3 Buildings

Wigan Borough currently has 15 libraries and 6 Life Centres, operating across a total of 18 buildings in 15 communities. The buildings our libraries occupy are broadly fit for purpose, although some continue to present issues which could affect their future sustainability: Atherton Library was planned to relocate from its current site in *The Next Chapter* report, due to maintenance costs associated with the building, and DDA² access at Tyldesley Library could be improved.

In integrating libraries with customer facing services, the Life Centres at Atherton, Leigh and Platt Bridge will be relocated to their equivalent library. This will help to enhance libraries as being the natural meeting point of their community, and part of a key network of front-facing council buildings across the borough.

Wigan Borough has two libraries which are co-located with schools (Lamberhead Green at Abraham Guest Academy and Platt Bridge at Platt Bridge Community School). Ashton Library and Standish Library provide space for the deliver for the local Start Well Centres. Marsh Green, Ince and Wigan libraries already co-locate with Life Centres. At Leigh, the first floor of the library building is operated by Turnpike CIC, which was established in January 2017.

Of the 15 library buildings, most are in council ownership, with Wigan being part of the PFI campus. Ince, Lamberhead Green, and Platt Bridge libraries are all in partner buildings.

2.4 Staffing

Customer Services has a cohort of public facing staff, which include teams that provide services at Libraries and Life Centres. Together, they provide customers with help and support that are asset-based, and embody the principles of The Deal: helping residents to do more for themselves. An integration of management functions was undertaken in 2015/16, bringing together culture (libraries) and customer-facing management functions into one unified team.

In libraries, this includes assisting customers with enquiries and supporting them in the use of computers and safe use of the internet. This follows the Life Centre approach to model and demonstrate the benefits of online solutions to enable customers to 'channel shift', moving them towards cheaper access channels for reporting and amending information and making payments for Council services.

² Legislation to improve access for people who are living with disabilities, as stipulated in the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995.

Inherited operational issues³ in libraries resulted in the need for two members of library staff to be available at all times, even in the smallest of libraries, to ensure quality customer service. However, much of the time, in smaller libraries, public usage of the service does not warrant this level of staffing. Through integration of library and Life Centre staff, working with partners and the community libraries there is an opportunity to make more efficient and effective use of this resource.

In more bespoke service areas, such as the Home Delivery Library Service, there are different models of staffing. Within Home Delivery, staff select books for customers, who find it difficult to access a library directly, and then deliver them to their homes. This service has largely been based on a self-referral model, and is not considered to be an asset-based⁴ approach.

Transforming Our Libraries is about enhancing services in line with The Deal and corporate policy: options to move the Home Delivery Library Service to a true asset-based approach presents an opportunity to provide additional support to those at most risk of social isolation in Wigan Borough.

Wigan's Library Service already has a well-established volunteering programme, which includes two community-led libraries, and 10 volunteers who provide added value during the week, as well as facilitating weekend opening at Shevington Library for two hours on a Saturday morning. In total, 101 people provided volunteering support in libraries during 2016/17.

Whilst it is acknowledged that some areas demonstrate greater success with volunteering than others, there is a clear opportunity to further enhance service delivery, whilst also providing individuals with new skills and experiences, in line with the ethos of The Deal.

3.0 *Transforming Our Libraries: enhancing the offer*

The transformation of Wigan's Library Service has been driven by the need to find an overall reduction of £1.4m from the library budget for 2017/18. However, through an innovative approach and a combination of fiscal savings and income generation, the resulting service will be an enhanced, more customer focused offer. Critically, *Transforming Our Libraries* is about retention of Library Services across the borough, and how, through embedding the principles of The Deal, the service provision can be enhanced.

3.1 Books

Books remain at the heart of the library experience for many residents and provide links to a number of Council priority areas, including school readiness, education and as a driver to combat social isolation (through initiatives such as reading groups). The book purchasing consortium⁵ ensures value for money in procuring new books, and the opportunities provided by supplier selection have been identified as ways to increase efficiencies and improve the supply of new titles.

³ These issues were related to previous working practices, when the library service in Wigan was operated by WLCT. As part of the transfer back to Wigan Council in November 2014 and the proposed integration of Culture and Customer Facing staff that formed part of the *Transforming Our Libraries* consultation, there are now other solutions available to make best use of the service's staffing resource, which include the introduction of core opening hours, supported by new working patterns that are aligned to business need.

⁴ An 'asset-based approach' in this context looks at what people can do / are interested in and then seeks to find solutions to enable them to enjoy an improved quality of life by engaging other service areas and helping to build the individual's own self-reliance.

⁵ The North West Libraries Consortium, which provides Wigan with advantageous terms for the supply of shelf-ready library books.

Work on individual library book stock is being carried out that will refine the offer at each site, tailoring it to local demand. Wigan's Library Service recognises that each of the 15 communities served by libraries are diverse and it is the ambition of *Transforming Our Libraries* to ensure that the service has the flexibility to adapt to meet the expectations and demands of each of those communities. This approach ensures that the stock profile at each library will be aligned to customer demand, whilst also protecting a wide range and breadth of library stock available within the borough.

Increased stock rotation and a process of continuous refinements made possible through an automated supplier selection⁶ model will help to ensure that the stock selection procedure for borough libraries will have the agility to reflect a pattern of continually changing customer needs.

3.2 Digital delivery

Our libraries already embrace self-service technology, offering customers the opportunity to borrow and return their own library books, and to book and release their own computers at our two central libraries. The Library Service is committed to providing free to use public access computers and internet access for all.

Wigan's Library Service supports the Council's Digital Strategy, through the provision of free internet access via the Public Access Network (PAN)⁷. In addition, all libraries offer free public wifi for customer's devices. This network is due for refresh in the 2017/18 financial year, and will see improvements made to public wifi in all libraries.

The Library Service is intending to replace its public access computers with new devices during the 2017/18 financial year. This investment in the service's digital infrastructure is deemed as essential to the provision of an 'efficient and comprehensive' service as the current devices are nearing the end of their lifespan.

Wigan's Library Service has a suite of tablets for use in planned customer sessions demonstrating the use of tablets and apps. Online solutions are available to customers to assist in searching the library catalogue and placing reservations.

Libraries in Wigan Borough do not currently offer ebooks, and whilst we will continue to monitor this situation, demand still appears to be low for this service. In the public consultation, only 5 respondents mentioned ebooks as being something they would like to see provided by their local library.⁸ For these reasons, our Library Service will continue to direct resources towards the purchase of physical books, whilst keeping a watchful eye on developments affecting ebooks and emagazines in the public library sector.

3.3 Volunteers

⁶ Supplier selection is a book selection model whereby the company that provides library book stock selects that stock – either through personal intervention or a computerised system – on behalf of the library service. This reduces operational costs for the service and ensures a quicker and more efficient selection process, which has the potential to ensure new books reach library shelves quicker and that key new titles are not missed.

⁷ The Public Access Network is also known as the People's Network, and comprises of computers available for booking for public use. As well as providing free internet access, these machines also offer access to printing services and use of popular software, such as Microsoft Office. Scanning facilities are available from selected machines.

⁸ Ebooks currently available to UK library services have only a limited range of bestseller titles and are not compatible with standard Kindle ereaders (they can be viewed via Kindle Fire mobile devices).

Volunteering in Wigan's Library Service takes several different forms: some volunteers are involved in the daily operation of Library Services, some provide added value through facilitating groups and activities, and some are members of 'Friends of' groups⁹.

A number of libraries have full or partial volunteer-led services (Aspull, Hope and Saturday opening at Shevington). *Transforming Our Libraries* looks to expand on this, providing opportunities for volunteers to enhance opening hours that reflect the desires of the communities they represent.

Volunteering supports the aims of The Deal, as well as helping to build a sustainable solution with pathways which enable individual volunteers to grow and develop and, where appropriate, gain transferable skills that will enable them to secure paid work.

3.3.1 Home Delivery Library Service

The volunteer offer has also been identified as a means to expand and develop the Home Delivery Library Service, whilst also reducing the costs of this bespoke and costly service.

Using an asset-based approach, the new model for Home Delivery Library Service uses a mixed economy of key organisations and volunteers to provide a more holistic solution, which places the individual at its centre.

This new approach seeks to find ways to continue to provide services to those most at need with our communities, whilst also finding mechanisms that will like those individuals in a more meaningful way to their communities. It is about empowering people and enabling them to do and participate more, rather than providing a basic service that is disconnected to other Council departments and partners.

3.4 Developing and brokering partnerships

The Next Chapter saw an increased focus in partnership working, which included the transfer of the operation of services on the first floor of the Turnpike Centre to a community organisation. There has been no further co-location of libraries to partner buildings, and indeed *Transforming Our Libraries* refines this position further by recognising library buildings as natural meeting points of the communities they serve.

The partner focus of *Transforming Our Libraries* is to seek to continue to develop existing partnerships, especially where this is to the benefit of communities. In addition, *Transforming Our Libraries* advocates the brokering of new partnerships, which can bring additional opportunities and co-location of services to help improve and refine the customer journey, whilst also bringing income generation opportunities which in turn reduce the revenue costs of the buildings.

Partnerships of this nature also bring staffing benefits, which help to maximise opening hours for residents and which provide greater efficiencies, enabling better use of the library staff resource.

There exist a number of partner agreements in place which will require further work to ensure that these agreements are aligned to the new operating model and that the Library Service is

⁹ As of March 2017, Library 'Friends of' groups operate at Atherton, Standish and Tyldesley Libraries. A 'Friends of' group for the Village Art Gallery, which forms part of Shevington Library, is in development phase.

being fairly compensated for spaces allocated under these agreements. For partners that utilise library buildings on a regular basis, a model will be developed to provide a fair and equitable outcome for both the partner and the library service, looking at the value of the space used against the benefits for the community.

A guiding principle of *Transforming Our Libraries* is the protection of libraries as neutral, safe spaces for the community to meet and feel ownership of. Recognising this, community use of library spaces will be facilitated wherever possible (and working with partners to help develop beyond standard opening hours will form part of this) and will be free of charge as far as is reasonably practical.

Space in libraries will also be made available, again where practically possible, for *Deal in the Community Investment Fund* recipient partners to host events and activities.

In line with the desire that libraries are neutral and safe spaces, Wigan's Library Service has the right to refuse any events that could be seen to challenge this neutrality and or risk the safety of those in the space.

3.5 Library locations

A key area of focus for *The Next Chapter* was the location of libraries, and several libraries relocated as part of the implementation of that strategy. As a result, the majority of the buildings occupied by Wigan's Library Service are fit for purpose and in the right locations. Libraries which relocated included Hindley and Ince libraries. Atherton Library was planned for relocation to the 14-19 education site at the old Hesketh Fletcher site, which is now operating as Atherton Community School.

One of the proposals that formed part of the consultation that has informed *Transforming Our Libraries* looked at the relocation of Atherton Library to Atherton Town Hall. At a public meeting, which was held in Atherton Library, there was a clear strength of feeling amongst those attending that library provision should remain in the current building¹⁰.

3.5.1 Atherton Library

Feedback from the public consultation meeting and data from the overall consultation has now been considered and options reappraised. In *The Next Chapter* report, the ongoing maintenance costs of Atherton Library were noted to be prohibitive and that a relocation of the library would be essential.

The options appraisal, on the back of the consultation data, shows that the Town Hall remains the best solution for Atherton Library: the Town Hall is in better overall condition and offers space for multiple uses. However, the consultation demonstrates the desire within the local community to protect services in Atherton, whilst the categorisation of the library as a Local Library, and its subsequent reduced opening hours, has clearly caused concern within the community.

It is in response to this feedback that the new model of delivery in *Transforming Our Libraries* removes *The Next Chapter* tiers, and replaces them with just two library categories: **Central** and **Community** (see [3.6 Defining our libraries](#) for an overview of the categories). The new model of delivery for Atherton Library within the Town Hall, in line with Community library

¹⁰ In total 51 people attended the meeting, and from comments received at the meeting, it was evident that those attending felt very strongly that the library should not move from its current location.

classification, will increase accessibility to services over 6 days a week, following the introduction of new opening hours and the integration of the library and Life Centre within the same building. The resultant library offer will be a traditional library model, and will continue to have distinct spaces for adult and children's library provision.

3.5.2 Hindley Library

Hindley Library relocated to its current location in First Avenue in January 2012, and shares its building with Adult Services and the Chapter One tearoom, which is operated by CRISP Communities CIC. There have been concerns over footfall to the site, but this seems largely to be due to a cut through from the main shopping street having been closed to the public due to ongoing building work. It is hoped that once the work is completed, the alleyway will be able to be reopened.

CRISP Communities has submitted a funding application to The Deal for Communities Investment Fund and this does present opportunities for closer working and the possibility of a different operating model that could unlock additional potential for residents accessing services from Hindley Library.

3.5.3 Tyldesley Library

Tyldesley Library does continue to have maintenance issues, despite the completion of some remedial work in 2011, which it was hoped would provide a longer term solution. In addition, the building has poor access for those with mobility issues or who are wheelchair users due to the main entrance being accessed via a flight of stairs. In *The Next Chapter*, an option to relocate the library to Tyldesley Community Education Centre was considered, although this was not recommended as a solution at that time. The Library Service remains open to opportunities to find an alternative home for the library, should a suitable town centre location be viable.

3.5.4 Other libraries

Alongside the three libraries mentioned above, there is potential to look at other library buildings to ensure best use is made of space and that the offer is aligned to customer needs. This work is likely to form part of Phase 2, and is an example of the need for Wigan's Library Service to be flexible in its approach to ensure that each of the library buildings is best placed to meet community needs and ambitions.

3.6 Defining our libraries

Wigan Council is committed to the provision of a network of libraries that together serve the communities of Wigan Borough, but also recognises the need to refine this offer, and to work closer with our communities and partners to ensure that this multi-site delivery model remains viable and sustainable, whilst also offering the best possible service for our residents.

As mentioned previously in this strategy, under *The Next Chapter* the borough's libraries were split into tiers. Four tiers were identified: Central, Local, Express and Direct. Express libraries had the smallest number of opening hours¹¹, and Direct was intended to be the category for online and home delivery service options. In reality, the Direct tier was not utilised in practice

¹¹ Following *The Next Chapter*, Express opening hours were set at 'a minimum of 18 hours per week'. Following a review in 2013, this increase to 19 hours.

and, as a result, the term never entered into public consciousness.

Through the consultation undertaken in 2016/17, it became clear that it would be beneficial to review the three core tiers. In some communities it was evident that the 'Express' tier was viewed negatively, and seen as being a mechanism to reduce access, with the expected resultant drop in usage being used to bring about library closures. This was a view that was made very clear in the public consultation meeting in Atherton Library.

Listening to this feedback, the existing library tiers are being removed, and being replaced by a simplified model that will provide greater consistency and clarity around library provision across all of the borough's communities.

Central Libraries will operate at two sites in the borough: Wigan and Leigh. They will continue to have longer opening hours and through improvements to the footprint of the library provision, will provide an improved range of partner organisations, especially at Leigh Library. These libraries will follow the 'one stop shop' approach, first introduced in the Wigan Life Centre building.

Community Libraries will be those libraries that operate in our communities across the borough, and will encompass all other libraries in the borough. These libraries will continue to champion the core library offer: books, computers, information, events and meeting spaces. Opening hours will be maximised wherever possible through integrated services and community involvement.

3.7 Opening hours

The consultation asked customers to indicate when they currently visited libraries and when they would like to visit libraries. In line with the new library classifications of Central and Community, *Transforming Our Libraries* aims to develop standardised opening hours at all sites, through an integrated culture and customer facing team of staff, alongside a community delivered offer.

This community offer will compromise partners and / or volunteers, with the exact model being established through conversations with the community that surrounds each library. By working with the community of each library in this way, local refinements and enhancements to opening hours that reflect community need can be facilitated.

Transformation of our libraries

This strategy is informed at a local level by the principles of The Deal, *The Deal for the Future 2020*, the Council's *Digital Strategy* and the data that was gathered during the public consultation which ran from 14 November 2015 – 5 February 2016 (inclusive).

The consultation data has been used to strengthen and develop the proposals, and has been used to shape the *Transforming Our Libraries* strategy.

4.1 How we consulted

Three different consultation surveys ran for the duration of the libraries' public consultation: one survey sought the opinions of customers and residents who accessed services from library buildings, one survey asked Home Delivery Library Service customers their views, and one survey gathered the thoughts and comments of staff in culture and customer-facing.

In total 2,419 consultation responses were received across the three surveys. These broke down as 2,161 responses to the building survey, 179 to the Home Delivery Survey and 79 responses from staff. The surveys were available online, with paper copies available on request for both of the public surveys. Key stakeholders were informed via email of the intention to consult.

In addition, 6 public meetings were held (2 each at Leigh and Wigan libraries, and 1 each at Ashton and Atherton libraries). 2 drop-in sessions were facilitated at each of our 15 libraries, offering residents opportunities to directly ask any questions that may have been concerning them. An email address and dedicated webpage with 'frequently asked questions' and other consultation data being maintained throughout the consultation period.

No petitions were received during the consultation period.

4.2 Looking at the national context

The direction of travel that Wigan is taking for its Library Service, which is underpinned by the principles of The Deal, is an innovative one which is different to that being undertaken by many other local authorities, as the need to make considerable financial savings becomes increasingly pressing.

As a statutory service, Wigan's Library Service has made extensive use of national research underpinned by the results of the local consultation in shaping the *Transforming Our Libraries* strategy. This strategy is aligned with many of the principles within *The Next Chapter*.

4.2.1 The statutory requirement

The *Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964*¹² stipulates that:

"It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a **comprehensive and efficient** library service for all persons to make use thereof"

Prior to the start of the public consultation for the transformation of the Library Service, Wigan Library Service advised the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of the intention to review the service and that this would include public consultation. The service received no challenge as a result of this communication.

4.2.2 Libraries Deliver

The *Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021* report, released by the Libraries Taskforce in late 2016 reinforces the role of libraries in building stronger, more resilient communities, positioning libraries as enablers of healthier, happier lives and providers of improved digital access and literacy.

In delivering the ambition for a stronger Library Service, 7 outcomes are identified in the report that Library Services contribute to and which are seen as being critical to the individuals and communities in their areas. These are:

- Cultural and creative enrichment

¹² Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964

- Increased reading and literacy
- Improved digital access and (digital) literacy
- Helping everyone achieve their full potential
- Healthier and happier lives
- Greater prosperity
- Stronger, more resilient communities

4.2.3 The Universal Offer

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) introduced the Universal Offer for public libraries to recognise the five key areas of service which library customers and stakeholders see as being integral to a 21st century service. The five areas are:

- Learning offer
- Information offer
- Reading offer
- Digital offer
- Health offer

Transforming Our Libraries holds each of these offers at its core, and has utilised these Universal Offers to ensure that Wigan's Library Service is well-placed to meet the needs of our residents and the expectations of a modern library service.

4.3 Shaping the transformation

Transforming Our Libraries has been informed by local knowledge, the council's direction of travel, consultation data and regional / national library trends. What is absolutely clear is that libraries are held in high regard by the communities they serve, and that they continue to have relevance in an increasingly changeable world.

As a listening organisation, Wigan Council recognises this and the fundamental part libraries have in the future of our service delivery in the context of The Deal and asset-based approaches.

The need to realise overall savings of £1.4m for 2017/18 is the driver for *Transforming Our Libraries*, but at the heart of this strategy is a desire to retain library service provision and provide enhancements to the service through innovation and new ways of working, whilst also delivering a sustainable service model.

5.0 Summary

The guiding principles of this strategy will help to ensure that Wigan's Library Service is innovative at its core and best placed to meet the needs of the communities it serves and the individuals that make up those communities. Over the past few years, libraries have widened their customer base, offering those seeking work access to computers and the internet, providing opportunities for volunteering and courses to build and develop skills, whilst also supporting our increasingly ageing local population with services in the heart of their communities aimed at combatting social isolation.

Regular sessions to help those living with Dementia and their carers have been introduced, and our computer courses have evolved to meet changing customer needs. The service has

successfully secured external funding of £190,000 to enhance cultural activities across our libraries and the communities they serve, and to support the borough's creative economy.

Core services for children and young people include weekly storytime sessions, which help to build school readiness amongst some of our very youngest residents.

Over the coming years, a fundamental part of delivering the *Transforming Our Libraries* strategy will be the strengthening of our partnership working, so that as a collective group, we co-design and co-deliver a wide range of services that meet the community need and enhance the overall customer offer.

Transforming Our Libraries presents an opportunity to protect what is important about our libraries, enhance the service delivery and build strong partner and community links, making our libraries sustainable and reliable access points for a wide range of services and information, whilst also protecting a strong ethos of customer service through trained and engaged staff.

6.0 Bibliography

- ***The Next Chapter***, Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust, 2011
- ***The Deal for the Future 2020***, Wigan Council, 2015
- ***Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021***, Libraries Taskforce, 2016
- ***The Universal Offer***, Society of Chief Librarians

Transforming our Libraries Strategy 2017 - 2021

Our Vision: Confident Place - Confident People

Integrated workforce

- Holistic approach to statutory Library provision creating wrap around services to meet the need of our communities
- Enabling an effective, efficient delivery model for services to ensure a library provision is retained in our communities.
- Trained staff that support customers through asset based conversations

Library Co-location

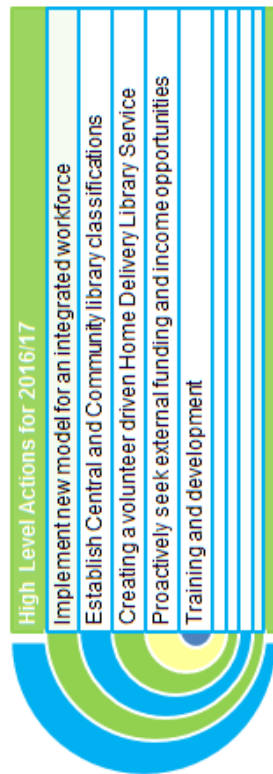
- Optimise building footprint and maximize opportunities for other key partners and organisations to share spaces
- Location of service provision to complementary buildings, that offer benefits to enhance the service and or widen access to it
- To continue to look for buildings that provide the best fit for the service and the communities it serves.

Volunteers and Community Co-production

- Volunteers, community groups and partners integral to providing an enhanced offer for communities, animating spaces and strengthening the sense of community engagement and ownership in line with the principles of the Deal.
- Libraries are recognised as being central to their communities.
- Capacity to support groups interested in applying for external funding to strengthen the library offer within our communities.

Home Delivery Library Service

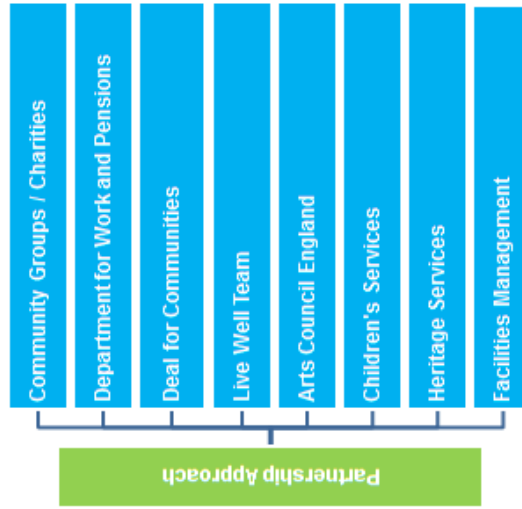
- Volunteers delivery model to build capacity
- A holistic offer which links to an asset-based approach
- Help connect the borough's more isolated and potentially vulnerable residents to their communities.



Aims of the Library Strategy

Our aim

- To be an innovative and creative Library Service
- To deliver a comprehensive and efficient service
- To develop a sustainable Central and Community Library offer
- To co-design with partners and communities to co-deliver services that customers want and need
- To build self-reliance, raise aspirations and skills and contribute to better health and well-being for all residents



Links with other policies and strategies

- Digital Strategy
- The Deal for the Future 2020
- Deal for Communities Investment Fund
- Start Well, Live Well, Age Well
- Social Mobility
- Worklessness
- Locality Plan

Success Measures

- Volumes of visitors
- Books issues
- Public Access Network hours
- Unique access to Public Access Network
- Number of volunteer hours contributed
- Number of community delivered events and activities
- AGMA / GMCA Benchmarking
- Feedback / survey responses

Governance

- Library Plan
- External Funding Partners
- Internal and External Audit