

Equality Impact Assessment



Name of project/proposal

Library and Registration Service: Library Service Transformation - Strategy to 2020

Contact name

Paula Crompton

Department

Culture, Communities and Business Services

Date to be published on Hantsweb

08 Apr 2016

Purpose for project/proposal

The Strategy to 2020 for Hampshire Library Service sets out the challenges, considerations and direction of travel over the next five years that will ensure the Library Service is sustainable and relevant to the diverse and changing needs of people who live, work or study in Hampshire. The Library Service must respond to changing demand, but also to provide services efficiently, develop staff, increase access to digital resources and ensure that the buildings used are fit for purpose.

Based on the Strategy, there is a requirement to make changes to the Library Service, and the proposal is to implement a number of actions over the course of the next four years.

Some of these actions will take place from 2016 and their impact is assessed within this EIA:

- Put the libraries into four different tiers to provide a standardised approach to services
- Invest £500,000 every year for four years from the £2 million Book Fund to make the libraries modern and vibrant, making best use of new technology and digital systems
- Increase the use of trained volunteers to support the work of paid Library Staff
- Develop library staff in line with business need
- Review the future viability of static libraries, using an agreed set of criteria
- Share library buildings with partner organisations or services for several services to be accessed in one visit
- Phase a withdrawal of poorly used library collections (e.g. CDs, games, and DVDs)

Another immediate action is to replace the mobile library service with modern alternatives by the end of June 2016. The impact of this change is covered by a separate EIA.

The progress of the Strategy will be reviewed in 2017 by which time there will be updated information on the savings required to be made by the Library Service by 2020. At this stage the following actions may be implemented, but these will be the subject of separate EIAs.

- Permanently reduce the Book Fund by £500,000 from 2020 onwards
- Transfer other specialist collections to other providers. These include the Naval Collection in Gosport and the Military Collection in Aldershot.

The Strategy was the subject of a public consultation. One of the common concerns raised during the public consultation was the possible closure of libraries. The strategy does not specifically identify libraries to be closed or transferred to the community; it only looks at criteria that will be used to review the viability of libraries. If in the future any libraries have to be closed they will be the subject of separate EIAs and further public consultations.

Consultation

Has a consultation been carried out?

Yes

There was a public consultation from 2 November 2015 to 16 January 2016.

Statutory considerations

Impact

Age	Low
Disability	Medium
Sexual orientation	Low
Race	Low
Religion and belief	Low
Gender reassignment	Low
Sex	Low
Marriage and civil partnership	None
Pregnancy and maternity	Low

Other policy considerations

Poverty	Low
Rurality	Low
Other factors	None

If other please describe

Geographical impact

Have you identified any medium or high impact?*

All Hampshire

Yes

No

Equality statement

Hampshire Library Service has to meet the challenge of providing a service that meets people's changing requirements of libraries in times of decline in use, whilst addressing the need to make savings by 2020, estimated to be £1.7 million, part of the impact of Government reduction in funding for Local Authorities. The Strategy to 2020 for the Library Service sets out proposals that will ensure that it is sustainable and relevant to the changing needs of the people that use the service, whilst meeting reductions in the budget.

The proposals to be implemented from 2016 are:

- Replace the expensive mobile library service with modern alternatives
- Put the libraries into four different tiers to provide a standardised approach to services
- Invest £500,000 every year for four years from the £2 million Book Fund to make the libraries modern and vibrant, making best use of new technology and digital systems
- Increase the use of trained volunteers to support the work of paid library staff
- Develop library staff in line with business need
- Review the future viability of static libraries, using an agreed set of criteria
- Share library buildings with partner organisations or services for several services to be accessed in one visit
- Phase a withdrawal of poorly used library collections (e.g. CDs, games, and DVDs)

The impact of the proposal to replace the mobile library service is considered in a separate EIA. The impact of the other proposals listed in the strategy is considered to be medium for Disability. Other than this the impact of the proposals listed in the strategy on the other protected characteristics and policy considerations is considered to be low or none.

Impact - Disability

The impact is assessed as medium for Disability because the reduction in the Book Fund by £500,000 (or 25% every year for 4 years) may have a greater impact on people with a disability. We do not have accurate data on the number of customers with a disability, as it is not mandatory to provide this information when joining. However people with a visual impairment will borrow Large Print books and audiobooks. These items are more expensive to purchase and a reduction in the Book Fund may have a greater impact on the number of Large Print and audiobooks purchased than other categories of stock.

Impact - Age and Sex

The impact is assessed as low because the analysis of our library users by age and sex tells us that people of different age groups and males and females use Hampshire's libraries in different proportions compared to their proportion in relation to the population of Hampshire. 32% of people using Hampshire Libraries (2014/5 data) are aged 0 - 17, whilst 21% of the population of Hampshire fall into this age group. This suggests that younger people will be impacted more by any changes to the service, should they be relevant to them. 27% of library users are aged over 60, compared to 26% of the population of Hampshire. Observation shows that more older people read Large Print books than other age groups and therefore this group will be impacted by a reduction in the spend on Large Print books. People aged 18 - 59 are under represented amongst library users. More women use libraries than men, approximately 60% to 40%, whereas 51% of the population of Hampshire is female. However the proposals in the Strategy will impact equally on all library customers, there are no specific changes that will affect women more than men.

Impact - Race

The impact is assessed as low for people who may not read or understand English as the 2011 census indicates that 3.8% of households in Hampshire contain at least one person who does not have English as their main language. The reduction in spending on the Book Fund may result in a reduction in the number of books in foreign languages which will impact this protected characteristic. The withdrawal of DVDs or music CDs may also impact this group.

Impact - other characteristics

The impact is also assessed as low for the other protected characteristics and policy considerations with the exception of marriage and civil partnership, which is assessed as none. We do not have data on the numbers of people with these characteristics that use the Library Service, but it is possible that some customers may be impacted by one or more of the proposals. It is possible, for example, that a person who is transgender or transitioning may be comfortable with library staff, but not with volunteers, and therefore will be impacted if the number of volunteers increases.

Potential mitigating actions – Disability

Although the reduction by £500,000 in spend on the Book Fund will have a greater impact on people who need to use Large Print or audiobooks because of the higher cost of these items, over the last 5 years there has been a significant decrease in the borrowing of these items. Audiobook issues decreased by 31% over the five years between 2010/11 and 2014/15, and issues of Large Print books declined by 37% in the same period. This suggests the impact of the reduction in Book Fund on Disability may not be as significant as it could be. Also the Library Service provides an alternative to large print and audiobooks: the free eBook and eAudiobook download service used by customers on their tablets, smart phones and eReaders. The use of this service is increasing significantly and it is likely that some of the decline in issues of large print and audiobooks is a result of customers, including those with a disability, choosing to download eBooks and eAudiobooks instead. Downloads of eBooks increased by 33% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 and downloads of eAudiobooks increased by 20% over the same period. The number of publishers allowing their books to be sold in eBook format to public library services is increasing and Hampshire Library Service will continue to purchase eBooks from as many publishers as possible to ensure that the range of eBooks available improves.

Other potential mitigating actions

Whilst changes to the Book Fund will result in a reduction in the purchase of books in foreign languages and therefore have an impact on people who do not read or understand English, steps have already been taken to minimise this impact. These include rationalising the number of languages available to the top ten spoken in Hampshire (Polish, French, Russian, Spanish, German, Italian, Tamil, Nepali, Chinese and Bengali) and allocating these books only to large libraries or to those libraries where the catchment population has shown a demand for a specific language (e.g. Nepali at Aldershot Library). The reservation system will allow customers whose library does not have a foreign language collection to request books in a foreign language from elsewhere in Hampshire and beyond. In addition the Library Service recently added Library Press Display to its collection of eResources. This provides free online access to newspapers from all over the world in 60 different languages.

Although one of the key proposals of the strategy is to provide a standardised approach to services by putting libraries into 4 tiers, there are no plans in the near future to reduce services in libraries that currently exceed the offer suggested for the tier in which they have been placed. For example, if a library currently opens for more days than suggested for their tier, they will not reduce their opening hours. All libraries will continue to provide a range of books, including children's books, and a range of activities for adults and children tailored to meet local community needs. When the Strategy is reviewed in 2017 there may be changes, for example to opening hours, but this would be subject to further consultation. The Community Library offer received support from Mobile Library Customers, is proposed to provide free online Library learning sessions for communities that are losing their mobile Library stop. This will show residents how to download eBooks, audio books, and eResources to their own mobile devices. Initially this will be offered to communities that currently have a mobile library stop.

The Community Library offer received support from Mobile Library Customers. It is proposed to provide free online Library learning sessions for communities that are losing their mobile Library stop. This will show residents how to download eBooks, audio books, and eResources to their own mobile devices. Initially this will be offered to communities that currently have a mobile library stop. One of the popular suggestions from respondents was to link in with community transport providers to help rural communities that are losing their mobile stop to access their nearest local library. This is being investigated.

The £500,000 from the reduction in the Book Fund every year for four years will be reinvested in the service, to improve buildings in need of modernisation and to make best use of new technology and digital systems. Building improvements ranging from relocation from upper floor units in shopping centres to a more accessible ground floor location, to refurbishments to improve layout will benefit all customers, including those with disability. Increasingly customers of all ages are making use of the online library service to download eBooks and find information, and developing these systems alongside providing improved staff training to assist customers, will have a positive impact for all customers.

The overall aim of the strategy is to ensure that by 2020 the Library Service is still relevant to customer's changing needs and therefore will continue to be used and valued by customers. However the service also has to meet the requirements to make savings by 2020, currently estimated to be £1.7 million. Although some of the proposals within the Strategy will have an impact on the protected characteristics, longer term the proposals should benefit all customers, by helping the service achieve the aim of the Strategy.

Date to review actions 18 Apr 2017

Final decision date

Final decision date due 18 Apr 2016
Decision to be made by Executive Member