



Special Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Tuesday 20 December 2022
Time 9.30 am
Venue Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the public and press. Members of the public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement and if registered to speak

1. Apologies
2. Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Items from Co-opted Members and other interested parties
5. Library Provision - Overview
 - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth (Pages 3 - 22)
 - b) Presentation by the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism (Pages 23 - 40)
6. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
12 December 2022

To: **The Members of the Environment and Sustainable
Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor B Coult (Chair)
Councillor J Elmer (Vice-Chair)

Councillors E Adam, P Atkinson, L Brown, J Charlton,
L Fenwick, G Hutchinson, C Kay, C Lines, B McAloon,
I McLean, R Manchester, C Martin, D Nicholls, R Potts,
J Purvis, J Quinn, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd and S Townsend

Co-opted Members

Mr T Cramond and Mr P Walton

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269711

**Environment and
Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

20 December 2022

Libraries Update



**Report of Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director Regeneration, Economy
& Growth**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the library service and initial findings of the County Durham Libraries Needs Assessment exercise.

Executive summary

- 2 This report focuses on updating the committee on the work of the library service carried out during the pandemic and its recovery following the easing and lifting of restrictions. It also gives an overview of the current public library service across County Durham and outlines the phased approach that is being taken to reviewing the service focussing on the results of the *Libraries For You* needs assessment public engagement, Phase One of the Libraries Transformation Programme.
- 3 Public libraries are a statutory service, as defined under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 with an obligation on upper tier authorities (County Council's) to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient service'.
- 4 The County Durham Library Service consists of 39 libraries including: a city centre library, eleven town centre venues and twenty-seven community-based libraries. In addition, there are three types of outreach service: books on wheels; book bus; and the mobile library service.

- 5 In March 2020, the library service, along with all other DCC cultural venues, closed to the public as part of the nationwide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During lockdown the library service introduced a hybrid offer of contact free services.
- 6 In May 2020 it was agreed by CMT that County Durham Library Service could recruit an external agency to carry out a 'Needs Assessment' on behalf of the Service as per DCMS guidance (Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport).
- 7 CounterCulture Partnership LLC was recruited to support the 'Needs Assessment' exercise.
- 8 The purpose of the 'Needs Assessment' was to carry out an engagement exercise to gain a clear evidence-based understanding of how the library service within County Durham can better respond to the needs of the modern community and to inform the shape of service provision for future users, as Phase One of the Transformation Programme.
- 9 A comprehensive engagement exercise to engage with library users, residents, community groups, focus groups and stakeholders took place between 7th January 2022 and 1st April 2022.
- 10 An External Reference Group has been set up as an expert panel to provide guidance and advice on the delivery of the Needs Assessment met. The ERG has met three times, on 10th June 2021, and 14th March and 26th July 2022. It is expected that the ERG will meet again in spring 2023 to advise on emerging options and opportunities to reshape the service in line with the outcomes of the initial needs assessment.
- 11 Feedback captured from the Needs Assessment has identified nine key elements/actions for change in order to develop County Durham Libraries Service in line with public and staff feedback; summarised as follows:
 - a. A **strategic review of the existing physical library network** taking into consideration the potential and current benefits of co-location and the need for capital investment.
 - b. A **review of library opening hours** and ways in which access can be extended considering changing needs and patterns of use post pandemic.
 - c. **Alignment of library outcomes with Council plans and priorities.**
 - d. **Investment in technology, and digital content and infrastructure** to expand access to services, including

development of a clear digital strategy which encompasses both operational and service delivery needs.

- e. A **workforce skills review and associated training** to support the changing needs and future facing ambitions of the service, its customers, and the communities of County Durham.
 - f. A **review of communications and marketing** to increase visibility and reach.
 - g. **Develop and deliver a compelling and accessible events programme** maximising the skills and knowledge of staff and volunteers to create a varied programme of activities, relevant to each local community.
 - h. **Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships** including a review of the current Mobile Library and other outreach services.
 - i. A **review of the current stock and content policy** alongside further work to better understand the changing needs and wants of audiences, and how the service can respond to feedback about the need for book stock to be 'bigger and better', with a wider selection of books across all ages and categories.
- 12 The outputs of the engagement exercise and the nine key elements will inform the next steps for producing options for an innovative, sustainable Library Service that meets the needs of communities within County Durham.
- 13 County Durham libraries have recovered well post lockdowns and shown that there is an appetite for a hybrid of digital and in person services going forward. There is an opportunity to use the results of the Phase One of the Library Transformation Programme to innovate and reposition the long-term library offer.
- 14 Following COVID-19, libraries are increasingly seen by residents as key community assets and they continue to play a highly visible role helping local people. Libraries are recognised and valued as community hubs for a range of services, activities, events, and social interaction, at the heart of both rural and town communities. In recent months this has included supporting our residents through the current cost of living crisis. All 39 libraries are registered warm spaces; a network of venues which aims to support residents across County Durham this winter. They are seen by many who currently use them as welcoming, free, safe, inclusive, and non-judgemental spaces that belong to everyone.
- 15 Libraries are recognised and valued as community hubs for a range of services, activities, events, and social interaction, at the heart of both rural and town communities. They are seen by many who currently use

them as welcoming, free, safe, inclusive, and non-judgemental spaces that belong to everyone

Recommendations

- 16 Members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note this update and comment on the 9 key elements for change

Background

- 17 Public Libraries are a statutory service, as defined under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964¹, with an obligation on upper tier authorities (County Councils) to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient service'. They must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available. What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area Councils therefore have the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs.
- 18 In providing this service, councils must, among other things:
- a. encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service (section 7(2)(b))
 - b. lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (in accordance with section 8(3))
- 19 Decisions made by councils about library services may also be subject to legal challenge by way of judicial review.
- 20 The Secretary of State for DCMS (and other ministers on their behalf) has a duty under the Act to: superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by councils in England, and to secure the proper discharge by councils of their functions as library authorities. DCMS is responsible for the superintendence and promoting the improvement of libraries across England². To support this duty, DCMS monitors developments in library services across England.
- 21 The Council's high-level priorities are set out in our Council Plan, and County Durham Libraries Service is part of the Connected Communities, Towns and Villages key programmes of work.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>

² *Guidance – Libraries as a statutory service* –

Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport – updated 15th December 2021.

- 22 Durham County Council's library service consists of 39 libraries, 12 of which are town centre based and 27 are smaller community based (Figure 1).
- 23 The library service also offers digital, outreach and rural services including:
- a. **Library Online**, which enables customers to join the library, browse the library catalogue, access their library accounts and book a public access internet PC in any library. In addition, it provides access to a wide range of digital resources including eBooks, eMagazines, eNewspapers and eComics as well as a range of eResources including British Standards Online, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Grove Music Online, Who's Who and Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. In addition to Library Online each library also offers free access to computers, Wi-Fi, and a printing and photocopying service.
 - b. **Mobile Library**, a fully accessible service which stops in villages and communities across County Durham, targeting some of the most rural and deprived parts of the county where a physical library isn't present. It provides a well-stocked selection of books to suit all tastes and ages as well staff who can respond to enquiries and provide access and signposting to information.
 - c. **Books on Wheels**, a free service that delivers books to people who have mobility problems and who cannot use their local library or have no one able or willing to go to the library for them. The Books on Wheels service has over 80 volunteers and assistants who deliver a selection of books and talking books to readers at home every three weeks. The service also provides access to information and answers to enquiries.
 - d. **Book Bus**, provides a mobile library service to older people and people with disabilities in residential homes, day care centres and sheltered housing schemes throughout County Durham. The Book Bus visits over 50 homes, centres, and schemes on a three-weekly rota. A wide selection of books is available to borrow in hardback, paperback, large print as well talking books. The Book Bus is designed around the needs of people who use the service.
- 24 Following COVID-19 libraries are increasingly seen by residents as core community venues and are key community hubs in many of our settlements. As well as the more traditional library services, the service also offers a wide range of events and activities for all ages. There is a strong focus on engagement with children and families; for example, through the digital online storytelling service Featherbed Tales, the annual Summer Reading Challenge and Toddler Time for under 5s. Reading groups, Get Creative and Discover Digital sessions are also

part of the offer in libraries. The library service also supports delivery of the Durham Book Festival.

25 The current service is supported by a central HQ based at Sevenhills Spennymoor, from which the library stock support function (ordering, relocating, circulating and disposal) is managed. The Sevenhills site also houses the mobile, and book bus vehicles, from where stock distribution takes place. This arrangement ensures orderly stock storage, purchase, cataloguing and distribution throughout all elements of the library network. The service is administered through an in-house library management system known as Halcyon.

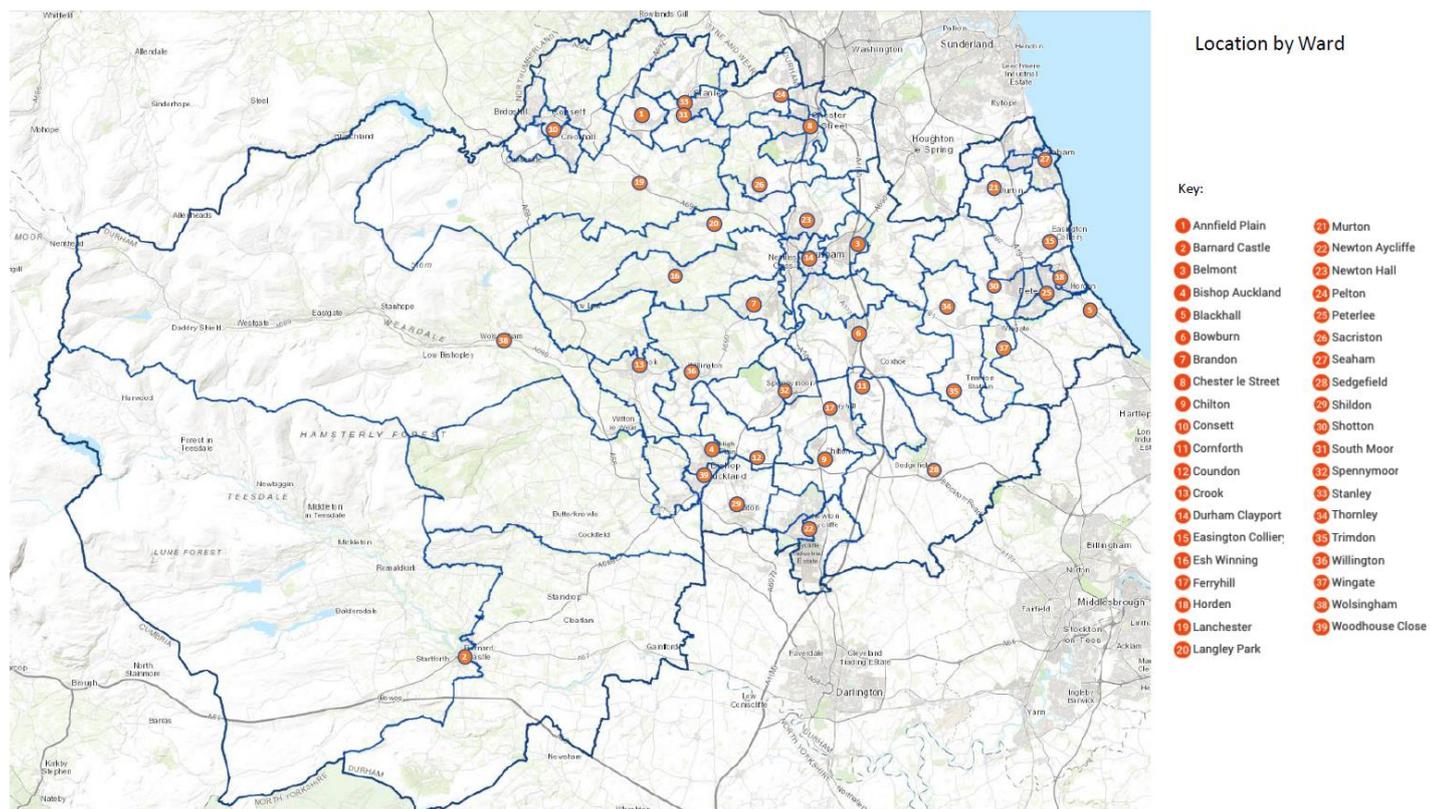


Figure 1 location of DCC libraries by ward.

26 Sevenhills is a shared building space with CYPS (commercial services) however, all costs incurred for the building and utilities are met by Culture Sport and Tourism.

27 In addition, the library service also provides a Prison Library service to Deerbolt YOI, HMP Durham, and HMP Frankland. These services are fully funded by the National Offender Management Service of central government.

28 The library service has a strong and increasing online presence that includes free access to e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines and online book ordering and renewal.

The impact of Covid 19 on the library service

29 While the number of library members remained relatively static over the last 3 years, the pandemic had a significant impact on the number of people visiting in person hitting a low of 38,687, in 2020; this compares to over 1,1446,486 library visitors in 2019/20, the last full year of operation prior to lockdowns and library closures. However, active borrowers and physical book loans are now beginning to show sustained recovery. The number of active borrowers in 201/22 was at 66% of pre-covid levels. Part year figures for 2022/23 (Q1 & Q2) show an improvement on this and have recovered to 76% of the last full pre-covid year. If the current trend continues in Q3 & Q4 of 2022/23 active borrowers are expected to match pre-covid figures by year end. Table 1 details the visitor figures, book loans, library memberships and active borrowers for the library service as a global figure between 2018/2019 and 2022/2023; Figure 2 shows active borrowers over the same period; Figures 3 and 4 show visitors and book loans for each individual library across the service for the last full financial year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Visits to all libraries	1,240,446	1,143,849	38,687	327,470	240,678
Number of books loaned	1,607,134	1,446,486	152,580	801,171	535,149
Members	239,223	228,092	230,202	214,686	165,473
Active Borrowers	53,528	50,682	21,192	35,188	40,761

Table 1. Summary of library usage 2018-2022, N.B. 2022/23 figures are part year to end of Q2. An Active Borrower is a member who has loaned a book within the last 12 month rolling period; this is a standard sector measurement which is reported annually to CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance).

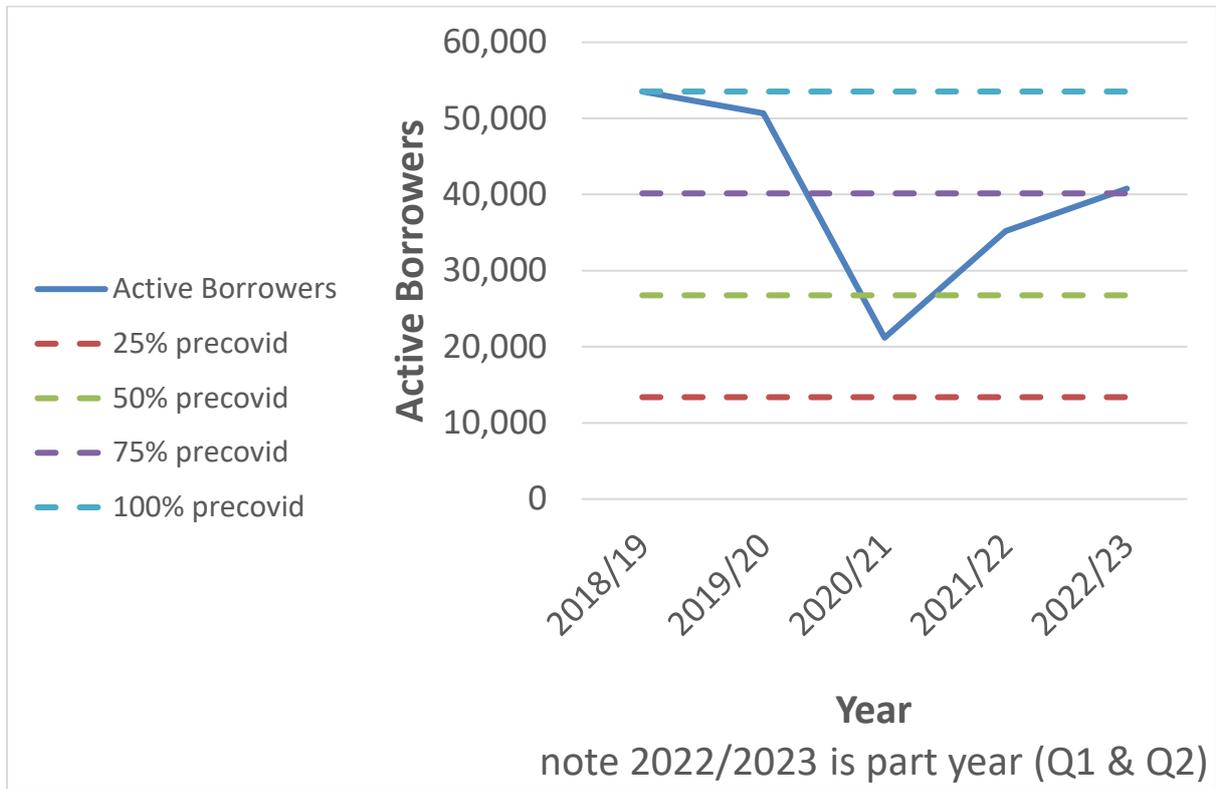


Figure 2 Active borrowers 2018/19- 2022/23. The number of active borrowers in 201/22 was at 66% of pre-covid levels. Part year figures for 2022/23 Q1 & Q2 show an improvement on this and have recovered to 76% of the last full pre-covid year. If the current trend continues in Q3 & Q4 of 2022/23 active borrowers are expected to match pre-covid figures by year end.

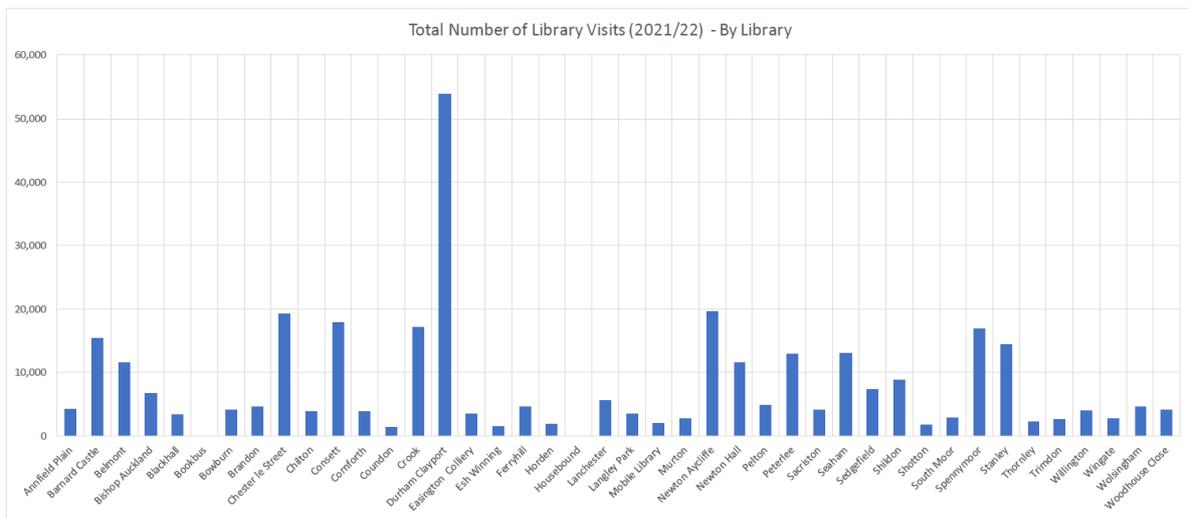


Figure 3 total number of library visitors by library in the last full year (2021/22)

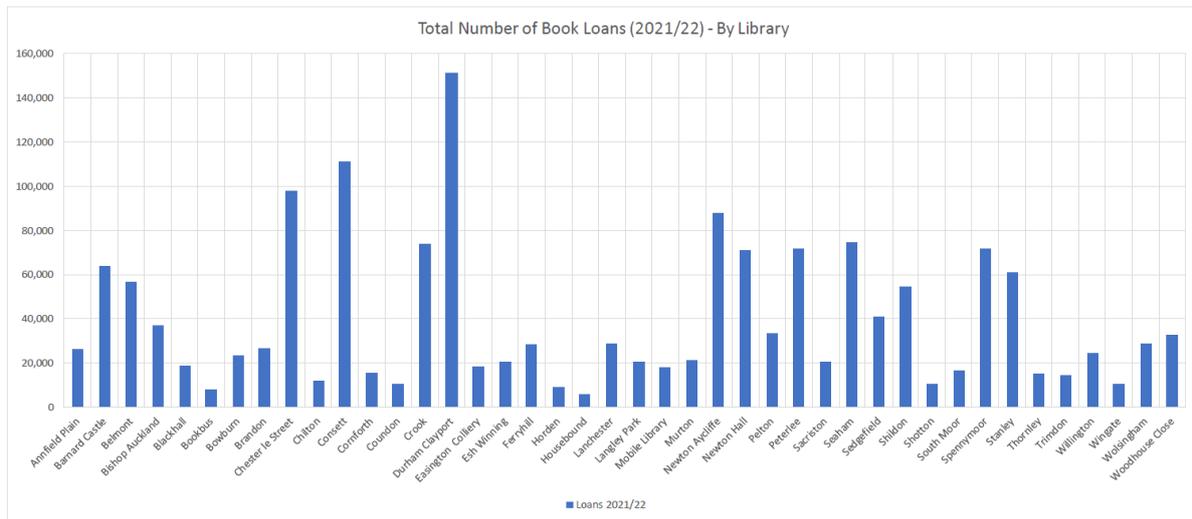


Figure 4 total number of book loans by library in the last full year (2021/22)

- 30 Libraries across the county operated reduced opening hours to accommodate pandemic guidance and many frontline library staff were seconded to support covid response priority services in 2020 and 2021. Staff were reallocated and used to support our most vulnerable members of society – providing shopper assistance, coordination of tasks, advice, and telephone chats to combat isolation.
- 31 Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and associated restrictions and national lockdowns there have also been some major benefits to the service in the past two years; opportunities have been taken at pace to improve and redesign services in response to the pandemic. The pandemic response has seen public libraries, and their staff, rise to the challenge of new ways of working and delivering community support services leading to a new style of library service, that in other circumstances would have taken many years to achieve. In particular, library services have experienced a period of significant digital and technological advancement, which has seen a transformation in the scope of services that have been delivered.
- 32 The first major change was to create a social media presence to engage with audiences who could no longer visit us in person. In 2020, the service launched a Facebook page and Twitter account. From a standing start County Durham Libraries Facebook now has over 1.6k followers with 224 on Twitter.
- 33 There was also the opportunity to support local creatives and launch a new digital suite of online professionally curated activities such as craft and storytelling sessions. These have attracted new customers and shown that there is an appetite for the library service to have a strong digital offer going forward.

- 34 Some services, such as Books on Wheels, have been successfully adapted to become doorstep book drops involving pre-packaging of selected books delivered direct to customers' doorsteps. This has enabled a continuity of service to vulnerable library members. This adaptation enabled larger numbers of customers to be served within existing resources.
- 35 May 2020, saw the launch of *Pick and Collect* an online book selection and express pick-up service from all libraries across the county. This safe operating model was welcomed by users and a permanent adaptation of our traditional operating model will be considered as part of the libraries transformation programme.
- 36 During the early stages of the pandemic the service quickly switched its core buying allocation to purchase additional eBooks, eAudio and eMagazines to enable the stock to meet the increased demand for digital access whilst the libraries were closed. Figure 4a & b show how demand for the digital offer changed pre and post pandemic.

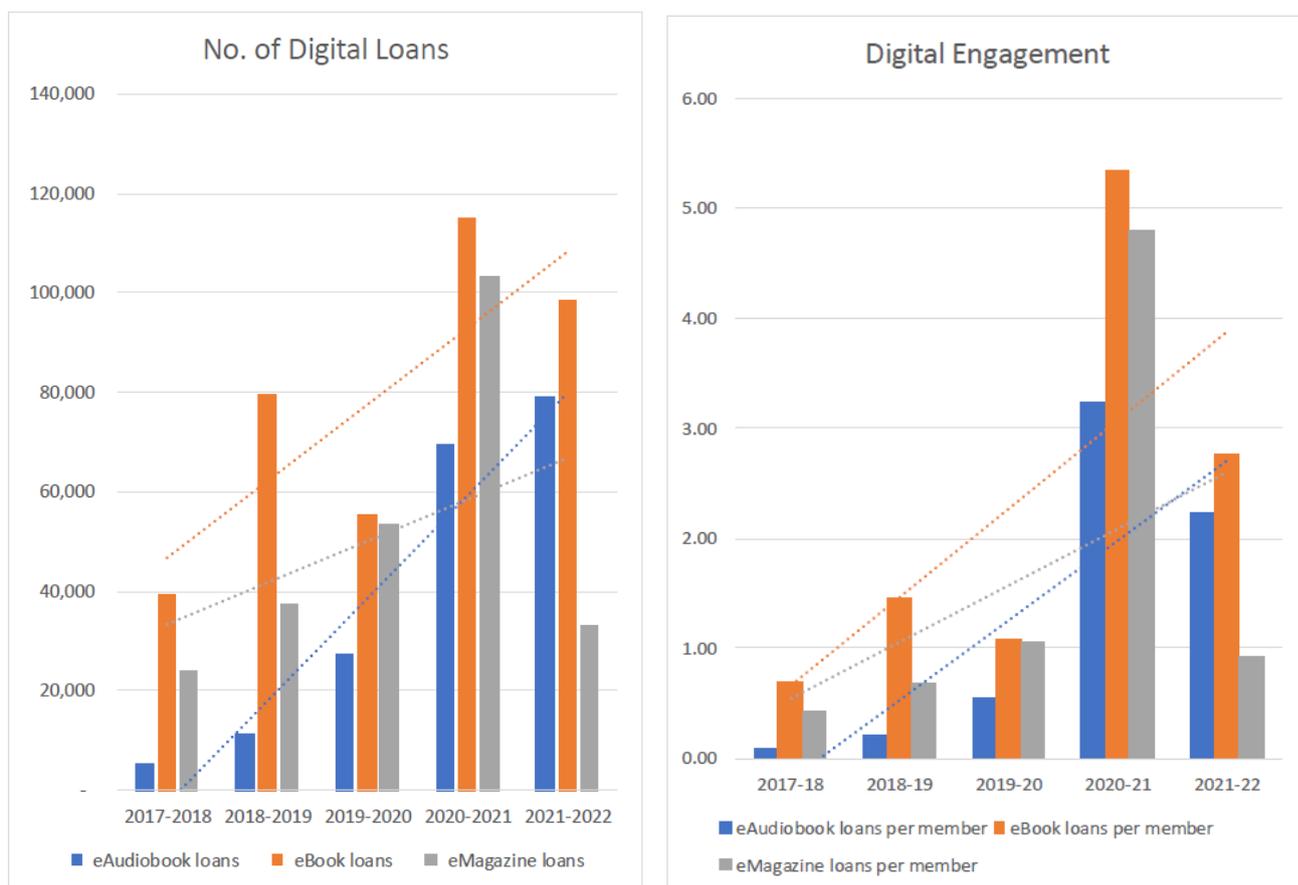


Figure 5 a. digital stock loans for all libraries 2017- 2018; 4 b. digital engagement per member 2017-2018 showing digital engagement and digital loans remain higher than pre-pandemic levels

- 37 The pandemic has not only seen acceleration of our digital transformation but has also led to other positive service changes. During the pandemic the decision was made to suspend overdue fines

bringing the service in line with others nationally, who recognise that for many, the potential of large bills for forgotten books, acts a barrier to engagement making reading an expense many cannot afford. Although this has had a negative impact on income, the decision not to charge overdue fines has been welcomed by the public and has temporarily brought the service in line with *no penalty* loan schemes that many other regional and national libraries operate.

- 38 Going forward, the pandemic has accelerated opportunities to reshape the more traditional aspects of library service delivery and has demonstrated the appetite of the public for library services to increase their supporting role helping communities stay connected (evidenced through Libraries Connected and DCMS survey data).
- 39 Services such as the books on wheels (housebound service) and our book buddy service, have shown how phone calls to our most vulnerable clients can make a significant difference, and help people to feel less isolated through online cultural events such as reading groups, and craft sessions.
- 40 Simple access to books for escapism and learning has also highlighted the key role of libraries in supporting the health and wellbeing of our residents. Helping individuals achieve greater confidence and improved literacy will continue to be a focus of the library service moving forward.
- 41 Our libraries continue to play a highly visible role helping local people acting as key community hubs. In recent months this has included supporting our residents through the current cost of living crisis. All 39 libraries are registered warm spaces; a network of venues which aims to support residents across County Durham this winter. Our library warm spaces are free, and residents can stay for as long, or for as short a period as they wish (within their opening hours).

Co-location

- 42 During the past five years there has been a growing trend to review library buildings, locations, and explore opportunities to collocate where appropriate with the wider council estate. This has included the co-location of libraries within leisure centres at Stanley and Newton Aycliffe; other shared services buildings such as at Pelton where the library is collocated with a local GP surgery, and at Crook with the Customer Access Point.
- 43 This process is ongoing and requires debate and discussion on a case-by-case basis when each opportunity arises to ensure the best outcome for the local community and enable flexibility for library service development for the future. Whilst this has in many venues increased footfall, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution and each opportunity is weighed on its own merits.

Library Transformation - Future Approach and Direction

- 44 The needs assessment is now being used to assist the service to inform and identify new priorities and delivery models to transform library services for all County Durham residents; to understand the role of the library within the community, support community needs and aspirations, and to assist in the Council's obligation to maintain a comprehensive, engaged, responsive and efficient service.
- 45 In 2016, the Government's Libraries Taskforce challenged central and local government to think differently about the transformation and future delivery of library services.
- 46 The last extensive consultation for County Durham library service took place in 2012. During the following decade it is believed that community needs have significantly changed and many have developed.
- 47 In addition, the pandemic enabled positive changes in service delivery and new ways of working and this, in tandem with significant digital and technological advancement in recent years has accelerated Library Services transformation.
- 48 In line with the challenge posed by the Government's Libraries Taskforce, and in order to ensure that the service can realise long term the benefits from new ways of working that the pandemic has enabled, the Council's Library Service needs to be revitalised and refocused to maximise how it spends its resources, develops new offers and attracts more people to use its services to successfully realise the wider benefits of our library offer.
- 49 In May 2020, CMT agreed that a Needs Assessment across County Durham Library Service should be undertaken to inform the future development of the new library service offer to residents.
- 50 The purpose of the 'Needs Assessment' was to carry out an engagement exercise to gain a clear evidence-based understanding of how the library service within County Durham can better respond to the needs of the modern community and to inform the shape of service provision for future users, as Phase One of the Transformation Programme.
- 51 The needs assessment is the first part of a programme of transformation for County Durham's library services. This transformation programme will be phased with the following indicative timeline:
- a. Phase one "*Get Involved*" – 2022 incorporating the needs assessment findings to generate a report on options and adaptations.

- b. Phase two “*Have your say*” 2023, will include work on a further consultation on the options put forward from Phase One, with any redefined service offer following public views.
- c. A final report on changes to the service and implementation is scheduled to go to Cabinet around Autumn 2023. Implementation of the recommendations from this report will begin in Spring 2024.

Needs Assessment (Phase One) 7th January – 1st April 2022 - Get Involved

- 52 Phase one of the library transformation journey, *Libraries for You*, gathered the views and opinions of our customers, non-users, stakeholders and staff through a comprehensive engagement exercise.
- 53 An External Reference Group was set up to provide guidance and advice on the delivery of the Needs Assessment. The role of this group is to:
 - a. support sector engagement and act as advocates for the project.
 - b. provide strategic and qualitative input into project development and delivery, including consultation and engagement exercises.
 - c. provide project oversight and review of key milestones and deliverables.
 - d. Gather and disseminate information relevant to the project through members’ networks.
- 54 The Needs Assessment was carried out by an external organisation in line with DCMS guidance; CounterCulture Partnership LLP were commissioned to do this.
- 55 CounterCulture Partnership LLP’s scope of work included:
 - a. review of documentation and data (desktop and field research) to identify the current library service provision baselines as well as reviewing national policy.
 - b. a review of the changing needs of specific demographic groups across the county and how these impact upon service need and usage, now and in the future.
 - c. a review of national and international exemplars of library service provision including an overview of delivery across key areas.
 - d. exploration of the role and function of the library service in relation to supporting wider outcomes and priorities in health and wellbeing, digital development and cultural and creative

enrichment whilst building strong and more resilient communities, and;

- e. a review of branding, communications, and IT use across service provision, identifying weakness, gaps in provision and potential solutions.

56 The Phase One consultation and engagement exercise was expected to:

- a. inform the identification of new priorities and delivery models to transform library services for all County Durham residents.
- b. help the service understand the role of the library within the community, support community needs and aspirations, and to assist in the Council's obligation to maintain a comprehensive, engaged, responsive and efficient service.
- c. enable the service to identify gaps for development and to identify service provision that no longer meets public need.
- d. identify and recommend the use of new technologies and provide bespoke solutions based on need with a view to future proofing provision, and;
- e. enable the Council to design, develop, administer, and report on a comprehensive Needs Assessment of services for County Durham Library Service.

57 The Needs Assessment engagement process used a range of approaches including:

- a. An online public survey.
- b. Online and in person focus groups.
- c. A consultation developed and delivered by DCC Youth Council around our outcomes to involve their networks and membership.
- d. Dedicated online sessions with Library staff.

58 The needs assessment exercise engaged over 3,500 residents and provided clear insight into what the public and wider stakeholders value about libraries. Responses from the survey, online and in person focus groups, the AAP meetings, the consultation mailbox and the Youth Council were reviewed, collated and synthesized in order to build an understanding of the position of the library within local communities.

59 Once the public engagement period closed Counterculture carried out a detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis of the full engagement from users, non-users, staff and stakeholders. Insights and data were

grouped under common themes. These groupings revealed the priorities and recurring themes across and within respondents' ages and the library services used.

- 60 At the mid-way review in February 2022, Counterculture and DCC discussed the emerging themes. These were shared with the ERG for testing. Suggestions from the ERG, responses through the engagement activity, desk research and expertise from Counterculture then shaped the recommendations in response to the key findings and themes.

Overview of initial findings of the Needs Assessment

- 61 CounterCulture Partnership LLP has provided a report as part of the work it has been commissioned to deliver to ensure that the library service within County Durham can better respond to the needs of the community and better shape provision for future service users.
- 62 The aim of the report is to provide ideas, insight and recommendations of actions and activities which could be used to stimulate and pilot innovation and changes within the library service, at least in the short to medium term, ahead of a public consultation exercise, as well as to signpost some key pillars which are likely to form part of the future library strategy.
- 63 The report contains recommendations on the future direction for the Library Service drawing on CounterCulture Partnership LLC's findings in the following contexts:
- a. The role and value of libraries
 - b. Libraries during Covid-19
 - c. Conceptualising the library service for the future
 - d. Strategic context for libraries
 - e. Partnership and funding potential
 - f. Access and Inclusion
 - g. The changing role of library staff
 - h. Driving change and modernisation in libraries
- 64 Feedback captured in this first phase of the engagement process identifies nine key elements of change in order to develop County Durham Libraries in line with public and staff feedback and are summarised as follows:
- i. **Element one - Consider the physical library network including the potential and current benefits of co-**

location and the need for capital investment. A strategic review of the existing physical library network is recommended. This should consider the current offer and benefits, both to the communities they serve, and as a DCC asset. The review should be used to identify where there are opportunities and scope for an improved offer through co-location with other complementary services and partners and should seek further engagement with customers on their views and needs.

- j. **Element two – Review library opening hours.** A review of library opening hours and ways in which access can be extended is recommended. The review should consider changing needs and patterns of use post pandemic and should seek further engagement with customers on their views and needs.
- k. **Element three - Align library outcomes with Council plans and priorities.** The new Council Plan is to be agreed shortly then work on this can commence.
- l. **Element four - Invest in technology and digital content to expand access to services.** A clear digital strategy for the service which encompasses both operational and service delivery needs and digital content is recommended as well as reviewing and investing significantly in the technology and digital infrastructure required to enable the modernisation, transformation and expansion of provision and access to services. This will ensure there is a defined plan which clearly links to the benefits and needs identified.
- m. **Element five – Support training and development of library workforce to build on existing skills .** A workforce skills review to support the delivery of an innovative and future facing service is recommended. This would help ensure library staff are equipped to support the changing needs and ambitions for the service, its customers, and the communities of County Durham.
- n. **Element six - Review communications and marketing for libraries to increase visibility and reach.** A communications campaign to promote the services of the library is recommended as well as a review of branding.
- o. **Element seven - Develop a compelling and accessible events programme.** A programme of free and low-cost activities for children, young people, adults, and older people is recommended. It is also recommended that the skills and knowledge of staff and volunteers are maximised

to create a varied programme of activities, relevant to each local community.

- p. **Element eight - Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships.** A plan to develop vibrant and sustainable community outreach and partnerships is recommended through community engagement and partnership working, including a review of the current Mobile Library and other outreach services.
- q. **Element nine – Books.** An attractive and wide-ranging selection of books and other resources remains a fundamental part of the service offer. A review of the current stock and content policy is recommended alongside further work to better understand the changing needs and wants of audiences, and how the service can respond to feedback about the need for book stock to be ‘bigger and better’, with a wider selection of books across all ages and categories.

65 Following analysis of the outputs of the Needs Assessment, preferred options identified based on the available evidence and proposals for a new library offer will be formally consulted on with members of the public as part of Phase Two.

Conclusion

- 66 Libraries are recognised and valued as community hubs for a range of services, activities, events, and social interaction, at the heart of both rural and town communities. They are seen by many who currently use them as welcoming, free, safe, inclusive, and non-judgemental spaces that belong to everyone.
- 67 As well as providing access to books and reading for pleasure, education, or wellbeing, across a range of platforms, libraries are a trusted resource for information and guidance providing support for the individual and community needs.
- 68 County Durham libraries are recovering well post lockdowns. The number of active borrowers is growing steadily from a low in 2020/21 and is now at 76% of the last full pre-covid year. If the current trend continues in Q3 & Q4 of 2022/23 active borrowers are expected to match pre-covid figures by year end.
- 69 Digital engagement grew six-fold during the pandemic and has remained at more than three times pre-covid levels since library buildings reopened. This suggests that there is an appetite for a hybrid of digital and in person services going forward.

- 70 COVID-19 has helped policy makers understand the potential of libraries as a community resource in County Durham's local communities. This can be built on through the next phase of the transformation project.
- 71 There is an opportunity to use the results of phase one of library transformation (needs assessment) to modernise and reposition the long-term offer reshaping and strengthening community ties going forward.

Background Papers

None

Contact:

Alison Clark

Head of Culture, Sport & Tourism

Alison.clark@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Covered in report

Finance

N/A

Consultation

Covered in report

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Any proposals will be subject to a Equality Impact assessment

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

N/A

Crime and Disorder

Although not specifically detailed in this report, it is still expected that libraries will have a positive contribution to overall social value, which will include crime and disorder, but also a much broader and holistic impact across a number of dimensions.

Staffing

Not impacted at this stage

Accommodation

Not impacted at this stage

Risk

N/A

Procurement

Any procurement in relation to this programme will be undertaken under the Council's contract procurement rules and with advice of the corporate procurement team.

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Environmental and Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

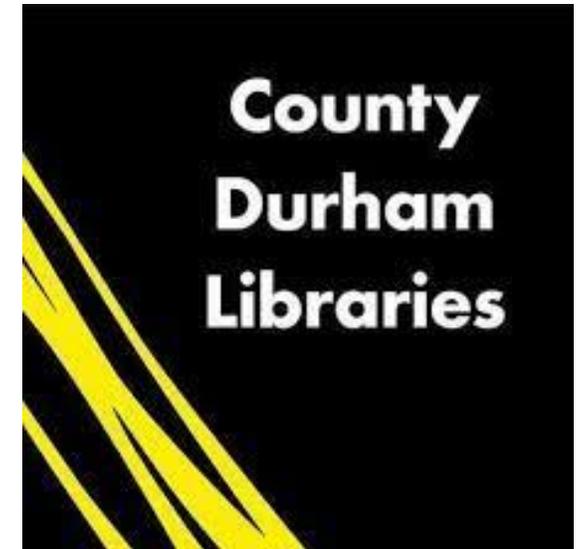
County Durham Libraries

20 December 2022



Outline of Presentation

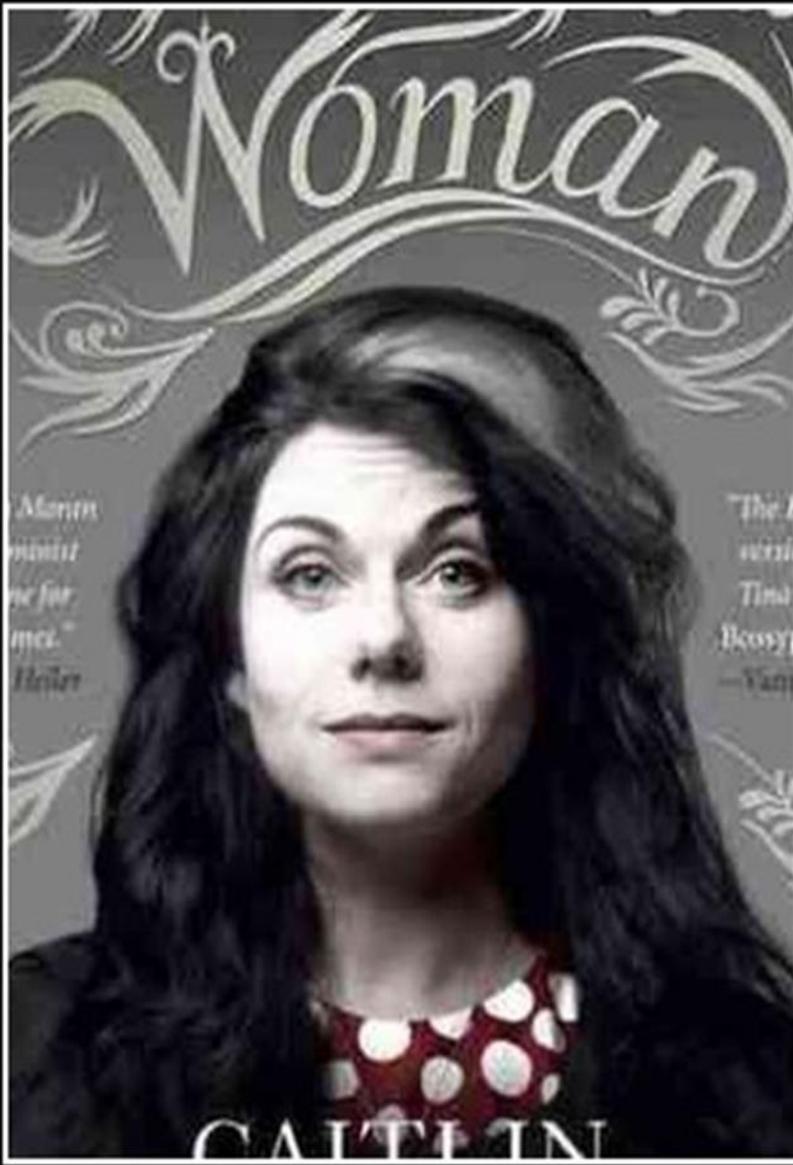
1. Overview and context of the Library Service
2. The impact of COVID-19 and pandemic recovery
3. Library Transformation – approach and direction
4. Initial findings of the needs assessment
5. Summary and next steps



1. Overview and context of the Library Service

**Public Libraries are a statutory service,
as defined under the Public Libraries and
Museums Act 1964**

Upper tier authorities have an obligation
to provide a ‘comprehensive and efficient
service’.



A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold, rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen, instead.

— Caitlin Moran —

AZ QUOTES

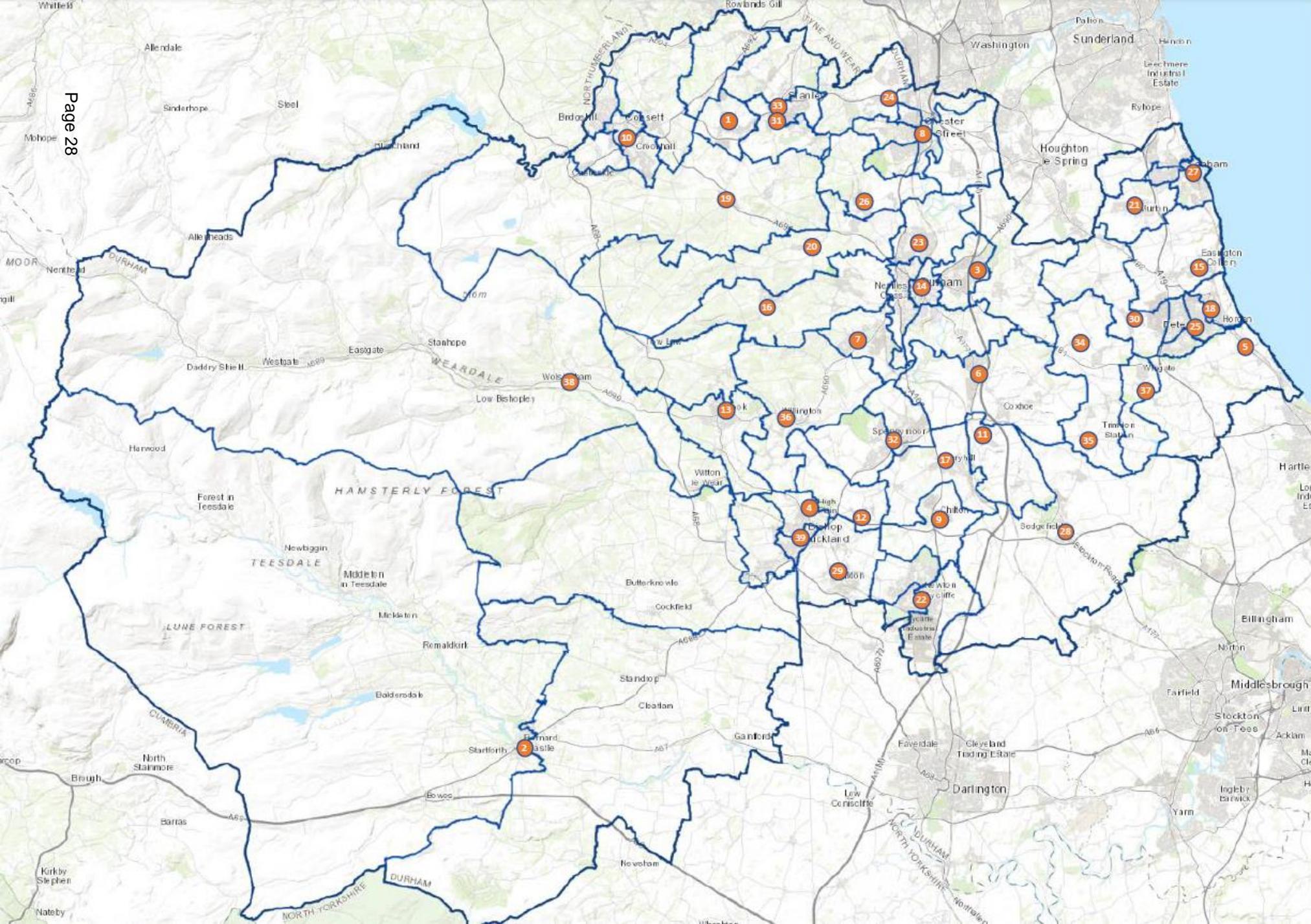
County Durham Libraries – an overview

- **39 libraries** - City Centre (1), town centre (11), community (27)
- **Books on wheels** – delivered services to over 150 clients own homes
- **Book bus** – vehicle calling at care homes to enable clients to choose their own books
- **Mobile library service** - delivering to over 80 settlements across the largely rural west of the county
- **Sevenhills – library HQ** - shared building with CYPS, from which stock support is managed, vehicles housed and distribution takes place, prison library service base, county bookstore, and Growing and Learning team base.
- **Online presence** – access to e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines, online book ordering and renewal

Location by Ward

Key:

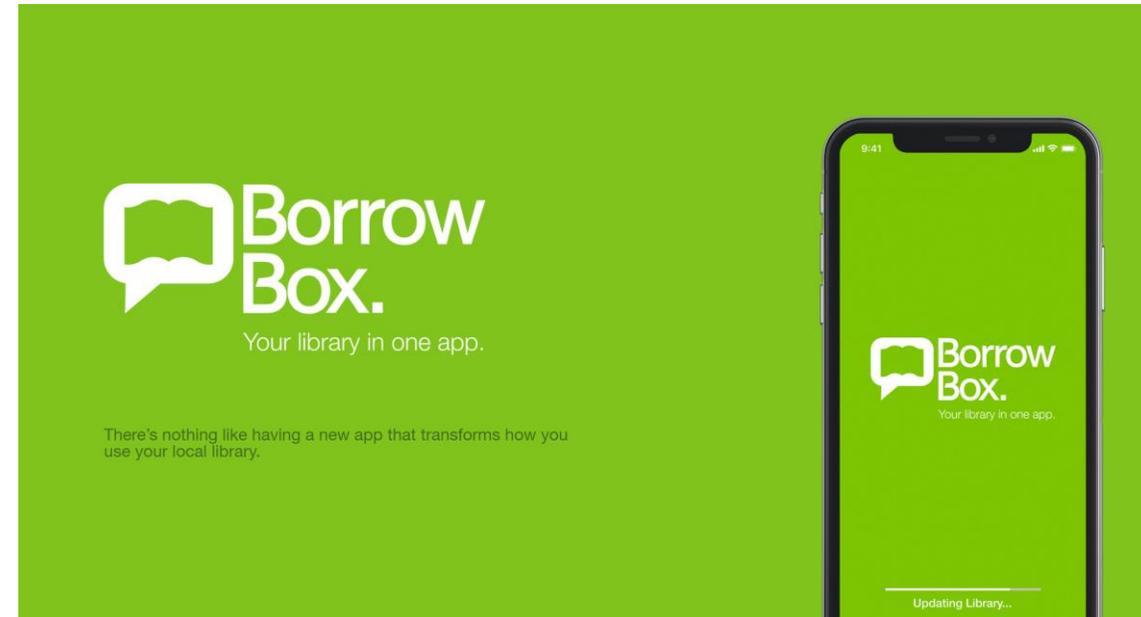
- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Annfield Plain | 21 Murton |
| 2 Barnard Castle | 22 Newton Aycliffe |
| 3 Belmont | 23 Newton Hall |
| 4 Bishop Auckland | 24 Pelton |
| 5 Blackhall | 25 Peterlee |
| 6 Bowburn | 26 Sacriston |
| 7 Brandon | 27 Seaham |
| 8 Chester le Street | 28 Sedgefield |
| 9 Chilton | 29 Shildon |
| 10 Consett | 30 Shotton |
| 11 Cornforth | 31 South Moor |
| 12 Coundon | 32 Spennymoor |
| 13 Crook | 33 Stanley |
| 14 Durham Clayport | 34 Thornley |
| 15 Easington Collier, | 35 Trimdon |
| 16 Esh Winning | 36 Willington |
| 17 Ferryhill | 37 Wingate |
| 18 Horden | 38 Wolsingham |
| 19 Lanchester | 39 Woodhouse Close |
| 20 Langley Park | |



Online Library Services

Library Online:

- Reserve items you find on the catalogue.
- Renew items you currently have on loan.
- Book one of our public access internet PCs in any of our libraries.
- Download eBooks, eComics and eMagazines
- Find out when and where the mobile library stops



Mobile Library Services

- Mobile Library
- Books on wheels
- Book Bus



Library HQ Sevenhills

- Library stock support:
 - Ordering
 - Relocating
 - Circulating
 - disposal
- Home of mobile library services



Library Events & Activities



Post details

ID: 474376178169034

Post overview

This view of your post may not represent exactly how it appears in Facebook's News Feed.

**County Durham Libraries**
Published by [Karen Milburn](#) · 4 d ·  · 

Did you know all 39 of our County Durham libraries are part of the Warm Spaces network? The network aims to support residents through the winter following an increase in energy costs and the rising cost-of-living. Our library Warm Spaces are free, and you can stay for as long, or for as short a period as you wish, within each libraries opening hours. We have free Wi-Fi, colouring sheets to keep children occupied and lots of books to browse.

For further information on Warm S... [See more](#)



Post performance

There may be delays in stats reporting. To see the most up-to-date stats, please go to your live post.

4,641

People reached ¹

0% from boosted posts

4,641 organic

0 paid

382

Post engagements ¹

125 reactions

32 on post

93 on shares

70 shares

70 on post

0 on shares

22 comments

1 on post

21 on shares

165 clicks

14 photo clicks

27 link clicks

0 clicks to play

2. Impact of COVID-19 and pandemic recovery

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Visits to all libraries	1,240,446	1,143,849	38,687	327,470	240,678
Number of books loaned	1,607,134	1,446,486	152,580	801,171	535,149
Members	239,223	228,092	230,202	214,686	165,473
Active Borrowers	53,528	50,682	21,192	35,188	40,761

3. Library Transformation – approach and direction

- (a) Phase one “*Get Involved*” – 2022 incorporating the needs assessment findings to generate a report on options and adaptations.
- (b) Phase two “*Have your say*” 2023, will include work on a further consultation on the options put forward from Phase One, with any redefined service offer following public views.
- (c) A final report on changes to the service and implementation is scheduled to go to Cabinet around Autumn 2023. Implementation of the recommendations from this report will begin in Spring 2024.

Why transform ?

- Making sure that our libraries **meet the future needs** of our communities by co production
- Maintaining compliance with Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) criteria
- Almost a decade since the last major review
- Learning from Sector **best practice**
- Reflecting **DCMS guidance for library service development**
- Applying what we have learned about the role of libraries during **covid**

4. Initial findings of the needs assessment

- 1. A strategic review of the existing physical library network**
- 2. A review of library opening hours**
- 3. Alignment of library outcomes with Council plans and priorities.**
- 4. Investment in technology, and digital content and infrastructure**

- 5. A workforce skills review and associated training**
- 6. A review of communications and marketing**
- 7. Develop and deliver a compelling and accessible events programme**
- 8. Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships**
- 9. A review of the current stock and content policy**

5. Next Steps

Following analysis of the outputs of the Needs Assessment, preferred options identified based on the available evidence and proposals for a new library offer will be formally consulted on with members of the public in Spring 2023

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