



Transforming Libraries and Cultural Services in Surrey Strategy

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Transforming Libraries and Cultural Services in Surrey

Dear Surrey Residents and Partners

We are seeking your views on our proposed new strategy to transform and strengthen libraries and cultural services in Surrey.

Libraries and cultural services are an integral part of community life across Surrey. One third of our residents visited a Surrey library in the last 12 months and our adult and community learning service had 21,768 enrolments onto adult learning classes in the last academic year. Our Surrey arts service engaged with 18,000 children and young people in weekly music education activities and our archives service had 5.6 million on line visits in the last year.

However, we spend much more than other, similar local authorities, while the use of some of our services, notably libraries and our archives centre, has gone down.

We know that to sustain our libraries and cultural services into the future, with the resources that we have, we need to think differently and creatively about how those services are provided.

To do this, we are asking for your views on five principles that form a strategy which we believe could underpin proposals for transforming libraries and cultural services in Surrey.

We are also asking you to tell us your own ideas for how we can create a new type of service that fits in better with 21st century life. We want everyone to get involved with a commitment to partnership working to ensure our services thrive and develop in the future.

The consultation is open until Friday 4 January 2019.

With sincere thanks.

Mary Lewis
Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Denise Turner-Stewart
Cabinet Member for Community Services

Dave Hill
Executive Director for Children, Families and Learning

Our plan for the future

Over the spring and summer of 2018, we engaged with residents, communities and partners across our county to understand what Surrey should look like in 2030. Informed by the conversations we had, we have been able to create a community vision for Surrey. We are now on an exciting journey of transforming our services so they can be in the best place to deliver our 2030 ambitions.

Community vision for Surrey 2030

By 2030 we want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community, and no one is left behind.

We want our county's economy to be strong, vibrant and successful and Surrey to be a great place to live, work and learn. A place that capitalises on its location and natural assets, and where communities feel supported and people are able to support each other.

Our ambitions for people are:

- **Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident.**
- **Everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life.**
- **Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing.**
- **Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place.**
- **Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life.**

Our ambitions for place are:

- **Residents live in clean, safe and green communities, where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities.**
- **Journeys across the county are easier, more predictable and safer.**
- **Everyone has a place they can call home, with appropriate housing for all.**
- **Businesses in Surrey thrive.**
- **Well connected communities, with effective infrastructure, that grow sustainably.**

We want to make sure that our libraries and cultural services contribute fully to the community vision for Surrey in 2030. With fewer resources as a local authority, we know that we have to be creative and innovative if we are to offer libraries and cultural services that are fit for the future and which enable us to make the community vision a reality. But we can't do this alone. If we are to seize the opportunity, we need to unleash the considerable resources of Surrey's residents and our colleagues in local councils and partner agencies, to come up with a new type of service. One that fits in better with 21st century life and is affordable within the funding available.

We aim to place libraries and cultural services at the heart of lifelong learning and stronger communities.

Our proposed strategy is made up of the following five principles:

1. Libraries and cultural services provide and enable opportunities for everyone to learn, access information, acquire new skills, improve literacy and be involved in their communities.
2. There is a focus on the wellbeing and strengthening of communities, particularly the most vulnerable, to enable them to be resilient.
3. Libraries and cultural services are most effective and efficient when they work in partnership with the public, voluntary, community and private sectors, including through the creation of shared spaces.
4. New technologies, including digital, enable libraries and cultural services to reach new audiences, and existing audiences in new ways, and offer 24/7 access.
5. Volunteers are crucial community advocates and assets in libraries and cultural services, who also gain valuable skills and relationships through the work they do.

Our intention is to develop proposals that deliver against this strategy and create libraries and cultural services that are fit for the future and sustainable in the long term.

We believe we can do this by building on local, national and international innovation and creating place-based solutions to meet community needs. There is unlikely to be one Surrey-wide solution, so the arrangements will need to reflect local communities and be specific to each community's needs.

We think the proposals should also include using digital and mobile approaches to bring services to residents. We will take account of accessibility and local transportation, along with the needs of those with vulnerabilities or specific needs. Learning, access to information and acquiring new skills will be at the heart of our approach while our cultural programmes, such as arts and heritage, will strengthen communities.

Alongside this we will aim to bring our spending in this area closer to other authorities. For example the most recent 2017/18 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) library statistics show that Surrey libraries cost £14.00 per head of population. The average cost per head of population for a county council is £9.89. It is our intention to get close to the national average spend.

We will also recognise our duty to fulfil statutory responsibilities under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and the 2010 Equalities Act.

Where are we now?

In Surrey, there are 52 libraries based across the county with a variety of core services. Of these, 10 are Community Partnered Libraries (CPLs) in which volunteers provide a variety of services. Nineteen of Surrey's libraries are within two miles of each other.

The current library service is well used, with a third of Surrey's population visiting Surrey libraries over the last year. However, the top 18 libraries account for 65% of the total visits, and 18 others for only 11.6% of business. While over 5 million physical books were borrowed, the

number of books borrowed and visits made have declined year on year, even as Surrey's population increases.

Some libraries are co-located with other services, such as the recently re-opened Merstham Library, where we have seen a 300% increase in library membership. In addition to library services, the Merstham hub includes a café, leisure area, community meeting space and public toilets in one building in an accessible community location. A further example is the Lightwater Library Association which owns and runs the local library building plus community hall with Surrey County Council supporting the library function. However almost all of Surrey's libraries are single use, stand-alone buildings. Many now have restricted opening hours due to cost pressures.

The digital library offer is valued by many residents, with 1.32 million items borrowed using the online catalogue. Residents, particularly vulnerable ones, tell us they value the access to public computers and Wi-Fi which libraries provide.

Volunteering is a strong feature of Surrey libraries. 680 volunteers give 21,000 hours per annum; additionally 34,500 volunteer hours support the Community Partnered Libraries.

Our broader cultural services offer covers arts, a music service, heritage and archaeology, adult and community learning and the registration and citizenship service. The property estate includes the Surrey Wardrobe, Surrey Arts centre, Surrey History Centre, seven adult learning centres and over 100 further outlets through which learning is delivered. There are also six Register Offices in Surrey.

What is happening in other places across the country?

Surrey libraries and cultural services have huge potential. We have an excellent and dedicated workforce who are ready for change and doing things in a different way. We also have examples within our libraries and cultural services where we are working differently with partners and thinking differently about how services are provided locally. Our Community Partnered Libraries are an example of this. However we can also learn from other parts of the country and there are innovative examples and initiatives that could help shape our proposals.

Some examples of the 'art of the possible' include:

Integrated services

Orford Jubilee Park in Warrington and the Hive in Worcester are two examples of borough-wide libraries and cultural facilities that have been combined with other services led by public, private and community providers. They provide an integrated approach to supporting lifelong learning and cultural opportunities combined with other services.

- Orford Jubilee Park was an Olympic legacy project that combined a replacement leisure centre, a library, a health centre with three combined GP surgeries, a further education college, arts and culture centre, a children's centre and a pharmacy set in a refurbished park and partly funded by Decathlon, an international sports retailer who built a new retail store on the same site.
- The Hive is the first combined university/public library in the UK which also houses Worcestershire's archive and archaeology centre, Worcester City Council's customer

services hub, a studio theatre, a lifelong learning centre and a business centre in a new flag ship building in Worcester.

Digital

Peterborough and Milton Keynes libraries have taken the use of technology to the next level with their new digitally-led libraries that are accessible 24 hours a day.

Health and Wellbeing

Kent County Council has been developing opportunities for arts and culture to contribute to local health and wellbeing priorities. Kent has created a new community mental health and wellbeing service to test how arts and culture could be embedded into service provision. So far, six arts and cultural organisations have been awarded innovation grants through this contract.

Reaching all communities

Some councils are replacing their mobile library service with a volunteer-led home bound delivery service which focuses on providing access to library services to vulnerable communities and individuals across the area.

Surrey has trialled and found a successful model of community link or micro libraries. These are run by volunteers who have access into the wider library services. They can be located anywhere from children's centres, community halls, shops, leisure centres and train stations, and are particularly effective in bringing books closer to more rural areas.

What is happening worldwide?

The Gates Foundation has set out to improve the lives of 1 billion "information-poor" people by 2030 while positioning the world's 320,000 public libraries as critical community assets and providers of information through relevant technologies.

With their existing infrastructure, dedicated staff, and mission to connect individuals to information, libraries are uniquely suited to offering public internet access and training to people who would otherwise be left behind in the digital world.

In the United States, about a third of those aged 14 and older - roughly 77 million people - use a public library computer or wireless network to access the internet each year. A recent study showed that library users tend to access more information about health, government, language, and culture than those who use the internet at other public locations. Public library users also report more positive impact on their lives from internet use in areas such as health, education, time savings, income, and personal finances.

In Chile, a national digital literacy campaign trained hundreds of thousands of people in basic technology skills, largely via a network of more than 300 public libraries. In rural Botswana, public libraries serve as small business owners' offices, helping people make their businesses more sophisticated and competitive. In Ukraine, one community has used library internet access to collect information about farming techniques, fundamentally changing the way they grow tomatoes and substantially increasing their crop quality and yield.

As these examples show, access to information and knowledge is a great equalizer. It enriches lives, informs choices, and prepares people for meaningful employment and contribution to their communities.

Further details about the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Global Libraries programme can be found by searching for Global Libraries at www.gatesfoundation.org.

What happens now?

We are inviting you to give your views on our strategy which is made up of the five principles shown above and to share your ideas for shaping the proposals which will transform our libraries and cultural services

The feedback questionnaire is available online at surreycc.gov.uk/consultations. You can also pick up a hard copy at your local library or request one by calling 03456 009009 or by texting 07860 053465.

Alongside this we will be engaging with community groups and partners including the district and borough councils and parish councils.

The consultation closes on Friday 4 January 2019.

There will then be a second phase of consultation where we will share the detailed proposals in spring 2019, in order to seek your views and understand the impact of them, before any final decisions are made.