



E R S

Research and Consultancy

**Swindon Borough Council
Library Service**

Review and Data Analysis

Final Report

Milburn House Dean Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1LE
T. 0191 244 6100 F. 0191 244 6101 E. newcastle@ers.org.uk

Also in Bristol, Carlisle and Leicester

W. www.ers.org.uk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In June 2009 ERS was appointed by Swindon Borough Council (SBC) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to undertake an analysis of the Council's Library Service to inform the development of a business case around the immediate challenges SBC faces and to enable the development of a robust Library Service Strategy.

Context

Since the Library Service last undertook a Service Review in 1998 there have been a number of changes within the Library Service's operating environment, both in terms of practical issues, such as technology, and the mechanisms within which local authorities operate and deliver services. The changing demographics of Swindon over the next twenty years highlight the need for the service to plan for delivery to a larger, progressively older and diverse population.

The continued absence of a published Library Service Strategy, in conjunction with a series of structural reorganisations within Swindon Borough Council, has served to isolate the library service and lessen its profile across a range of service partners. In addition the related lack of vision regarding the role of the library service in responding to community needs has led to a disconnect between the service and both existing and potential users.

Recent research by MLA has highlighted a significant number of National Indicators that libraries and Library Services are either directly or indirectly contributing to. However Swindon's Local Area Agreement makes little reference to the Library Service and the library indicator (NI 9 Use of public libraries) has not been included. **It is imperative that Swindon's Library Strategy clearly highlights the contribution that the service is making to broader policy priorities across the local authority and other partners.**

The recently launched Connecting People, Connecting Places Programme provides a framework for closer working in localities and neighbourhoods across Swindon. In light of the cross-cutting nature of the Library Service and the perceived value as a 'friendly, neutral, community space', then **the process of planning and delivery of a Library Strategy should be used as an exemplar of how the Connecting People, Connecting Places Programme will deliver services.**

Library Service Performance

At present Swindon's Library Service meets half of the Public Library Service standards. The number of scheduled opening hours and purchase of stock per 1,000 population have both declined since 2005/06. However the quality of the service in meeting requests for books remains strong. When compared with its comparator authorities **Swindon has the second lowest ratio of staff in post per 1,000 population and experienced the joint highest reduction in staff to population ratios between 2005 and 2008.**

The total number of library service points in Swindon is comparable with comparator authorities. However Swindon does not have any service point open for more than 60 hours and only one service point opens for more than 45 hours per week (the Express Zone facility in the Central Library increases opening hours to more than 60 hours per week). **Some 50% of Swindon's library service points are open for less than 30 hours per week, the joint highest ratio of the comparator authorities.**

This suggests that the service needs to build on its ability to meet user requests for books and **focus attention on facilitating access by extending opening hours across the service and continuing to boost visit numbers.**

Review of Library Service Consultation

The consultation that was undertaken in relation to the proposed closures of the branch libraries has provided useful evidence to support the development of the library strategy. However the design and delivery of similar consultation exercises needs to be strengthened to inform any future decision making process. Emphasis and resources should be dedicated to developing staff skills to ensure that future consultations are robustly developed and delivered and use a variety of engagement methods.

Draft Strategy Framework

There is no evidence that the recent budget options analysis for Swindon's part-time libraries has consistently and adequately discussed the role of the broader role of each library service on the context of the community within which they are located. **There should be no closures of any library service point until the vision and strategy are produced, with the exception of the changes proposed at Gorse Hill where an equivalent service will be provided.** Whilst the subsequent closure of individual library service points may be feasible, any decision must be incorporated within a robust plan and adequately take into account community needs.

The substantial capital investment in the Library Service infrastructure over recent years should be recognised. The opening of the new Central Library and refurbishment of a number of other library service points can provide the necessary momentum to drive forward a continued programme of modernisation. In this respect **a range of other service partners have a clear support role to play, in particular with regards to the coordination of capital assets, co-location of services and shared delivery to identified communities.**

The adoption of the recent single working guidance, cost savings linked to the book supply contracts, introduction of new technologies to simplify and automate manual tasks, the savings accrued from the re-provisioning of Walcot Library and re-provision at Gorse Hill Library, increased income from the re-opening of Central Library and more detailed scrutiny of non-staff costs should deliver the required efficiency savings of £100k in the current financial year. This should be confirmed by Swindon Library Service as a matter of urgency.

A draft Strategy Framework has been produced as part of this review and in consultation with the Library Management Team. **The stated actions should be progressed by in partnership with identified service partners and library users with the final Library Service Strategy published in November 2009.**

Recommendations

Recommendations for completion by November 2009	
1	The vision and strategy are produced in advance of any closure of library service points , with the exception of the changes proposed at Gorse Hill where an equivalent service will be provided
2	The process of planning and delivery of a Library Strategy should be used as an exemplar of how the Connecting People, Connecting Places Programme will deliver services
3	Implementation of Swindon Borough Council's single working guidance across relevant library service points
4	Premises and Supplies and Services costs are thoroughly reviewed to identify revenue saving for 2009/10 and beyond
5	Swindon Library Service to produce income projections for the service taking into account the re-opening of Central and Park library service points
6	The library service should be included as a central support service and recharge allocated to relevant departments that receive the greatest support and benefit from library services
7	Library service staff terms and conditions of employment and job descriptions to be reviewed to assess the financial and staffing implications of reconfiguring the library service
Recommendations	
8	Resources allocated to develop staff skills to ensure that future service consultations are robustly developed and delivered using a variety of appropriate engagement methods
9	Greater use of joint appointments and internal secondments with service partners to facilitate joint service delivery
10	Swindon Library Service to actively engage with the Community Asset Review New Ways of Working Programme
11	Swindon Borough Council to review the delivery of the Wiltshire and Swindon's School Library Service to schools across Swindon and the opportunities for the Swindon Library Service to play a stronger role

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Study Remit

1.1 In June 2009 ERS was appointed by Swindon Borough Council (SBC) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to undertake an analysis of: data around Swindon Borough Council's Library Service; the ongoing feedback from the Library Service's ongoing consultation process; best practice from around the country. This analysis has been used to inform the development of a business case around the immediate challenges SBC faces and to enable the development of a robust Library Service Strategy. The Objectives of this study are to:

- *Analyse the key sets of data, evidence of impact and other intelligence around the role of Swindon Borough Council's Library Service in recent years;*
- *Analyse the feedback from the consultation process currently ongoing in Swindon concerning the potential closure of up to four branch libraries, and contribute to the process as appropriate;*
- *Search out and assess best practice in other library services across England, the UK and internationally, in relation to community engagement, visioning and strategy development;*
- *To develop a sound business case for the service, offering value for money for the Council, ensuring a cost effective and comprehensive library service is delivered to the communities of Swindon; and*
- *To work with Swindon Borough Council and MLA, assisting the partners in the development of a strong vision for the Library Service and a robust strategy to deliver that vision.*

Methodology

1.2 The study team approached this with a methodology informed by recent delivery experience and in response to the particular situation in Swindon as initially outlined in the Review Brief. A key element is that it is objective yet pragmatic in recognition of the immediate and longer-term pressures that SBC Library Service faces. Importantly the methodology included both

quantitative and qualitative elements, to support the development of a balanced, independent and evidence based strategy to inform the development of the Library Service.

1.3 The methodology was comprised of four stages which included a Desktop Review, Community Consultation Review and Stakeholder Consultations:

- The **Desktop Review** entailed undertaking a document review to provide the study team with a sound understanding of the local and national policy context within which the Library Service is operating and an awareness of the impact these may be having on the service; a data review to provide the study team with a detailed understanding of how well libraries are performing overall and in relation to the MLA's definition of a "comprehensive and efficient" public library service; and the identification of best practice examples to inform the development of the Library Service's Strategy
- The **Community Consultation Review** entailed analysing feedback from the consultations undertaken by SBC in relation to the proposed closures of Even Swindon, Gorse Hill, and Old Town libraries
- **Stakeholder Consultations** were undertaken with 35 stakeholders, listed in Appendix 1. The majority of these were conducted on a face-to-face basis and followed a semi-structured format, being tailored to each individual stakeholder
- **Workshop with Library Management Team (LMT)** to develop outline Strategy Framework, vision, objectives and required actions

1.4 Carrying out this review has required significant contributions of time and information from a large number of people (see Appendix 1) and their assistance and contributions are much appreciated.

2.0 DEVELOPING A LIBRARY STRATEGY: SWINDON CONTEXT

- 2.1 Since the Library Service last undertook a Service Review there have been radical changes within the Library Service's operating environment, both in terms of practical issues, such as technology, and the mechanisms within which local authorities operate and deliver services.

Swindon Libraries Organisational Review

- 2.2 In 1998 Swindon Borough Council (SBC) commissioned an organisational review of the Library Service '*to assist in the determination of the future direction of the service particularly in relation to (then) recent government initiatives in the fields of Libraries, information and education*¹'. Although it is beyond this study team's remit to review and assess this document, it does provide some useful background context and valid comments that remain relevant when developing the Library Service strategy.
- 2.3 However, as this review has not resulted in a *published strategy* there is the need for an exercise to determine which, if any, of these recommendations have been taken forward and identify which of these are still relevant, particularly in respect of the use of technology and population growth. There is also a need to reassess the policy context within which this review was undertaken, discussed further below. It is imperative that a robust strategy is produced that fully addresses the current and future needs of the local community prior to any decision on the future of individual library service points.

Technology

- 2.4 Although delving into the nature of technological change since 1998 is beyond the scope of this study, there is a clear need for the Library Service to future proof this element of their service provision. However since technological advancements occur at such a rapid rate the Library Service needs to develop a mechanism for scanning the 'technology horizon' in relation to both the utilisation of technology and potential income generation, such as replacing CD/DVD rentals with high-speed downloading capabilities, and in maintaining and attracting users.

¹ Confidential document

Population Growth

2.5 In relation to changes in population the Library Service will need to consider several key issues. First, estimates suggest Swindon's population will increase to 192,300 in 2019 and then to 196,900 in 2026². Second, central government initiatives to promote housing construction means that Swindon has been earmarked for providing 34,000 new homes³. Third, between 1997 and 2007 the population of Swindon increased by 8.2%, a higher rate of growth than experienced across the South West (7.3%) and England (5%)⁴. Fourth, the Swindon population is comparatively young with over 63.6% Working Age People, (16-59/65), 19.8% Children (0–15 years) and 16.6% Older People (60/65+)⁵. Fifth, Swindon's ethnic minority population is 4.8%, a higher percentage than across the South West (2.3%)⁶. Although accurately estimating future population figures is difficult due to the variety of factors influencing growth, the Library Services will need to plan for delivering services to a larger, progressively older and diverse population.

The Policy Environment

2.6 As indicated above there have also been significant changes in the policy environment within which both the Library Service and other service providers operate. Although there are a large number of relevant policies which the Library Services need to be engaged with and contributing to, this should be a long-term goal, with resources dedicated in the short-term to engaging with Swindon's Strategic Partnership in relation to the Local Area Agreement (LAA), the Neighbourhood Management Asset Review and the roll out of the Community Engagement Framework.

2.7 The Swindon Strategic Partnership (SSP), Swindon's Local Strategic Partnership, was formed in 2003 and is made up of representatives from the voluntary, community, business and public sectors. The aim of the SSP is to bring together all the organisations and groups that are involved in making decisions that affect the future well-being of the people of Swindon.

² ONS (2004)- 'Sub-National Population Projections'.

³ A Shared Vision for Swindon 2008 - 2030

⁴ Swindon Brief – as at 24 Apr 09, Produced by GOSW Regional Intelligence Team

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

2.8 The Partnership has several responsibilities but there are two key elements of their work which the Library Service needs to engage with. First, at the strategic level, is A Shared Vision for Swindon 2008-2030 produced by the SSP. This is Swindon's Community Strategy which sets out the one overall vision for the Borough and *serves to provide the framework for service providers to develop plans and policies* to contribute to making the vision a reality.

2.9 The Community Strategy is divided into 6 themes, which include:

- **Theme 1** - Swindon: a destination of choice;
- **Theme 2** - All Swindon people are benefiting from our growing economy;
- **Theme 3** - We have safeguarded our environment for future generations;
- **Theme 4** - A healthy, caring and supportive community;
- **Theme 5** - A place where high aspirations are supported by superb education provision for all ages; and
- **Theme 6** - A place where local people can have real influence and where they feel safe.

2.10 Second, at the delivery level, are the Local Area Agreement Delivery Blocks and their associated action plans. The LAA is a three-year agreement that sets out the priorities for Swindon, as agreed between central government and the local area. LAAs represent a change in the relationship between central and local government which gives areas greater freedom to allocate resources to local priorities and benefit communities. This is done by bringing key local partners together, simplifying funding streams, and focussing on a core set of outcomes. The agreement is made up of outcomes, indicators and targets aimed at delivering a better quality of life for people through improving performance on a range of national and local priorities. These priorities are grouped around the 5 delivery blocks:

- **Children and Young People**
- **Safer and Stronger Communities**
- **Healthier Communities and Older People**
- **Economic Development and Enterprise**
- **Environmental Sustainability**

- 2.11 A review of Swindon's LAA indicates that there is little mention of the Library Service and the library indicator (NI 9 Use of public libraries) has not been included, though the use of libraries as a means for engaging residents is identified in two of the agreed targets. Recent research by MLA has however highlighted a significant number National Indicators that libraries and Library Services are contributing to either directly or indirectly across the country (see Appendix 2 for full details)⁷.
- 2.12 In relation to Swindon's LAA the following list highlights those currently agreed by the SSP which the Library Service could contribute to, either directly or indirectly. These are:

- **NI2** - % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood;
- **NI5** - Overall / general satisfaction with local area;
- **NI110** - Young people's participation in positive activities;
- **NI139** - The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home;
- **NI141** - Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living;
- **NI153** - Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods; and
- **NI164** - Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 3 or higher.

- 2.13 It is imperative that Swindon's Library Strategy is able to clearly highlight the contribution that the service is making to broader policy priorities across the local authority and other partners. By way of example Swindon's Home Library Service⁸ has 293 members⁹ and is delivered by WRVS volunteers. The service provides a clear contribution to supporting vulnerable people to achieve independent living and in 2008/09 recorded 25,238 issues and renewals to its members.

⁷ Outcomes framework for Museums, Libraries and Archives, MLA April 2008

⁸ The Home Library service is for residents of Swindon Borough who: Have a long-term disability, which prevents them from getting into a library; because of disability, would find it difficult to carry books home; and are recovering from a stay in hospital or long illness at home.

⁹ Data provided by Swindon Borough Council

Asset Management

2.14 An additional key process that the Library Service needs to actively and strategically engage with is the Community Assets Review which is encompassed within the larger Neighbourhood Management Asset Review¹⁰. As part of the Community Assets Review consultations were undertaken in early 2007 which sought the views of stakeholders, partners and residents around three alternative management and policy options. These were:

- *Declare all buildings surplus and dispose of individually depending on local circumstances. This could include Community Right to Buy;*
- *Keep a number of main centres as “hubs” taking into consideration the needs of the communities in that neighbourhood or town wide use. Dispose of others as above; or*
- *Identify a standard the Council wishes to be provided to every neighbourhood for community facilities and manage them directly. Will require considerable investment over a considerable period of time.*

2.15 However as it was recognised that taking forward decisions related to the three management and policy options noted above could be legally complex and time consuming, it was recommended that the future of community buildings be determined through other existing asset review mechanisms, such as the Neighbourhood Management Asset Review New Ways of Working Programme.

¹⁰ Community Assets Review, Swindon Borough Council Cabinet Report July 2007

Figure 1- Using the Asset Mapping Model for Service Planning

A West Durham Rural Delivery Pathfinder project

The West Durham model of asset mapping, 'The Talking and Listening Space', challenged the traditional approach to service planning. It did this by focusing on assets that already existed in communities, and how to make best use of them.

When compared to traditional models of planning service delivery, asset mapping turns conventional thinking on its head. Instead of taking a needs-based approach – which tends to concentrate on the negatives – asset mapping accentuates the positives. It seeks to ascertain what assets a community possesses, rather than those it does not. During the first session statistical information relating to key messages was discussed. In the second, the concept of the asset based approach was introduced, then linked to the problems and issues identified during the first session. It was at this stage that an asset map was produced. Thirdly, the issues were prioritised, and finally, ideas were developed for using the identified assets to create solutions.

2.16 Of particular interest to the Library Service is the recognition in the consultation report that community facilities, whether through provision of space and/or activities, provide opportunities to meet outcomes of the Local Area Agreement. Although mainly focused on service provision by community organisations this review provides an opportunity to engage with potential partners, both internal and external, to discuss the development of partnership delivery and/or co-location which could provide benefits in relation to increased efficiencies in both engaging with targeted beneficiary groups and in cost savings through achieving better economies of scale within localities (e.g. the roll-out of Swindon Direct customer service centres).

2.17 There are numerous examples of successful capital developments that incorporate a range of services within one building. This approach has in particular been used to anchor broader regeneration schemes, with the library service included as a core partner within a community hub. A number of examples are provided over page (Figures 2 to 4):

Figure 2- The Phoenix Centre, Sutton

Opened in September 2004, the Phoenix Centre was designed to cater for the needs of the local community. The centre was developed as part of a wider regeneration project of the Roundshaw Estate and was specifically designed to:

- *Break down barriers between the estate community and off-estate users*
- *Encourage the breaking down of barriers between age groups as well as a wider mix of social demographic users*
- *Enable traditional non-library users access to a library*

The Phoenix Centre includes a range of services, namely:

- *A leisure centre*
- *Youth zone*
- *Library*
- *Community cafe*

Co-location of different services within the centre has facilitated stronger joint working between a number of frontline services. In particular the library and youth services have taken part in shared training in how to work with challenging young people. All centre employees have a strong sense that they work for the Phoenix Centre - not just their particular service - resulting in a breakdown of silos and a more shared understanding of wider work areas and a greater feeling of safety.

Service Managers located in the Phoenix Centre attend monthly multi-agency meetings and work together to plan events and activities for a six month period, targeting particular service groups and then working together to develop a shared programme to meet that target group's needs.

Regular consultation meetings are held across all services and include the local community as well as the police and PCTs. The community have been involved since the beginning of the project and their suggestions and feedback are incorporated into the running of the project.

Since the centre opened the number of visitors to the library increased from approximately 5,000 month to 15,000, in part attributable to the increased opening hours for the library (83 hours a week) but also due to the centre's location and focus as a community hub. Within the library RFID provides the functionality for self-service withdrawals and returns of books.

Figure 3- The Blakenall Village Centre, Walsall

Blakenall Village Centre has been widely acclaimed as a flagship building, not only as a local landmark but also as a bustling community 'hub'. This regeneration success was built with the aid of Central Government funding, through the New Deal for Communities Programme. Crucially the centre was developed in response to in-depth consultation with local people on what improvements were needed. The centre was designed by the community, for the community and is owned by the community.

The £7.3 million facility was officially opened on 7th October 2005 by HRH Princess Royal. The Centre was the first of its kind in the region, bringing to the area community and mainstream public services that work together delivering a more structured, holistic approach, easily accessible to all members of the community and professionals alike. Co-location has delivered improvements to mainstream public service departments working more closely to deliver national and local targets.

The Village Centre incorporates the following public services under one roof:

- *Blakenall Meadow Practice Health Centre with GPs and primary care facilities*
- *Walsall teaching Primary Care Trust*
- *Co-operative Pharmacy*
- *Community Dentist*
- *Complementary Therapy for cancer patients*
- *Bereavement Service for cancer and palliative care patients*
- *Walsall Council - Social Services*
- *Walsall Council - Library Services*
- *Bloxwich Housing Trust*
- *New Horizon - 'healthy eating' restaurant and meeting place*
- *Jean Beeley conference and meeting rooms*
- *Walsall's New Deal: New Horizons management*

Figure 4- The Freedom Centre, Hull

The Freedom Centre, located just three miles east of Hull city centre, is at the heart of a multi million pound Village Centre development by the Preston Road Neighbourhood Development Company as part of a substantial regeneration programme in the area.

The Freedom Centre offers facilities for conferences & seminars, training courses, company board meetings and informal meetings. The Freedom Centre has established itself as a popular business venue with the public and private sectors alike. Along with other Village Centre service providers, the Freedom Centre offers a range of services to benefit the local community. As a not-for-profit social enterprise, the revenue from its conferencing facilities helps the Freedom Centre to maintain its services for local people. Facilities at the Centre include:

- *Theatre for up to 260 delegates*
- *Library*
- *Community learning services*
- *Conference and seminar suites*
- *On-site café*
- *Hairdressing salon*
- *Childcare*
- *Recruitment agency*

Swindon Community Engagement Framework

- 2.18 The Swindon Strategic Partnership (SSP) recognises the importance of community engagement as it serves to provide regular links and conversations with Swindon's communities to create a dialogue between agencies and the people they serve. One element of this is through the **Connecting People, Connecting Places** programme, which will give focus to these conversations.
- 2.19 The Connecting People, Connecting Places programme represents an important step change as it aims to support closer working in localities and neighbourhoods. Although a relatively new approach it is intended that locality or 'cluster' working will include decisions about how best to involve local people in their area.
- 2.20 Importantly the framework is flexible to ensure its applicability across the borough and will provide different methods of engagement with local people, with different levels of involvement. The following categories have been developed to assist the SSP to better plan and understand conversations with local people:
- *Inform citizens and young people;*
 - *Consult citizens, young people and communities; and*
 - *Involve citizens and young people directly.*
- 2.21 These methods will be used in different ways to achieve different outcomes, such as improving services and outcomes, providing increased awareness of decision making processes, and involving individuals and communities in the democratic process.
- 2.22 The Community Engagement Framework identifies a number of actions to be taken that will support the development of the framework's vision which the Library Service should engage with. Of particular relevance is that in many areas a branch library is often the only council service point which is accessible to the public. As a starting point, the following actions are planned:
- *Development of good practice amongst providers;*
 - *Undertake an annual self-assessment process;*

- *Develop an annual cycle of engagement activity to run alongside existing planning and review systems;*
- *Develop a tracking system of people who indicate they would like to be involved with us;*
- *Produce an annual Citizen Experience Report;*
- *Explore the potential for wider use of technology in engagement; and*
- *To initiate a 'You said..., we did...' campaign.*

2.23 In addition to highlighting the practical role that libraries can play within the Community Engagement Framework, participation in this process will also provide the Library Service with opportunities to engage with a variety of strategic partners via the Stronger Communities Forum, the delivery group taking responsibility for this work, and the Stronger Communities Joint Delivery Group.

3.0 LIBRARY SERVICE PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 One of the objectives of this review is to analyse key sets of data and other intelligence around the role of Swindon Borough Council's Library Service. This aspect of the review provides the context regarding the current position and performance of the library service as well as highlighting areas for further exploration and/or discussion. It is however important to draw a distinction between historic activity and performance and the potential of the library service to meet the evolving needs of future residents and visitors to the town.
- 3.2 To inform the development of a coherent strategy for the Library Service and support an assessment of whether Swindon Borough Council provides a 'comprehensive and efficient' local public library service, discussion regarding the configuration of all library service points (full time and part time) should focus on the following, inter-related questions:
- I. What are the needs of the local community and how can the Library Service respond?*
 - II. Does the existing provision meet local needs?*
 - III. Are the opening hours (number of hours and distribution) appropriate and conducive to maximising local use?*
 - IV. What is the minimum number of issues and visits to justify continued staffing as a formal library service point?*
 - V. Is the existing location of the service point fit for purpose in terms of access, delivery of services, safety and profile within the community?*
 - VI. Are alternative options available to accommodate the library service point?*
- 3.3 Although it is acknowledged that there is no formal definition of 'comprehensive and efficient', it is possible using key sets of performance, budget and operational data to provide a summary of the current performance of Swindon's Library Service (full details are included in Appendix 3).

Public Library Service standards

- 3.4 The Public Library Service standards are no longer an integral part of the local government process. However assessing local performance against the 10 standards outlined in the most recent edition does still provide value in informing and guiding local library service planning.
- 3.5 Using the most recent available data Swindon's Library Service meets 5 of the 10 Public Library Service Standards and no data is available for 2008 on the standard relating to the proportion of households living within specified distance of a static library (PLSS1). **The number of scheduled opening hours and purchase of stock per 1,000 population have both declined since 2005/06.**
- 3.6 However the quality of the service in meeting requests for books remains strong and the most recent data provided by Swindon (not currently available on CIPFA) records a total number of visits for 2008/09 as 5,553 per 1,000 population
- 3.7 This suggests that **the service needs to build on its ability to meet user requests for books and focus attention on facilitating access by extending opening hours across the service and continuing to boost visit numbers (inextricably linked indicators).**

Comparing Swindon with comparator CIPFA authorities

- 3.8 Caution must be taken when interpreting individual indicators as a number of contextual factors need to be taken into account (e.g. historic levels of investment). In addition it is also important to retain a focus on the aspirations and vision for the library service in Swindon. Relative comparability with comparator group local authorities should not be taken as providing evidence that the service is or is not adequately meeting the needs of the community.
- 3.9 With regards to staffing levels Swindon has the second lowest ratio of staff in post per 1,000 population across each of the comparator authorities and between 2005 and 2008 experienced the joint highest reduction in staff to population ratios of the selected comparator authorities. In addition Swindon has one of the lowest ratios of 'Professional Posts' to 'Other Posts' across the comparator authorities.

- 3.10 Caution should be taken when interpreting this data as it would be clearly misleading to adjudge that staff within 'Other Posts' are not skilled, valuable, professional and providing a quality service to library users. **It is important to explore the extent to which the library service is adequately resourced in terms of staff capacity, experience and skills to support the local community and maximise the use of the library stock.**
- 3.11 **Total net expenditure in Swindon per 1,000 population has, with the exception of 2005, been consistently higher than the comparator authorities** and total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population in Swindon has been the highest across the comparator group since 2006, both of which can be linked to the phasing of the capital investment programme.
- 3.12 The total number of library service points in Swindon is comparable with comparator authorities. However Swindon does not have any service point open for more than 60 hours and only one service point open for more than 45 hours per week (the new Central Library which is open for 58 hours per week¹¹).
- 3.13 **Some 50% of Swindon's library service points are open for less than 30 hours per week, the joint highest ratio of the comparator authorities.** This can be compared with 13% of service points that are open for less than 30 hours in Stockport and 14% in Trafford.

Library point usage in Swindon

- 3.14 Whilst it is important to have a thorough understanding of the usage of individual library points across Swindon, in particular the eight part time libraries, it is also important to understand the context and profile of each neighbourhood they serve, in particular with regards to: demographic structure; the presence of (or lack of) community facilities; local needs; and access issues (transport connectivity and cost, time taken, physical access).
- 3.15 The part time libraries account for 30% of opening hours across the sixteen library service points. **When standardised to take account of the number of issues per hour open, the rate of issues per hour at both Old Town**

¹¹ The Express Zone facility in the Central Library increases opening hours to more than 60 hours per week.

and Liden libraries is broadly comparable with the full-time libraries at Upper Stratton and Wroughton. As a caveat the extent to which usage at each part time library would increase proportionate to any increase in opening hours is unclear, although increased promotion of these service points may boost the number of active users.

- 3.16 The part time libraries also account for only 13% of total public floor space across the library service, with two of the part time libraries (Old Town and Gorse Hill) having less than 45sqm of public floor space each. Clearly these libraries are restricted in terms of available space to accommodate visitors, display book stock and host structured reader development activities.
- 3.17 There is no evidence that the context and profile of the local community has been consistently and adequately discussed across each of the library service points to date, in particular in relation to the budget analysis presented (Appendix 5). The experience of Dudley Libraries (Figure 4 over page) provides a number of learning points with regard to developing a new service model for library services and providing access points and services for users who cannot travel far to a library or prefer to remain in their locality.

Figure 4- Dudley Library Modernisation Programme¹²

In 1998-99 the Policy Committee of Dudley Libraries concluded that the library service had not kept pace with modern expectations, was not cost-effective and operated across too many buildings, some in inappropriate locations and many with poor facilities. Consultation with members of the public indicated that the buildings, stock and opening hours needed improving.

A Peer Review of Dudley Libraries was completed in 2005, which was followed by a review of the whole service. This culminated in the development of a Library Modernisation Programme which was approved by Cabinet in December 2007.

As part of the new Modernisation Programme a new service model 'Library Links' was to be introduced in four locations. Three unsustainable, under-used libraries were scheduled to be replaced with this model and a fourth to be opened in a community where need had been identified.

The concept of a 'Library Link' was to provide a tailored library service to a target community in an area where a traditional library was no longer sustainable. The 'Library Link' is designed to give better access to services by seeking out partner organisations which could offer space in community buildings. As a minimum these buildings should provide:

- *A children's section*
- *Comfortable seating*
- *Two public-access PCs*
- *A self-service kiosk*
- *Space for library-related activities (e.g. reader development)*

The model of a 'Library Link' adopted in Dudley is a collection of 1,500 items of stock that are regularly refreshed and selected based on the preferences of local users. Dudley Libraries signed Service Level Agreements with three different partners to help deliver the 'Library Link' model, namely an Adult Learning Centre, a Children's Centre, and a Community Centre. The fourth 'Library Link' in an area that previously had no library was delivered in partnership with the Primary Care Trust.

Particular attention was paid to the customer experience of using the 'Library Links' and they were staffed continuously for the first two weeks to introduce users to the new service. The 'Library Links' contribute 40 staffed hours per week to the library service opening hours, with the self-service facilities available for an extra 43.5 hours across the 'Library Links'.

This model has sustained the use of libraries in areas which previously had unsustainable library provision. The relatively low cost of providing this model has enabled the Council to invest £2.5m in a capital programme to improve the library network elsewhere across Dudley. The 'Library Links' provide an access point and service for users who cannot travel far to a library or prefer to remain in their locality.

¹² *Public Library Journal (2009)- 'Making stronger links'. Kate Millin, Jen Beardsmore and Jayne Wilkins. Summer 2009.*

Swindon Library Service budget

- 3.18 **Over the period 2004/05 to 2008/09 payroll costs have remained relatively static. Premises costs have increased by 44% and the cost of supplies and services by 38% of the same period.** A number of these costs relate to the opening of the Central Library. Both budget headings merit further investigation to determine whether a contribution to the requisite revenue saving for 2009/10 and beyond can be identified.
- 3.19 As the local authority owns the majority of the library premises then the scope of realising revenue savings within the Premises costs may be limited in the short-term. **Future efficiencies may however be realised through co-location of services and a restructure of all local authority capital assets (i.e. not restricted solely to library service points).**
- 3.20 The Recharge Costs (central support charges) have fluctuated over the same period as the criteria for what is included each year is not consistent. In addition the process for allocating recharge costs varies from authority to authority thus it is difficult to establish any meaningful comparisons.
- 3.21 A number of efficiency savings have already been identified within the book supply contracts, which can provide a potential maximum saving over each of the next four years of £11,840 per annum. In addition the new book supply contracts offer the ability to tag stock with radio frequency identification (RFID) as well as having book labels and barcodes printed and inserted by the supplier. This will generate further efficiencies with regards to ordering and distributing book stock.
- 3.22 The opening of the new Central Library and refurbishment of Park Library may provide income uplift for 2009/10 given the increased opportunity to hire music and DVD stock to library users and hire premises to other services. However at the time of writing Swindon Borough Council has not undertaken any detailed income projections for the library service. **It is important that any library strategy includes a clear action plan to identify and realise income opportunities across the library service.**

Swindon Library Service staffing

- 3.23 The proportion of staff hours allocated to each library Group in Swindon is consistent with the levels of use. **Increased operational flexibility may be realised by reviewing job descriptions for individual posts to ensure that the balance between back office and front line is appropriate and in line with the customer focused ethos of a modern library service.** The approach of retaining a number of cross network posts is sensible and enables the library service to respond to demand across the library service points.
- 3.24 Operational efficiencies have also been identified with regards to the provision of a number of library services that are currently undertaken manually (e.g. the provision of photocopying facilities). This will free up staff time to be re-deployed across the service.
- 3.25 **The recent adoption of a single working guidance by Swindon Borough Council presents opportunity to free up staff hours deployed at the same library point (in particular part-time libraries) which can be invested elsewhere across the service.** This could be used to extend opening hours at a number of library service points and/or strengthen the level of outreach work and reader development activities from a range of community venues (i.e. not restricted to library service points).
- 3.26 It is important that a thorough review of terms and conditions of employment and job descriptions is undertaken to assess the financial and staffing implications of reconfiguring the library service.

Summary

- 3.27 **There is no evidence that the context and profile of the local community has been consistently and adequately discussed across each of the library service points to date.** This is an area that requires immediate attention to inform the development of a coherent strategy for the library service.
- 3.28 **At present Swindon's Library Service meets half of the Public Library Service standards.** The number of scheduled opening hours and purchase of stock per 1,000 population have both declined since 2005/06. This raises concern regarding the level of access to the service and range of services on offer across each library service point.
- 3.29 The low ratio of staff in post per 1,000 population also raises **concern regarding the level of access to expertise and advice across the service and the ability of Swindon's Library Service to encourage full use of the library stock.**
- 3.30 In light of the current economic climate and associated budgetary pressures on the public purse, the importance of identifying efficiency savings is understandable. However the Library Strategy should focus on reconfiguring as opposed to cutting the service per se and embracing new models of delivery that can provide more a cost-effective service.
- 3.31 Analysis of the library service budget highlights that a number of efficiency savings have already been identified. However **more detailed scrutiny of all operating costs, in particular premises and supplies and services costs, is required to identify additional cost-savings.** The Library Strategy should identify short, medium and longer-term efficiency savings as well as highlighting those requiring initial capital investments to realise their potential.
- 3.32 The library strategy should also include a clear action plan to identify and realise income opportunities across the library service. In light of the concern regarding the low ratio of staff in post per 1,000 population, every effort should be made to protect core staffing levels and identify cost-savings from alternative budget headings.

4.0 REVIEW OF LIBRARY SERVICE CONSULTATION

- 4.1 As part of Swindon Borough Council's budget reporting process proposed library closures were first announced in 2008, initially identifying Old Town and Walcot libraries. Subsequent to this and in response to the identification of Even Swindon and Gorse Hill as libraries facing potential closure a public consultation exercise was undertaken. As part of this study members of the study team interviewed a number of key stakeholder involved in this process.

Consultation on Proposed Library Closures

Consultation Phase 1

- 4.2 The consultation process on the proposed library closures and reconfiguration started in early 2008 with the initial announcement in the 2009/10 budget to meet council-wide budgetary pressures. At this time Old Town Library and Walcot Library were specifically named for alternative library service point provision. The Old Town Library and Walcot Library proposal was deferred by one year, supported by one-off funding from the Council.
- 4.3 At a later time in the Council's 2009/10 budget process a proposal was put forward for alternative library service provision in Even Swindon and Gorse Hill. It was recognised that no previous consultation had taken place on this proposal and a three month consultation period was announced to commence on 1 April 2009.
- 4.4 Walcot Library re-provisioning was mitigated by co-locating the Walcot Community Shop within the library building and the use of volunteers. Due to continued campaigning to keep Old Town Library open, the Council agreed to a further 12 week consultation period.
- 4.5 Subsequently it was announced that Even Swindon Library and Gorse Hill Library were the previously unspecified libraries being proposed for closure. As these two libraries' closures were considered to have been insufficiently made public and due to continued campaigning to keep the Old Town Library open, a public consultation period was announced.

Consultation Phase 2

- 4.6 The public consultation period ran for 12 weeks from 1st April 2009 for both Even Swindon and Gorse Hill libraries and from 16th March 2009 for Old Town Library. Announcements of the public consultations were posted in the libraries, local radio and press and by word of mouth from library staff, concerned residents and businesses. Letters were also sent to all community groups as well as individuals known to be interested in participating in the consultation process. To facilitate public engagement several drop-in sessions were held adjacent to each library. Details for submitting written feedback, either by post or email, was also provided as was the option for the Library Service to attend community events as part of the public consultation process.
- 4.7 Overall there has been considerable feedback from residents although there is variation between the three libraries. For example, the Old Town Library drop-in sessions, of which there were 2, was attended by over 100 people, while both Even Swindon and Gorse Hill were each attended by over 40 people. Additionally there has been written feedback to the council, and some provided to this study team, although the majority of this has been in relation to the Old Town Library which of the three areas has the most tangible campaign against closure.

Written Submissions

- 4.8 Given the evocative nature of proposals to close a local amenity, the vast majority of written submissions have therefore been against the proposed closures. In the main residents are concerned about the impact on users, the loss of a community amenity, and the knock-on effect that the loss of a branch library will have on the vitality and viability of neighbourhood centres.
- 4.9 The vast majority of those who have written in are themselves library members, using the library for choosing their own books and also using it with their children to help with school work and for the enjoyment of reading. Parents are concerned about the impact on their families' use of libraries, particularly the frequency of visits, as to access an alternative library would require a trip into town.

- 4.10 There is also a notable concern about the impact on older people who may not be physically capable of going to town or have the confidence to do so. It must also be recognised that for many older people using their local library serves a social function where they meet friends (albeit it is important to consider the existing accessibility of the existing part time library service points to users with impaired mobility).
- 4.11 Finally, there a concern that the loss in footfall will adversely impact on other businesses in the area as many noted that stopping at the library is part of residents shopping routine and closure will divert custom to the town centre.
- 4.12 In relation to the proposed alternatives, increased mobile provision and the use of volunteers, residents were overwhelmingly against these options. In relation to mobile provision, this was felt to be inadequate as it would only focus on the delivery of books, be for short periods of time, and not serve the same social function the current library offers. In relation to the use of volunteers, this was felt to be a poor substitute for the quality of existing staff and the service they provide, with many noting that volunteers should not be used to deliver a council service.
- 4.13 There was also a notable level of concern about the consultation process. Several letters mentioned that this was not the first written submission they had made but one among many. They also questioned why previously submitted letters never seemed to be recognised or counted when elected members or council officers publically commented on the number of letters received. Concerns were also raised about the lack of direct engagement with young people, who, if they are to be future library users, need to have their views taken into consideration.

Drop-In Sessions

- 4.14 A total of 7 Drop-In Sessions were held with two in Even Swindon and three each at both Gorse Hill and Old Town. The overwhelming majority of attendees indicated they were members of the library and most used their library on a weekly basis. In relation to weekly usage, 69% of Old Town attendees do so while 56% of both Even Swindon and Gorse Hill do so.

Table 1- Reported Library usage

How often do you use the library?					
Library	Weekly	Fortnightly	Three weekly	Monthly	Less often
Even Swindon	56%	12%	7%	20%	5%
Gorse Hill	56%	8%	3%	31%	3%
Old Town	69%	5%	1%	21%	4%

4.15 When asked if they used other libraries the majority indicated they did not. Even Swindon and Gorse Hill had the highest percentage of attendees who do not use any other library, being 66% and 65% respectively, while 54% of Old Town attendees indicated they do not use any other library.

Table 2- Use of other library service points

Do you use any other library?		
Library	Yes	No
Even Swindon	34%	66%
Gorse Hill	35%	65%
Old Town	46%	54%

4.16 When asked to rate current library provision at their respective libraries the majority of attendees rated them as either Excellent or Good. Overall Even Swindon was rated the highest by attendees.

Table 3- Views on library service provision

What do you think of the current library provision?				
Library	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Even Swindon	87%	13%	0%	0%
Gorse Hill	56%	33%	8%	3%
Old Town	69%	25%	4%	2%

4.17 Attendees at the drop-in sessions were also asked what they wanted from their library service. Overall attendees indicated they were keen to maintain as a minimum the library and the service they currently received, which reflects the high rating they gave to their respective libraries and in particular the value of the library staff.

4.18 The most frequently cited elements of this were the provision of books and friendly and helpful staff, with after school support and access to IT also mentioned. A further issue highlighted by attendees was the community role that the library played in the respective areas. In relation to making changes

to the library services, attendees identified improving the stock, extending the opening hours, and increasing the number of computers available. In relation to library facilities it was also noted by some attendees that the library premises should be expanded, although this varied according to the location of the drop-in sessions, for example the frequency of this recommendation was greater in Old Town where there is currently a vacant shop adjacent to the library.

- 4.19 When attendees were asked what they thought of the proposed closures and reconfiguration of the library service, which included increasing mobile provision and/or volunteers supporting library provision, the vast majority of attendees were against these although a small percentage indicated they would try the mobile if forced to or would be willing to volunteer to keep the service open.
- 4.20 In relation to increasing mobile provision most attendees indicated that this would be inadequate due to the infrequency and length of time it would stop and only supports the provision of books since there are no IT facilities on the mobile. In relation to utilising volunteers most attendees indicated this would be inadequate as they would not provide the same level of professional service that library staff currently provide and also questioned why council tax payers should be asked to support delivery of a council service.

Overview of the Consultation Process

- 4.21 Since 2009 local authorities have been required to involve local representatives when carrying out 'any of its functions' by providing information, consulting or 'involving in another way'¹³. For the purpose of this analysis consultation is defined as a process of dialogue that leads to a decision¹⁴.
- 4.22 Authorities must consult a balanced selection of stakeholders, must not discriminate in the way they inform, consult or involve local people, and must promote equal opportunities for people to engage and get involved. Examples of effective engagement adopted by other library services in order to shape the future configuration of the library service are provided over page.

¹³ *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2009.*

¹⁴ *Audit Commission, Listen Up! effective community consultation*

Figure 6- Walsall Library Services

Walsall libraries regenerate

When Walsall Library Services reconfigured its library branch network to meet the future needs of customers, the modernisation plan had to be self-financing. To do this, it would need to sell off a number of redundant library sites then use the capital to fund the regeneration work. But when the service invited the community to comment on which libraries should be refurbished or relocated, the residents and businesses of Bentley condemned the proposals fearing the area would become a ghost town.

With such strong support for the Bentley Library, Walsall Council took the decision to broaden the project and regenerate the entire Bentley Centre, bringing much needed investment and jobs. In response, two committees were set up: The Bentley Centre Project Team, consisting of officials, councillors and library staff, and the Bentley Project Reference Group, made up of community groups, local associations and library users. One of the biggest hurdles was gaining the support of the Council to accept the use of capital receipts to regenerate the library¹⁵.

Figure 7- Sandwell Libraries Go Local

In order to ensure that its service was able to meet the needs of all the community, Sandwell Library and Information Services overhauled its whole management process structure and produce a new mission statement: “Open to everyone to explore, discover and enjoy”. This meant redesigning job descriptions to reflect the community and encourage applications from minority groups, re-writing and re-positioning marketing and advertising material, allowing libraries to be used for a much wider range of cultural activities, reviewing opening hours and adapting its book stock to reach its new wider audience¹⁶.

4.23 The consultation that was undertaken in relation to the proposed closures of the branch libraries has provided useful evidence to support the development of the library strategy. However the design and delivery of similar consultation exercises needs to be strengthened to inform any future decision making process. . As discussed above the consultation phase was divided into two phases, with phase one being a more implicit or narrow consultation and phase two a more explicit or public consultation. Among stakeholders there is a clear division between those who consider the process appropriate and those that do not.

¹⁵ http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Walsall%20libraries

¹⁶ http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Sandwell%20libraries

- 4.24 **It must be recognised that there is no one size fits all approach to a consultation, as the appropriateness of approach will be determined by the nature of the issue over which consultation is being sought over** (see Appendix 7 for methods of consultation). However that there are such divided opinions about this process intimates that the process has not been very transparent.
- 4.25 The phase two consultation process was limited in scope, in the main focusing on library users who do not represent the wider community. This has no doubt influenced the type of responses received, the majority of which, as noted above are against the proposed closures. This process would have benefited from a more proactive approach to engaging with non-users to identify, for example, why they do not access the library and what library provision they would like to see.
- 4.26 The drop-in sessions could have been more robust to enable a greater depth of analysis to be undertaken to inform subsequent decision making. In the first instance it would have been better to capture library membership type (e.g. young person, adult, visually impaired), to analyse opinions within these different groups. Whilst some profile data (e.g. age) was captured, this has not been used specifically to analyse the different needs and aspirations of users. Additionally a more structured approach to asking questions relating to what participants wanted from their library service and what they thought of the council's proposals (i.e. use of volunteers and increased mobile provision) would have been desirable.
- 4.27 Overall this consultation process would have benefited from a more proactive approach and from being guided by the answers to several fundamental questions: including¹⁷ (see Appendix 7):
- *Why you are engaging and what outcomes are you hoping for?*
 - *How much influence will the community be able to have – what can and can't change?*

¹⁷ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9274731#contents-7>

- *Does the method engage people from the bottom up, or is it council driven? And how will it reach beyond the active few?*
- *Above all, what is the 'good result' you are looking for, and what is the most effective way of getting there?*

4.28 At the time of writing Swindon Borough Council's Community Engagement Strategy has been developed and is currently being rolled out. However the library service should not wait for this to evolve into a tool kit nor be reliant on others to undertake consultations. Emphasis and resources should be dedicated to developing staff skills to ensure that future consultations are robustly developed and are integral to service design and delivery. Future consultations should use a variety of engagement methods appropriate to the particular target group/community. A number of online resources can be used to support this process (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8: Developing consultations

Community empowerment tools

The organisation People and Participation have put together a process planner that helps you structure how you will use your community empowerment method or tool and in what stage of your project. Before you begin, you should make sure that you have consulted this planner and mapped out exactly how you intend to use your chosen tool or method. <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Involve/Home>

Dialogue by Design

This handbook has been prepared by Andrew Acland and the team at Dialogue by Design. It draws upon previous experience with conducting public and stakeholder engagement and accompanies the online engagement design system - Dialogue Designer. <http://www.dialoguebydesign.net/resources/handbook.htm>

- 4.29 Furthermore in line with the local authority's duty to involve, the library service should start looking beyond community consultations to establish systems and procedures that are enabled to engage the community on a more structured and regular basis.
- 4.30 **Swindon Library Service needs to ensure that future public consultations are transparent in that they are widely publicised and are well planned** to avoid confusion amongst the general public and recriminations of misconduct from community activities or campaigners.
- 4.31 Future public consultations should be accountable in that they proactively target and engage with residents who represent the demographic profile of areas served and not just library users.

-
- 4.32 **Swindon Library Service needs to develop a robust approach to community consultation and engagement**, being informed by best practice and professional approaches to consultation and survey design, to enable it to make informed decisions and to be able to present decisions made and the rationale for them to the public (see Appendix 7).

5.0 LIBRARY SERVICE DRAFT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The absence of a published Library Service Strategy, in conjunction with a series of structural reorganisations within Swindon Borough Council, has served to isolate the library service and lessen its profile across a range of service partners. In addition the related lack of vision regarding the role of the library service in the responding to community needs has led to a disconnect between the service and both existing and potential users. As a consequence **it is imperative that both the vision and strategy are produced in advance of any closure of library service points, with the exception of the changes proposed at Gorse Hill where we understand an equivalent service will be provided¹⁸.**
- 5.2 The Library Service Strategy should define what 'comprehensive and efficient' means in context of Swindon's public library service. The strategy should include a clear vision for the service, outline key services and standards, identify strategic priorities to be achieved for the duration of the strategy and agree a number of core principles relating the user consultation, engagement of staff and investment areas. The strategy also needs to be underpinned by a series of action plans that are used to drive forward the development and delivery of the service as well as adequate mechanisms to measure service performance and user satisfaction.
- 5.3 It is important that the strategy places emphasis on **a library service that is flexible and able to deliver services in a variety of settings** and is not restricted to delivery at static library service points. Mobile provision, deposit collections, the existing home library service and use of outreach all enable the library service to meet the demands of individual users. The flexibility of this non-static service delivery can facilitate the process of transition for individual library service points as well as delivering tangible outcomes for service partners.

¹⁸ *The mobile service will be used to provide a flexible library service point. An equivalent number of hours to the static service point will be provided and the bookstock refreshed more frequently. The existing library service point is located in a community building which is not suitable for lone working of library staff. The low volume use of the static library service point does not provide the most efficient use of resources and is unsustainable. The use of the mobile service provides greater flexibility and enables the service to be provided at different locations across the community.*

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- 5.4 Crucially the strategy needs to **recognise and value the skills, professionalism, experience and energy of library staff** and the critical role they play in encouraging the whole community to make full use of the service. It is imperative that all staff are encouraged to participate in shaping the strategy to engender a stronger sense of ownership and also to ensure that the strategy is informed from the experience of staff across the whole service.
- 5.5 The following section provides an outline Strategy Framework, vision, objectives and required actions following a workshop completed with Swindon Library Service senior management team. A summary of actions is included in Appendix 8.

Vision

- 5.6 *‘Swindon’s Library Service aims to provide opportunities and access for learning, enjoyment and discovery by actively working with the community and other service providers’.*

Priority Area 1: Actively Working with the Community

A) Consultation

- 5.7 **The Library Service recognises that consulting with the community should be part of an ongoing process of engagement with users and non-users.** To this end the Library Service will:

- **Develop consultation and engagement processes that are transparent and robust to ensure that residents are aware of and able to constructively contribute to consultations, are designed to elicit the appropriate level of information, and are articulated in a manner which does not serve to artificially raise community expectations;**
- **Develop flexible consultation and engagement processes which are reflective of the nature of the issue being consulted upon and informed by best practice; and**
- **Develop Library Service staff consultation and engagement skills in line with recognised good practice (see Appendix 7) and national policy objectives, such as the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2009.**

- 5.8 As part of this process **the Library Service will develop a rolling Audience Action Plan process** for all its libraries to inform local provision. These action plans will be informed through the development of detailed community profiles for Swindon and also take into account data relating to local needs. The use of self-service kiosks, currently in use at a number of sites across the library service network, provides an opportunity to extend access to library stock outside of formal Library Service opening hours and may even be used to facilitate access to library stock in a range of community venues (i.e. similar to the Library Links model). The use of this facility should not however be used to substitute library staff within library service points.

5.9 These plans will be utilised to:

- **Review library opening hours in relation to local demand;**
- **Review the utilisation of self-service kiosks to complement service provision in relation to local demand (see Figure 9 below);**
- **Assess the local offer and identify changes in the local demand for services or provision; and**
- **Agree the levels of service to be provided at each library service point including Central library, full-time libraries and community libraries.**

5.10 For these plans to achieve the greatest effect they will need to:

- **Agree target audiences across Swindon (e.g. children, socially excluded people, ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities);**
- **Incorporate SMART¹⁹ measures; and**
- **Be shared with partner agencies to facilitate delivery.**

Figure 9- Use of fast-track facilities in Westminster

Westminster Library Services introduced a fast-track facility to provide access for office workers. An investment of £584,000 was used to introduce check-in/check-out kiosks, re-arrange the library floor space and furniture then move library staff out staff from behind their desks.

Since the changes were adopted 93 percent of all book and audio transactions are now scanned via the kiosks, which will accept cash and card payments. As a result of the introduction of fast-track facilities customer numbers have increased by ten percent, lengthy queues have been eliminated, stock levels have risen and there has been an increase in user satisfaction and staff morale.

The fast-track facilities have been introduced in Paddington, Marylebone, Victoria, Charing Cross and St John's Wood libraries. The key to the entire project's success has been the forward planning put in place by the library services' team and the decision to choose technology that could be easily adapted to meet future improvements and changes. In addition the installation of the facilities was incorporated as part of a broader redesign of the library, highlighting the importance of not simply introducing fast-track facilities in isolation.

Westminster Library Services is on course to recoup the costs of introducing the fast-track facilities over the next four years as well as making regular annual savings of £200,000.

¹⁹ *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-based*

B) Marketing and Promotion

- 5.11 **The Library Service recognises that it is important to raise its external profile to facilitate greater interaction and engagement with partner agencies and also encourage greater use of library services by the communities it serves.** To this end the Library Service will:

- **Identify and actively engage with relevant local partners, organisations and groups to promote both the formal library service offer and opportunities to provide responsive support to local priorities.**

C) Volunteers

- 5.12 **The Library Service recognises that volunteers can play a vital role in supporting the achievement of both organisational aims and participants aspirations.** Volunteers be utilised to not only support the delivery of library services they can also contribute to other priorities such providing skills development, work experience, building self confidence and promoting social engagement (see Figure 10).

- 5.13 One of the proposals put forward to maintain a library service presence in a number of localities involved operating a service through the use of community volunteers. However there are a number of important considerations that need to be taken into account prior to any decision regarding this approach. These include:

- a. *In the context of Swindon Borough Council and the desire to maintain a minimum standard of service across the library network, there would be a considerable risk in transferring responsibility for delivery wholly to community volunteers. Should this option be pursued then it is recommended that these points are not branded and promoted as part of Swindon's statutory library service provision;*
- b. *There is a significant distinction between the use of volunteers to support library staff and enhance core service and the use of volunteers to operate library service points. It is recommended that Swindon Borough Council adopt the former definition for use in library service points;*
- c. *Should Swindon Borough Council pursue the option of using community volunteers then the library service should produce a volunteer policy which includes the following: recruitment and retention of volunteers; tasks and activities supported; payment of expenses; and training and development.*

5.14 To this end the Library Service will:

- **Develop a working definition of a ‘volunteer’ that reflects the varied roles they can play in contributing to organisational aims and participant aspirations;**
- **Develop a Volunteer Policy to inform their appropriate use which does not serve to replace staff service delivery;**
- **Develop a process for identifying when volunteer utilisation will add value or complement library provision, for example in conjunction with self service kiosks; and**
- **Develop a process for identifying when the Library Service can provide placements to support partner service providers’ volunteers.**

Figure 10- Effective Use of Volunteers²⁰

As local authorities are now required to report on national indicators of performance the museums, libraries and archives sector is in a position to contribute directly to NI6 - Participation in regular volunteering.

Using volunteers should be linked to helping an organisation deliver its strategic aims, such as increasing community engagement or promoting skills development among users. Conversely volunteering can deliver outcomes for participants by increasing the ability to find employment or reduce isolation and develop social capital.

However for volunteering to be effective and beneficial to both the organisation and the participant several issues need to be addressed. First, for organisations to make most effective use of volunteers they need to understand what they as an organisation want to achieve and structure volunteer tasks accordingly. Second, organisations need to identify participant’s expectations and motivations to enable the organisation to match these. Third, volunteer programmes should be structured including a recruitment process, volunteer agreement and formal induction and training. Fourth, a member of staff needs to have explicit responsibility for volunteers to undertake management and supervision and deliver volunteer training.

²⁰ MLA (2008)- ‘Briefing 5: Effective use of volunteers’. Ailbhe McNabola, 19th December, 2008

Priority Area 2: Actively Working with Other Service Providers

A) *Partnership Development*

5.15 **The Library Service recognises that working with service providers at the strategic level is important to ensure that the service becomes more integrated into mainstream service delivery.** The Library Service will proactively strengthen the service's strategic links with key service partners to increase its contribution to the delivery of local priorities and aspirations. This will include:

- Engagement with strategic partners to raise the service's profile, both internally and externally, with a particular emphasis on delivery of LAA targets (see Section 2.10);
- The provision of clear evidence of the service's contribution to partners' strategic objectives to facilitate partnership working; and
- Working in partnership to enhance the local offer and service providers' impact on targeted beneficiaries, such as through co-delivery or co-location.

B) *Corporate Asset Strategy*

5.16 **The Library Service recognises that their libraries are important community assets whose current and future utilisation needs to be considered in the wider context of service delivery across the Borough.** To ensure that these assets are utilised to achieve the greatest effect the Library Service will:

- Engage with the Planning Department to develop Supplementary Planning Guidance in relation to securing Section 106 funding from developments within a library's catchment area;
- As part of Audience Action Plans review the condition and proposed use of each library service point to ensure that the facilities meet the needs of users and that the premises provide a sustainable accommodation for a modern library service;
- Communicate the above information to appropriate partners to facilitate joint investment and co-location, as appropriate;
- Where appropriate and beneficial utilise co-location to achieve efficiencies in service delivery, such as running costs and increasing access; and
- Work to secure and ring fence all capital receipts from the sale of any Library Service assets to support reinvestment in the service.

Figure 11: Using the Asset Mapping Model for Service Planning

A West Durham Rural Delivery Pathfinder project

The West Durham model of asset mapping, 'The Talking and Listening Space', challenged the traditional approach to service planning. It did this by focusing on assets that already existed in communities, and how to make best use of them.

When compared to traditional model of planning service delivery, asset mapping turns conventional thinking on its head. Instead of taking a needs-based approach – which tends to concentrate on the negatives – asset mapping accentuates the positives. It seeks to ascertain what assets a community possesses, rather than those it does not. During the first session statistical information relating to key messages was discussed. In the second, the concept of the asset based approach was introduced, then linked to the problems and issues identified during the first session. It was at this stage that an asset map was produced. Thirdly, the issues were prioritised, and finally, ideas were developed for using the identified assets to create solutions.

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=7929736>

C) Libraries Trust

5.17 The establishment of a charitable Libraries Trust merits further investigation. It is important to ensure that minimum standards and the vision for the library service are not diminished as a consequence. In addition the experience from Wigan (see Figure 12 over page) outlines the importance of understanding the scale of services required to make a Trust a viable and sustainable vehicle for quality service delivery.

5.18 To this end the Library Service will:

- **Complete a scoping exercise with relevant partners to assess the feasibility of establishing a charitable Libraries Trust.**

Figure 12- Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust

The Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust was established in 2003 to manage all former Wigan Council leisure and cultural services, with the exception of markets. Its scope ranges from libraries to leisure centres, country parks to archives and museum services. The intention was to improve investment and service quality.

The Trust has an annual turnover of £30m, 55% of which is a community services fee from Wigan Council. The Trust benefits from £0.5m saving on business rates (NNDR) each year. This has enabled the Trust to spend an extra £1.2 million over the last four years on providing residents with a more efficient and effective library service, including extended opening hours, new stock provisions and increased partnership projects with schools, health and children's centres.

In addition a further £350,000 investment has paid for two new outreach libraries, a new branch library, the relocation of some libraries into schools, extra stock, funding for a new marketing and branding campaign, plus the appointment of a new project development officer. The experience of Wigan's Leisure and Culture Trust has highlighted the importance of ensuring that this approach is suitable based on the context of each individual library service. Learning points from Wigan's experience include:

- *Ensuring that the charitable Trust comprises a sufficient range and scale of services to enable efficiencies through scale*
- *That stakeholders have clear objectives and focus on the degree to which a Trust can improve services*
- *That the Trust is not formed simply to solve a service management or delivery problem or simply to save money*
- *The mix of services that might be managed through a Trust should suit local circumstances and needs - there is no "best" model*
- *That sufficient time is allowed for set-up processes, with this expected to take a minimum of 1 year*

Priority Area 3: Library Service Staff

5.19 The Library Service recognises that for this strategy to be effective it needs to ensure that it has the right number of staff in the right roles and with the right skills. It also recognises the need to ensure that staff feel valued and that their views are important. To this end the Library Service will:

- **Work to ensure that the deployment of staff reflects the balance of skills necessary to support delivering this strategy;**
- **Review staff development and training to ensure staff have the appropriate skills, and the opportunities to develop them, such as community consultation and engagement, partnership working, income generation, and marketing and promotion;**
- **Develop a clear communication channel with all staff to secure staff input and support for the development of this strategy, such as an annual away day; and**
- **Develop clear and consistent communication channels with all staff to report the progress of delivering this strategy and on-going developments in the Library Service.**

6.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

- 6.1 The absence of a published Library Service Strategy, in conjunction with a series of structural reorganisations within Swindon Borough Council, has served to isolate the library service and lessen its profile across a range of service partners. In addition the related lack of vision regarding the role of the library service in the responding to community needs has led to a disconnect between the service and both existing and potential users. As a consequence **there should be no closures of any library service point until the vision and strategy are produced, with the exception of the changes proposed at Gorse Hill where an equivalent service will be provided.** Whilst the subsequent closure of individual library service points may be feasible, any decision must be incorporated within a robust plan and adequately take into account community needs.
- 6.2 The process of preparing the strategy should be recognised as equally important as its implementation. The strategy should fully engage with the local community, relevant service partners and library service staff to ensure that the service is able to deliver a modern, efficient, quality and sustainable service that can support the aspirations outlined in the Shared Vision for Swindon.
- 6.3 Using the most recent available data Swindon's Library Service meets 5 of the 10 Public Library Service Standards. The number of scheduled opening hours and purchase of stock per 1,000 population have both declined since 2005/06. However the quality of the service in meeting requests for books remains strong and the most recent data provided by Swindon records an increase in visit numbers. This suggests that **the service needs to build on its ability to meet user requests for books and focus attention on facilitating access by extending opening hours across the service and continuing to boost visit numbers.**
- 6.4 The strategy should also provide clarity on the minimum standards that users can expect across the Library Service, whilst recognising that not every library service point can provide every service. **It is important that the strategy places emphasis on a Library Service that is flexible and able to deliver services in a variety of settings and is not restricted to delivery at static library service points.** The continued use of outreach and mobile provision

will enable the service to meet the needs of identified target groups within the community.

- 6.5 In light of the current economic climate and associated budgetary pressures on the public purse, the importance of identifying efficiency savings is understandable. However the Library Strategy should focus on reconfiguring as opposed to cutting the service per se and embracing new models of delivery that can provide more a cost-effective service. Whilst the Library Strategy can identify a range of areas where efficiencies can be delivered, these cannot all be provided in the short-term. Consequently **the strategy needs to identify short, medium and longer-term savings as well as highlighting those requiring initial capital investments to realise their potential.**
- 6.6 The adoption of the recent single working guidance, cost savings linked to the book supply contracts, introduction of new technologies to simplify and automate manual tasks, the savings accrued from the re-provisioning of Walcot Library and re-provision at Gorse Hill Library, increased income from the re-opening of Central Library and more detailed scrutiny of non-staff costs should deliver the required efficiency savings of £100k in the current financial year. This should be confirmed by Swindon Library Service as a matter of urgency.
- 6.7 The already substantial capital investment in the Library Service infrastructure should be recognised as very positive. The opening of the new Central Library and refurbishment of a number of other library service points will, if channelled appropriately, provide the necessary momentum to drive forward a continued programme of modernisation. In this respect a range of **other service partners have a clear support role to play, in particular with regards to the coordination of capital assets, co-location of services and shared delivery to identified communities.**
- 6.8 Finally the recently launched Connecting People, Connecting Places Programme provides a framework for closer working in localities and neighbourhoods across Swindon. In light of the cross-cutting nature of the Library Service and the perceived value as a 'friendly, neutral, community space', then **the process of planning and delivery of a Library Strategy should be used as an exemplar of how the Connecting People, Connecting Places Programme will deliver services.**

Recommendations

- 6.9 The following recommendations are provided based on the consultation with stakeholders and review of data and other intelligence around the role of Swindon Borough Council's Library Service:

Recommendations for completion by November 2009	
1	The vision and strategy are produced in advance of any closure of library service points, with the exception of the changes proposed at Gorse Hill where an equivalent service will be provided
2	The process of planning and delivery of a Library Strategy should be used as an exemplar of how the Connecting People, Connecting Places Programme will deliver services
3	Implementation of Swindon Borough Council's single working policy across relevant library service points
4	Premises and Supplies and Services costs are thoroughly reviewed to identify revenue saving for 2009/10 and beyond
5	Swindon Library Service to produce income projections for the service taking into account the re-opening of Central and Park library service points
6	The library service should be included as a central support service and recharge allocated to relevant departments that receive the greatest support and benefit from library services
7	Library service staff terms and conditions of employment and job descriptions to be reviewed to assess the financial and staffing implications of reconfiguring the library service
Recommendations	
8	Resources allocated to develop staff skills to ensure that future service consultations are robustly developed and delivered using a variety of appropriate engagement methods
9	Greater use of joint appointments and internal secondments with service partners to facilitate joint service delivery
10	Swindon Library Service to actively engage with the Community Asset Review
11	Swindon Borough Council to review the delivery of the Wiltshire and Swindon's School Library Service to schools across Swindon and the opportunities for the Swindon Library Service to play a stronger role

APPENDIX 1- LIST OF CONSULTATIONS

1	Allyson Jordan	Head of Libraries, Swindon Borough Council
2	Anne Snelgrove MP	Labour MP for South Swindon, Swindon Borough Council
3	Bernie Brannan	Director of Housing and Leisure, Swindon Borough Council
4	Carol Jones	Library Manager (Old Town Library), Swindon Borough Council
5	Celia Carrington	Group Director: Environment, Regeneration and Community, Swindon Borough Council
6	Christina Sivers	Director of Community, Swindon Borough Council
7	Cllr Bob Wright	Cllr Central Ward (Labour), Swindon Borough Council
8	Cllr Fay Howard	Cllr Parks Ward (Labour), Swindon Borough Council
9	Cllr Fionuala Foley	Cllr Old Town & Lawn (Conservative), Swindon Borough Council
10	Cllr Fionuala Foley	Cllr for Old Town and Lawns (Conservative), Swindon Borough Council
11	Cllr Mike Bawden	Cllr for Old Town and Lawns (Conservative), Swindon Borough Council
12	Cllr Peter Mallinson	Cllr Walcot (Conservative), Swindon Borough Council
13	Cllr Stan Pajak	Eastcott Councillor (Liberal Democrats), Swindon Borough Council
14	Debs Osorio	Home Library Coordinator, Swindon Borough Council
15	Gary Tubb	Community, Leisure & Libraries Finance, Swindon Borough Council
16	Gavin Jones	Chief Executive & Group Director: Partnership & Performance, Swindon Borough Council
17	Geoff Allen	Interim Regional Manager (South West), MLA
18	Helen Cooper	Policy Adviser: Sector / Programme Support Officer: Living Places, MLA
19	Helen Miah	Head of Culture, Swindon Borough Council
20	Jon Finch	West Director of Engagement, MLA

21	Judith St John	Head of Ideas Stores, Tower Hamlets
22	Karen Leyden	Library Manager (Even Swindon Library), Swindon Borough Council
23	Margie Philips	Library Assistant, Swindon Borough Council
24	Marion Stevens	Strategic Manager Electronic and Learning Services, Swindon Borough Council
25	Mark Jones	Strategic Manager Information Services, Swindon Borough Council
26	Mary Dawes	Strategic Manager Children and Young Peoples Services, Swindon Borough Council
27	Matt Gott	Director (Partnership, Policy & Communications), Swindon Borough Council
28	Peter Musset	Head of Library Operations
29	Shaun Smith	Strategic Manager Adult and Community Services, Swindon Borough Council
30	Sherry Waldon	Chairperson, Parks and East Walcot Forum
31	Shirley Burnham	Old Town Library Campaign Group
32	Shirley Colbeck	Library Manager (Gorse Hill Library), Swindon Borough Council
33	Susan Brown	Library Strategy and Projects Officer, Swindon Borough Council
34	Terry King	Old Town Library Campaign Group
35	Tola Dabiri	Senior Policy Adviser: Excellence, Improvement & Innovation, MLA

APPENDIX 2- LIBRARY SERVICE CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL INDICATORS

NI	Title of national indicator
1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
2	% of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
3	Civic participation in the local area
4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
5	Overall / general satisfaction with local area
6	Participation in regular volunteering
7	Environment for a thriving third sector
9	Use of public libraries
13	Migrants' English language skills and knowledge
17	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour
23	Perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration
50	Emotional health of children
72	Achievement of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least 6 in each of the scales in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy
73	Achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2
74	Achievement at level 5 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 3
75	Achievement of 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths
76	Reduction in number of schools where fewer than 65% of pupils achieve level 4 or above in both English and Maths at KS2
77	Reduction of schools where fewer than 50% of pupils achieve level 5 or above in both English and Maths at KS3
78	Reduction in number of schools where fewer than 30% of pupils achieve 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE and equivalent including GCSEs in English and Maths
79	Achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19
80	Achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19
81	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19

NI	Title of national indicator
82	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19
83	Achievement at Level 5 or above in Science at Key Stage 3
84	Achievement of 2 or more A*– C grades in Science GCSEs or equivalent
85	Post-16 participation in physical sciences (A Level Physics, Chemistry and Maths)
86	Secondary schools judged as having good or outstanding standards of behaviour
87	Secondary school persistent absence rate
88	Percentage of schools providing access to extended services
89	Reduction of number of schools judged as requiring special measures and improvement in time taken to come out of the category
90	Take up of 14-19 learning diplomas
91	Participation of 17 year-olds in education or training
92	Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest
93	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
94	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
95	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3
96	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3
97	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
98	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
99	Looked after children reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2
100	Looked after children reaching level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2
101	Looked after children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and mathematics)
102	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 2 and 4
103	Special Educational Needs – statements issued within 26 weeks
104	The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap – achieving Key Stage 2 English and Maths threshold
105	The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap – achieving 5 A*- C GCSE including English and Maths
106	Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education

NI	Title of national indicator
107	Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups
108	Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups
109	Delivery of Sure Start Children's Centres
110	Young people's participation in positive activities
119	Self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing
138	Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood
139	The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home
140	Fair treatment by local services
141	Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living
142	Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living
151	Overall Employment rate (working-age)
152	Working age people on out of work benefits
153	Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods
161	Learners achieving a Level 1 qualification in literacy
162	Learners achieving an Entry Level 3 qualification in numeracy
163	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher
164	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 3 or higher
165	Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 4 or higher
171	New business registration rate
172	Percentage of small businesses in an area showing employment growth

APPENDIX 3- SWINDON LIBRARY SERVICE DATA

Public Library Service standards

In 2001 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a series of standards²¹ relating to key areas of service delivery in libraries. The standards were designed to cover the whole library service of an authority and not to that provided within one library. In the context of the standards the term 'library' is used to mean a staffed service point in a dedicated building, room or vehicle and does not cover book-borrowing facilities in other premises (i.e. shops or post offices).

It was intended that performance against the standards would be assessed on an annual basis by DCMS, with any assessment taking into account the whole range of standards as well as the extent to which the authority has met its own local targets for services to specific audiences (e.g. children and young people, socially excluded groups).

The Public Library Service Standards (PLSS) has been revised three times since their launch in 2001 with the most recent edition published in June 2008²². A number of the original 19 standards have been dropped or amended since their launch, albeit individual authorities have at their discretion continued to collect or monitor their performance should they feel this is a worthwhile exercise.

The changing landscape of local government performance assessment, namely the shift from Best Value Review to Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the current Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), has meant that the Public Library Service standards are no longer an integral part of the local government process. As such individual authorities no longer collate and report performance against the standards, however DCMS maintains the view that the standards are '*reasonable and reflect the minimum standard of service that local people are entitled to expect*'.

In the context of the increasing range of delivery methods open to library services, and in line with the principle of local discretion, greater flexibility has been afforded to individual authorities to judge the precise needs of the communities they serve.

²¹ DCMS (2001) - '*Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries – Standards and Assessment*'. May 2001.

²² DCMS (2008)- '*Public Library Service Standards*'. June 2008

However assessing local performance against the 10 standards outlined in the most recent edition does still provide value in informing and guiding local library service planning. The most recent update relating to Swindon's performance against the Public Library Service standards is contained in Table 4 over-page.

As a caveat it is important to note the change in population between the two reporting periods with the 2004/05 data based on a population of 182,200 and 2007/08 data based on a population of 189,500. In addition the recent capital reinvestment in a number of library buildings, most notably Central Library and Park Library, which for the period of data capture served to depress visit numbers. Headline findings based on the data contained in Table 4 include:

- *No data is available to assess the proportion of households living within specified distance of a static library, consequently more attention should be focused on reviewing library access across Swindon's library service points;*
- *The aggregate scheduled opening hours has fallen below the national standard by 5%;*
- *Performance relating to meeting book requests continues to outperform the national standards;*
- *Satisfaction with the library service has increased since 2005/06, however is still below the Public Library Standards;*
- *Annual items purchased per 1,000 population has dropped considerably since 2005/06 and is now 9% below the national standard.*

Using the most recent available data Swindon's Library Service meets 5 of the 10 Public Library Service Standards and no data is available on one (PLSS1). However the quality of the service in meeting requests for books remains strong. In addition the most recent data provided by Swindon (not currently available on CIPFA) records a total number of visits for 2008/09 as 5,553 per 1,000 population, showing an increase on the previous year.

This suggests that the service needs to build on its ability to meet user requests for books and focus attention on facilitating access by extending opening hours across the service and continuing to boost visit numbers (inextricably linked indicators).

Table 4- Public Library Service Standards: Swindon

Public Library Service Standard	Performance Measure ²³	Target	2005/06 ²⁴	2007/08 ²⁵	2008/09 ²⁶
PLSS1	Proportion of households living within specified distance of a static library	88%- 1 mile	92%	n/a	n/a
		100%- 2 miles	99%	n/a	n/a
PLSS2	Aggregate scheduled opening hours per 1,000 population for all libraries	128 hours	134	122 ²⁷	122
PLSS3	% of static libraries providing access to electronic information resources connected to the Internet	100%	100%	100%	100%
PLSS4	Total number of electronic workstations with access to the internet and the libraries catalogue available to users per 1,000 population	6	9	7.5	9.8
PLSS5	i) % of requests for books met within 7 days	50%	73%	73%	72%
	ii) % of requests for books met within 15 days	70%	85%	87%	84%
	iii) % of requests for books met within 30 days	85%	94%	95%	92%
PLSS6	Number of library visits per 1,000 population	6,300	6,381	5,320 ²⁸	5,553
PLSS7	% of library users 16 and over who view their library service as 'very good' or 'good'	94%	89%	91%	91%
PLSS8	% of library users under 16 who view their library service as 'good'	87%	72% ²⁹	84%	84%
PLSS9	Annual items added through purchase per 1,000 population	216	225	197	213
PLSS10	Time taken to replenish the lending stock on open access or available on loan	6.7 years	5.4 years	6.7 years	n/a

²³ DCMS (2008)- 'Public Library Service Standards'. 3rd revised edition April 2008.

²⁴ Based on population figure of 182,200

²⁵ Based on population figure of 189,500

²⁶ CIPFA data not available, however this represents Swindon's CIPFA return for 2008/09

²⁷ Based on opening hours published within the Swindon Libraries leaflet.

²⁸ The most recent data for Swindon, not published on CIPFA, records a total number of visits for 2008/09 as 6,149

²⁹ Previous national target was 77%

CIPFA³⁰ comparators

The comprehensive data set available through CIPFA presents opportunity to compare the performance of Swindon's library service with suitable comparator authorities. The most recent comparator group model for CIPFA provides the following metropolitan districts and unitary authorities:

Local Authority	Population	Local Authority	Population
Bury	183,300	Peterborough	163,300
Calderdale	200,100	Stockport	280,900
Darlington	100,000	Stockton-on-Tees	190,200
Derby	237,900	Swindon	189,500
Dudley	305,400	Telford & Wrekin	161,700
Kirklees	401,000	Trafford	212,800
Medway	252,200	Warrington	195,200
Milton Keynes	228,400		

However as with the Public Library Service standards data, caution must be taken when interpreting individual indicators as a number of contextual factors need to be taken into account (e.g. historic levels of investment). In addition it is also important to retain a focus on the aspirations and vision for the Library Service in Swindon. Relative comparability with comparator group local authorities should not be taken as providing evidence that the service is or is not adequately meeting the needs of the community.

The data presented in the following tables should be used as a starting point to inform discussion regarding the structure of and investment in the Library Service as opposed to a definitive position regarding current or projected future performance of the service.

The first two datasets relate to the use of the Library Service in Swindon when compared with comparator group authorities between 2005 and 2008. Table 5 provides evidence of a 12% reduction in the number of recorded annual physical visits between 2005 and 2008. Four of the comparator group have recorded a reduction in annual visits greater than experienced in Swindon, namely Darlington, Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Trafford. However in the context of Swindon this can be attributed to the closure for refurbishment / rebuild of both Central Library and Park Library during 2008.

³⁰ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

The most recent data for Swindon, covering the period of 2009, records an increase in the number of annual physical visits to 5,553 per 1,000 population³¹. Further increases are anticipated in 2009/10 given that the new Central Library did not open until October 2008 and Park Library re-opened in September 2008.

Table 5- Annual physical visits per 1,000 population³²

	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Bury	5,207	4,473	4,974	5,466	5%
Calderdale	4,883	4,906	4,877	4,928	1%
Darlington	4,243	4,472	4,387	3,357	-21%
Derby	5,500	5,584	5,398	5,164	-6%
Dudley	5,150	5,081	4,737	4,512	-12%
Kirklees	5,429	5,271	5,297	5,278	-3%
Medway	3,967	4,005	4,210	4,183	5%
Milton Keynes	5,496	5,815	5,052	4,609	-16%
Peterborough	7,535	7,911	7,039	5,935	-21%
Stockport	4,767	4,711	4,929	5,032	5%
Stockton-on-Tees	5,025	5,240	5,275	5,007	0%
Swindon	6,063	6,319	5,629	5,320	-12%
Telford & Wrekin	4,485	4,804	5,680	4,552	1%
Trafford	6,092	5,677	5,573	4,931	-19%
Warrington	4,652	4,532	5,038	4,986	7%

Table 6 over page displays a similar trend with regard to the number of book issues in Swindon, with a reduction of 16% recorded between 2005 and 2008. This trend is mirrored across the majority of comparator authorities, with the exception of Medway and Telford & Wrekin, with an average reduction of 8%. Again however the most recent data records an increase in Swindon in the number of annual issues to 6,149 per 1,000 population³³, a return to the 2005 rate prior to the closure of the Central Library.

³¹ Based on a total number of 1,052,229 visits from April 2008 to March 2009

³² CIPFA data

³³ Based on a total number of 1,165,240 issues from April 2008 to March 2009

Table 6- Annual Book Issues per 1,000 population³⁴

	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Bury	5,544	5,483	5,325	5,465	-1%
Calderdale	5,867	5,523	5,241	5,027	-14%
Darlington	5,816	5,305	5,608	5,205	-11%
Derby	4,680	4,576	4,566	4,462	-5%
Dudley	5,147	5,238	4,988	4,833	-6%
Kirklees	4,785	4,670	4,757	4,303	-10%
Medway	3,377	4,132	4,288	4,488	25%
Milton Keynes	6,280	6,158	6,116	5,689	-9%
Peterborough	5,134	5,095	4,704	4,612	-10%
Stockton-on-Tees	6,009	5,099	4,920	4,877	-19%
Stockport	6,764	6,269	6,135	5,916	-13%
Swindon	6,151	5,980	5,420	5,182	-16%
Telford & Wrekin	4,220	4,529	4,515	4,255	1%
Trafford	4,597	4,399	4,126	3,932	-14%
Warrington	7,294	6,761	6,451	5,828	-20%

The second two datasets provide detail on the staffing structure of the Library Service when compared with a number of comparator authorities. For the purpose of this review it is important to recognise that the Library Service is not simply a network of static library points but a service where the library staff (not solely librarians) play an essential role in *'encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the service, provide advice as to its use and make available bibliographical and other information'*³⁵.

Indeed as this role can be delivered in a broad range of community settings (i.e. is not restricted to static library points) then it is important to explore the extent to which the Library Service is adequately resourced in terms of staff capacity and competence to support the local community and maximise the use of the library stock.

The data in Table 7 below reveals that Swindon has the fifth lowest ratio of staff in post per 1,000 population across each of the comparator authorities. In addition over the period of 2005 to 2008 Swindon has also experienced the joint highest reduction in staff to population ratios of the selected comparator authorities.

³⁴ CIPFA data

³⁵ Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

Table 7- Staff in post per 1,000 population

	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change
Bury	0.47	0.45	0.45	0.44	-0.03
Calderdale	0.46	0.43	0.42	0.41	-0.05
Darlington	0.41	0.41	0.36	0.41	0
Derby	0.41	0.44	0.36	0.39	-0.02
Dudley	0.48	0.5	0.44	0.47	-0.01
Kirklees	0.37	0.45	0.42	0.67	0.30
Medway	0.39	0.42	0.41	0.35	-0.04
Milton Keynes	0.34	0.33	0.31	0.33	-0.01
Peterborough	0.46	0.41	0.46	0.46	0
Stockport	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.02
Stockton-on-Tees	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.44	-0.01
Swindon	0.42	0.42	0.39	0.37	-0.05
Telford & Wrekin	0.30	0.31	0.30	0.27	-0.03
Trafford	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.52	-0.01
Warrington	0.33	0.31	0.31	0.31	-0.02

In addition to the quantity of staff within the service it is also important to review the level of skills and experience of the workforce, in particular as this recognises their valuable role in supporting and delivering a range of structured reader development activity. The data in Table 8 over page provides detail on both the total number of staff as well as a breakdown of the number of staff recorded as professional and those recorded as other posts.

The data reveals that Swindon has one of the lowest ratios of 'Professional Posts'³⁶ to 'Other Posts'³⁷ across the comparator authorities. The proportion of 'Professional Posts' is exactly half the ratio recorded in Stockport.

³⁶ The number of posts for persons holding formal qualification in librarianship or information science or persons who have completed their qualifying examinations. This includes graduates and other trained specialists on the library staff. Include posts where it may be preferable but not essential for staff to hold the above mentioned qualifications.

³⁷ The number of posts for persons performing administrative, clerical and general duties plus the number of posts for persons who hold Library Certificates, or who are trainees (including supernumeraries). Include also the number of posts for all other employees (eg bindery staff, porters, janitors etc) but exclude staff employed by the DSO or other contractors.

Table 8- Staff in post comparators (as at 31st March 2008)

	Professional Posts (FTE³⁸)	% Total	Other Posts (FTE)	% Total	Total (FTE)
Bury	17.9	22%	63.4	78%	81.3
Calderdale	20.1	25%	61.3	75%	81.4
Darlington	8.3	20%	33.6	80%	41.9
Derby	22.9	24%	70.9	76%	93.8
Dudley	27.0	19%	117.9	81%	144.9
Kirklees	45.0	17%	223.0	83%	268.0
Medway	14.7	17%	73.7	83%	88.4
Milton Keynes	15.5	20%	61.0	80%	76.5
Peterborough	8.0	11%	67.5	89%	75.5
Stockport	43.4	34%	85.5	66%	128.9
Stockton-on-Tees	23.2	27%	61.2	73%	84.4
Swindon	11.8	17%	58.2	83%	70.0
Telford & Wrekin	11.4	26%	31.8	74%	43.2
Trafford	24.0	22%	87.5	78%	111.5
Warrington	17.8	30%	42.1	70%	59.9

Caution should be taken when interpreting this data as it would be clearly misleading to adjudge that staff within 'Other Posts' are not skilled, valuable, professional and providing a quality service to library users. The data may however be used to explore the extent to which the existing skills of the Library Service workforce are able to meet the current and future needs of the community and a range of partner agencies.

The final three datasets relate to library service expenditure across the comparator authorities for the period 2004 to 2008. The data in Table 9 over page indicates that the total net expenditure in Swindon per 1,000 population has, with the exception of 2005, been consistently higher than the comparator authorities (albeit that CIPFA does not included data for Swindon for 2008).

³⁸ Full time equivalent

Table 9- Total Net Expenditure per 1,000 population³⁹

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bury	17,202	17,514	18,033	19,497
Calderdale	18,653	19,291	17,721	18,174
Darlington	n/a	16,109	19,354	19,549
Derby	16,153	17,470	17,286	n/a
Dudley	14,342	14,841	15,766	15,755
Kirklees	17,956	18,737	17,822	19,853
Medway	15,488	19,234	17,711	16,658
Milton Keynes	13,873	14,044	12,602	13,356
Peterborough	23,138	22,302	19,457	21,636
Stockport	17,530	18,427	18,882	18,561
Stockton-on-Tees	16,982	17,087	16,537	15,822
Swindon	20,770	23,948	23,536	n/a
Telford & Wrekin	10,159	11,210	14,087	13,272
Trafford	n/a	14,210	13,933	16,670
Warrington	14,607	14,025	13,964	13,950

Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population in Swindon has also been the highest across the comparator group since 2006, which can be linked to the phasing of the capital investment programme.

Table 10- Total Revenue Expenditure per 1,000 population

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bury	17,738	18,591	19,247	19,183
Calderdale	22,014	19,843	18,925	19,097
Darlington	11,763	12,528	13,685	13,980
Derby	18,327	19,113	19,627	n/a
Dudley	14,434	15,276	16,136	16,338
Kirklees	17,674	18,079	18,356	20,303
Medway	15,533	18,973	18,168	17,062
Milton Keynes	14,507	14,367	13,613	14,085
Peterborough	21,007	21,474	20,459	21,608
Stockport	17,149	17,813	18,883	18,740
Stockton-on-Tees	16,746	16,804	16,642	15,876
Swindon	19,312	22,195	23,219	22,798
Telford & Wrekin	10,642	11,603	14,469	14,029
Trafford	13,610	14,256	14,885	17,476
Warrington	15,318	14,542	14,529	14,446

Revenue expenditure on employees per 1,000 population (Table 11 over page) has consistently been below the comparator group average between 2005 and 2008, although the data indicates that the ratio of expenditure per 1,000 population has generally reduced for all comparators within 2008.

³⁹ CIPFA data. Financial Information (2007-08 Actuals) - Total Net Expenditure including Capital Charges

Table 11- Revenue Expenditure (per 1,000 Population)-Employees

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bury	17,738	18,591	19,247	11,652
Calderdale	10,901	9,799	8,606	8,609
Darlington	11,763	12,528	13,685	9,144
Derby	18,327	19,113	19,627	17,435
Dudley	14,434	15,276	16,136	9,874
Kirklees	17,674	18,079	18,356	12,058
Medway	15,533	18,973	18,168	11,104
Milton Keynes	14,507	14,367	13,613	7,900
Peterborough	10,473	10,900	10,476	11,181
Stockport	9,804	10,543	11,239	11,026
Stockton-on-Tees	16,745	16,804	16,642	9,432
Swindon	10,165	10,183	9,809	9,715
Telford & Wrekin	10,642	11,603	14,469	6,120
Trafford	7,124	8,461	8,328	8,510
Warrington	7,063	7,588	7,776	7,550
Average	12,860	13,521	13,745	10,087

Employee expenditure as a % of gross service expenditure has actually fallen in Swindon between 2005 and 2008 (Table 12), which can be attributed to previous staffing cuts as well as growth in other cost areas such as premises costs and Third Party payments (see next section for further detail). Over the same period the level of materials expenditure in Swindon as a % of gross service expenditure, a trend mirrored across the majority of comparator authorities.

Table 12- % Expenditure: Comparison with CIPFA family

Year	Local Authority	Materials Expenditure as a % of Gross Service Expenditure	Employee Expenditure as a % of Gross Service Expenditure
2008	Bury	10	61
2007	Bury	11	61
2006	Bury	10	57
2005	Bury	14	57
2008	Calderdale	14	45
2007	Calderdale	12	45
2006	Calderdale	11	49
2005	Calderdale	11	50
2008	Darlington	15	65
2007	Darlington	14	61
2006	Darlington	15	63
2005	Darlington	19	55
2008	Derby	n/a	n/a
2007	Derby	12	51
2006	Derby	13	52
2005	Derby	13	52
2008	Dudley	11	60

2007	Dudley	12	63
2006	Dudley	12	64
2005	Dudley	14	64
2008	Kirklees	11	59
2007	Kirklees	14	60
2006	Kirklees	16	55
2005	Kirklees	12	54
2008	Medway	6	65
2007	Medway	8	60
2006	Medway	9	53
2005	Medway	10	59
2008	Milton Keynes	11	56
2007	Milton Keynes	12	56
2006	Milton Keynes	9	54
2005	Milton Keynes	10	52
2008	Peterborough	9	52
2007	Peterborough	10	51
2006	Peterborough	9	51
2005	Peterborough	10	50
2008	Stockport	12	59
2007	Stockport	11	60
2006	Stockport	12	59
2005	Stockport	13	57
2008	Stockton-on-Tees	10	59
2007	Stockton-on-Tees	12	56
2006	Stockton-on-Tees	11	54
2005	Stockton-on-Tees	10	53
2008	Swindon	9	43
2007	Swindon	10	42
2006	Swindon	10	46
2005	Swindon	13	53
2008	Telford & Wrekin	13	44
2007	Telford & Wrekin	13	42
2006	Telford & Wrekin	16	51
2005	Telford & Wrekin	17	54
2008	Trafford	8	49
2007	Trafford	8	56
2006	Trafford	7	59
2005	Trafford	12	52
2008	Warrington	14	52
2007	Warrington	15	54
2006	Warrington	15	52
2005	Warrington	15	46

The final dataset (Table 13 over page) relates to the number of library service points (static points excluding mobile library provision) and opening hours across each of the comparator authorities. Again to reiterate a library service point relates to a staffed service point in a dedicated building, or room. In addition as a caveat it is important to recognise that this data does not take into account the aggregated size (public floor space) of all the service points and as such may not fully reflect the capacity of the library service.

The data reveals that the number of library service points in Swindon is marginally higher than the comparator average of 14. Similar to the majority of comparator authorities Swindon does not have any service point open for more than 60 hours. In addition Swindon only has one service point open for more than 45 hours per week (the new Central Library which is open for 58 hours per week⁴⁰), which is the joint lowest proportion across all comparator authorities. Swindon also has the joint second highest ratio of service points open for less than 30 hours as a proportion of all service points (i.e. 50% of Swindon's library service points are open for less than 30 hours, compared with 0% in Derby and Stockton-on-Tees).

Following a period of steady decline annual visits and annual issues increased as a consequence of the opening of the Central Library and refurbishment of Park Library. Consequently it is important that the Library Service is able to maintain this momentum across the whole service.

Swindon has recorded the joint highest reduction in staff to population ratios of the selected comparator authorities and also has one of the lowest ratios of 'Professional Posts' to 'Other Posts' across the comparator authorities. Further work is required to explore the extent to which the Library Service is adequately resourced in terms of staff capacity, experience and skills to support the local community and maximise the use of the library stock.

Swindon also has the joint second highest ratio of service points open for less than 30 hours as a proportion of all service points when compared with comparator authorities. This suggests that the library strategy needs to engage with local communities to determine to what extent existing opening hours meet local needs.

⁴⁰ www.swindon.gov.uk/leisuresport/libraries/libraries-libraries/libraries-central.htm

Table 13- Comparing Library Service Points / Opening Hours (CIPFA data)

Local Authority	Open 60 hours and over		Open 45 to 59 hours		Open 30 to 44 hours		Open 10 to 29 hours		Total Service Points
	Number	% Total Points	Number	% Total Points	Number	% Total Points	Number	% Total Points	
Bury	1	8%	2	15%	5	38%	5	38%	13
Calderdale	0	0%	6	29%	5	24%	10	48%	21
Darlington	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	2
Derby	0	0%	2	18%	9	82%	0	0%	11
Dudley	0	0%	6	33%	7	39%	5	28%	18
Kirklees	1	4%	8	32%	4	16%	12	48%	25
Medway	0	0%	4	24%	7	41%	6	35%	17
Milton Keynes	0	0%	2	22%	2	22%	5	56%	9
Peterborough	1	10%	3	30%	1	10%	5	50%	10
Stockport	0	0%	8	53%	5	33%	2	13%	15
Stockton-on-Tees	0	0%	5	42%	7	58%	0	0%	12
Swindon⁴¹	0	0%	1	6%	7	44%	8	50%	16
Telford & Wrekin	0	0%	2	18%	5	45%	4	36%	11
Trafford	2	14%	4	29%	6	43%	2	14%	14
Warrington	0	0%	1	8%	6	46%	6	46%	13

⁴¹ The Express Zone facility in the Central Library increases opening hours to more than 60 hours per week

Library point usage in Swindon

Whilst the CIPFA data enables useful comparison with other authorities, this data relates to the whole Library Service. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the usage of individual library points across Swindon, in particular the eight part time libraries⁴². However it is also important to understand the context and profile of each neighbourhood they serve, in particular with regards to (in no particular order):

- *Demographic structure;*
- *Presence of (or lack of) community facilities;*
- *Local needs (which may not be the same as local demand); and*
- *Access issues (transport connectivity and cost, time taken, physical access).*

Consequently although the data presented below provides detail of existing use, it does not reflect potential use or some of the more qualitative aspects of the service provided within the part time libraries. Table 14 over page provides detail on the usage of each library service point for 2008/09 when compared with the previous year. The data is skewed by the closure for refurbishment / rebuild of both Central Library and Park Library during 2007/08.

The part time libraries account for 11% of library visits and 13% of library issues across the whole library service. However to place that in context the part time libraries account for 30% of opening hours across the sixteen library service points. When standardised to take account of the number of issues per hour open (see Table 11) the rate of issues per hour at both Old Town and Liden libraries is broadly comparable with the full-time libraries at Upper Stratton and Wroughton. It is important to standardise usage data when assessing the relative performance of each library service point, in particular if this is to be used to inform service reconfiguration.

As a caveat the extent to which usage at each part time library would increase proportionate to any increase in opening hours is unclear, although increased promotion of these service points may boost the number of active users.

⁴² Swindon Borough Council Library Service defines a full-time library as open for more than 30 hours per week and a part-time library as open for less than 30 hours per week.

Table 14- Swindon Library Service: Headline indicators

Library ^{43 44}	Floor space (Public Area) sqm	Issues		% Change	% Issues	Annual Issues	Visits		% Change	% Visits
		2007/08	2008/09		(by Library)	(per Sqm)	2007/08	2008/09		(by Library)
Central	1909	226,215	303,165	34%	26%	159	278,885	336,076	21%	32%
North Swindon	1225	206,875	217,441	5%	19%	178	176,573	186,600	6%	18%
West Swindon	758	140,745	140,816	0%	12%	186	131,194	112,856	-14%	11%
Highworth	621	101,368	104,443	3%	9%	168	111,638	108,187	-3%	10%
Moredon	138	48,199	48,515	1%	4%	352	52,270	48,555	-7%	5%
Park	305	22,738	32,971	45%	3%	108	28,747	35,823	25%	3%
Upper Stratton	196	56,286	53,851	-4%	5%	275	49,503	45,290	-9%	4%
Wroughton	370	65,170	60,889	-7%	5%	165	50,963	46,738	-8%	4%
Covingham	69	28,209	32,373	15%	3%	469	20,862	23,347	12%	2%
Liden	285	31,865	34,340	8%	3%	120	27,526	27,310	-1%	3%
Old Town	43	25,525	27,867	9%	2%	648	10,418	11,774	13%	1%
Penhill	107	12,780	11,677	-9%	1%	109	12,961	11,170	-14%	1%
Walcot	153	17,236	14,867	-14%	1%	97	15,249	16,733	10%	2%
Even Swindon	42	11,418	10,847	-5%	1%	258	4,690	4,435	-5%	>1%
Gorse Hill	60	10,566	9,866	-7%	1%	164	4,824	4,204	-13%	>1%
Pinehurst	103	10,141	9,983	-2%	1%	97	13,804	12,735	-8%	1%
Mobile		27,974	24,667	-12%	2%	-	17,964	20,396	14%	2%
Deposit Collections		27,728	26,662	-4%	2%	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	6,384	1,071,038	1,165,240				1,008,071	1,052,229		

⁴³ Part-time libraries highlighted in bold

⁴⁴ Libraries identified for alternative provision highlighted in yellow

The part time libraries also account for only 13% (862 sqm) of total public floor space across the Library Service, with two of the part time libraries (Old Town and Gorse Hill) having less than 45sqm of public floor space each. Clearly these libraries are restricted in terms of available space to accommodate visitors, display book stock and host structured reader development activities.

Assessing the rate of issues per sqm (see Table 15) provides a more robust comparison of relative usage based on availability capacity, with both Even Swindon and Old Town recording relative high numbers of issues based on the physical size of the service point.

Table 15- Standardised Issue data

Library⁴⁵	Opening Hours	Issues
	(Week)	(per hour open)
Central	58	101
North Swindon	42	100
West Swindon	41	66
Highworth	42	48
Moredon	33	28
Park ⁴⁶	33.5	19
Upper Stratton	30	35
Wroughton	33	35
Covingham	22	28
Liden	21	31
Old Town	18	30
Penhill	18	12
Walcot	17.5	16
Even Swindon	10	21
Gorse Hill	10	19
Pinehurst	15	13
Mobile	-	-
Deposit Collections	-	-
TOTAL	444	

⁴⁵ Part time libraries highlighted in bold

⁴⁶ Data skewed by closure for refurbishment during 2008/09

To inform the development of a coherent strategy for the Library Service and based on the usage data presented, discussion regarding the configuration of all library service points (full time and part time) should focus on the following, inter-related questions:

- I. What are the needs of the local community and how can the library service respond?*
- II. Does the existing provision meet local needs?*
- III. Are the opening hours (number of hours and distribution) appropriate and conducive to maximising local use?*
- IV. What is the minimum number of issues and visits to justify continued staffing as a formal library service point?*
- V. Is the existing location of the service point fit for purpose in terms of access, delivery of services, safety and profile within the community?*
- VI. Are alternative options available to accommodate the library service point?*

Greater clarity on the above questions should be used to inform the future structure of the Library Service, albeit that it is essential that these are discussed in close consultation with a range of statutory and non-statutory service providers.

Swindon Library Service budget

The trigger for the current review of the Library Service structure in Swindon was the need to identify efficiency savings for 2009/10 to address a broader funding shortfall across the Borough Council. The library service was requested reduce annual revenue expenditure by £100k for 2009/10, with further saving requirements anticipated in subsequent years.

As evidenced in the CIPFA data earlier in this report, this needs to be set in the context of an increase in Total Net Expenditure per 1,000 population (including Capital Charges) since 2005, which can be linked to the phasing of the capital programme.

Analysis of the financial data for the library service over the period 2004/05 to 2008/09 (Table 16) reveals that payroll costs have remained relatively static, but that premises costs have increased by 44%. In addition the cost of supplies and services has already increased by 38% of the period, albeit that a number of these costs relate to the opening of the central library.

Table 16- Swindon Library Service: Financial Data 2004/05 – 2008/09⁴⁷

Budget Heading	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Payroll Costs	1,852,084	1,873,643	1,830,397	1,840,900	1,894,282
Transport Costs	42,041	25,898	31,657	28,549	-
Premises Costs	354,863	384,088	404,488	417,557	512,696
Supplies & Services	667,387	663,266	674,809	671,086	919,967
Recharge Costs	490,527	1,036,708	1,218,871	1,087,100	393,049
County Record Contribution / Third Party Payments	116,804	115,516	160,290	291,389	240,000
Income	-277,267	-265,969	-271,914	-226,733	-230,857
TOTAL	3,246,439	3,833,150	4,048,598	4,109,848	3,729,137

The Recharge Costs (central support charges) included in the data has also fluctuated over the period as the criteria for what is included each year is not consistent. In addition the recharge is linked to service (e.g. Personnel overhead recharged on number of staff, IT Central Support on number of electronic terminals) so will fluctuate depending on the configuration of the service. Indeed the data

⁴⁷ Data provided by Swindon Borough Council

indicates that the recharge cost for 2008/09 (see Table 17) was substantially reduced when compared with the 2007/08 budget. In addition the process for allocating recharge costs varies from authority to authority thus it is difficult to establish any meaningful comparisons.

Table 17- Swindon Library Service: Recharge Costs 2008/09⁴⁸

Description	Cost
Housing Department Support	14,450
Chief Executive's Departmental Admin Recharge	25,504
Risk Management Central Support Charge	1,719
Janitors Central Support Charge	8,937
Customer Services Recharge	9,332
Core Finance Central Support Charge	50,520
Audit Recharge Central Support Charge	22,990
Insurance Central Support Charge	9,852
Personnel Central Support Charge	22,563
Training Central Support Charge	6,523
IT Central Support Charge	215,642
Health & Safety Central Support Charge	5,019
Total	393,051

Leaving aside recharge costs the financial data does highlight substantial growth over the period in both Premises costs and Supplies & Services, increasing by 44% and 38% respectively. Both heading merit further investigation to determine whether a contribution to the requisite revenue saving for 2009/10 and beyond can be identified. It is however important to recognise that as the local authority owns the majority of the library premises then the scope of realising revenue savings within the Premises costs may be limited in the short-term. Future efficiencies may however be realised through co-location of services and a restructure of all local authority capital assets (i.e. not restricted solely to library service points).

However included within the Premises costs are the charge for National non-domestic rates⁴⁹ (NNDR), which generally accounts for approximately 35% of the total premises cost. Consultation has highlighted the potential to reduce this cost by 80% through the establishment a charitable Libraries Trust, although this option has not been explored in detail to date. Based on the NNDR costs included in the

⁴⁸ Data provided by Swindon Borough Council

⁴⁹ National non-domestic rates - are a means by which local businesses or organisations contribute to the cost of local authority services. Liable properties include public buildings, pipelines and advertising hoardings, as well as businesses. Further information can be accessed at www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/nationalnondomesticrate

financial detail this would have equated the following revenue savings based on the data from 2004/05 to 2008/09:

Table 18- Potential NNDR Revenue savings⁵⁰

Budget Heading	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Premises Costs	354,863	384,088	404,488	417,557	512,696
NNDR component of Premises	123,059	125,748	130,968	119,270	178,310
80% NNDR saving	£98,447	£100,598	£104,774	£95,416	£142,648

Consequently the establishment of a charitable Libraries Trust certainly merits further investigation, however it will be important to ensure that minimum standards and the vision for the Library Service is not diminished as a consequence.

A number of other costs are highlighted in the financial data for 2008/09 (see Table 19) that warrant more detailed review. Whilst this review cannot make any value judgement as to whether these costs are reasonable and necessary, given the increase in revenue costs within the Premises and Supplies & Services clearly any efficiency savings should scrutinise these in detail in addition to assessing the potential to improve the operational efficiency of library service staff.

Table 19- Swindon Library Service: Revenue Costs 2008/09

Revenue Cost: Example detail		Cost
Payroll costs		
A0214	Overtime	17,042
A0252	Sick Pay	14,466
A9712	Temporary Staff Employed Via Pertemps	15,587
A9711	Agency staff (delivery driver)	26,111
A0230	Unsocial hours	1,109
A0218	Specialist Payments	30,858
	Sub-Total	105,173
Supplies & Services costs		
E0002	Capita Strategic Partnership Service Charges	38,052
D5520	Hardware maintenance	66,854
	Sub-Total	104,906
Premises costs		
B3200	NNDR	178,310
B5400	Non : Competitive Cleaning & Caretaking	118,927
B6055	Service Charge	31,727
B6300	Security Guards	56,821
	Sub-Total	385,785
Total		£595,864

⁵⁰ Data provided by Swindon Borough Council

Consultation has highlighted that efficiency savings have already been identified within the book supply contracts, which can provide a potential maximum saving of £47,360⁵¹ over the next four years (£11,840 per annum). In addition the new book supply contracts offer the ability to tag stock with radio frequency identification (RFID) as well as having book labels and barcodes printed and inserted by the supplier. This will generate further efficiencies with regards to ordering and distributing book stock.

Further operational efficiencies have also been identified with regards to the provision of a number of library services that are currently undertaken manually (e.g. the provision of photocopying facilities). Indeed the library service has already benefited from an Invest to Save⁵² bid that has generated efficiencies by freeing up staff time to be re-deployed across the service. This approach should be continued, however it is important to clarify to what extent these efficiencies will be reinvested back into the library service.

The final trend highlighted in the financial data is the gradual reduction (17%) in the income received by the Library Service between 2004/05 and 2008/09. Analysis of the income for 2008/09 reveals the most significant sources of income as follows:

Table 20- Income Overview 2008/09

Description	Cost	% Total
Music Hire	5,837	3%
Hire of DVD	70,480	31%
Library Fines	56,862	25%
Photocopier	9,186	4%
Hire of premises	31,111	13%
Sale of recycling sacks	7,459	3%
Sub-Total	180,935	78%
Total Income	230,857	

The opening of the new Central Library and refurbishment of Park Library may provide income uplift for 2009/10 given the increased opportunity to hire music and DVD stock to library users and hire premises to other services. However at the time of writing Swindon Borough Council has not undertaken any detailed income projections for the library service.

⁵¹ Based on potential saving of £36,480 for adult book supply and £10,880 for children's book supply from 2009 to 2013.

⁵² The Invest to Save Budget (ISB) is a joint Treasury/Cabinet Office initiative with an aim to create sustainable improvements in the capacity to deliver public services in a more joined up manner. For further details visit www.isb.gov.uk/hmt.isb.application.2/index.asp

It is important that any library strategy includes a clear action plan to identify and realise income opportunities across the Library service. This may require additional investment in new technologies to ensure that the Library Service offer is aligned with public demand.

Swindon Library Service Staffing

A detailed breakdown of the allocation of staff hours by library service point is provided in Appendix 4. However a summary by Group is provided below in Table 21:

Table 21- Distribution of staff hours by library group (week)

Group	Basic Hours	Hours at 1.5	Total	% Total Hours
Across Network	837.25	15.75	853	28%
Central	765.75	77	842.75	28%
North Group	390.68	29.561	420.241	14%
East Group	294.65	20.775	315.425	10%
West Group	214	12.5	226.5	7%
South Group	283.875	28.25	312.125	10%
Potential Closures	76	5.125	81.125	3%
TOTAL	2862.205	188.961	3051.166	100%

The data indicates that 28% of total weekly hours are allocated to 'Across Network' staff, which includes library management, the Acquisitions team (Library Support Unit), nine librarians allocated across the library groups and cross service roles such as the Home Library Coordinator, a Delivery Driver, the Surestart and Outreach Officer and the Mobile Library Driver.

A further 28% of total weekly hours are allocated to the new Central library, spread across 37 posts, including a mixture of full time and part time staff. The operational rationale for the distribution of hours across the library can be tested by comparing the proportion of allocated hours with the aggregated usage (proxy of visits) for each group (see Table 22).

Table 22- Distribution of staff hours by library group (week)

Group ⁵³	% Total Hours	% Total Visits ⁵⁴
Across Network	28%	-
Central	28%	32%
North Group	14%	25%
East Group	10%	17%
West Group	7%	11%
South Group	10%	10%
Potential Closures	3%	2%
TOTAL	100%	

⁵³ Does not include Walcot library as this is not currently staffed

⁵⁴ Based on 2008/09 data.

Generally the proportion of staff hours allocated to each Group is consistent with the levels of use, with the exception of the North Group which is skewed by the high number of visits to North Swindon library. However further analysis of the Across Network staffing data reveals that these posts are distributed across the network of libraries, with North Swindon accommodating four posts which includes two librarians. A summary of the base library for each post is provided below:

Table 23- Distribution of Across Network staff hours (week)

Base Library	Number posts	Total hours
Central	8	244
Highworth	1	16
Library Support Unit	5	149.5
Liden	1	37
North Swindon	4	125
Premier House	3	111
West Swindon	6	170.5
TOTAL	28	853

Consequently based on the information provided the allocation of hours across the library service appears appropriate. However increased operational flexibility may be realised by reviewing job descriptions for individual posts to ensure that the balance between back office and front line is appropriate and in line with the customer focused ethos of a modern library service. The approach of retaining a number of cross network posts is sensible and enables the library service to respond to demand across the library service points.

Ongoing improvements to the system of ordering and receiving stock and running the interlibrary loans have already reduced the number of hours allocated to the Library Support Unit. Over the past three years the number of hours allocated to this function has been reduced from 238 per week to 149.5 hours per week (37% reduction). The Library Service is currently working towards automating the final phase of electronic data interchange (EDI). At the time of writing the Library Service is currently testing the final phase of EDI and it is anticipated that this system will be operational by July 2009.

This will substantially reduce the number of hours allocated to the Library Support Unit and it is envisaged that the 3 FTE currently staffing this function will be reallocated to other front line functions, thus providing additional capacity with no net impact on the library service revenue budget. This provides a useful example of how infrastructure investment can generate efficiencies and enable staff resources to be reallocated to support service delivery across the network of library service points.

In addition the recent adoption of a single working policy by Swindon Borough Council presents opportunity to free up staff hours deployed at the same library point (in particular part-time libraries) which can be invested elsewhere across the service. This could be used to extend opening hours at a number of library service points and/or strengthen the level of outreach work and reader development activities from a range of community venues (i.e. not restricted to library service points).

Finally the staffing data does highlight the regular, weekly use of hours paid at time and a half (Hours at 1.5 in Table 17). Based on the data provided this currently equates to 6% (189 hours) of all weekly hours, which paid at the enhanced rate is equivalent to 283.5 standard rate hours per week. This enhancement is provided to cover Saturday and Sunday working and is a legacy issue relating to the terms and conditions of employment of staff (see Table 24).

Table 24- Existing staff vacancies

Group	Post Name	Basic Hours	Hours at 1.5	Total
Central	Library Manager	37	0	37
Central	Library Assistant	6	0	6
North	Library Assistant	4.5	0	4.5
North	Enquiry Officer	13.437	2.563	16
North	Library Assistant	4	0	4
North	Library Assistant	9.12	0	9.12
North	Library Assistant	11.125	1.875	13
East	Library Assistant	14	2	16
West	Library Assistant	13	0	13
South	Library Assistant	18	0	18
TOTAL		130.182	6.438	136.62

It is important that a thorough review of terms and conditions of employment and job descriptions is undertaken to assess the financial and staffing implications of reconfiguring the Library Service, most notably opening hours.

APPENDIX 4- ALLOCATION OF STAFF HOURS (WEEK)

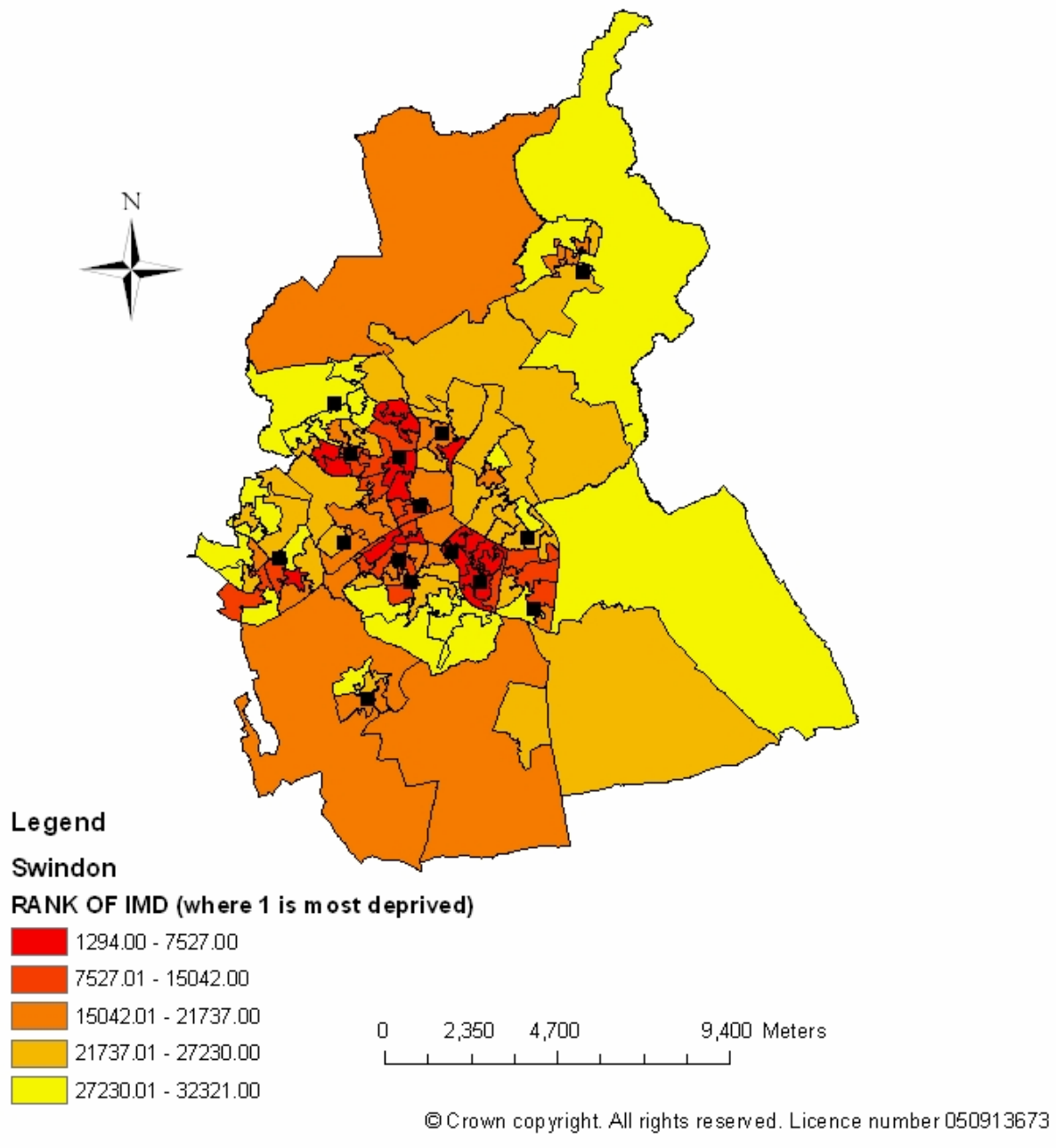
	Base Library				Second & Third Library				TOTAL		
	Basic Hours	Hours at 1.5	Total		Basic Hours	Hours at 1.5	Total		Basic Hours	Hours at 1.5	Total
Across Network	837.25	15.75	853		0	0	0		837.25	15.75	853
Central	765.75	77	842.75		0	0	0		765.75	77	842.75
North Group											
Central	12.25	0	12.25		0	0	0		12.25	0	12.25
Moredon	62.875	5.375	68.25		2	1.875	3.875		64.875	7.25	72.125
North Swindon	249.18	16.686	265.866		4	0	4		253.18	16.686	269.866
Penhill	28.375	5.625	34		1.5	0	1.5		29.875	5.625	35.5
Pinehurst	27.5	0	27.5		3	0	3		30.5	0	30.5
Sub-Total	380.18	27.686	407.866		10.5	1.875	12.375		390.68	29.561	420.241
East Group											
Covingham	37.5	0	37.5		8.75	0	8.75		46.25	0	46.25
Highworth	153.4	13.275	166.675		4.625	2.375	7		158.025	15.65	173.675
Stratton	73.125	3.375	76.5		17.25	1.75	19		90.375	5.125	95.5
Sub-Total	264.025	16.65	280.675		30.625	4.125	34.75		294.65	20.775	315.425
West Group											
West Swindon	210.5	12.5	223		3.5	0	3.5		214	12.5	226.5
Sub-Total	210.5	12.5	223		3.5	0	3.5		214	12.5	226.5
South Group											
Park	175	13.25	188.25		12.375	1.625	14		187.375	14.875	202.25
Liden	30.375	4	34.375		0	0	0		30.375	4	34.375
Wroughton	66.125	9.375	75.5		0	0	0		66.125	9.375	75.5
Sub-Total	271.5	26.625	298.125		12.375	1.625	14		283.875	28.25	312.125
Potential Closures											
Old Town	30	0	30		7	0	7		37	0	37
Gorse Hill	3	0	3		13.75	5.125	18.875		16.75	5.125	21.875
Even Swindon	0	0	0		22.25	0	22.25		22.25	0	22.25
Sub-Total	33	0	33		43	5.125	48.125		76	5.125	81.125
TOTAL	2762.205	176.211	2938.42		100	12.75	112.75		2862.205	188.961	3051.17

APPENDIX 5- OVERVIEW OF PART-TIME LIBRARY COSTS

Library	Leased	Employees	Sickness / Holiday Cover	Premises	Supplies & Services	IT	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure
Moredon	SBC owned	37,236	3,800	10,500	2,500	1,468	55,504	-5,000	50,504
Liden	SBC owned	23,650	2,400	22,000	1,240	1,468	50,758	-900	49,858
Covingham	Y	24,153	2,500	11,200	300	3,193	41,346	-1,400	39,946
Walcot	SBC owned	22,140	2,100	7,600	740	1,420	34,000	-700	33,300
Penhill	CLIP agreement	21,134	2,100	5,500	460	3,351	32,545	-800	31,745
Old Town	SBC owned	19,624	2,100	4,900	380	1,404	28,408	-1,200	27,208
Pinehurst	SBC owned	16,102	1,700	6,100	300	1,437	25,639	-600	25,039
Gorse Hill	Y	14,592	1,150	2,300	300	420	18,762	-300	18,462
Even Swindon	Y	11,573	1,150	2,700	200	420	16,043	-200	15,843
TOTAL		190,204	19,000	72,800	6,420	14,581	303,005	-11,100	291,905

APPENDIX 6- MAPPING LIBRARY SERVICE POINTS IN RELATION TO RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

Swindon - IMD Ranking and Library Locations



APPENDIX 7- CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES

Figure 13- Designing Consultation Questions

To help you think about what could work best in the situation you have to deal with, consider the following:

- Why are you engaging and what outcomes are you hoping for?
- What type of engagement are you planning? Is it about consultation? Or getting new ideas for some difficult problem? Getting the community voice heard for a campaign? Making decisions about how to spend a budget? Building the capacity of communities to take action themselves?
- How much influence will the community be able to have – what can and can't change?
- Does the method engage people from the bottom up, or is it council or partnership driven?
- Is it 'engagement friendly'? How will it appeal to those whose voices are not often heard? And how will it reach beyond the active few? Will it involve a really good representative cross-section of the community?
- Do people need some guidance or training in using the tool or method?
- What degree of expert facilitation do you need to make it work properly?
- Do you have a budget for using the tool to greatest effect?
- Above all, what is the 'good result' you are looking for, and what is the most effective way of getting there?

Source: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9274731#contents-7>

Figure 14- Consultation Methods

Focus groups

Focus groups are guided discussions of a small group of citizens. They are normally one-off sessions although several may be run simultaneously in different locations.

Online consultations

Online consultations seek people's opinions and expertise about important proposals or changes being made. By using the internet, an unlimited number of participants can be involved.

Online forums

Online forums are internet-based discussion areas where participants can post their views about topics and respond to other people's comments.

Opinion polls

A form of survey that measures the opinion of a selected sample of people and counts their 'votes'.

World cafe

A world cafe uses an informal 'cafe setting' for participants to explore an issue in small groups. The method is good at generating new ideas about the issue, sharing experience and exploring action in real life situations.

Design charrettes

A 'design charrette' is an intensive, participative workshop that brings people from different disciplines and backgrounds together to explore options for a particular area or site.

Area forums and community forums

Area forums are meetings held in a locality, often facilitated by the local council. They may be formed for one-off purposes, or take place on a regular basis to keep people and communities involved. They may debate key topics, answer residents' questions on a face-to-face basis or have open agendas.

Source: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9274731#contents-4>

Figure 15- Participatory Techniques

Participatory appraisal

Participatory appraisal (PA) is a 'family' of approaches that enable local people to identify their own priorities and make their own decisions about the future. It emphasises local knowledge and enables local people to do their own assessment, analysis, and planning, which makes it very effective in empowering communities.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting (PB) is one member of the PA family. PB directly involves local people in making decisions about how to spend a defined public budget. Local people discuss and vote on spending priorities, and they also have a role in overseeing the process.

Participatory strategic planning

Participatory strategic planning (PSP) is another of the PA family. It is a way of bringing a community together to help them jointly explain and agree with each other how they want their community or organisation to develop over the next few years.

Co-production

Co-production refers to a way of working whereby decision makers and citizens, or service providers and users, work together to create a decision or a service which works for them all. The approach is based on the principle that the people most affected by a service are in the best position to help design it.

User panels

User panels are regular meetings of service users about the quality of a service or other related topics. They help to identify concerns and priorities they and others may have and can lead to the early identification of problems or ideas for improvements.

Citizens' jury

Citizens' juries consist of a small panel of non-specialists, modelled on the structure of a criminal jury. The group sets out to examine in detail something that local people have identified as being very important, and at the end they deliver a 'verdict'.

Consensus conference

A consensus conference is made up of a panel of citizens who question expert witnesses on a particular topic at a public conference. Their recommendations are then circulated widely.

Source: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9274731#contents-4>

APPENDIX 8- LIBRARY SERVICE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Priority Area 1: Actively Working with Communities				
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Lead Officer
Consultation	Liaise with Citizen Engagement Team; Identify skills needs among staff at all levels.	Development of identified staff skills; Utilise internal and external staff skill to develop Audience Action Plans.	Utilise AAP process as ongoing and formal Community Consultation and Engagement Process.	
		Develop Audience Action Plans (AAP) for all Community Libraries.	Develop AAPs for all Branch Libraries; Update Central Library AAP (AAP cycle begins again with Community Libraries).	
		Review of Opening Hours as part of AAP process.	Ongoing	
		Review appropriateness of Self Service Kiosks as part of AAP process.	Ongoing	
Marketing and Promotion	Agree local level strategic objectives with Branch Managers.	Agree priority partnership meetings to attend with Branch Managers.	Continued engagement and joint delivery of initiatives.	
Volunteers	Agree definition of a 'volunteer'.	Develop Volunteer Policy.	Process established to ensure appropriate utilisation of Volunteers and Library Placements.	
Priority Area 2: Actively Working with Other Service Providers				
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Lead Officer
Partnership development	Identification and engagement with key strategic partners, promoting the service.	Engagement at strategic and delivery level of LSP/LAA.	Continued strategic engagement and partnership delivery, such as joint delivery, co-location.	
	Review service data capture and dissemination, particularly for LAA targets.	Disseminate relevant service data re contribution to LAA target achievement	Align data capture and dissemination with LAA process (i.e. refresh) and other corporate strategy reviews.	

Asset strategy	Engage with Planning Department to review SPD regarding Section 106 contribution to libraries.	As part of AAP, review condition and use of each library service point.	Ongoing	
		Disseminate AAP Asset review information to relevant partners.	Ongoing	
			Secure and ring fence all capital receipts from any sale of Library Service assets.	
Priority Level 3: Library Service Staff				
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Lead Officer
Staff Development	Develop clear communication channels with all staff.	Ongoing		
	Strategy away day with all staff.	Review staff skills as per strategy needs.	Ongoing	
Staff Deployment		Review deployment of staff as per strategy needs.	Ongoing	