

LIBRARY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: 1/12/25

Subject: Community hubs and operating models

Introduction:

Background information and guidance on libraries as community hubs, strategy and library service operating models are outlined below for consideration by the committee. This information builds on the previous background report submitted to the select committee [Full-Agenda-Library-Services-Select-Committee-20.11.25.pdf](#). This is not exhaustive and wider information and guidance is available should committee members wish to undertake further research.

National guidance:

Libraries Deliver Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021; [Libraries Deliver - Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021.pdf](#) sets out a vision for the future of public libraries in England. Although published under the previous government it remains a useful reference point for guidance and information. The following extracts may provide useful context for committee members when considering plans for library services.

Community hubs (Our vision for public library services in England page 6 – 7 [Libraries Deliver - Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021.pdf](#)):

“Libraries are vital community hubs - bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better. Our ambition is for everyone to:

- *Choose to use libraries, because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so*
- *Understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what’s available to them*
- *Be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills and information they need to improve their quality of life*
- *Receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world*

We also outline specific ambitions for communities, public services and other partners, and library services. To achieve these ambitions, library services contribute to 7 Outcomes that are critical to the individuals and communities in their areas:

- *Cultural and creative enrichment*

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

When considering library services for the future in North East Lincolnshire, it may be assist committee members to consider the role of the service within the context of the Council Plan and how the future service can connect and contribute to priorities and ambitions across the Council Plan: [Council Plan 2025 to 2028](#).



Barnsley library service strategy may provide a useful example of how this has been approached: [Barnsley Library Strategy 2022-2025](#).

Further information on libraries as community hubs is also available through a report published in July 2017 as commissioned by Arts Council England. The purpose was to

help build an evidence base of the contribution that libraries can make to different local and national policy priorities. The research examines the role of libraries that are co-located alongside other services in community hubs [Libraries-CommunityHubs-Renaissi.pdf](#). The findings in page 2 to 19 of the report cover the headline reading including extract below from the executive summary:

“The idea of a library being part of a community hub alongside other services is not a new one, but has gained increased traction in recent years:

- *Libraries are well placed to play a role in community hubs because of their existing position of trust within local communities, the contribution they make across a range of agendas, and their ethos of partnership working*
- *The arrangement of libraries and other services within community hubs varies considerably from place to place and is driven by local circumstances – success rests on reflecting and responding to local need*
- *Where libraries are co-located in community hubs, there are visible benefits for the library itself, other partners and services in the building and local residents*
- *Changing to a community hub model can generate natural concerns about the process, but these were outweighed in the case studies by the benefits, including the longer term sustainability of the library for the local community”*

In addition, the following link [Case Studies](#) for Designing Libraries “is a freely accessible resource for everyone interested in design and innovation in libraries”, presents a range of case studies for consideration.

Operating models (Considering different models for local service delivery page 36 [Libraries_Deliver_-_Ambition_for_Public_Libraries_in_England_2016_to_2021.pdf](#)):

“Once councils have a clear view of their communities’ needs, they then need to plan how to meet them. There is a range of different delivery models already being used across England which are described in our [Libraries shaping the future: good practice toolkit - GOV.UK](#), including:

- *Local authority run*
- *Commissioned libraries: local authority outsourced or commissioned to a third-party organisation*
- *Local authority outsourced to another local authority (shared services, either as a whole service or for certain functions)*
- *Community run with local authority support: for example the council provides IT equipment and book stock; some funding; and some input from paid staff who visit (but on a limited basis), liaise and provide professional input”*

Further information on operating models can be found at: [Alternative delivery models explained - GOV.UK](#). Each of the delivery model options offers library services and councils something different in terms of ownership, governance/control and the flexibility to innovate.