

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE:** 26 JULY 2022**REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER:** MARK NUTI, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES**LEAD OFFICER:** MARIE SNELLING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES**SUBJECT:** INCREASING ACCESS TO LIBRARY BUILDINGS**ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA:** GROWING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY SO EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT/ ENABLING A GREENER FUTURE/ EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES**Purpose of the Report:**

Following Cabinet's approval of the [Library and Cultural Service Strategy 2020-2025](#) in [November 2019](#), the Library and Cultural Services Transformation Programme has commenced significant change across the Library Service. This includes a major workforce transformation and initiation of a five-year programme of work to modernise library settings across Surrey. The Strategy commits to widening access to libraries, including through the introduction of technology that increases community access to library buildings. Open Access is technology that enables increased and flexible access to buildings, through library membership-based door entry systems and associated security features. Open Access will increase the ability of libraries to meet the needs of communities, support wider strategic priorities, and be fit and sustainable for the future.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agrees the introduction of Open Access technology in thirteen¹ libraries across the county.
2. Agrees an initial capital allocation of £345k from the £1.8m identified in the Capital Pipeline.
3. Agrees the proposed approach to a phased introduction of Open Access in additional libraries.
4. Delegates to Capital Programme Panel (CPP) the approval of any subsequent release of funding, within the overall envelope identified in the Capital Pipeline and subject to a robust business case.

Reason for Recommendations

Cabinet agreement to introduce Open Access technology into libraries is essential to unlock the full potential of library buildings, increasing access beyond the current opening hours, and empowering communities to reap wider benefit from using these valuable community assets. Thirteen libraries have been prioritised, based on analysis of where there is greatest

¹ The Business Case proposes introduction in 13 libraries, with a stretch target of 15

opportunity to achieve positive impact, and with a good geographic spread across the county. Careful analysis of usage, cost and revenue generation opportunity from the initial thirteen will inform the proposal and business case for future phases of implementation.

Executive Summary:

Background

1. In November 2019, [Cabinet approved the Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020–2025 and future model for service delivery as part of its duty to deliver a comprehensive and efficient statutory service](#). This included a clear commitment to widening access to libraries, maintaining the county's 52 libraries, and taking a local co-design approach that actively involves key stakeholders, residents, and other services to shape local library offers.
2. To deliver the strategy, The Libraries Transformation programme was formed as a key part of Surrey County Council's (SCC) ambitious programme of change. The Libraries Transformation programme consists of a number of interconnected projects and workstreams with a focus on increasing impact and reducing cost, to meet the needs of those who live, work and study in Surrey. To date, the programme has successfully delivered significant positive changes to the library service as well as efficiencies of £2.9m.
3. Responding to both the Library and Cultural Services Strategy 2020–2025 and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 report](#) the transformation programme is enhancing the valuable role libraries play in changing lives for the better, actively responding to local needs and issues, supporting COVID-recovery, and contributing directly to SCC's strategic priorities. The changes made to reshape and modernise the service alongside its response to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to it being the second most visited public library service in England in 20/21 according to the most recent data from [The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy \(CIPFA\)](#). This achievement, alongside the latest survey data from Surrey Library users, indicates that there is a demand for extended access to library services.
4. Open Access technology is a means of enabling self-managed access to libraries, outside staffed opening hours. This facility is successfully operated by multiple local authorities across the UK and is similar to the way many banks, gyms and other services now operate. Door entry systems are operated with membership cards and linked to security features, and access is easily configurable to enable timings and individual permissions to be adjusted to respond to demand and manage risk.
5. Maximising the times during which libraries can be accessed will provide equality of access across different areas of the county, increase the positive impact of library services for all groups, and create access to these community assets for other service delivery and community-led activity, contributing to the SCC's mission of 'no one left behind'.

The next phase of delivering on the Strategy: increasing access to libraries

6. There is evidence of demand for increased access to library buildings from surveys carried out with [library users in 2017](#) and in [2022](#) and evidence from other authorities that have already introduced this technology, of the increased impact in terms of usage, satisfaction and revenue generation. Additionally, flexible and self-managed access to library spaces will support the Council's Agile Organisation Programme's delivery of flexible 'spoke' provision for County Council staff, and feedback from the initial pilot of workspace in six libraries demonstrates there is already demand for this facility.
7. Increasing access to libraries beyond the current opening hours will ensure the greatest possible impact for all those who live, work and study in Surrey. This will provide choice and flexibility of access to core library services, including well-equipped spaces for work and study, and enable greater variety and flexibility of use for other valuable activities, such as community-based service provision, or meeting space for community groups. It also offers an opportunity to maximise delivery not only of the ambition of libraries as social hubs, cultural centres, learning hubs and economic enablers, but also of the wider County Council priorities of empowering communities and ensuring no one is left behind.

Key principles

8. The following principles will underpin the approach to introducing Open Access technology to Surrey Libraries:
 - a. All plans for locations, timing and usage of Open Access will align with both the Library and Cultural Services strategy 2020-2025 and the five-year plan for modernisation of the library estate, in support of Surrey's Community Vision to 2030.
 - b. All plans will follow the relevant DCMS legislation, guidelines and advice in relation to Libraries being a statutory service: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>.
 - c. Open Access will enable maximum use of library buildings as community assets, in addition to increasing access to library services.
 - d. All plans for libraries will be designed to enhance delivery of the outcomes and benefits of a modern library service as detailed in the library service's strategy.
 - e. All plans to introduce Open Access into specific libraries will be evidence based, and will balance evidence of need (for example, the demand gathered through surveys and co-design activity with local communities) with affordability, ease of implementation and management of risk.
 - f. The plan for Open Access implementation will be aligned with the pipeline of major works to library properties, so that any significant works to libraries will include making them 'Open Access ready', and work to any libraries prioritised for both Open Access and the first phase of property works will be combined, to minimise costs and disruption to service provision.
 - g. Local communities, staff and partners will be engaged throughout the process through ongoing co-design, to understand demand for flexible access and to determine the best solution for the specific locality. This will include further engagement with Districts and Boroughs, local members, and other key stakeholders. Community engagement in the ongoing operation of Open Access libraries will be key to developing local ownership and maximising use of the assets.
 - h. Implementation will be informed by engagement with a network of other local authorities that have successfully implemented Open Access and have carried out evaluations and lessons learned.

- i. Implementation will be via a staged and managed approach, reviewing the learning from the initial phase and using this to inform any proposals to extend beyond the initial thirteen libraries.

The approach to Open Access

9. The county's 52 libraries have been assessed for Open Access on the basis of the anticipated value of introducing the functionality into each relevant location, considering the local demographic, current rates of library usage, resilience of the current model of opening (including level of dependency on single staffing), and demand for community accessible buildings in the locality. Alongside this the ease of implementation in each library property has been assessed, with reference to the physical access and layout of the buildings, relevant technologies (e.g. CCTV) already installed, and tenure (whether freehold or leasehold, and any obvious complexities such as access via another property).
10. The work to analyse the benefits and impact of Open Access, and to establish an affordable financial model for delivery, has led to a clear case for implementation in the proposed thirteen libraries in the first instance. This combination of libraries will provide a good spread of Open Access across the county, with at least one library in each district or borough. This will provide an opportunity to test the model in a number of settings, learn and refine the offer accordingly. A positive aspect of the Open Access technology is its high degree of configurability, meaning that parameters such as the times during which users are able to access a building can be altered remotely and quickly via the system. This will support management of risk and enable a responsive approach to demand (supported by clear and transparent communications).
11. Alignment with a number of related initiatives is critical to ensure maximum efficiency of cost and effort. The planned list of libraries for implementation of Open Access has been set alongside the priority libraries for capital investment through the agreed pipeline of property works. The expectation is that any significant property works will include preparation of the building for Open Access technology, and that any libraries prioritised for Open Access will implement this at the same time as major works, unless there is a strong case for not doing that. The programme team is working closely with related programmes of work, including the development of the strategy for property technology, Agile Organisation, and Customer Experience, to identify shared principles, ensure consistency, and align benefits wherever relevant.
12. If Open Access proves as successful as anticipated in the initial thirteen libraries (delivering increased usage and satisfaction and an affordable financial model), the proposal is to extend to further libraries. Cabinet is asked to delegate further release of funds to the Capital Programme Panel, assuming extension on the same basis as the initial thirteen libraries can be shown to be affordable within the overall financial envelope (£1.8m). The programme has budgeted for the costs of any lease negotiations or amendments that may be required to support introduction into non-freehold properties.

Consultation:

13. This plan and its principles have been devised jointly between Surrey Libraries, IT&D, and Land & Property.
14. Introduction of Open Access forms part of the wider transformation of libraries across the County. The County Council has been discussing with district and borough local authorities' key local opportunities and the proposed way forward for a modernised library service. These discussions have explored opportunities to align library service provision with need, accessibility, and local ambitions to improve facilities and services appropriate to the local community. Engagement with district and borough partners forms a critical strand of the co-design activity, and officers will continue to engage on that basis, to ensure the fit with wider opportunities in localities.
15. The Libraries Transformation programme reported to the [Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee](#) in March 2021 and Leader's Transformation Assurance Board, as well as to Cabinet in [November 2021](#). These meetings and the focus on widening access and ensuring no one left behind have helped to shape thinking and inform this paper.
16. The programme has presented Open Access for discussion to the Technical Design Authority and held regular meetings with IT&D and Land & Property, as well as fortnightly meetings of the Open Access Working Group, reporting to the Programme Board, on which all relevant internal teams are represented. These meetings have ensured alignment with wider organisational developments in terms of technology and property, and with other transformation programmes including the Agile Organisation Programme and Customer Experience, to ensure a coherent and efficient approach.
17. The programme has presented to, and continues to engage with, NHS and commissioning partners (SCC and Surrey Heartlands) to gather insights to inform potential demand for accessible spaces that both support revenue generation and meet the outcomes of the library transformation for local communities.
18. A co-design methodology and resources are now in operation to support resident engagement.

Risk Management and Implications:

19. There are risks associated with the project and a project risk register has been compiled and is regularly updated. Risks are categorised as relating to communications and engagement about the plans for Open Access; delivery of the project (technical implementation), and ongoing operating risks of Open Access. The significant risks associated with this project are set out below, under each of these categories.
20. Communications and engagement: there is a risk that communicating the intent to introduce Open Access functionality in libraries is perceived as a means to reduce staffed opening hours, and to replace these with self-managed access to libraries. This will be mitigated by a robust communications plan outlining the plan to increase overall opening hours, and within this to maintain the current levels of staffed opening hours.

Communications will draw on examples from other areas, supported by videos to demonstrate ease of usage and benefits cited by users.

21. Technical implementation: there is a risk that implementation of Open Access technology is delayed as a result of a lengthy procurement process, complexity of technical integration with new and existing systems, or the need to align with planned property works, leading to delay in realising the benefits, and potential loss of momentum or negative perception amongst staff and users. This will be mitigated by close management of the project, including via nominated managers within IT&D and Land and Property, and Procurement. They will work closely with the Programme Team, to oversee delivery, highlight risks at an early stage, and maintain a regular open dialogue with staff and users, through the existing co-design structures in each local area.
22. Operating risks: there is a risk that users display a lack of respect for library buildings or for other users during unstaffed hours, leading to damage to property or breaches of security or safety. The experience of other local authorities indicates that this is a risk with very low likelihood of materialising. It is essential to plan for and mitigate any such situation, however, and mitigations include mandatory induction training for all users in Open Access; monitoring via entry systems and CCTV with the ability to restrict access with immediate effect, and emergency reporting systems within libraries.

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

23. The cost of implementation has been assessed through market engagement with the two existing providers of the Open Access solution. The annual running costs of Open Access are informed by the experience of local authorities already operating the solution, and beyond the annual costs of subscription to the solution itself, include assumptions around additional energy, cleaning, supplies and security measures.
24. The financial model to cover the costs of implementation and operation of Open Access has been developed based on an analysis of current service operating costs, including core and additional (use of bank/overtime) staffing costs, as well as anticipated income generation resulting from enhanced rental opportunities. The overall aim is to enhance access and opening hours.
25. £1.8m of capital investment for Open Access has been factored into the Capital Pipeline.
26. The maximum cost of supply and installation is approximately £20k per library, based on the highest end of the range provided by suppliers, with reference to Surrey libraries of varying complexity, through the soft market testing. £45k has been assumed to support work required in the remaining libraries, based on insights from other local authorities that have carried out equivalent installations. This amount will be refined at survey stage once a preferred supplier has been selected.
27. The annual running cost is up to £4k per library for licences and support, based on indicative costings provided via the soft market testing.

28. A number of options have been costed, with a recommended option of introduction in thirteen libraries initially, with the possibility of further roll out over the next two years, subject to learning from the first thirteen. Costings are based on fifteen libraries, to ensure affordability of this as a stretch target beyond the initial thirteen. Installation would require £345k of capital investment in the first tranche, with further possible investment in future years subject to review (within the overall financial envelope of £1.8m identified).

	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Running Costs (incl software subscription & hardware support costs)		0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
Anticipated Efficiencies:					
- Staffing		0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055
- additional income		0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026
- other		0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004
Revenue Efficiencies Achievable		-0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085
Net service cost / (efficiencies)		-0.025	-0.025	-0.025	-0.025
Borrowing Costs		0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027
Net Revenue Cost²		0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002

29. The running costs of the open access solution are planned to be offset by staffing cost efficiencies and the generation of additional income, as set out above. Borrowing is profiled over 15 years, resulting in an annual borrowing cost of c£27k. For the purpose of this report, costs for all libraries, regardless of size and complexity, are based on the upper end of the supplier indicative costings, and staffing efficiencies are based on the need to cover the current cost estimate. This results in a small net cost of c£2k per annum. If this scenario materialised, then the service is committed to generating additional efficiencies in order to ensure this small net cost is contained within existing revenue budget envelopes and ensure the project is self-financing.

30. If running costs come in at the lower end of the supplier indicative costings, the result is to generate a net revenue efficiency of c£35.5k per annum after borrowing costs.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

31. Although significant progress has been made to improve the Council's financial position, the financial environment remains challenging. The UK is experiencing the highest levels of inflation for decades, putting significant pressure on the cost of delivering our services. Coupled with continued increasing demand and fixed Government funding this requires an increased focus on financial management to ensure we can continue to deliver services within available funding. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2022/23 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.

² For the purpose of this Business Case, costs for all libraries, regardless of size and complexity, are based on the upper end of the supplier indicative costings, and staffing efficiencies are based on the need to cover the current cost estimate: there is the potential to generate further efficiencies if required to ensure the project is self-financing.

32. The table above illustrates the upper end of the indicative costs and conclude if this scenario is realised there would be a small annual pressure as a result of these recommendations. The service has committed to managing such a pressure from within the existing budget envelope if it materialised. Costs will be monitored through the engagement process and mitigating actions taken as necessary. The more likely scenario is that the final costs are less than the upper end demonstrated, and any resultant efficiencies will be factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as part of the budget planning process. As such, the s151 officer supports the recommendation to take a phased approach to the introduction of Open Access capability in libraries.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

33. The Council’s primary obligation in relation to the provision of library services can be found at S7 Public Library and Museums Act 1964 which requires the Council “to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons in the area that want to make use of it.” The proposals that Cabinet is asked to approve will enable residents to make use of facilities at times when the library would otherwise have been closed thereby increasing the efficiency of the service.

Equalities and Diversity:

34. An overarching Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken for the Libraries and Cultural Services Programme, along with one specifically relating to Technology and Operations (incorporating Open Access) and this has been signed off by the Portfolio holder. These are published here: [Libraries and Cultural Services Transformation - Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\) – Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](#)

35. Consideration has been given in the [Technology and Operations EIA](#) to potential barriers to engaging with Open Access for certain groups, as well as to the potential for Open Access to address barriers in some situations, and appropriate mitigations relating to training, communication and support are identified. The EIA for Technology and Operations highlights the benefit of conducting a specific EIA for Open Access, to build on the initial assessment. Due to the specific nature of some of the potential impacts for service users / residents with certain protected characteristics, in relation to individual properties, this detailed work will be undertaken in conjunction with the detailed customer journey mapping, involving branch staff and residents in the relevant libraries, to ensure the mitigations are sufficiently targeted.

Other Implications:

36. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:

Compliance Against Net-Zero Emissions Target And Future Climate Compatibility/Resilience

37. Refurbishment of library buildings is anticipated to significantly reduce the projected carbon cost per year at 2030, as a result of improved energy efficiency in the buildings. Open Access would introduce increased usage of buildings, with the potential to increase energy costs from the target level as a result. This is anticipated to be mitigated in overall climate resilience through a reduction in travel to work or study for people able

to make use of library buildings for those purposes as a result of increased access, and with the introduction of smart technologies in the buildings wherever possible (in line with the emerging strategy for property technology), for example with sensors to minimise the risk of lights being on for longer than necessary.

What Happens Next:

38. The next steps:

- a. Cabinet approval of implementation in the proposed thirteen libraries will enable the Open Access project to progress to the delivery phase.
- b. Commencement of the procurement process, to select and engage a supplier to install the relevant technology, is enabled via the existing approval of the Annual Procurement Forward Plan, which includes an allocation for Open Access. This means that there will not be a further requirement for Cabinet to approve the award of contract to the selected supplier. The initial procurement activity is therefore in train but will progress to contract stage only once Cabinet approval of the Business Case is obtained.
- c. Staff engagement activity is underway and will continue, ensuring opportunities for staff at all levels to input into the process, supported by engagement with Unions and HR.
- d. In parallel, detailed engagement with local communities will commence in the thirteen locations, including customer journey mapping and production of specific EIA. This will include careful management of messaging to mitigate the risk of concerns around reductions in staffed opening hours.
- e. A timeline for implementation, aligned to planned property works wherever possible, will be finalised once the procurement is complete.
- f. Open Access technologies will be installed, alongside any required property works to ensure the safe operation of Open Access (for example in relation to door entry and fire exit capabilities, secure internal doors, or partitioning of confidential internal areas).
- g. Development of processes and protocols, and training of library staff, will follow the approach taken by other local authorities, and will include visits to observe Open Access in practice.
- h. Communications to library users and potential users promoting the benefits of Open Access, and offering opportunities to find out more, address any concerns, and sign up for access with training, will commence towards the point of 'go live' for each library.
- i. Open Access will be implemented (in those of the thirteen libraries where there is not a need to delay timescales to align with planned property works for efficiency of costs) within a year of supplier selection.
- j. Careful monitoring and evaluation of the use and success of Open Access will be undertaken, including in relation to identified risks and informed by user and staff feedback. Accesses will be adjusted where required to respond to the findings.
- k. Following implementation in the initial libraries, and based on the learning from that initial phase, costed proposals will be developed for roll out to further libraries, with the proposal that these are presented to CPP for release of additional funds within the overall envelope of £1.8m, and on the same basis as outlined for the initial thirteen.

Report Author:

Simon Harding, Service Manager, Libraries and Heritage, simon.harding@surreycc.gov.uk, 07792 225786

Consulted:

Council Cabinet members and portfolio holders

Corporate Leadership Team and other staff

Surrey County Council Property Panel

IT&D Capital Governance Board

Technical Design Authority

8

Annexes:

Annex 1: Further Details on the initially selected libraries and criteria for determining these

Annex 2: Outline Business Case for Open Access

Sources/background papers:

[The Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee](#) update on Libraries Transformation report. March 2021

[The Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee](#) update on Cultural Services

[LIBRARIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES: OUR NEXT PHASE, Cabinet Report 2019](#)

[Libraries and Cultural Services Strategy 2020-2025](#). November 2019.

[Libraries Transformation Update and The Next Phase, Modernising Our Library Estate](#) November 2021

[Strategic planning of library services: longer-term, evidence-based sustainable planning toolkit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[A new way of delivering library services in Peterborough - DCMS Libraries \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

[Shining a light The future of public libraries across the UK and Ireland](#)