

## **Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 19 February 2020**

### **Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025**



**Cllr Gill Heath, Cabinet Member for Communities said,**

“The evolution in recent years of Staffordshire’s library service has been remarkable. While maintaining 43 libraries across the county, as well as two mobile services, hundreds of people have made a difference by volunteering at either our county council managed libraries, or the community managed ones.

Not only do our libraries provide the traditional service for all, but increasingly they are becoming community hubs; home to a variety of services helping people in many different ways.

These proposals will help us continue this success story into the next decade.”

#### **Report Summary:**

This report provides an update on Staffordshire County Council’s library offer, celebrates the transformation that has been achieved and makes recommendations for the future direction and strategy for Staffordshire’s Library Service 2020-2025.

#### **Recommendations**

I recommend that:

- a. Cabinet notes the range of activity which takes place across Staffordshire Libraries and the value that this activity delivers within communities.
- b. Cabinet endorses and agrees the reviewed support package for the community managed library model which will enable the sustainability of the Community Managed Libraries and support their work within communities.
- c. The key milestones as detailed in paragraph 70 are agreed.

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

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### **Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025**

#### **Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Communities**

I recommend that:

- a. Cabinet notes the range of activity which takes place across Staffordshire Libraries and the value that this activity delivers within communities.
- b. Cabinet endorses and agrees the reviewed support package for the community managed library model which will enable the sustainability of the Community Managed Libraries and support their work within communities.
- c. The key milestones as detailed in paragraph 70 are agreed.

#### **Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities**

##### **Reasons for Recommendations:**

##### **Context and Background**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Staffordshire County Council's library offer which was agreed by [Cabinet](#) on 18 July 2018 and outlines the proposed future direction and strategy for Staffordshire's Library Service 2020-2025.
2. Within Staffordshire the Library Service contributes to delivering literacy, life skills and digital inclusion, supporting the delivery of Staffordshire's Education and Skills strategy and our agenda for increasing aspiration.
3. Staffordshire's Libraries are integral to the development of "Community Help Points" within the Supportive Communities Programme where vulnerable people are supported to maintain or retain their independence with access to information, advice, guidance and social connections to assist them to live well within their community. Community Help Points, which include libraries, are a key part of Staffordshire's new adult social care pathway.
4. The library, as a community asset and our offer, are embedded within the Corporate People helping People agenda, the Place Based approach and enables communities to take responsibility for #DoingOurBit.
5. [The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#) gives the County Council a statutory duty to provide "a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons" The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and councils may also offer

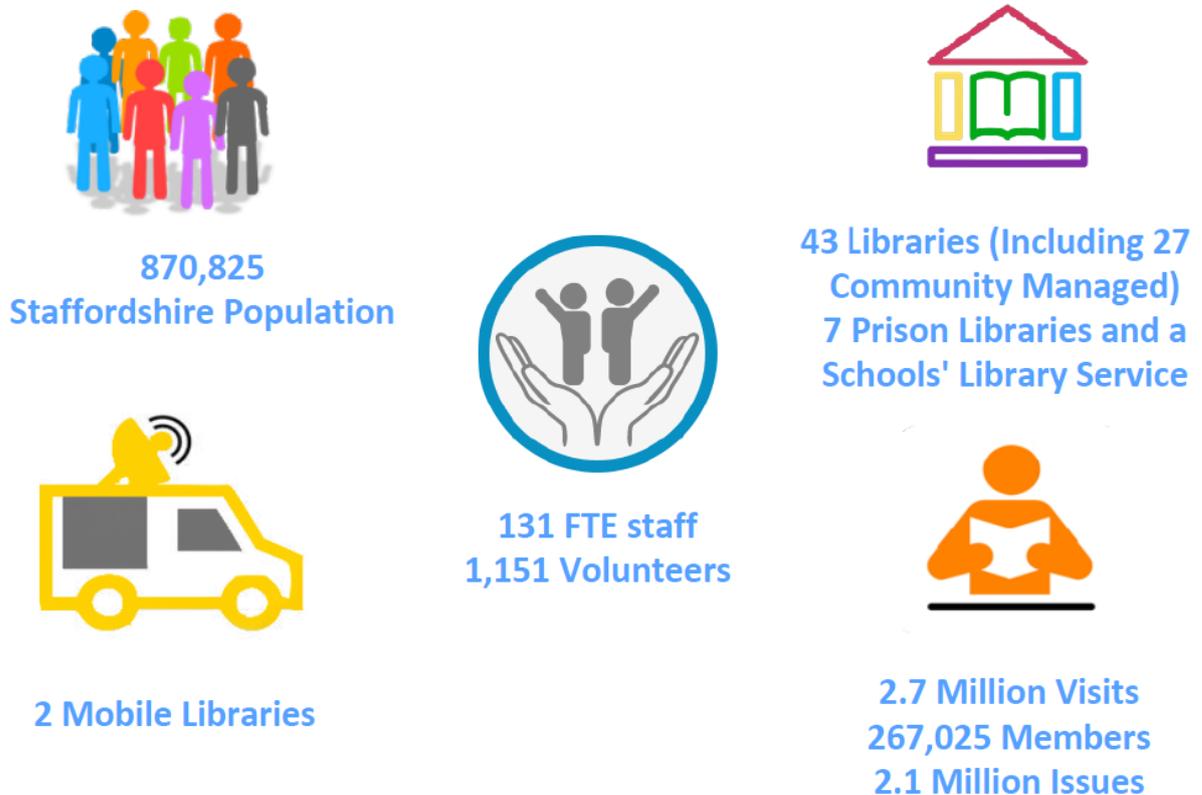
wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities or providing access to Wi-Fi and computers).

6. The Act provides the Secretary of State with the statutory power to intervene and call a local inquiry when a library authority fails (or is suspected of failing) to provide the required service and councils that have proposed extensive library closures have been subject to judicial review.
7. The public library service is a local service and the interpretation of “comprehensive and efficient” differs between councils depending on local need. It is therefore the responsibility of local councils to determine how the library service is managed and delivered:
  - a. in consultation with their communities
  - b. through analysis of evidence around local needs
  - c. in accordance with their statutory duties

### Staffordshire Libraries

8. As part of Staffordshire County Council’s statutory library network there are 43 Libraries and 2 Mobile Libraries. The Prison Library Service and School’s Library Service are externally funded. See Figure 1 below:

9. Figure 1 - 2018-19<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> CIPFA Public Library Statistics Actuals 2018-19

10. The delivery model for Staffordshire's Library Service was informed by extensive public consultation during 2014 and further public consultation during 2018. The County Council now manages and delivers a library service at the 16 largest and busiest libraries which account for over 75% of library visits.
11. 27 of the County Council's least busy libraries, which account for 25% of library visits, have been transferred to 19 community groups/organisations over a 3-year period (see paragraph 38) These groups, through the current lease arrangement, manage and deliver the statutory library offer, while the council remains responsible for agreed utility bills and maintenance costs, library stock, public pcs and Wi-Fi.
12. There is an effective level of support in place for the Community Managed Libraries from the Library Service, with additional financial support from Strategic Property who, under the current lease arrangement, underwrite the utility bills to an agreed level and provide ongoing building maintenance. Without this level of support, Community Managed Library organisations would be at risk of failing.
13. With 43 static libraries Staffordshire currently has 1 static library per 20,251 population. Without professional support and guidance, Staffordshire's 27 Community Managed Libraries would not form part of our statutory provision. This would leave 1 library per 54,426 population with a risk that Staffordshire may be subject to judicial review for failing to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service.
14. Library authorities that have proposed extensive library closures have been subject to judicial review. When Northamptonshire County Council proposed to close 21 libraries and retain 8 large and 7 medium branch libraries leaving 1 library per 60,000 residents, a High Court found in July 2018 that the council's decision-making process had been unlawful.
15. During 2018-19:
  - a. Staffordshire Libraries had **267,025** library members, over **2.7m** physical library visits and **638,000** virtual visits and issued nearly **2.2m** items.
  - b. **326,861** sessions were booked on library pcs, **11,344** children joined the Summer Reading Challenge and **15,594** bus passes were processed.
  - c. Over **1,151** volunteers participated in regular volunteering opportunities contributing **100,529** hours of volunteering into the service which added value and made a financial, in kind, contribution of **£1.4m<sup>2</sup>** towards the delivery of Staffordshire's Library offer for the same period.

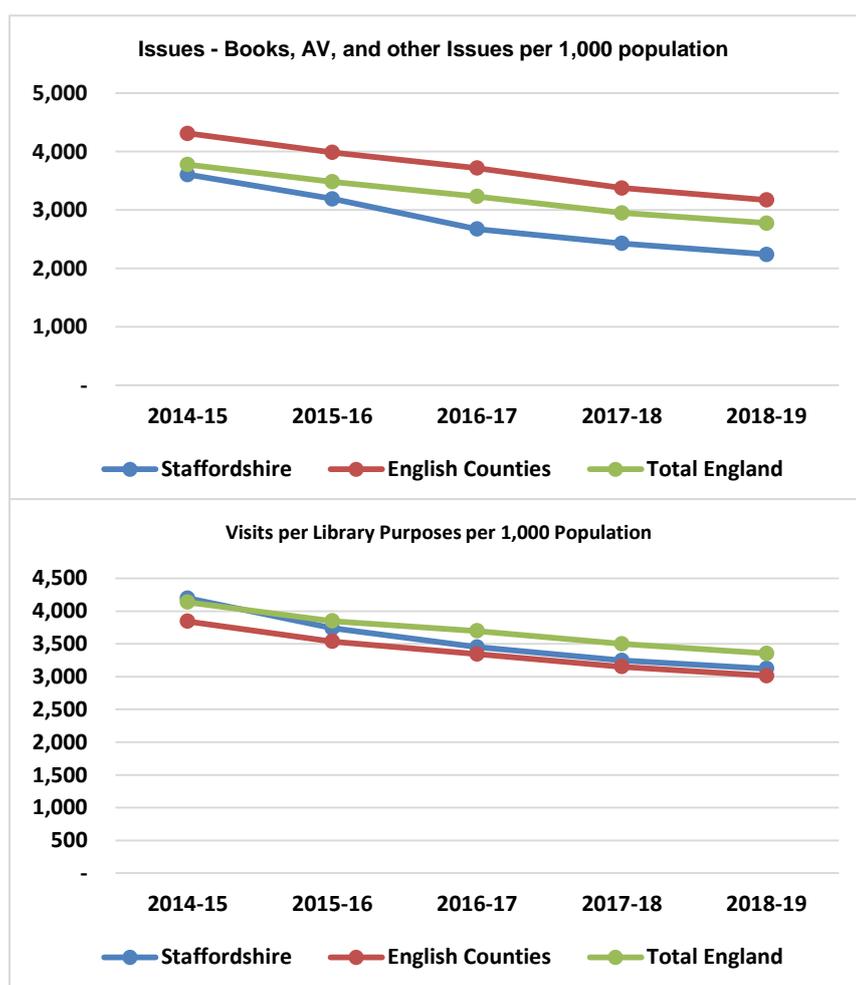
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<sup>2</sup> The cost of volunteering in accordance with best practice is based on the following calculations (all figures published May 2015 on ONS website regarding all UK industries and occupations.). Average weekly earnings for full-time employees in the UK divided by hours in a full-time week worked on average equals £13.71 per hour average. Rounded up for ease of calculation to £14 per hour volunteered.

16. As described in previous reports the way that people access information and learning, the way they socialise and interact with each other and with organisations continues to evolve in the digital age.

17. The use of libraries in Staffordshire is in line with national trends. Figure 2 <sup>3</sup>below compares Staffordshire against the other English Shire counties and Library authorities in England.

18. Figure 2: Issue & Visits per 1,000 population (2014/15 to 2017/18)



19. Whilst we recognize that traditional use of libraries is declining, libraries across Staffordshire continue to meet community need and deliver wider county council outcomes:

**Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth:**

<sup>3</sup> CIPFA Public Library Statistics Actuals 2014-18

- a. Business Enterprise Support (BES) who manage **Silverdale CML** (Community Managed Library) were awarded £34,000 from the NatWest Skills and Opportunities Fund to develop a new Business Start-up Hub within Silverdale CML. The hub includes a dedicated area within the Library with IT access and a Hub Co-ordinator to assist and mentor anyone who is seeking to start their own business.
- b. A partnership between Business Enterprise Support (BES) and Newcastle-under-Lyme College enabled students from the college studying painting and decorating to decorate the interior of **Silverdale CML**. This enabled the students to put into practice what they have learned in college, project managing the work as a key course component.
- c. The National Careers Service run sessions at **Silverdale and Talke CMLs**, providing 1-1 support for individuals seeking to change their career, find employment, or access training advice and support; offering specific support for CV writing, job searches and opportunity awareness.

#### **Be healthier and more independent:**

- a. Doodle bags are a new initiative co-created with Young Minds at **Burton Library** enabling young people to discreetly borrow books from the Shelf Help collections in libraries helping to avoid stigma amongst peers. Doodle bags contain additional resources including colouring books. One young person commented *"Weirdly doing the colouring and drawing has helped me loads. I didn't think it would!"* and from health professionals, "Mental health support in a bag. Impressive stuff!" *"Love, love, love this! The co-creation with the young people shows through. Supporting book choice is incredible!"*. There are plans to roll this out to 8 additional libraries across the county.
- b. In July 2018 Compton Care, working with Cruse Bereavement Care began a collaboration with **Perton Library** to establish a bereavement information hub. The monthly sessions began at Perton Library in July 2018 and have an average attendance of 24 people. The Bereavement Information Hub offers people from Perton and the surrounding communities the opportunity to access valuable information, support and companionship for those affected by loss and grief. The library setting is recognised as a safe, friendly and welcoming environment for people to attend and find out more about what is on offer in their community and to meet others who have first-hand experience of the grief of losing a loved one. One visitor explains how she has benefitted from the hub *"It has helped me feel a connection with others who have been through similar situations and it has helped me to realise what I am feeling is normal"*.
- c. A further hub was launched at **Wombourne Library** on 1<sup>st</sup> April and due to the success at Perton an evening Hub was established in June, offering a chance for working people to benefit from the support available.
- d. In July 2018 **Kinver CML** became the first 'Refill Station' within the community. 'Refill' is a national campaign that aims to make refilling water bottles as easy, convenient and cheap as possible. This reinforces the library's value as a community hub in doing their bit for their community and the environment.

#### **Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community:**

- a. **Loggerheads CML & Information Hub**, in partnership with Newcastle Rural Locality Action Partnership are coordinating initiatives to enable the area to become recognised as a Dementia Friendly Community. A range of partners, including local businesses are involved in the project. Dementia Friends Awareness Sessions have taken place in Loggerheads CML providing opportunities for people in the area to become Dementia Friends Champions.
- b. In August 2018, **Glascote CML** and **Tamworth Library** became the first libraries in the county to register as 'Places of Welcome'. 'Places of Welcome' is a growing network of hospitality run by local community groups who want to ensure that everyone in their area has a place to go for a friendly face, cup of tea and a conversation. This initiative supports libraries to tackle loneliness and social isolation. A customer suffering from chronic depression came to Places of Welcome for several weeks and felt so at ease with the warm and friendly atmosphere that she was able to start volunteering herself at a local dementia café. This in turn helps her husband as it gives him a few hours a week free time so reducing his anxiety. Consequently, Places of Welcome have now expanded to hold sessions at other libraries including **Lichfield, Cannock, Burntwood, Burton, Uttoxeter, Cheslyn Hay and Perton**.
- c. **Cannock Library** working in partnership with the Children's Centre and Create Church at Huntingdon have recently established a School Uniform Recycling Pilot. A local hotel has offered to clean items at no cost. The uniform will be gifted from a 'shop front' area at Create Church to reduce stigma for parents. Cannock Library have hosted awareness sessions to encourage parents and the public to donate to or use the facility.

20. During 2018-19, Staffordshire Libraries engaged people as follows:

**a. 179,774 attendances at reading and literacy activities**

- i. The national Summer Reading Challenge is the UK's largest reader development initiative for children. In 2019 11,609 children participated at a Staffordshire Library, a 2% increase on the previous year with 74% of children surveyed at a selection of libraries across Staffordshire who said that they thought they were better readers at the end of the Challenge than at the start.
- ii. To support the national and county campaign to encourage parents to support their child's early speech, language and literacy skills libraries run baby rhyme times and libraries offer story times for pre-school children. Staffordshire Libraries works in partnership with Early Years and Health to gift Bookstart, the free book gifting scheme for pre-schools.
- iii. For young people aged 11-14 years Staffordshire Libraries run Staffordshire's Young Teen Fiction Book Award to encourage young people to read more widely and talk about books culminating in an annual Celebration Day which in 2019 was attended by 179 young people.

**b. 74,767 attendances in activities to support their health and wellbeing**

- i. Over 330 health and well-being related sessions are delivered each month across Staffordshire's libraries. These include; Yoga, Mindfulness and Meditation, Walk and Talk Sessions, Knit and Natter, Social Hub Coffee

Mornings, Chronic Pain Group, Dementia awareness Drop-Ins, Dove Bereavement Service Sessions and Reminiscence Sessions.

- ii. 'Everyone Health' is a Midlands based company who deliver a range of health and wellbeing services and are currently working in partnership with Staffordshire County Council to provide services for local people aged 50 plus on a range of health-related issues. Everyone Health deliver sessions from Staffordshire's libraries, giving advice to local people and referring them on where appropriate. Working with Everyone Health is helping to embed the library as a vital community hub for local people, where support can be accessed on a wide range of issues.
- iii. Staffordshire Libraries supported the national Health Information Week held during July 2019 aiming to raise awareness of quality health information to help local people to lead healthier and happier lives. This included promotions of the Reading Well collections of books on Dementia, mental health, long term conditions, mood-boosting books and the young people's collection Shelf Help and work with partners. Health Fairs were held at Perton and Burton Libraries with partners including the Diabetes Teams, Autism Support Groups, Everyone Health, the Good Life and Therapy Poodles.

#### **c. 323,620 attendances at learning activities**

- i. To encourage school readiness within priority areas, Staffordshire Libraries deliver Ready Steady Library – an Arts Council England funded project<sup>4</sup> that helps parents to ensure their child has a good level of development when they start school.
- ii. Complementing Ready Steady Library, the county council's Community Learning Trust funding enables libraries to delivery Your School Ready Child in Burton, Tamworth and Newcastle.
- iii. In building community resilience, Staffordshire Libraries supported national Empathy Day with book promotions, empathy walls that encouraged local people to share their empathy issues and solutions and class visits where children were invited to talk about empathy<sup>5</sup>.

#### **d. 130,301 attendances at cultural and creative activities**

- i. The ACE funded Libraries Live project has enabled community managed libraries across Staffordshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire to engage with quality artists and develop new audiences. As part of this project The New Vic Theater Education Team worked with **Glascote CML** volunteers to co-create Bobby in the Blue Room. The performance was attended by local nursery and early years settings and as a result of building new relationships, the nursery now visits Glascote Library on a regular basis.

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<sup>4</sup> Staffordshire Library Service is included in this report as Best Practice example: [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE\\_Libraries\\_welcome\\_everyone\\_report\\_July18.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_Libraries_welcome_everyone_report_July18.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The article at <https://www.empathylab.uk/whats-happening-near-me-on-empathy-day> highlights how Staffs Libraries engaged with communities.

- ii. Young people from Cannock participated in the Cannock Chase Emerge Festival, a festival co-created by young people working with library staff and with Spirit of 2012 funding. 54 young people attended 22 weekly sessions at the **Cannock Library** Lab from October 2018 to April 2019 to plan and create the festival which was held on Saturday 6 April. Of the 54 young people attending - 43 lived in areas of Cannock Chase with the highest levels of deprivation; 26 had no previous engagement with the arts; 12 had a disability. Audience estimates for the day from CCTV and livestream footage – 3,000 physical visits and 5,500 virtual visits.
- iii. **Werrington CML's** Knit and Natter Group have been knitting for the Neonatal Ward at the Royal Stoke Hospital. The group were recently nominated for the Moorlands Heroes Award and won a Commendation Certificate. The Leek Post and Times ran the Awards to recognise the support that groups like this offer in their community.

**e. 13,545 attendances in activities to develop their digital literacy skills**

- i. Volunteer IT Buddies encourage people with less confidence to develop their digital literacy skills. Each month approximately 30 IT Buddy Training Sessions are held across Staffordshire's Library network which have supported people to set up an email address, apply for a Blue Badge or write a CV etc.
- ii. Staffordshire Libraries work with Staffordshire's Adult and Community Learning Service to provide opportunities for people to access IT training courses to develop their skills.
- iii. Staffordshire Libraries host 9 Code Clubs which encourage children aged 9-11 to learn more about computer programming and helps them create their own games.

**f. 3,000 people in activity to support economic growth**

- i. 17 Job Clubs are delivered regularly across Staffordshire's Library network.
- ii. During 2018-19, 40 library volunteers moved into employment and 31 library volunteers are now accessing education as a result of library volunteering opportunities.
- iii. Since transferring to community management 8 people with English as a second language have volunteered at **Baswich CML** reflecting the diversity of the local community. 6 Baswich CML volunteers have subsequently found work, of which 4 have English as a second language, demonstrating how libraries can support people to gain practical skills and work experience.

**g. 1,848 people engaged in community activity – volunteering, co-creation and co-production of the library service offer**

- i. **Norton Canes CML** created a Zen Garden at the Library with volunteers donating their time and a local business donating hard landscaping, weed membrane gravel, cobbles etc. It has now been named the Zen Garden and provides a welcome peaceful space for people which supporting their well-being. This initiative demonstrates community spirit, partnership working and team building.

- ii. **Barton CML** are proactive in working with the local community to enhance the library offer. The volunteers have recently been awarded funding from a local charity to replace the children's library furniture and shelving. This has improved the interior of the library, making it more attractive and welcoming to local people and has helped to strengthen local networks and partnerships
- iii. In January 2019. **Holmcroft CML** asked their customers what the library means to them. One library user said "Holmcroft Library is so important for people. If anyone is lonely, they are welcome to come in and they will be asked if they would like a drink and a biscuit." Another local person added "The volunteers are very helpful. I attend a super group, which is very important to me as I have just lost my husband, and this really helps."

#### **h. 143 volunteering opportunities - young people**

- i. During the 2018 Summer Reading Challenge 103 young people volunteered at a Staffordshire Library for a combined total of 1,716 hours and supporting over 11,000 children to engage in the summer reading challenge and read for pleasure.
- ii. Staffordshire Libraries run a Poet Laureate and Young Poet Laureate scheme. A former Young Poet Laureate has said about her experience "*it has brought me a lot of joy, and encouraged my confidence*"
- iii. A recent **Barton CML** Volunteer also studying for a master's degree in Librarianship at University states "Volunteering in the library has proven to be essential to gain relevant practical experience and has also been hugely beneficial for my personal enrichment. Volunteering in a library combines my love for books with my passion for supporting people."

#### **i. 1008 volunteering opportunities – over 25's**

- i. In March 2018 **Barton CML** Volunteers won Volunteer Star Award (organised by Support Staffordshire). Barton CML were crowned joint winners of the Team of the Year Award in the category for volunteer teams less than 2 years old.
- ii. December 2018. **Brewood CML** were winners of the Community Impact Award at the South Staffordshire Volunteer Awards. The event, organised by Support Staffordshire, South Staffordshire Council and SCVYS, aimed to publicly recognise the hard work and support that volunteers give to the local community in a variety of categories. Brewood CML have maintained connections with schools and nurseries, offering regular class visits, and have introduced new activities, including weekly Mindfulness Sessions and Children's Coding Workshops.
- iii. In December 2018 one of the CML volunteers said this about their volunteering experience: "I am surprised at the difference volunteering has made to me. Friends have noticed a big difference in me as I am much more confident now. Volunteering has given me a routine, a sense of doing something positive and has opened up new options to me. Being able to say that I volunteer at the library, rather than saying I am unemployed, has helped my self-esteem."

21. It would not be possible for the Library Service to deliver wider County Council outcomes and engage the number of people as described above without the support of the organisations who manage and deliver the CML network and Library volunteers who are now integral to the delivery of the library offer.
22. It would therefore be more difficult for the County Council to deliver its priorities without the network of libraries that deliver Staffordshire's library offer.

### **Staffordshire Library Service Transformation 2012-2019**

23. Since 2013/14 when we began the Libraries Transformation programme, the library service has delivered £3m of MTFS savings. By April 2020, when a further £250,000 MTFS saving is delivered the libraries budget will have reduced by 41% to **£4,205,040**.
24. To achieve this level of saving, 27 libraries have transferred to community management; the mobile library fleet has been reduced by 6 vehicles and the resources budget has reduced by 41% from £1.1m to £650K in 2019/20
25. Underpinning the library offer is the library workforce. Over a 10-year period the Public Libraries staffing establishment (excluding Prisons and Schools) has reduced by 53% from 280 FTE to 131 FTE in 2018/19.

### **Community Managed Library Model**

26. The public consultations held in 2014 and 2018 highlighted public concern for the Community Managed Library model with 46% of respondents who disagreed with the proposal in 2014 and 45.5% of respondents who disagreed with the proposal to transfer Cheadle, Clayton, Eccleshall and Penkridge to community management in 2018.
27. The most common concerns expressed included:
  - a. Losing Library Staff
  - b. Recruitment and retention of Volunteers
  - c. Future Management of Libraries
  - d. Access
28. To mitigate these concerns a County Council support package was developed which includes access to paid staff and is included within the current contracts for each organisation. Feedback from the Community Managed Library organisations indicates that the support package is crucial to their ongoing sustainability.
29. Through the provision of a strong support package our vision was, and continues to be, that we will work with organisations to develop a thriving and exciting library offer.
30. The support package which was agreed by Cabinet in February 2015 and further endorsed by PSSC in June 2018 and Cabinet in July 2018 is in line with national best practice guidelines. Staffordshire's package of support includes the following:

- a. A small team of 4 FTE Community Support Officers, led by a Community Capacity Manager – who provide professional guidance and expertise; monitor contracts; assist with the recruitment and training of volunteers and ensure that the statutory library service continues to be delivered
  - b. Library stock
  - c. Staff & public access PCs, WiFi – maintained by Staffordshire ICT
  - d. Building maintenance, cleaning, grounds maintenance and utility bills paid to an agreed amount - provided by Strategic Property.
31. Through the introduction and implementation of the Community Managed Library model, Staffordshire County Council responded to the issues and concerns which were raised as part of the consultation and we have taken time to embed the model effectively.
32. As a result, Staffordshire's Library Service, and therefore the County Council has not been subject to a national campaign and has built a genuine relationship with the Community Managed Library organisations, volunteers and communities. The transformation has been well managed, and Staffordshire have a Community Managed Library network and support offer that is nationally recognised as best practice.
33. To ensure the continued success of Staffordshire County Council's community managed library model, ongoing support and investment is essential.
34. Based on 2019/20 budgets, the approximate cost of the County Council support package for the 27 Community Managed Libraries breaks down as follows:

Library Service Budget	Community Support Team	£285,600	1 FTE Community Capacity Manager and 4 FTE Community Support Officers
	Library Stock	£202,500	£7,500 per CML
	Sundries	£13,421	Telephone charges and photocopier lease costs
Staffordshire ICT Budget	ICT	£83,713	Staff and Public Access PCs
Strategic Property Budget	Property	£549,187	Utilities to an agreed level, Cleaning, Business Rates, Grounds Maintenance and £137,820 property maintenance costs for 2018/19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,134,421</b>	

35. The library support of £501,521 is 12% of the overall libraries budget which represents good value for money when Community Managed Libraries attract 25% of Staffordshire Libraries visits.
36. During 2018/19 the 27 Community Managed Library buildings incurred £549,187 property related costs which equates to approximately £20,000 per library. MTFS

savings against all library buildings have been identified within Phase 2 of the Strategic Property Review. However, to realise the savings which are allocated to Community Managed Libraries, partner agreement and public consultation will have to take place, to ensure that these Libraries do not fail as a result of making changes to the library building.

37. The Community Managed Libraries have 5-year contract and lease agreements with Staffordshire County Council that can be renewed for a further 5 + 5 years.

38. The first contracts are due for renewal in April 2021:

<b>Library</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contract renewal</b>
Barton	Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT)	25 April 2021
Werrington	Werrington Community Volunteers Group	14 May 2021
Baswich	MPFT	16 May 2021
Rising Brook	Rising Brook Baptist Church	26 May 2021
Blythe Bridge	Care and Fun Club	27 May 2021
Holmcroft	MPFT	29 May 2021
Norton Canes	MPFT	5 June 2021
Brewood	MPFT	13 June 2021
Glascote	MPFT	19 June 2021
Heath Hayes	MPFT	27 June 2021
Hednesford	MPFT	4 July 2021
Kinver	Kinver Community Library Limited	3 January 2022
Silverdale	Business Enterprise Support	3 January 2022
Audley	Audley Resource and Information Centre	13 February 2022
Shenstone	Shenstone Community Library Organisation	27 March 2022
Great Wyrley	Catherine Care	6 September 2022
Knutton	Knutton St. Marys Primary School	10 October 2022
Loggerheads	Loggerheads Community Information Centre	10 October 2022
Wilnecote	The Wilnecote School	27 March 2023
Brereton	Rotary Club of Rugeley	3 April 2023
Talke	Kidsgrove Care Solutions	11 April 2024
Gnosall	Gnosall Library, Environment & Nurture Hub (GLEAN)	20 April 2024
Clayton	Business Enterprise	1 July 2024

	Support	
Cheadle	The Cheadle Community Information and Resource Group	12 July 2024
Cheslyn Hay	Rotary Club of Bloxwich Phoenix	29 July 2024
Eccleshall	Rotary Club of Eccleshall Mercia	6 August 2024
Penkridge	Penkridge Parish Council	12 August 2024

39. While a high level of disagreement for Community Managed Libraries was expressed within the 2014 and 2018 public consultations, we now have over 950 people volunteering on a regular basis across the community managed library network who are supported by the County Council to take responsibility at a local level as part of the #DoOurBit strategy.

40. Examples of Community Managed Libraries in Staffordshire can be found on our website:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Libraries/managed-libs/Community-managed-libraries.aspx>

### **Staffordshire Libraries 2020-2025**

41. During the next 5 years, we want Staffordshire Libraries to continue to deliver against the county council outcomes; to support communities to do their bit, shaping the library offer to meet community need and to ensure that our libraries remain safe, welcoming spaces which reduce social isolation and enable children to have the best possible start.

42. To achieve this, we will ensure that we have a workforce that supports the delivery of the frontline library service; support staff who can provide guidance to the CMLs; a high performing book stock; flexible access to our library offer and continued investment in digital solutions.

43. Libraries Connected, the national strategic support organisation for libraries have refreshed the universal offers: Reading, Information & Digital, Health & Well-Being and Culture and Creativity and from April 2020 these will provide a delivery framework to enable Staffordshire to continue to develop a relevant library offer which reflects local, regional and national priorities.

44. There are no proposals to transfer any further libraries to community management as our current delivery model ensures that Staffordshire County Council provides a “comprehensive and efficient” library service to comply with our statutory duty. However, to ensure the sustainability of the current model there is a need for Cabinet to endorse the support offer to community managed libraries which will enable the continued delivery of county council outcomes.

## Community Managed Libraries

45. The success of the community managed library model must be attributed to the vision of the Community Managed Library organisations; the commitment and enthusiasm of the volunteers and the high level of support provided by the county council who have built genuine relationships with each organisation.
46. As a tangible measure of success, Between April 2016 and March 2019, Community Managed Library organisations successfully applied for £122,000 of additional funding which has been used to enhance the library offer at their local library.
47. Establishing the CML model has required time, ongoing support for organisations and volunteers from the Community Capacity Manager and Community Support Officers and financial assistance from the Library Service, Strategic Property and Staffordshire ICT.
48. During 2021 the first set of contracts and leases will be due for renewal (see table above). Cabinet therefore need to consider if the County Council continues to provide the previously agreed support package. If the level of support is reduced, there is a risk that Community Managed Libraries might fail.
49. To ensure the ongoing sustainability of the 27 CMLs, the Library Service have been in discussion with Strategic Property and Staffordshire ICT and therefore recommend the following when CML contracts are renewed for a further 5-year period:
  - a. Continued support from the Library Service – professional guidance, expertise, library stock and sundries (including photocopier lease costs and telephone charges)
  - b. Continued provision of ICT which will be reviewed annually in line with Staffordshire Managed Libraries.
  - c. Continued support from Strategic Property which will include ongoing maintenance and cleaning of the library building. Utility costs will be reviewed and may remain at the same level; grounds maintenance will be reviewed on an individual basis and CMLs with charitable status will be required to claim back the 80% business rate rebate that they are entitled to.
50. The 80% of the Business Rates which will be recovered by the eligible CMLs will save £36,117 per annum.
51. Any property savings that are realised when the CML leases and contracts are renewed will contribute towards the wider County Council Strategic Property MTFS 2019-24 savings target of £2.5m
52. In line with the Strategic Property review, the county council will also reserve the right to discuss with the existing CML organisations, if the opportunity arises, to share space within their buildings or relocate to alternative buildings to reduce property costs and therefore contribute towards the Phase 2 Strategic Property MTFS savings target of £2.5m

53. Any proposed changes to library locations will require the completion of a full Community Impact Assessment and potentially public consultation, subject to the nature of the proposed change.
54. If Cabinet agree the support package as described in paragraph 49, this will impact upon Strategic Property's ability to realise the MTFs savings targets that have been identified for Community Managed Libraries.

### **County Council Managed Libraries**

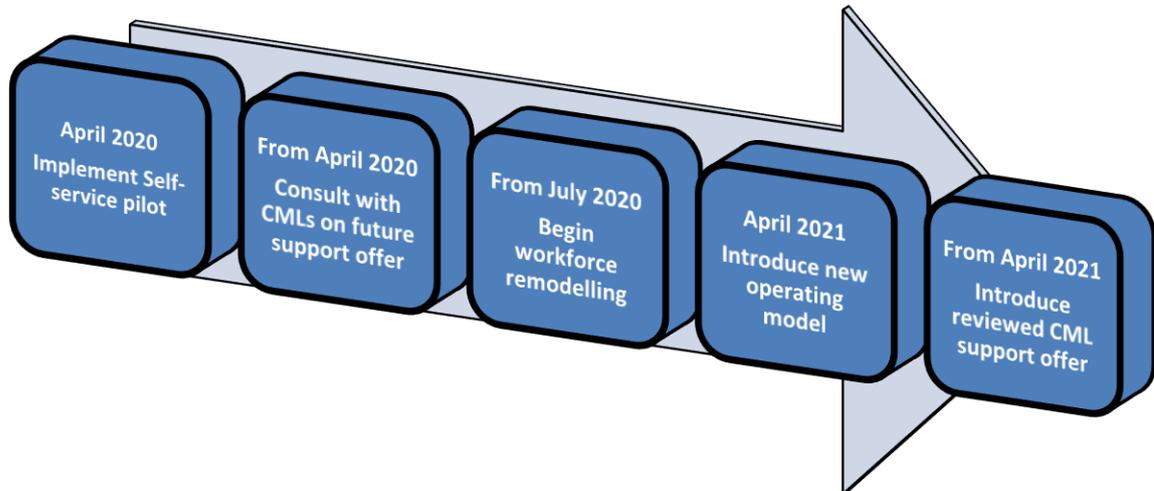
55. It is recognised throughout this paper that the Library buildings are a corporate asset. To ensure that Staffordshire County Council's Estate is used to its full potential, the Library Service will continue to work with Strategic Property to identify vacant space within the 16 County Council managed library buildings for other County Council services or commercial rent. Where library meeting rooms are no longer available for hire, library income targets will be adjusted accordingly.
56. The Library Service will continue to work with Strategic Property to identify the potential to relocate libraries into more cost effective or shared premises if appropriate (see paragraph 54 and 64).
57. The library workforce will be reviewed during 2020-21 to ensure that there is capacity at the right level. Currently the frontline library service is under resourced which increases the risk of unscheduled library closures.
58. It is recommended any savings which result from this review will be reinvested into the resources budget to ensure that our core library offer is maintained.

### **Self Service Proposals**

59. Cabinet agreed in July 2018 to pilot self-service at Stafford Library to explore if this is an opportunity to expand the hours that the library is accessible and reduce expenditure.
60. It was anticipated that a tender and procurement process would be initiated during September 2018 with a view to implementing self-service at Stafford Library from April 2019. However, due to ongoing discussions with staff and their Trade Union representative, which have now concluded, the pilot has been delayed by approximately 12 months.
61. When the pilot is established, it will be monitored over a 12-month period and then evaluated. The results of the evaluation will be brought back to Cabinet to consider if self-service could be extended to more libraries to improve the effectiveness of the Library Service by enabling more flexible access to the library offer.

### **Next Steps**

62. The Library Service seeks permission from Cabinet to consult with Community Managed Organisations from April 2020 upon a reviewed offer of support when their contracts are due for renewal. There may be a risk of challenge from communities and Community Managed Organisations if the level of support is reduced which could trigger a DCMS enquiry.
63. There is potential that without the support from Staffordshire County Council Community Managed Library organisations will be unable to sustain their offer and will fail to renew their contracts at the end of the 5-year period. This could result in closure of up to 27 Community Managed Libraries between 2021 and 2024.
64. To ensure compliance with our statutory responsibility, material changes to the library network are subject to due process and public consultation. In addition, any future decisions made about library buildings will require a full Community Impact Assessment to be completed to consider the needs of communities, highlighting and mitigating the potential impact of proposed changes.
65. The Library Service will begin work with HR during 2020 to consult with library staff and their Trades Union representatives on an operating model which will add capacity to the frontline library service.
66. Prior to bringing these proposals to Cabinet, we sought the views of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee (PSSC) who scrutinised these proposals at their meeting on 17 January 2020.
67. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee (PSSC) members commented on the high level of satisfaction with the library service and how individual libraries focus on local need to ensure that the library offer is relevant to the local community.
68. The committee acknowledged the wonderful contribution made by local volunteers and thanked those volunteers for their hard work and resilience. They also extended their thanks to the library officers who have provided a high level of support for the volunteers. However, the committee did raise concerns about the initial proposals relating to cleaning and grounds maintenance, which the committee felt could lead to a reduction in volunteer numbers and a loss of good will.
69. Having listened to concerns expressed by members of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee, Community Managed Organisations and volunteers and to ensure that CMLs are not placed at risk, the original proposal relating to cleaning has been revised. In consultation with the Cabinet member the updated proposal is now described in paragraph 49.
70. Milestones, should the proposals be agreed: Figure 3



## Legal Implications

71. Staffordshire County Council have a statutory responsibility to deliver a “comprehensive and efficient” library service (see paragraphs 5-7).
72. 27 of the County Council’s Libraries have transferred to community management. Community groups/organisations through a lease and contract arrangement manage and deliver the statutory library offer (see paragraphs 11-13).
73. Without professional support and guidance, Staffordshire’s 27 Community Managed Libraries would not form part of our statutory provision and there would be a risk that Staffordshire may be at risk for failing to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service (see paragraph 13).
74. The Community Managed Libraries have 5-year contract and lease agreements with Staffordshire County Council that can be renewed for a further 5 + 5 years. The first contracts are due for renewal in April 2021 (see paragraphs 37 and 38).
75. If the proposals are agreed as described within paragraph 49, the Community Managed Library contracts and leases will be reviewed to reflect this.
76. Community Managed Libraries require ongoing support and investment to ensure their sustainability. If the level of support is reduced, there is a risk that Community Managed Libraries might fail and that the County Council would be in breach of their statutory duty.
77. If there are any proposed changes to library locations as a result of the Strategic Property Review this will require the completion of a full Community Impact Assessment and potentially public consultation (see paragraph 53).

## Resource and Value for Money Implications

78. The approximate cost of the County Council’s Community Managed Library support package is broken down in paragraph 34.

79. The financial implications of reviewing the Community Managed Library support package are outlined in paragraphs 50-52.

80. If Cabinet agree the support package as described in paragraph 49, this will impact upon Strategic Property's ability to realise the MTFs savings targets that have been identified for Community Managed Libraries within Phase 2 of the Strategic Property review.

### **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Community Impact Assessment – Checklist and Executive Summary

### **Contact Details**

**Assistant Director:** Janene Cox OBE, Assistant Director for Culture, Rural and Safer Communities

**Report Author:** Catherine Mann  
**Job Title:** Libraries and Arts Manager

**Telephone No.:** 01785 278320

**E-Mail Address:** [Catherine.mann@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Catherine.mann@staffordshire.gov.uk)