

## **Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

### **Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service 2022-25**

#### **Recommendations**

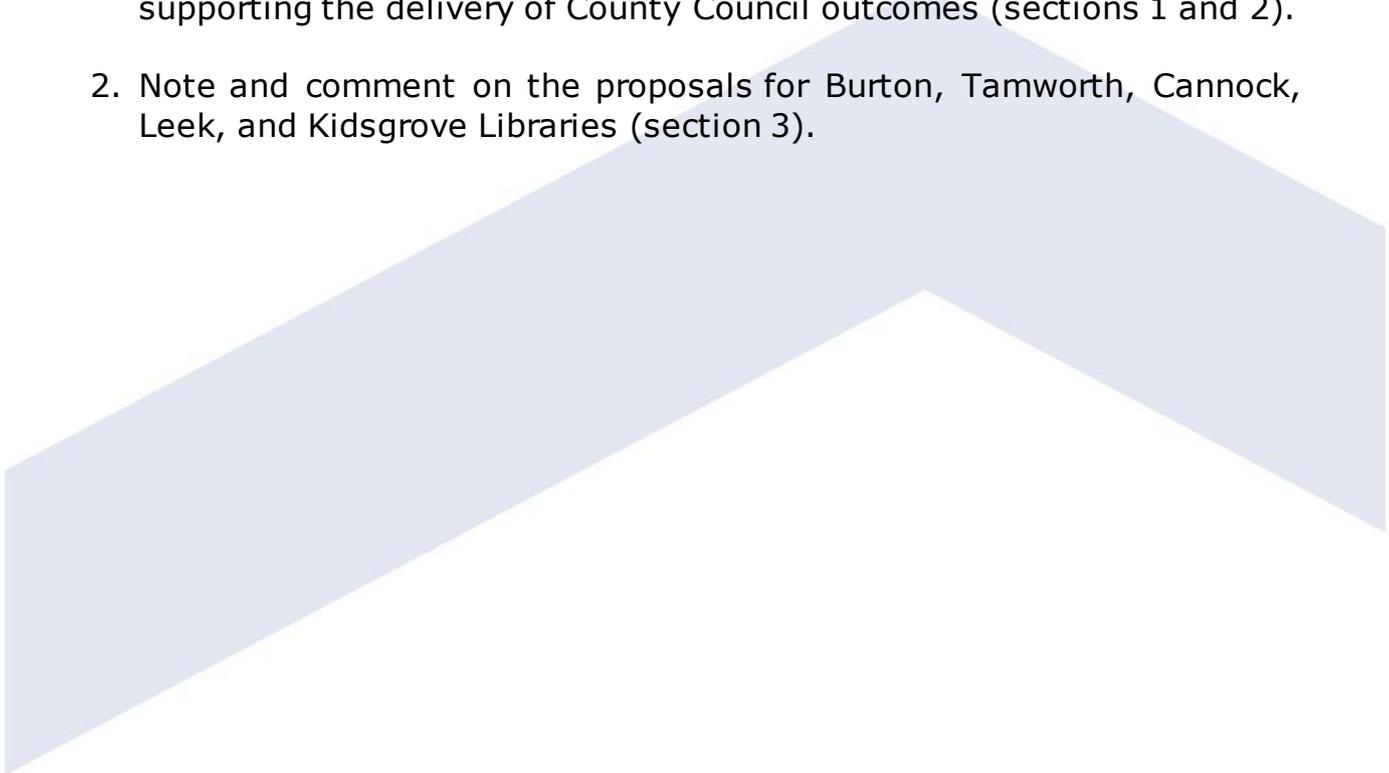
I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Notes the range of activity which takes place across Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service to support the delivery of County Council outcomes.
- b. Provides comment on the overall direction of travel for the Library Service.
- c. Notes the proposals for Burton, Tamworth, Cannock, Leek and Kidsgrove Libraries and provides comment.

#### **Report of Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture**

#### **Summary**

##### **What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?**

1. Review and endorse the range of activity which takes place across Staffordshire Libraries and note the value that this activity delivers in supporting the delivery of County Council outcomes (sections 1 and 2).
  2. Note and comment on the proposals for Burton, Tamworth, Cannock, Leek, and Kidsgrove Libraries (section 3).
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## Report

### Brief Report Summary

3. Highlights the work Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service has taken to recover the service after the pandemic.
4. Outlines how the Library Service is working to support Staffordshire County Council outcomes to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on local communities and how this work is shaping the future direction and strategy for the Library Service.
5. Describes the proposals for Burton, Tamworth, Cannock, Leek and Kidsgrove Library buildings.

### Background

6. Within Staffordshire the Library Service helps to connect communities, improve health and wellbeing and digital inclusion and promotes equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity. This is achieved through the delivery of four national Universal Library Offers: Health and Wellbeing; Reading; Culture and Creativity; Information and Digital. These are underpinned by two national Library Promises, the Children's Promise and the Print and Impaired People's Promise.
7. The Library Service works with internal and external partners to deliver on key work strands that support the national Universal Library offers and meet Staffordshire County Council priorities.
8. As the county works to recover from the pandemic the Library Service has fully recovered the service offer and is delivering a blended programme of physical and virtual activity to support County Council outcomes.
9. The Library Service is helping to address key outcomes from the pandemic including supporting the County Council's priorities to grow the economy through the establishment of Start-Up Hubs in libraries, encouraging good health and wellbeing by working with Health Education England to improve health and digital literacy in local communities and enabling every Staffordshire child to have the best start in life by supporting learning in the home.
10. The Library Service is supporting the County Council to tackle the climate change emergency by helping people to change behaviours.

11. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 gives the County Council a statutory duty to provide "a comprehensive and efficient library service".

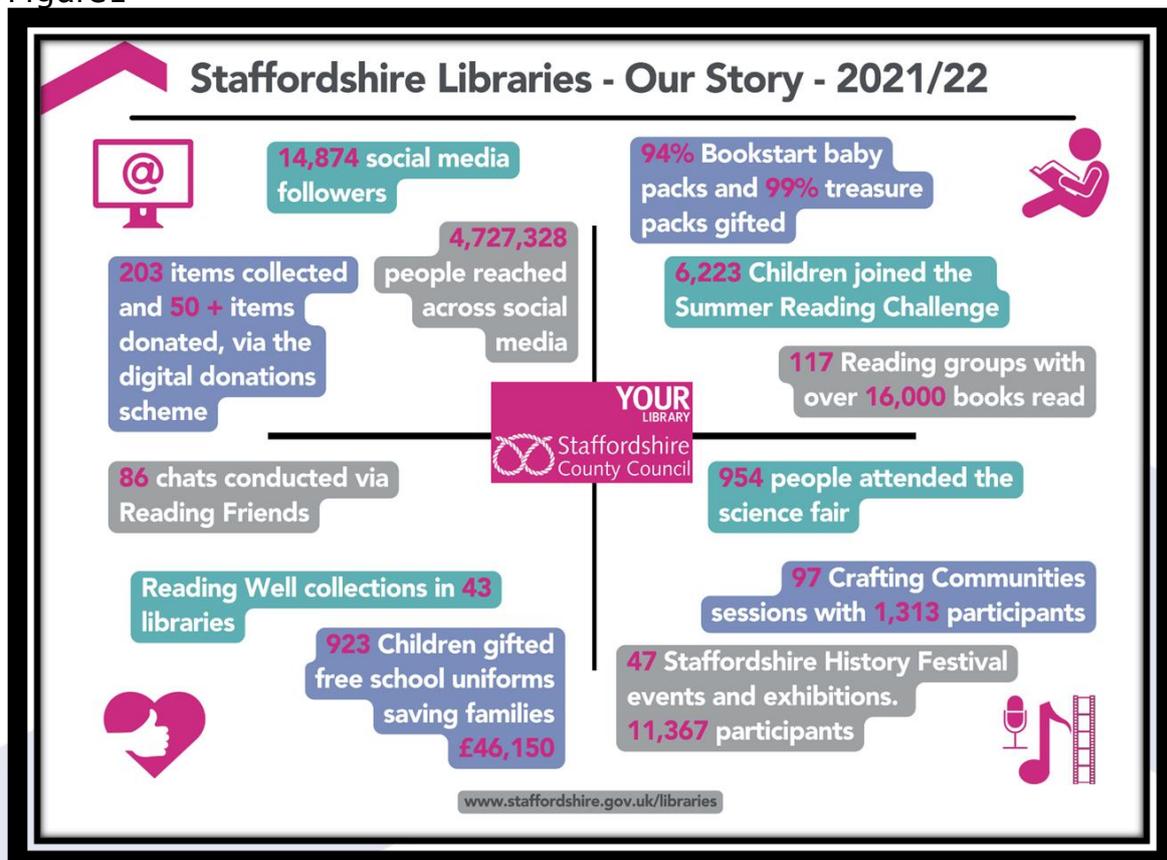
### Section 1 – The Library Offer

12. As part of Staffordshire County Council's statutory network there are 43 Libraries and 2 Mobile Libraries. 27 libraries are delivered through partner organisations.

13. During 2021-22:

- a. Staffordshire Libraries had 201,701 library members, 1,091,677 physical library visits and issued nearly 1,230,025 items.
- b. Figure 1 demonstrates the work achieved to support the recovery of the Library Service during the period 2021-22.
- c. During 2021-22 we engaged:
  - 20,221 people in 1,486 Reading Offer sessions
  - 4,380 people in 703 Information and Digital Offer sessions
  - 24,335 people in 2,121 Culture and Creativity Offer sessions
  - 16,874 people in 1,368 Health and Wellbeing Offer sessions

Figure 1



## Section 2 - Supporting County Council Priorities

14. Staffordshire's libraries are a vehicle for enabling the County Council to deliver its ambitions and priorities for the years ahead.

### Start-Up Information Hubs

15. In 2021 the Library Service received a grant from Arts Council England of £64,520 to work in partnership with Business Enterprise Support (BES) to establish Start-Up Information Hubs in libraries.

16. The project has been developed in consultation with local people and BES customers who have found it difficult to access relevant information and support. Research has informed BES that current start-up programmes do not reach those who are unemployed, who have multiple barriers to employment & who wish to set up a lifestyle business. The situation worsened during COVID-19.

17. As part of the Start-Up Offer all 43 libraries will provide information on self-employment & dedicated space allocated for start-up promotional materials, leaflets, business related reading books, and information factsheets. Access to COBRA [Free online resources - Staffordshire County Council](#) library computers and the 3d printing machines in some libraries will provide those who wish to research further or develop their business plans further support.

18. The aim of the Start-up Information Hub is to ensure more people have easy access to basic information in buildings which are local to people and are known for being safe, non-threatening spaces. This will encourage those who lack confidence to seek out the support they need to pursue their business idea without having to "join" a class or participate in sessions which do not meet their needs or aspirations.

19. The following table shows the growing use of COBRA since it was introduced in June 2022

Number of Downloaded Information Sheets

June 2022	July 2022	August 2022
19	27	113

Information downloaded includes how to create a business plan, how to set up a business bank account and there have been 5 downloads of how to run a mobile take-away business.

## **Health and Digital Literacy**

20. Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service is one of 8 library services to be awarded funding to help address the issue of adults in England (43%) struggling to read and understand written health information. This situation has been exacerbated during the pandemic.
21. The £9,999 funding from Health Education England will enable the Library Service to deliver Be Your Health.
22. The Library Service, NHS Knowledge and Library Services, Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust and Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust will partner with 16-25 year olds to co-design a programme of work to improve access to health and digital literacy information for young people in Newcastle and Burton areas and this will provide a model for libraries nationally [Health and digital literacy partnership provides local learning for better health - Knowledge and Library Services](#)

## **Moonbeams Early Years Action Research Programme 2022**

23. Public libraries have a significant role to play in supporting children's development from the very earliest months as well as helping parents and carers to support their child as they grow and learn.
24. Across the county Early Years practitioners have recognised the impact of Lockdowns on children's speech and language development and Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service is one of three library services to secure a place on the Moonbeams Action Research Programme 2022.
25. This action research partnership between Newcastle under Lyme Library, Hassell Primary School and artists is supported by Arts Connect and the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC). The programme of research looks at developing language and communication through arts and creativity with 0-5-year-olds in libraries.
26. By participating in the research programme, we will strengthen the local library partnership with Hassell Primary School, foster trusted and effective relationships with families and support improved vocabulary, language skills and reading for pleasure in children.

## **Climate Change**

27. Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service is one of 15 library services to secure funding to deliver on the national Green Libraries work Green Libraries Grants - CILIP: the library and information association

28. £2,500 funding will allow the Library Service to develop Changing Climates Changing Lifestyles, a programme of activity that will encourage people to make simple lifestyle changes to support Climate Change.
29. A toolkit of resources will be produced for Climate Change Library Champions to ensure libraries are part of the drive to address Climate Change in local communities.
30. Professional artists, Juneau Projects will run workshops in libraries on a recycling theme for families.

### **Section 3 - Library Buildings**

#### **Burton Library**

31. A submission to Arts Council England for Libraries Improvement Fund Round 2 is being developed.
32. The focus is on widening audience reach and improving the ground floor of the library to create a multi-purpose space that will include a Maker space, sensory areas, and an improved audience area for events.
33. Engagement with community groups, partners and stakeholders will form an integral part of this project to ensure local needs are reflected.

#### **Tamworth Library**

34. Tamworth Borough Council is vacating Marmion House which currently accommodates the County Council's Adult Care and Families teams.
35. Tamworth Library has been identified as the most suitable place to base these teams.
36. The library building will be reconfigured to accommodate Staffordshire County Council staff moving into the building.
37. The library offer will be available from the ground floor and the first floor of the building.
38. To minimise disruption and to enable the building work to be completed as quickly as possible, the library will be relocated temporarily to 56a Albert Road during October and will return to the Corporation Street library in Spring 2023 when the building work is complete.

### **Cannock Library**

39. In October 2021, Cannock Chase District Council (CCDC) were notified that their Levelling Up Funding (LUF) bid had been successful. CCDC have been awarded £20m LUF to develop a new and enhanced cultural and leisure destination in the town with incubator workspace to address local unmet design.
40. CCDC are seeking to create a cultural hub in the town centre of Cannock which will include a revamped theatre and a cinema.
41. SCC have been approached by CCDC to see whether they would be interested in being involved in looking at the potential inclusion of Cannock Library and other services.
42. During July and August, the Library Service has been engaging with Cannock Library customers to seek their views on this potential move.

### **Leek Library**

43. A refresh of Leek Library is part of the application to the Government's Levelling Up Fund Programme to invest in the Nicholson Institute.
44. This project will transform the Nicholson Institute, refurbishing the lower ground floor and creating a flexible, multi-use space that will be used by Buxton and Leek College during the week for student services, such as counselling, welfare and employability and skills training, and evening and weekend use for events, subject to agreement from the Charity Commission.
45. The rest of the building will be enhanced, creating a dynamic new offer for the town, which brings together museum, gallery and library services into a blended experience over the ground and first floors of the building.

### **Kidsgrove Library**

46. Discussions are taking place with the Town Deal Board for Kidsgrove Library to be involved in the Kidsgrove Shared Service Hub.

## **Section 4 - Next Steps**

47. Baroness Elizabeth Sanderson of Welton has been appointed by the Government to help develop a new strategy for public libraries. The strategy will focus on new ideas to improve library service provision and will help to formulate innovative new policy ideas. The strategy will be published in 2023 and will shape future public library service delivery.
48. With the increasing costs of fuel, energy, food, travel etc impacting on residents and businesses across Staffordshire the Library Service will work with partners to sign-post to existing support and will highlight the range of resources and services available at the library.
49. The library service will continue to develop the library offer based around the Universal Library Offers in section 1 and will continue to deliver on the grant funded projects to meet Staffordshire County Council priorities in section 2.
50. The library service will continue to seek opportunities to improve library buildings and engage with local communities. If the funding applications referenced in section 3 are successful, the library service will be part of a Project Team to ensure different areas of expertise and a full range of views are considered. Engagement with local communities will take place and Community Impact Assessments.

### **Section 5 - Link to Strategic Plan**

51. That everyone in Staffordshire will:
  - d. Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth
  - e. Live in thriving and sustainable communities
  - f. Be healthier and independent for longer

### **Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity**

52. Previous committee papers: Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025, 17 January 2020

### **Community Impact**

53. High level CIA to be completed.

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

N/A

## Contact Details

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