

**FUTURE LIBRARIES
STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

2024 – 2029

Engagement Plan

January 2024

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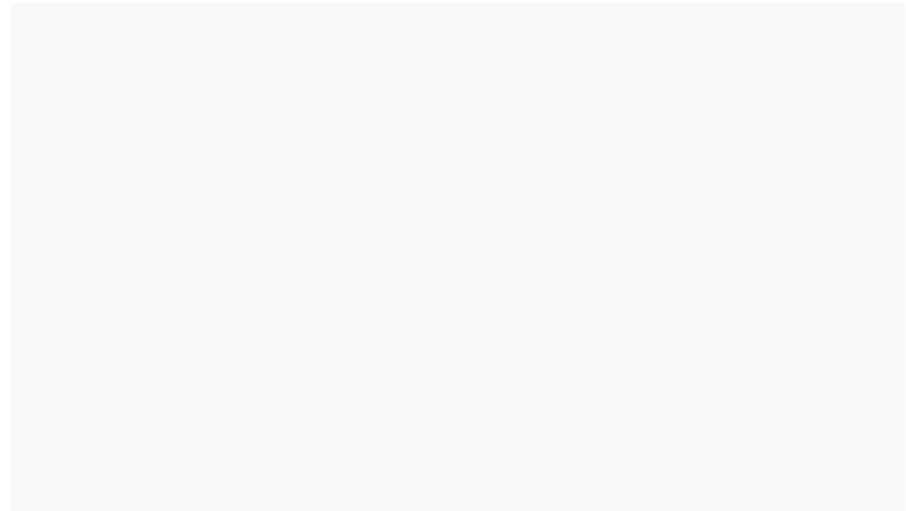
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Overview

Welcome to our Future Libraries Strategy Engagement Plan. In the following pages, we will outline our plans to inform the creation of a new strategy for Edinburgh's Libraries, including proposals for future change.

We have adopted a two-stage approach which includes an initial engagement stage followed by a consultation stage planned to take place later in 2024. This Plan provides:

- the background detail to our approach;
- the associated timescales for delivery;
- the methodology;
- information on how we will communicate the engagement; and
- how any future decisions on change will be made



1. Introduction

Libraries have always been at the heart of our communities. There are 27 community libraries across Edinburgh, 23 school libraries, a prison library, a mobile vehicle service and Central Library which opened in June 1890 and was the city's first public library building. All are trusted welcoming spaces where people can learn, participate, create and have fun. They are much more than places where people go to borrow books, offering a wide range of learning and skills development opportunities, access to cultural experiences, health and wellbeing support and a space to connect with others.

However, like many other public services, the library service has faced significant change in recent years. With technological advances, changing public expectations and increasing budget pressures, we now need to consider what the future should look like for the service and how it can best meet the needs of our city's residents. We want to explore opportunities to develop the service, to evolve and to be able to meet the diverse needs of local people and our communities all within a balanced budget and that means doing things differently, more sustainably and efficiently.

In December 2023, the Council agreed the development of a new strategy and vision for Edinburgh's Libraries to provide the framework for service delivery and development for public and school libraries over the next five years.

You can read a copy of the full [Report](#) considered by the Culture and Communities Committee and the [agreed amendments](#).

The new strategy will seek to respond to the changing needs of the city's population and the different ways that people use library services. To help shape the new strategy and inform future proposals for change, it was agreed to carry out an engagement and consultation process with residents, elected members, stakeholders and library staff to gather views on service provision.

1. Introduction cont/

A two-stage engagement and consultation process has been developed which will be delivered against the following key principles.:

Principle	Activity
Inclusive	The engagement and consultation process will be designed to be as accessible as possible. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been undertaken and will continue to be updated to ensure that the service has considered the potential impacts (negative and positive) in relation to equality, socio-economic disadvantage, climate change, sustainability, the environment, and human rights, and to take any appropriate action to address issues identified.
Communications	A range of communication methods have been identified to ensure anyone that wishes to participate can do so using resources and materials that best meet their group or individual needs.
Localised and general	The engagement process will be guided by the IIA and will promote opportunities for local promotion / group based and one to one activity. Appropriate arrangements will be identified and introduced throughout the engagement and consultation phases if required to ensure opportunities to participate are tailored to meet specific needs wherever required.
Targeted	Specific individuals, stakeholders or groups of interest will be identified as a key consideration of the IIA to ensure there are adequate opportunities to participate and appropriate support arrangements have been offered.
Free from any manipulation or coercion	The engagement and consultation will use nonbiased language.
Documented / transparency	The process, meetings, and outcomes of the engagement and consultation process will be documented and available for scrutiny if required.
Reviewed	The process will be reviewed regularly to identify any activity gaps and any emerging issues will be addressed. The IIA will also be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
Conclusions	Recognition that reaching conclusions associated with change can be challenging therefore, any conclusions which will included in the final Report to be considered by Committee will be based on accountability (has the process been fair and sufficient) equality (have all reasonable steps been taken to consider the views of all), deliverability (resource implications), and financially viable (will be affordable)

2. Background

The current Edinburgh Libraries operating model includes public, high school, Edinburgh Prison and mobile library services. The service also offers MacMillan Cancer support services and digital services.

The current core service delivery includes:

- the promotion of reading for pleasure and improved literacy
- support for school students to maximise their learning opportunities through access to reading development programmes
- free access to a range of digital resources and training support

And provides:

- opportunities to participate in informal learning and develop new skills
- safe, inspiring places for children and young people to learn, explore their creativity and find their talent
- access to information about local, city and national services that can assist to support individuals and families to be supported or participate with other activity
- warm, welcoming spaces, open for all to use to improve their lives and their communities
- a wide range of information and support services to improve the health and wellbeing of customers.

Performance data providing detailed information about current service delivery and outcomes is available at Appendix 1 of the [Future Libraries Strategy 2024 to 2029](#) Report considered by the Culture and Communities Committee on 7 December 2023.

3. Context – need for change

There are a number of key drivers for change:

3.1 Modernise the service

Almost every aspect of modern life continues to change rapidly. The Covid pandemic, technological advances and the cost-of-living crisis have contributed to these changes. As a result, the way people use libraries, and their expectations of public services are also changing. Like all public services, libraries must adapt accordingly to continue to develop their offer and respond to changing needs. User data and associated trends have also shown changes in how our customers use the different services offered, with increasing numbers of people engaging with digital resources and intervention-based supports such as the Warm Welcome initiative.

The planned engagement activity and subsequent draft Future Libraries Strategy will assist in identifying how the service can shape itself into one that's fit for the future whilst seeking to strengthen its financial resilience and sustainability.

3.2 Improved Strategic and Policy Alignment

The service's key commitment in the Council's Business Plan is to "develop a libraries service for the future which enables people to access public services locally and digitally in ways that meet their needs and expectations and contributes to a greener net zero city". In addition to this primary aim, it's important to understand the opportunities for the service to make a significant contribution across all three of the Council's strategic priorities with a role to play in the journey towards ending poverty, net zero and the creation of good places to live and work.

Libraries are in a perfect position as a trusted safe space at the heart of our communities to deliver against all three priorities in the Council's Business Plan. To maximise the positive impacts that the service can bring, there is a need to ensure that strategically, there is alignment to the ambitions set out in the Council's Business Plan and in the other city and national strategies that provide the direction of travel for our services including:

- [Citywide Cultural Strategy 2023-2030](#);
- [20 Minute Neighbourhood Strategy](#);
- [Corporate Property Strategy](#);
- [Edinburgh Learns for Life](#);
- Emerging Council Community Centre Strategy;
- [Forward: Scotland's Public Library Strategy](#); and [Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools](#): A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland 2018-2023

3.3 Financial context

As with other statutory service providers and Local Authorities across Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council faces significant challenges associated with providing services against reducing budgets.

In common with other parts of the public sector, libraries have faced significant financial challenges. Over recent years Edinburgh's Library Service has operated with a budget deficit of nearly £1 million (Libraries total net revenue budget 2023/24 is £8.447 million). Financial pressures have become increasingly difficult to manage as costs continue to rise.

The creation of the new Future Libraries Strategy will determine the priorities for service and resource provision. The Service will also undertake a review alongside the development of the new strategy to identify proposals for change to improve provision, performance and to consider any efficiencies to mitigate against budget pressures. There is also a desire to explore opportunities for future investment in the service to allow the service to grow. The Future Libraries Strategy and proposals for service change will be informed by the engagement and consultation processes.

3.4 Technological – Infrastructure

The service needs to be better able to respond to changing customer needs and expectations in a transforming digital world. Technological infrastructure is the backbone of the service and includes everything from supporting access to the stock catalogue to our online digital services. There are currently challenges for the service in remaining up to date with technological advances and digital innovation and a recognition that additional investment in these areas could reap benefits for improving lifelong learning, literacy, and participation across our communities.

The engagement and consultation processes will assist in identifying where service changes can be made which, in turn, may assist in future investment in technological infrastructure for the service.

3.5 Buildings

The Library Service is delivered through a network of 27 community library buildings, Central Library, 23 high school libraries, Saughton Prison Library and mobile vehicles. Maximising the use of the libraries physical estate and spaces is one of the drivers for change. Whilst the Future Libraries engagement and consultation process will focus primarily on service provision, feedback which relates to the physical estate will also be gathered and considered within the wider context of other Council led approaches including:

- [Corporate Property Strategy](#)
- [20 Minute Neighbourhood Strategy](#)
- Emerging Council Community Centre Strategy

Any future potential changes to how libraries use the property estate will be strategically aligned to these strategies and will take a place-based and multi-service approach which fully involves local communities in the decision-making process.

4. Stage one - Engagement

The library service will undertake engagement across the city aimed at both existing service users and non-service users to ensure that the strategy and any proposed future changes to service are well-informed and consider all opportunities to increase access to service.

The engagement will be open between 26 January 2024 and 19 April 2024.

Views will be sought on our:

Current service delivery including:

- Which services work well – community, school, mobile and digital services
- Why people might choose not to access services
- When the service is used- opening days and times
- Does the service meet need

Future service delivery including:

- Opportunities to improve access to the service for all – what might be missing and does anything need to change
- Opening days and times – when would be best to meet need
- More than a library – could other services function from some spaces and if so, what services
- Continued service development – what ways could continued dialogue with customers be supported to ensure our services remain relevant
- Any efficiencies to mitigate against budget pressures

- Any other opportunities citizens and groups may identify to ensure the service is responsive to need and any suggestions for how the service might change during the next five years.

Methods to be used:

- Online questionnaires for citizens, stakeholders / partners, and library service staff
- Paper copy questionnaire available in library locations
- Discussion groups specifically targeted at under-represented groups
- Creative activity for children
- Discussion groups with young people

The views of library service staff, stakeholder groups and organisations will be sought via separate bespoke questionnaires. Library staff and stakeholders are also welcome to complete the online resident's questionnaire.

Stage One – engagement activity will be supported over 12 weeks

Throughout the engagement process, feedback and involvement will be reviewed to ensure:

- Planned activity is meeting key requirements as set out in the Integrated Impact Assessment.
- Planned activity is involving and providing responses from key stakeholders, service users, non-service users and under-represented individuals and groups
- Appropriate action is taken to ensure any necessary changes to the process are made in good time, allowing anyone already involved to have a say on any adapted content. Where deemed necessary, end / closing dates will be extended.
- The development of stage two – consultation is fully informed to identify any options for change and the draft Future Libraries Strategy 2024 to 2029

An engagement report will be produced. This will be made available to any participant that has indicated an interest in receiving a copy. Copies will also be available in libraries and digital / downloadable versions made available on the City of Edinburgh Council website.

5. Stage two – Consultation

If there are no significant delays associated with the engagement process, it is currently planned that the consultation stage will take place between June 2024 and August / September 2024 (minimum 12 weeks).

The consultation will gather views on a draft Future Libraries Strategy and any proposals or options for change informed by the feedback during the stage one engagement process.

A separate consultation plan will be developed and made available.

6. Process management and decision making

Timeline	Activity	Outcome / Decision
7 December 2023	Culture and Communities Committee	Agreed to establish a Future Libraries Strategy and to develop engagement and consultation processes
January to April 2024	Undertake engagement	Draft strategy informed, any options for change identified
May to June 2024	Engagement Report produced and made available	
June to August/September 2024	Undertake consultation	Draft strategy and any options for change further informed

Timeline	Activity	Outcome / Decision
October 2024	Consultation Report produced and made available	
*October 24	Culture and Communities Committee	**To agree the Future Libraries Strategy and any options for change
November 24 onwards	Future Libraries Strategy adopted. Any agreed changes to service to be delivered as part of an implementation plan.	

**Meeting date to be confirmed*

*** Culture and Communities Committee may decide to refer to other Committees*

7. Other supporting activities

Communications

Communications will use a range of methods including but not limited to:

- The City of Edinburgh Council's website
- Posters
- Lamppost wraps
- Direct engagement in library settings
- Social media
- Leaflets
- Direct engagement with citizens in other public locations
- Partner organisations circulation lists and websites
- Direct emails to key stakeholders

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

An integrated impact assessment defines how the overall engagement and consultation process will be managed and ensures the service complies with the law, taking account of equality, environmental, human rights, and socioeconomic disadvantage (poverty) implications when making decisions. It also ensures participants are fully informed, at a formative stage in the decision-making process i.e. engagement.

The IIA also ensures that any proposals that are informed by the engagement results have been thought through and meet equalities requirements.

IIAs have or will be created for:

- The Future Libraries Strategy engagement process
- The Future Libraries Strategy consultation process
- The Future Libraries Strategy and any changes to service

Links to each will be made available as they are created.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPA)

A Data Protection Assessment was carried out and as a result, a data protection process has been adopted to ensure legal compliance. The Data Protection Assessment is produced by the Consultation Manager and indicates how personal data will be collected, how it will be securely stored, how it will be used and any associated risks.

Participants are provided with a Data Protection statement which must outline how personal information is managed as above.

The statement is included at the start of the questionnaires or face to face process.

8. Participation support

The library service will use all available resources and assistance from partner organisations to ensure anyone that wishes to participate can do so.

If anyone that would like to participate but requires a different method or support, then they can inform any member of staff in their nearest library or can contact the engagement and consultation team using the contact details below and efforts will be made to meet the identified need.

9. Contact Information

In any library- ask to speak to the Development Leader or Supervisor.
Email us at: futurelibraries@edinburgh.gov.uk