



**FUTURE LIBRARIES
STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT
2024 – 2029
Consultation Plan
September 2024**

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Overview

Welcome to our Future Libraries Strategy Consultation Plan. In the following pages, we will outline our plans for consultation to inform the creation of a new strategy for Edinburgh’s Libraries, including proposals for future change as agreed at the City of Edinburgh Council’s Meeting on 29 August 2024. An implementation plan will follow approval of the final strategy.

This consultation follows the Future Libraries engagement activity which took place 26 January – 19 April 2024. This plan provides:

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

1. Introduction

This document provides detailed information about the Consultation processes and procedures to be used to seek the views of citizens, stakeholders and other interested parties on the draft Edinburgh Future Libraries Strategy 2024-2029. The strategy has been created following a period of engagement that took place during January to April 2024 when over 14,000 citizens and stakeholders shared their views on:

- What they liked about the library service
- When they prefer to use the service
- What other services they might access alongside library services
- Why they might not choose to use the service
- What ways the service could change to better meet their needs

These responses, together with an analysis of existing service use data and service delivery knowledge, have shaped the creation of the draft strategy which will inform future service delivery and development over the next five years. The strategy will also seek to respond to the challenges set out in the Future Libraries report which was discussed and agreed at the Council's Culture and Communities Committee in December 2023. You can read a copy of the full [Report](#) considered by the Culture and Communities Committee and the [agreed amendments](#). In May and in August 2024, Committee agreed to move forwards with the public consultation. You can read a copy of the [May report](#) considered by Committee and the [agreed amendments](#), and a copy of the [August report](#) and [agreed amendments](#).

The new strategy will need to recognise and respond to the changing needs of the city's population and the way that people choose to access library services, but also to respond to the financial challenges and continued pressure on public funding. The service needs to address the existing budget gap of £0.903m and become financially sustainable by delivering efficiency savings while exploring opportunities to invest in future service development. We need to make changes to do things differently, more sustainably, and efficiently.

The library service is delivered through a network of buildings and mobile vehicles, all of which 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. The consultation will provide an opportunity for all to provide their views on the draft strategy and future development plans. The consultation will also seek views about a range of identified options for changes to opening hours and the potential for the service to manage events and activities differently. More detailed information is available in the options for change document.

1. Introduction Continued

The consultation process follows the same key principles used to deliver the engagement activity:

Principle	Activity
Inclusive	The consultation process will 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 consultation 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 consultation if required to ensure opportunities to

	participate are tailored to meet specific needs.
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 consultation will use nonbiased language and will never seek to influence or direct.
Documented / transparency	The process, meetings, and outcomes of the 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 be 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, HMP (Saughton) Library 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 Report](#) considered by the Culture and Communities Committee on 7 December 2023.

3. Context – need for change

The report agreed by the Culture and Communities Committee on 7 December 2023 highlighted the 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 rising cost-of-living 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 consultation process and development of the 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 commitment, it's important to understand the opportunities for the service, as a trusted safe space at the heart of local communities, 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.

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 2024/25 is £9.003 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, HMP (Saughton) 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 consultation will focus primarily on service provision, any 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 aligned to these strategies and will take a place-based and multi-service approach which fully involves local communities in the decision-making process separate to and over and above the Future Libraries engagement and consultation processes.

4. Consultation

The library service will undertake consultation on:

The draft Future Libraries Strategy 2024 - 2029:

- The proposed vision, purpose and mission statement
- The proposed five strategic aims
- The proposed goals identified to help deliver each of the five strategic aims

Opening hours:

- Options to change opening hours

Future service delivery including:

- Proposals to change when the service provides events and activities

Consultation methods to be used:

- Online questionnaires for citizens, stakeholders / partners, and library service staff
- Paper questionnaires available in public libraries and on request for printing
- Activity aimed at children P4-P7 age group
- Activity aimed at young people S1-S6 age group
- Entry and exit polls at libraries
- Individual library discussion groups

- Activity sessions specifically targeted at under-represented groups

The consultation will be undertaken across the city and aimed at citizens, stakeholders and visitors 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 consultation will be open between 25 September 2024 and 18 December 2025. (A minimum of 12 weeks)

Consultation management:

Throughout the consultation process, feedback and involvement levels 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 remedial 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.

A consultation 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. Process management and decision making

Timeline	Activity	Outcome / Decision
29 August 2024	City of Edinburgh Council (Full Council meeting)	Agreed to proceed to the consultation phase and to consult on the draft strategy and options for change associated with opening hours and service management of events and activities.
September to December 2024	Undertake Consultation	Views and opinions of citizens and stakeholders will be sought to inform development of final strategy document and any other service change options

Timeline	Activity	Outcome / Decision
*February 2025	Culture and Communities Committee	Agree the strategy and any options for change
February to April 2025	Strategy implementation plan and performance framework developed	
*April 2025	Culture and Communities Committee	Agree the implementation plan and performance framework
April 2025 onwards	Implementation plan to be delivered	

**Meeting date to be confirmed/ Culture & Communities Committee may decide to refer to other Committees*

6. 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.

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

An IIA has been created for The Future Libraries Strategy consultation activity.

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.

7. Participation support

The library service will use all available resources and assistance from partner organisations to ensure that 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 they can contact the engagement and consultation team using the contact details below and efforts will be made to meet the identified need.

8. Contact Information

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