

Shared Intelligence

By Shared Intelligence

Dorset Library Strategy: phase two engagement

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1 Introduction

Context

- 1.1 A year on from the first phase of the library strategy consultation (October 2021 to January 2022), [Shared Intelligence](#) was commissioned to support Dorset Council with the second phase of their consultation. Phase one had explored what communities across Dorset valued from the library service and how the service could better meet the needs of residents and enable the service to become a stronger strategic partner to the council and community organisations. Phase one, which included the Let's Talk Libraries consultation survey and a programme of workshops and activities, informed the development of a draft library strategy and opportunities for action.
- 1.2 Phase two of the Let's Talk Libraries consultation took place between September and December 2022 and focused on testing the draft library strategy with stakeholders across Dorset. This second phase of public consultation was designed to refine the draft strategy and ensure it will have a positive impact. The consultation asked Dorset's communities and partners to prioritise strategy outcomes and explore what delivery could look like in their communities. It also sought to identify how the strategy might impact communities including negative impacts which might require mitigation.
- 1.3 Similar to phase one, phase two involved a survey and workshops with residents and representatives of other local service providers. The survey was designed to provide breadth of response and the workshops were designed to gather depth and insight. This report documents the discussions from the *workshops* (the survey is being reported separately). This report analyses data from the workshops to identify cross-cutting issues which Dorset should consider when it makes the next set of revisions to the draft library strategy, accompanying action plan and proposed operating model. It is important to note that this report deals only with the workshops and should be considered alongside analysis of the survey data once that is also available.

Engagements with relevant stakeholder groups

- 1.4 Workshops took place either in person, online, or a combination of the two (hybrid). Workshop design was adapted to be relevant to the knowledge and interests of the stakeholders taking part in each discussion. Through the workshops, the consultation engaged with over 100 individuals. Below is a list of the workshops that took place:
 - Equality, diversity and inclusion organisations: hybrid.
 - Council Members: hybrid.
 - Library users: hybrid.
 - Non-library users: hybrid.
 - Library service staff: hybrid.
 - Children's workshops: KS2 children attending cub scouts in Weymouth, and KS3 children in a Year 8 class at Lytchett Minster Secondary School: both in-person.
 - #OneTeam (variety of council and community stakeholders who have the potential to be key strategic partners of the library service): online.

- 1.5 The aim of the workshop series was to understand attendees' views on the direction of change indicated by the draft library strategy and the potential impact of the proposed service operating model if implemented. Participants were asked to give their reactions to the strategy themes and sub-aims. A quick straw poll was conducted during each workshop asking which aims were most important. This was done using Mentimeter, an online tool for conducting anonymous polls and displaying instant results. The results of these quick polls were explored through discussion to understand what lay behind participants' views of the strategy aims. Participants were also asked about the potential impacts, negative or positive, of the new strategy if implemented, including impacts on specific demographic groups or types of users.

2 Key messages

Key aspects of the strategy were supported across workshops

- 2.1 Participants in the workshops welcomed being consulted at this stage in the process and showed support for the three proposed strategic aims of 'inspire', 'connect' and 'enable'. The majority of participants felt these aims, and the detail under each one, resonated with how they saw the role of public library services. The proposal for a three-tiered model was seen as providing greater consistency and clarity for the public. The majority of participants also felt that using socioeconomic data to define levels of need, was a fair and sensible way to allocate resources and determine which libraries would be in which tiers. Workshop participants welcomed the prospect of having a larger core offer across all three proposed tiers. In different ways, workshop participants saw libraries as having potential to make more of a difference to communities than they do now and to play a bigger role as community spaces, and they saw it as important for the library service to reach more people.

Tiered library model

- 2.2 Some participants queried whether the proposed Library Connect location in the north of the county (Blandford) was the natural centre for people to travel to. Gillingham was thought by many to be the natural centre of north Dorset, more so than Blandford. That said, in the discussions with service partners, Blandford was seen as a location which could fit with the plans of other agencies for expanding their own presence.
- 2.3 Many participants also wanted the locations of Library Connect to capitalise on existing progress in terms of investment, alignment with partner priorities, and service development (again the focus was often Gillingham) rather than risk having to start again in different locations. The interaction between the library service plans and the development of a county-wide network of Family Hubs also needs to be fully explained.
- 2.4 Workshop participants also voiced concern about Bridport being the only Library Connect in the west of Dorset due to lack of transport connectivity in that part of the county. Many residents in areas served by Bridport (e.g. Lyme Regis) have health and mobility issues. Workshop participants emphasised the need to consider the wider transport infrastructure and to use library outreach services to compensate for poor connectivity.
- 2.5 An important rationale for the proposed three-tiered structure was that it would provide greater consistency and transparency in the service offer and would allow for better promotion of the

services available at libraries to non-library users. Some workshop participants in the employee session asked what evidence there is that greater consistency is needed – for example, had this come up in surveys? However, across the workshops as a whole, participants supported the concept of the three tiers. What was a more common concern was that the lowest tier ‘Library’ would not benefit from development and innovation in the upper tiers and would have to stop doing things which went beyond the lower tier offer (in terms range of services). Some suggested the issue of lowest tier libraries being left behind could be mitigated by assigning all branches to clusters so that lower tier libraries could work with those in the upper tier to create a ‘hub and spoke model’. Outreach activity by the service was also seen as a vital element of ensuring Dorset-wide access.

Possible responses to concerns

- Review the data used to identify Library Connect locations including information about existing infrastructure, recent investment, and partner priorities.
- Gather data on which towns are typically used by residents in north Dorset for shopping, amenities, and services.
- Provide a more detailed explanation of the rationale for the three-tiered library model and make it clearer that the core library offer allows for local variation.
- Consider having a cluster or hub and spoke model, along with outreach to those in rural areas.

Reaching isolated or vulnerable individuals in low needs areas

2.6 Participants supported the allocation of resources based on the socioeconomic needs of different communities. However, many participants were worried this could disadvantage people who are vulnerable or face disadvantage but live in areas lower down the needs assessment (i.e. in pockets of deprivation found within otherwise affluent areas). Some participants argued that isolated disadvantaged households in otherwise affluent areas can face greater disadvantage than residents in areas where deprivation is more apparent. Here again, outreach activities were seen as vital.

Possible responses to concerns

- Use partnerships with other services (e.g. social care) to identify isolated and vulnerable communities.
- Develop targeted library service outreach.
- Ensure the core library offer, available at all library sites, is relevant in meeting the needs of all Dorset’s communities.

Opening times

2.7 The discussions across the workshops highlighted a range of preferred opening times, although ideas differed from workshop to workshop and between different stakeholder groups. What was consistent however was a distinction in the minds of participants between three broad categories of users who each have different patterns of use in terms of time of day, and day of the week:

- Adults using the library for work and study who want desk space, reliable Wi-Fi, quiet space, and opportunity for human contact and/or help.
- People of all ages using the library for leisure and wellbeing who want books and interesting events.
- Children using the library for a combination of reading and fun activities who are looking for things which make them feel happy. Of these, many children with working parents can only visit a library at the weekend as on weekdays they attend after school clubs until their parents finish work.

- 2.8 School-aged workshop participants tended to prefer after school and weekends (either late morning or early afternoon). Also, primary aged children who attend after school clubs (most likely children with working parents) were rarely able to visit a library after school during term-time and tended only to go at weekends. For children, being *unable* to access a library during its opening hours may have a negative impact on their interest in reading and their ability to access activities/events which will broaden their horizons.
- 2.9 Adults using the library for study wanted quiet space on weekday evenings after work, whereas adults using the library for remote working (e.g. as an alternative to their kitchen table) wanted weekday daytime access (along with reliable Wi-Fi and opportunities for human contact). Older adults (often using the library for leisure and wellbeing) tended to prefer early morning access before going about other errands.
- 2.10 The overall pattern indicates: evening opening will help adults wanting to use libraries for study or skills development; weekend opening around the middle of the day will help children, especially those with working parents; and weekday daytimes will help both remote workers and older adults. N.B. we did not engage with parents of pre-school children in this round of engagement, although we did during the earlier phase one engagement in autumn 2021. Although we did not ask specifically about opening times in autumn 2021, we heard that families need spaces to take their pre-school children which are practical, social, safe, free, and accessible at times which fit with family life. School holidays and weekends were often mentioned in this context, because these are times when other free-to-use early years activities are not available.
- 2.11 Participants tended to agree that having library opening hours tailored to local patterns and considering days which have generally higher footfall (e.g. market days) could encourage attendance. We also heard that some consistency of hours across the library network was important and would be welcomed by workshop attendees.
- 2.12 This suggests a potential need for ongoing research to understand what opening times would encourage use by new user groups, alongside monitoring patterns of use by existing users.

Possible responses to concerns

- Develop a range of opening hours, which meet the needs of different types of users. For example, more weekday evenings for adults in areas with high adult learning needs, more weekend hours in areas with high family need (especially school age), and more daytime hours in areas with high older-adult and remote-worker needs.
- Conduct regular reviews to understand what hours will maximise impact and reach.

Touchstone role of reading, literacy, and access to books

- 2.13 Although there was support for libraries broadening their offer to increase collaboration with other local services and community impact, discussions often turned to the touchstone role of reading, literacy and access to books and the written word. This also comes across very clearly in the quick polls we conducted during the discussions. This part of the offer comes under the ‘inspire’ theme in the draft strategy. However, while the draft strategy gives it equal prominence to the other strategy elements, workshop participants consistently saw reading, literacy, and books as the anchor which underpins the public’s understanding of the service as a whole, and which enables libraries to deliver everything else – from creating community connections to signposting other public services.

Possible responses to concerns

- Explain the role of reading and literacy – as the anchors which enable the other roles of libraries – more clearly in the next draft of the strategy.

Language within the strategy

- 2.14 Several participants felt the terminology in the strategy should be adapted for a wider audience to ensure the public can relate to it. Participants felt that the drafting of the sub-aims in the strategy and the names of the three library tiers might not have clear meaning for residents and were often described in abstract terms. Furthermore, some participants felt that there was unnecessary duplication in the strategic sub-aims. To mitigate this, they felt the draft strategy should be tested for plain English as it is developed into a final proposal.

Possible responses to concerns

- Carry out a full plain English review of the strategy text.
- Produce a summary-level 'plan on a page' version to help with accessibility of the strategy.

Libraries can only have impact if the public are aware of the offer

- 2.15 One of the sub-aims under the 'connect' theme is, 'Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer'. This was seen by many as a vital precursor to other forms of impact for the simple reason that the public can only benefit from a service if they are aware of it and know how to access it. Put conversely, many workshop participants, including both adults and children, and users and non-users, felt that the biggest potential barrier to access was lack of awareness and they saw this as a vital issue to address. In terms of who this would impact most, it would likely be individuals who are less familiar with sources of council information, or who face other barriers in accessing information more generally (e.g. for reasons relating to language or disability). This is an issue which has come up frequently in all recent library service engagement and the service has already identified this as a service development priority.

Possible responses to concerns

- The service is committed to delivering a communication plan to increase service awareness including targeted communication for disadvantaged groups.

Integrating other services without diminishing the 'trusted and neutral' reputation of libraries

- 2.16 There was a positive response across the workshops to the sub-aim 'Library services form part of community hubs', both in discussion and in the quick polls. This was seen by many as a role libraries were already taking on, and was a positive development. However, there was a concern that for some users who see public services or 'officialdom' as intimidating or in negative terms, this might become a barrier to use – and these users would likely already be marginalised in other ways.

Possible responses to concerns

- Conduct engagement with marginalised communities, co-ordinated with existing equality and diversity networks and agencies.
- Seek regular customer feedback about trust and perception.
- Co-locate and work with services aligned to the library service's aims and priorities.

3 Summary table of possible issues and suggested solutions

What is the issue that needs to be addressed?	What kind of response does it need?	What is a possible solution?
Queries around the tiered library model	Review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Natural’ centres of shops and services • Existing investment, partner alignment, and service development • How to maintain/ensure development of all library tiers 	<p>Review the data used to identify Library Connect locations including information about existing infrastructure, recent investment and partner priorities.</p> <p>Gather data on which towns are typically used by residents in north Dorset for shopping, amenities, and services.</p> <p>Provide a more detailed explanation of the rationale for the three-tiered library model, and make it clearer that the core library offer allows for local variation.</p> <p>Consider having a cluster or hub and spoke model, along with outreach to those in more rural areas.</p>
Reaching isolated or vulnerable individuals in low needs areas	Need to consider how library services can identify and reach these residents, either through library provision or through collaboration with other council/community services.	<p>Use partnerships with other services (e.g. social care) to identify isolated and vulnerable communities or communities.</p> <p>Develop targeted library service outreach.</p> <p>Ensure the core library offer, available at all library sites, is relevant in meeting the needs of all Dorset’s communities.</p>
Opening times	Need to consider what times of day would support which groups of users and ensure opening times maximise impact for a range of user types.	Develop a range of opening hours, which meet the needs of different types of users. For example, more weekday evenings for adults in areas with high adult learning needs, more weekend hours in areas with high family need (especially school age), and more daytime hours in areas with high older-adult and remote-worker needs.

What is the issue that needs to be addressed?	What kind of response does it need?	What is a possible solution?
		Conduct regular reviews to understand what hours will maximise impact and reach.
Touchstone role of reading, literacy, and access to books	Ensuring the strategy capitalises on the role played by reading and literacy as the anchor which enables other roles.	Explain the role of reading and literacy – as the anchors which enable the other roles of libraries – more clearly in the next draft of the strategy.
Language within the strategy	Review of language used within the strategy.	<p>Carry out a full plain English review of the strategy text.</p> <p>Produce a summary-level ‘plan on a page’ version to help with accessibility of the strategy.</p>
Libraries can only have impact if the public are aware of the offer	Broad action to advertise library offer and targeted messages to those least likely to access council information, but for whom the library could offer most help.	The service is committed to delivering a communication plan to increase service awareness including targeted communication for disadvantaged groups.
Integrating other services without diminishing the ‘trusted and neutral’ reputation of libraries	Ongoing assessment and review of public perceptions and trust in Dorset libraries among marginalised communities.	<p>Conduct engagement with marginalised communities, co-ordinated with existing equality and diversity networks and agencies.</p> <p>Seek regular customer feedback about trust and perception.</p> <p>Co-locate and work with services aligned to the library service’s aims and priorities.</p>

APPENDICES: WORKSHOPS AND DISCUSSIONS

Equality, diversity, and inclusion organisations

Tuesday 8 November, 11am–1pm

Participants: 11 participants

Prioritisation of the strategic sub-aims

- 4.1 After explaining each of the strategic themes and sub-aims, a quick poll was conducted using Mentimeter. Participants were asked to pick the **top three sub-aims** they felt were most important for libraries to deliver under each of the three strategy themes.

Inspire

	Inspire – sub-aims	Poll
1.1	Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals	9
1.2	Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences	8
1.3	Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence	9
1.4	Support an innovative and thriving micro and small-to-medium enterprise business network	1
1.5	Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions	2

- 4.2 For 'inspire', the top three sub-aims were:

- 1.1 Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals, with nine votes.
- 1.3 Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence, with nine votes.
- 1.2 Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences, with eight votes.

- 4.3 Participants caveated their choices with the fact that they felt those aims with less votes are not *unimportant*, and they found it hard to select only three options. They felt all the sub-aims were good aspirations. They noted that all these aims require those running libraries to have more confidence and training to be able to provide an equal and high-quality offer to all users. Participants were asked about the three sub-aims which had got the most votes in the poll; the common view was that these are the aims which most reflect the general perception of libraries within the community. The other two sub-aims (around business support and climate change) are very specific in nature but could still be delivered by the library service.

- 4.4 Participants were unsure whether these things were already being delivered by the service and noted that it is important to take into account the different cultures in Dorset, both when supporting literacy and the development of skills as well as hosting events and activities, i.e. having provision in different languages.
- 4.5 Digital skills are key, as a lack of access to digital prevents you from accessing other services and online opportunities. The library offers the opportunity for people to learn more about digital, and removing barriers to those who are more vulnerable is important.
- 4.6 One participant questioned how ‘Inspire, inform, and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions’ was chosen to go in the strategy as opposed to other areas. Another stated that it is important to have an overarching ‘green perspective’ which feeds into all sub-aims.
- 4.7 One participant felt that self-employed sole traders don’t have many physical places to connect with each other and they need extra support. In an equality context, one participant said that women and people of colour are more likely to be self-employed or sole traders. While some local organisations are already trying to set up co-working hubs, it could be useful for libraries to do something around this, even if it is simply promoting co-working hubs that are already available.

Connect

	Connect – sub-aims	Poll
2.1	Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer	8
2.2	Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection	9
2.3	Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset’s Community Managed Libraries	2
2.4	Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free	4
2.5	Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council’s front door	4

- 4.8 For ‘connect’, the top sub-aims were:
- 2.2 Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection, with nine votes.
 - 2.1 Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer, with eight votes.
- 4.9 Two sub-aims received four votes each:
- 2.4 Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free.
 - 2.5 Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council’s front door.
- 4.10 Participants’ initial reactions were that all of the sub-aims were relevant and interconnected; each needs to be done for them to work. However, they felt that 2.5 could conflict with 2.2 and 2.4 because people would be more likely to associate libraries with officialdom and other services which can be off-putting to some groups and communities. Some saw 2.4 (open and inclusive) as an odd aim to have because this is a basic non-negotiable necessity for any public service; having it as an aim makes it sound optional or something the service is doing because it wishes to. However, others

felt that having inclusivity as an aim creates a mechanism to hold the council and employees in libraries to account in a more tangible way.

- 4.11 The language of the sub-aims needs to be more accessible in plain English to ensure it can be understood by the public. For example, the word ‘open’ can be interpreted differently.
- 4.12 The provision of service is very linked to library opening hours and there are often hidden impacts and consequences which have disproportionate impacts on some groups of people. The library also offers accessible public toilets which are very important for many members of the community. Their opening hours need to be clear and consistent to ensure people are aware of the availability of such provision.
- 4.13 To achieve thriving, open spaces that meet community needs, libraries can’t work in silo so having a co-ordinated network is also important and will help raise expectations of what libraries have to offer more broadly across Dorset.

Enable

	Enable: our communities – sub-aims	Poll
3.1	Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces	7
3.2	Provide safe trusted spaces	7
3.3	Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth	2
3.4	Library services form part of community hubs	6
3.5	Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities	2

- 4.14 For ‘enable’, the sub-aims which received the most votes were:
- 3.1 Creating inviting, flexible, well used spaces, with seven votes.
 - 3.2 Provide safe trusted spaces, with seven votes.
 - 3.4 Library services form part of community hubs, with six votes.
- 4.15 Participants felt that 3.1 and 3.2 did not need to be separate points and could be merged because one without the other is unhelpful. In order for spaces to be well used and inviting they need to be safe.
- 4.16 There were also several queries around the language used:
- One participant suggested that 3.5 doesn’t explicitly include social care and stated that it should be included.
 - Many participants questioned the phrase ‘hub’ and felt that the wording should be explained for members of the public who would be unfamiliar with what a hub would entail. Changing language at the strategy level will hopefully ensure that services and the strategy are accessible to all communities. Language and methods of communication are fundamental and have frequently been discussed in Dorset Council’s Equality Diversity and Inclusion Reference Group.
- 4.17 Participants also felt strongly about ensuring the strategy uses language which all residents can relate to. If the service wants to meet need, then issues on the ground need to be considered and reflected in a way that resonates with people.

- 4.18 Overall, there is a concern among diversity and inclusion organisations about the loss of community spaces and that these need to be safeguarded.

Insights on the tiered library approach and allocation of libraries to tiers

- 4.19 When asked if the tiered model was clear, respondents likened it to the Tesco store model. They liked the fact that the approach aims to make it clear which services are available in each specific type of library and each branch.
- 4.20 They were also keen to ensure that the service would still offer outreach to vulnerable residents alongside this tiered library model, as they raised concerns over how accessible certain aspects of the offer were to those who do not live near a Library Connect and do not have the means to travel there. However, they understood that financially, Library Connects cannot be put everywhere
- 4.21 They felt that the model could be more inclusive to ensure that some communities don't lose out. They suggested that close partnership working could enhance the offer and partners could help provide activities. Participants also wanted adults with special educational needs (SEN) and autism to be considered, not just children, and that activities should be offered for people of all ages. They also discussed that this model needs to be delivered by fully trained staff to ensure they are better equipped to meet diverse needs.
- 4.22 In thinking about their communities, the measures that have been used to assess need do not cover all areas of need and how different needs interact, e.g. rural isolation is compounded by low income which can affect access to a vehicle, which is compounded again if areas don't have sufficient bus routes. In this sense, they questioned whether the tiered model could work against access for all, especially when access to transport is considered.
- 4.23 It is key to have a variety of opening hours both within and outside of traditional working hours. There should also be flexibility if, after assessment, the schedule doesn't attract and encourage users.
- 4.24 Other comments included:
- Participants hoped there could be a reassessment of the spread of different tiers in the west of the county which recognises poor transport connectivity.
 - It is important that all libraries act as warm spaces, especially during the cost-of-living crisis.
 - Participants pointed out that the library strategy must be closely linked to Dorset Council's plans for developing Family Hubs.
 - They appreciated that the library service doesn't have the funding to provide all services in all locations, but they asked whether some of the Library Connect services could be delivered in a smaller way in libraries.
 - Having libraries acting as a single front door for council services could reduce the safety and neutrality of the space and may make some individuals uneasy, increasing marginalisation.

Participants:

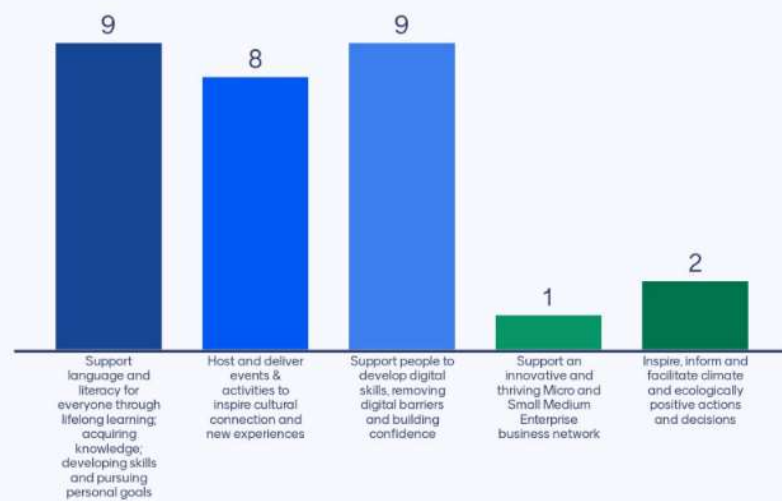
Included representatives from:

- DC Employee Networks, e.g. disability network and women's network
- People First Dorset
- Space Youth Project
- Home Start (West Dorset)
- East Dorset Citizens Advice
- Stars Dorset

Poll results from Mentimeter as shown to participants

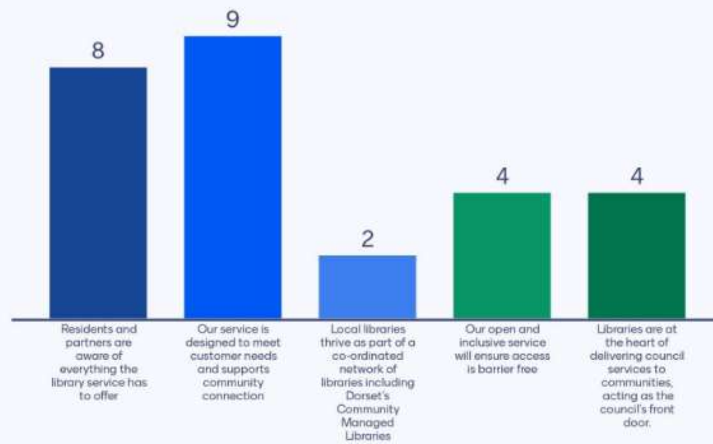
Of the following five '*inspire*' sub-aims which is most important for you? You can select up to 3 options.

Mentimeter



Of the following five '*connect*' sub-aims which is most important for you? You can select up to 3 options.

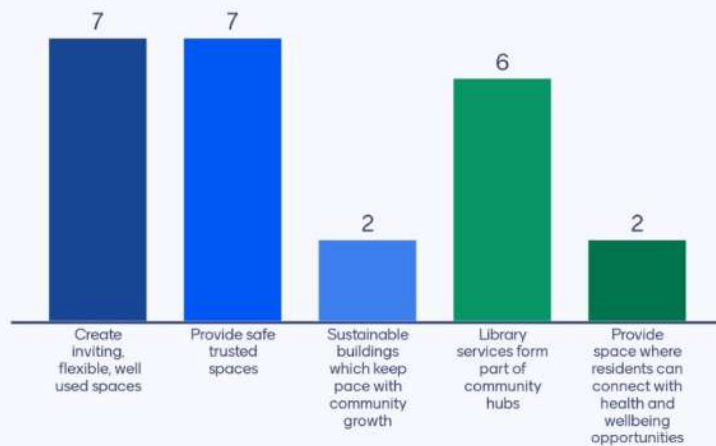
Mentimeter



9

Of the following five '*enable*' sub-aims which is most important for you? You can select up to 3 options.

Mentimeter



9

Dorset Council Elected Members

Wednesday 9 November – 1.30–3.30pm

Participants: 10 members – four in person, six online

Prioritisation of the strategic sub-aims

- 5.1 After explaining each of the strategic themes and sub-aims, a quick poll was conducted using Mentimeter. Participants were asked to pick the **one sub-aim** they felt was most important for libraries to deliver under each of the three strategy themes. They were only able to select one option in this workshop due to an error in configuring the Mentimeter questions.

Inspire

	Inspire – sub-aims	Poll
1.1	Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals	6
1.2	Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences	0
1.3	Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence	1
1.4	Support an innovative and thriving micro and small-to-medium enterprise business network	0
1.5	Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions	0

- 5.2 When discussing the reasons for strategic sub-aim 1.1 ‘Support language and literacy through lifelong learning’ received the most votes. One reason given for this was that it was seen as the core function of a library that should underpin all activity (i.e. acquiring knowledge, developing personal skills, etc) – as one person put it ‘without this nothing else matters’. Another reason was that this reading and literacy seemed like a ‘catch all’. Members explained that the other sub-aims were limited in their description of activities. Furthermore, there was concern that important parts of the existing offer were missing from the list such as sheet music lending and music activities. One member said their son attended music activities at Lyme Regis library every week and learns language and communication skills through singing and being with others.
- 5.3 Although sub-aim 1.3 ‘Support people to develop digital skills’ received one vote and strategic sub-aims 1.2, 1.4 and 1.5 received no votes, members wanted to make it clear that this was more to do with the fact they could only vote for one rather than the other sub-aims not being important.
- 5.4 One other comment was that there needs to be caution around the provision of a ‘business offer’ (sub-aim 1.4) because this was an example of where the library cannot be all things to all people.

Connect

	Connect – sub-aims	Poll
2.1	Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer	1
2.2	Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection	4
2.3	Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries	1
2.4	Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free	1
2.5	Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door	0

5.5 Strategic sub-aim 2.2 'Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection' received the most votes (four). Similarly, to reasons given for voting for 1.1 in the previous strategic aim, members tended to agree that this one was a 'catch all' and the other sub-aims were seen as very similar.

5.6 All of the following received one vote:

- 2.1 Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer
- 2.3 Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Library
- 2.4 Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free

5.7 There was a suggestion that 2.2 and 2.5 could be brought together as meeting needs, supporting community connection and the library acting as the council's front door could all link together well.

5.8 Another comment made was about libraries providing services that offer refuge and sanctuary. In particular, the point was made that libraries should provide quieter spaces that are perceived as safe spaces.

Enable

	Enable: our communities – sub-aims	Poll
3.1	Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces	4
3.2	Provide safe trusted spaces	0
3.3	Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth	2
3.4	Library services form part of community hubs	2
3.5	Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities	0

5.9 The most votes were received for:

- 3.1 Create inviting, flexible, well-used spaces, with four votes.
- 3.3 Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth, with two votes.
- 3.4 Library services form part of community hubs, with two votes.

5.10 When explaining the results, a couple of members stated that sub-aims 3.2 ('safe, trusted spaces') and 3.3 ('sustainable buildings') were 'a given' or already expected of libraries therefore their votes went to other sub-aims.

- 5.11 Other comments included that sub-aims again were limited and needed to be more rounded. One member stated that the term 'enable' has been over-used and therefore different language that is more reflective of the aims should be considered.

Insights on the tiered library approach and allocation of libraries to tiers

The tiered library approach and service offers

- 5.12 Regarding the library tiers, there were concerns that the lowest library tier with shorter opening hours and smaller buildings will experience very little change to what they offer now and will therefore be unable to have much impact on the strategic aims. Members felt that the opportunity for change is constrained by the buildings libraries are in. For this reason, some of the members felt there are significant inequalities between opportunities as a result of library tiers.
- 5.13 There was concern that the proposed offer for 'libraries' would be restrictive, and that libraries allocated to this tier which are currently open longer hours or already offering more services will be forced to do less. (Council officers clarified to Members that the tiers describe the *minimum* core offer not the maximum and that libraries would have the flexibility to deliver within this framework if they are already offering more than the minimum).
- 5.14 There was concern that even with libraries allocated to tiers, there may still be variance between the offers within the same tier. (Council officers clarified that this would go counter to the principle of a core library offer).
- 5.15 There was a concern about the ability to reach non-users and the need for continued communication and marketing efforts to spread awareness of the offer to reach non-users. (Officers clarified that clear simple presentation of what services are available at libraries allows the service to engage more effectively with non-library users).
- 5.16 One member made another point about language. They preferred a different name to Library Connect because the word 'connect' has two different meanings in this strategy (one in relation to a tier, and another in relation to one of the strategic themes). A Library Connect could be understood as the only library tier that will deliver the 'connect' strategic aim. The member suggested the word 'together'.
- 5.17 Lastly, there was concern that businesses, the chamber of commerce and the Dorset Growth Hub had not been adequately engaged in this consultation. (Council officers clarified that the Dorset LEP are actively involved in the One Team process of detailed officer-level discussion of the library strategy, as are the council's own economic growth team. The chamber of commerce and Dorset Growth Hub and broader business network have been engaged via direct promotion of the survey).

Allocation of libraries to tiers

- 5.18 There were concerns around communities in the north and west of the county that are not near Library Connects. For example, there was a particular concern around the current proposal for a Library Connect in Blandford rather than another north Dorset library (e.g. Gillingham). There was also concern about Bridport as a Library Connect in the West as it is only accessible by those who can drive or afford the bus. Many residents in areas that Bridport is proposed to serve (e.g. Lyme Regis) have health and mobility issues.

- 5.19 Following on from this, it was discussed that consideration needs to be made around Library Connects and available public transport.
- 5.20 There was discussion of the geography of Library Connects and whether libraries could work in clusters – a ‘hub and spoke’ model where Library Connects work closely with a neighbouring library and Library+ in their areas. There was a particular concern raised around the allocation of Lyme Regis into the library tier due to significant community needs that exists within and outside of the immediate area.
- 5.21 One member asked whether the proposed approach could link into current work on family hubs. (Officers confirmed that the library service has a close working relationship with the family hubs project team, is an active stakeholder and is feeding into this project group work).

Understanding community need

- 5.22 There were questions about the nature of the data used, including whether the assessment used the most recent national Census data and included projections of population growth and new housebuilding in Dorset. (Council officers confirmed: all data sources are publicly available via the Strategic Needs Assessment document; which includes data relating to population growth and house building; all the latest data was used in the document’s creation; and data sources will be updated again with the latest data before being presented to the Joint Overview Committee in early 2023).
- 5.23 There was also a question around whether different factors included in the needs assessment had been weighted in determining the overall needs scores. (Council officers clarified that no weighting had been applied in any of the calculations and all factors had equal weight, as all aspects related to equally weighted Council priorities).

Impact of proposed library strategy

- 5.24 Members were concerned that the lowest tier of library would not have the same opportunities as the higher tiers in terms of developing their offer in the future. They were also concerned that communities within these areas would have unequal access to new offers, and that ultimately, for these libraries, ‘things would stay the same’. (Officers clarified that the core offer available at libraries represents an expansion on the existing library offer).

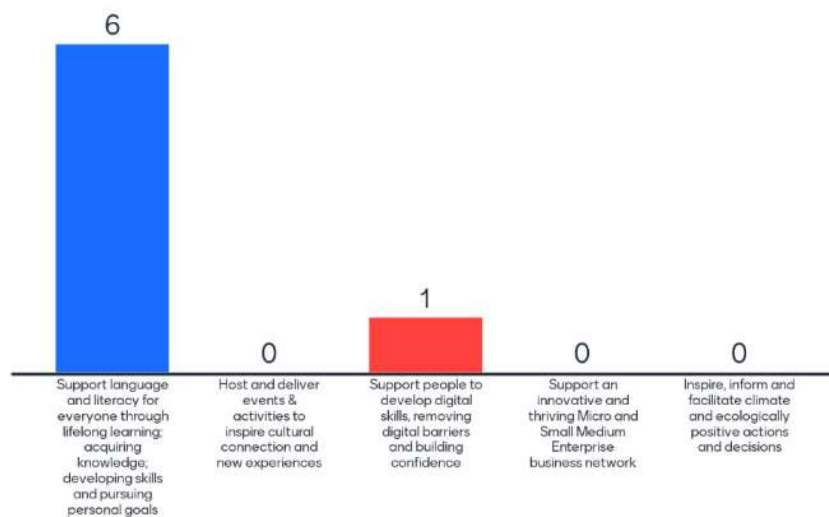
Participants:

- Cllr Anthony Alford
- Cllr Belinda Bawden
- Cllr Brian Heatley
- Cllr John Worth
- Cllr Kate Wheller
- Cllr Pauline Batstone
- Cllr Val Potheary
- Cllr Laura Beddow
- Cllr Carole Jones
- Cllr Alex Brenton

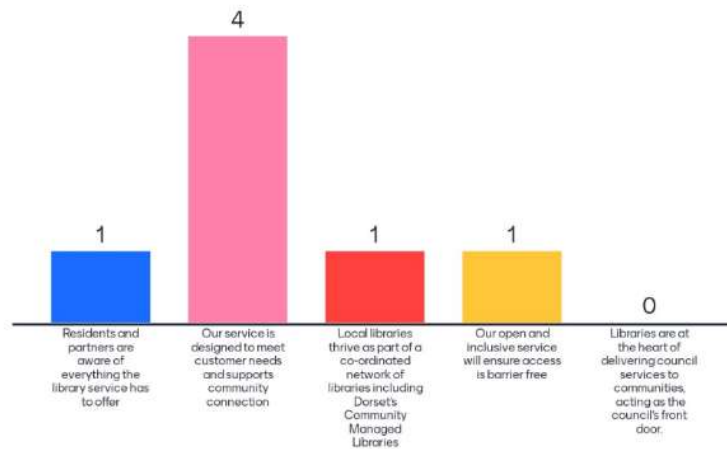
Poll results from Mentimeter as shown to participants

Of the following five '*inspire*' sub-aims which is most important for you?

Mentimeter

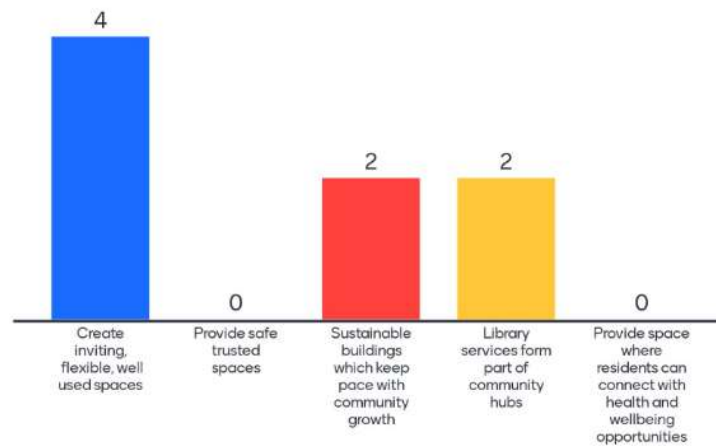


Of the following five '*connect*' sub-aims which is most important for you?



7

Of the following five '*enable*' sub-aims which is most important for you?



8

Library users

Wednesday 23 November, 11am–1pm

Participants: 14 participants

Icebreaker questions

When and why do you use the library?

- Attending an oral history talk at Bridport library of someone sharing her memories of life in West Bay. The talk was free and full, showing how valued these activities are.
- Another participant said there is always lots of versatility in activities in the libraries including different groups and talks, e.g. from local authors to the police. It is very good for information about the local area and other social opportunities, as well as providing a warm space.
- The space is very conducive for those working from home with many companies cutting back on office space.
- Participants agreed that libraries are a good opportunity to bring the community together.
- One participant runs a book club, from which many other groups such as a creative writing and memories club have been set up.

Prioritisation of the strategic sub-aims

5.25 After explaining each of the strategic themes and sub-aims, a quick poll was conducted using Mentimeter. Participants were asked to pick the **top three sub-aims** they felt were most important for libraries to deliver under each of the three strategy themes.

Inspire

	Inspire – sub-aims	Poll
1.1	Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals	11
1.2	Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences	9
1.3	Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence	6
1.4	Support an innovative and thriving micro and small-to-medium enterprise business network	1
1.5	Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions	6

6.1 The top sub-aims were:

- 1.1 Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals, with 11 votes.
- 1.2 Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences, with nine votes.

- 1.3 Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence, with six votes.
- 1.5 Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions, with six votes.

6.2 Participants overwhelmingly felt that all the aims were worthy priorities. Only one participant voted for sub-aim 1.4 as they felt it is important to keep businesses in the area. They also felt support for young people looking for employment is key. There is an entrenched pattern of working-age people moving away from Dorset for work, and this service offer could help to reduce out-migration. The move towards remote working is also a great opportunity for libraries to encourage visitors to use the space. Sub-aim 1.4 is helping to promote community sustainability by enabling anyone who works for businesses, big or small, to use the space.

6.3 One risk that was discussed was the breadth of the sub-aims. Participants worried that they are too broad and not focused enough and the service risks doing too much. They understood that the library service needs to support other areas of public services and library staff need to be able to answer council related queries. However, one of the current challenges libraries face is a lack of understanding about what they offer and this could add to the confusion. Everyone had a different concept of a library, but the core is to promote reading and access to information throughout people's lives. Therefore, aims around language and culture must be central. Digital is also becoming increasingly important and some people are being left behind. Participants felt it is important for libraries to continue their work to tackle digital exclusion.

6.4 One participant was passionate about the climate crisis and felt this is important for libraries. She would like to see libraries bring this to the forefront when talking to customers or when training staff. The library offers an important space to talk about sustainability and could offer space for climate emergency hubs to disseminate information around how to mitigate negative impacts. This shows the added value libraries can have.

Connect

	Connect – sub-aims	Poll
2.1	Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer	10
2.2	Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection	10
2.3	Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries	5
2.4	Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free	8
2.5	Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door	3

6.5 The sub-aims with the most votes were:

- 2.1 Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer, with 10 votes.
- 2.2 Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection, with 10 votes.
- 2.4 Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free, with eight votes.

- 6.6 Those at the workshop felt that smaller libraries are immensely important to communities, as people may struggle to travel into the larger towns. Those in remote areas need these services as well and it is important to connect the whole county to the library service.
- 6.7 One participant said that library services are integral to her as a carer; she got support from the service over lockdown when they delivered books to use for her degree studies. This has had a big impact on her and removed barriers to her education.

Enable

	Enable: our communities – sub-aims	Poll
3.1	Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces	11
3.2	Provide safe trusted spaces	8
3.3	Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth	4
3.4	Library services form part of community hubs	9
3.5	Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities	4

- 6.8 The most popular enable sub-aims were:
- 3.1 Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces, with 11 votes.
 - 3.4 Library services form part of community hubs, with nine votes.
 - 3.2 Provide safe trusted spaces, with eight votes.
- 6.9 The library users were interested in the concept of a library hub but felt there is an important balance between the broader hub model and the traditional idea of a library. They realised certain sacrifices may have to be made in diluting the traditional role to encourage young people into the space by modernising it.
- 6.10 Participants felt that space for council services fits well with libraries as their role is to disseminate information, however it can't lose the focus on spreading the enjoyment of reading. They also felt that library staff are already busy so may not have time to help people with wider council issues.

Insights on the tiered library approach and allocation of libraries to tiers

- 6.11 Overall, they liked the strategy but focused on transport and accessibility. The model needs to be accessible by transport as this is an aspect which restricts many in the county, whether it be parking costs or limited public transport. Many library users do not have access to private cars or taxis which means that for this strategy to be effective, it should be co-ordinated with existing public transport timetables and future public transport planning.
- 6.12 Participants were pleased with the clarity of the tiering system and that people will know what will be offered across the network. One participant was unsure about the titles of the libraries and felt that 'Library +' should be named 'Library Plus'. However, there are also fears that smaller libraries will suffer. Smaller libraries are for everyone outside the main towns, and they felt they do not have lesser need. They were concerned that smaller libraries will miss out on opportunities and some of these opportunities may be required in certain communities that don't have access to the larger libraries. They are keen that smaller libraries retain the community activities and services they currently have and that none of them close. They were pleased that most areas had a variety of the

three types of libraries and that there is representation for people depending on their level of need, not just population size or current library use.

- 6.13 One participant said it was unclear whether the descriptions of the opening hours for each tier include voluntary hours in their opening times.
- 6.14 Participants had seen how NHS services had made use of libraries to offer health related services, and this was positive. It also encouraged people to visit the library and expanded their purpose.

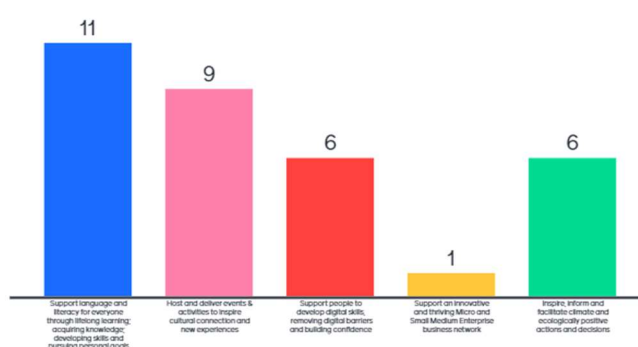
Insights on preferred opening times

- 6.15 For people who work during the week, the weekend, and later on in the evening for those who also have children to collect for school, would be ideal. They felt there are lots of reasons why people can't attend on weekdays.
- 6.16 It is difficult for carers to find time to access libraries generally. Workshop participants recommended that the library service regularly test the needs of such groups in terms of opening times. To offer the most to everyone, at least one weekend day is needed and one to two evening sessions. For carers, weekends and evenings are best as these enable library use to serve as respite for carers with stressful home lives. Human contact is most important for many of these users and they enjoy talking to people and taking part in activities. If they can't attend the library due to opening hours, they will miss out on this.
- 6.17 One participant was keen for libraries to retain some weekday opening hours for those who need quiet desk space that they lack at home.

Poll results from Mentimeter as shown to participants

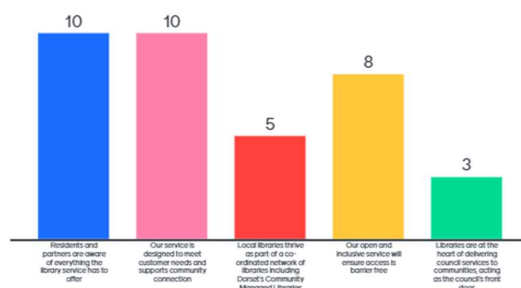
Of the following five 'inspire' sub-aims which is most important for library services to deliver? You can select up to 3 options.

Mentimeter



Of the following five '*connect*' sub-aims which is most important for library services to deliver? You can select up to 3 options.

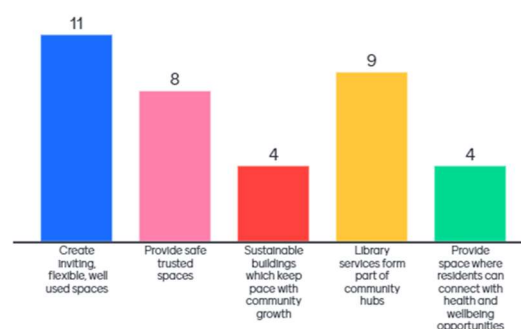
Mentimeter



12

Of the following five '*enable*' sub-aims which is most important for library services to deliver? You can select up to 3 options.

Mentimeter



12

Non-library users

Wednesday 16 November – 1.30–3.30pm

Participants: six participants – one in person, five online

Icebreaker questions

Had participants used a library before and if so, when and why?

- 7.1 A couple of the participants used the library when they were children but hadn't accessed services as adults. Of the visits discussed, they often involved accessing books and being taken to the library by a relative as something to do together.
- 7.2 One participant said he used to be a library digital champion at Dorchester library. However, during that time and even at present, he didn't access any other services because libraries seemed too focused on books which are not of great interest to him.
- 7.3 One participant who used libraries as a child perceived libraries as currently playing a stronger role within the community. This participant hasn't accessed library services as she has grown up because she hasn't needed the services they offer. For example, she had her own computer at home.
- 7.4 A couple of the participants had used a library recently. One mentioned that she had accessed Bridport library and found the services to be OK there. Another participant mentioned they had recently visited the New York Public Library for school/research.

Prioritisation of the strategic sub-aims

- 7.5 Among the group, there was general support for libraries to deliver against all of the sub-aims. In particular, the group offered ideas for opportunities to learn in an interactive way and in a public environment where members of the community could connect with others.

"It's very important to learn and while learning we gain connection with people who by any chance we could not meet"
- 7.6 There was some challenge about the balance between libraries delivering services that enable people to learn and other aims. For one participant, the aims were all positive 'but they didn't relate strongly enough to books'. He argues that if libraries will be expanding the nature of services they deliver, they need to rebrand so people can begin to understand their new role.
- 7.7 There was also some challenge around the practicalities of delivering such a breadth of services. In particular, one participant discussed whether libraries could reconcile the need for quiet, private spaces for studying/working/confidential discussions with a space for fun activities and events. However, another participant felt that the need for purely quiet space to learn is changing and that people may actually prefer more interactive ways to learn:

“It’s important the different aspects you pointed out [are] incorporated in the library because in recent times people’s idea of learning changed, especially post-covid. Some people no longer associate learning with the quiet space due to the change in skillset requirements”

- 7.8 After the workshop, one participant added that in his view libraries serve distinct groups: young children learning to read or becoming keen readers who want a regular supply of books; adults who require computers to help get a job (although the computers are often over-subscribed); and adult borrowers reading for pleasure, which he saw as an increasingly niche market given the ease of browsing and range of new titles provided by bookshops.

Insights on the tiered library approach and allocation of libraries to tiers

- 7.9 One participant discussed that location of libraries is critical. They stated that people would likely want to visit the closest library to them regardless of the services being offered. This would therefore mean sometimes people may be unhappy that their nearest library may not have the services they want rather than travelling further to a library that does have the service.
- 7.10 Another participant felt the proposed names of the tiers would not make the library offer any clearer, and that the more important barrier to reaching more users is lack of knowledge of what is on offer.
- 7.11 There was general agreement among the group that however libraries change, there needs to be better branding and communication so people are aware of what’s available to them, particularly those who may really benefit from services. A couple of participants suggested there should be communications through social media as this is often where people look for information. One participant suggested the use of social media tags and handles to disseminate information about events and activities.

Insights on preferred opening times

- 7.12 Some participants would prefer to visit a library early in the morning during the week before doing other things in the afternoon. Others would prefer later evening slots in order to study/access services after work on weekdays. There was a view that this type of activity was seen in the same way as work and employment whereas weekends were seen as a time for leisure activities. Quieter, later hours during the week may therefore benefit study-users. This would keep quiet study hours separate from after school hours (weekday afternoons) which tend to be busier and louder.

Library service staff

Wednesday 23 November 2–4pm

Participants: 14 participants

Prioritisation of the strategic sub-aims

- 7.13 After explaining each of the strategic themes and sub-aims, a quick poll was conducted using Mentimeter. Participants were asked to pick the **top three sub-aims** they felt were most important for libraries to deliver under each of the three strategy themes.

Inspire:

	Inspire – sub-aims	Poll
1.1	Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals	14
1.2	Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences	13
1.3	Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence	14
1.4	Support an innovative and thriving micro and small-to-medium enterprise business network	1
1.5	Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions	0

- 8.1 For the Inspire strategic aim, the top three sub-aims were:

- 1.1 Support language and literacy for everyone through: lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills; and pursuing personal goals, with 14 votes.
- 1.3 Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence, with 14 votes.
- 1.2 Host and deliver events and activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences, with 13 votes.

- 8.2 ‘Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions’ received no votes in the poll with this group. Participants explained that they saw climate action as a more recent priority and they were reflecting the fact that this has not been part of their service goals in the past – and is less familiar. Therefore staff haven’t thought about how they can incorporate this priority into the service. They stressed that climate is not *unimportant* but the top three sub-aims they voted for are at the forefront of what a library does; they are the core of the service.

- 8.3 Participants were keen to keep libraries as libraries and were nervous about expanding the offer into too many different areas. They felt that the service needs to be careful around how it advertises/markets itself and that a library should still be free and open and not associated with multiple council functions.

- 8.4 In relation to sub-aim 1.4 (business support), the library service is part of Dorset Council whose aims include supporting local businesses and keeping them in Dorset. However, until recently, library service policies have prevented the service from working with businesses although this is beginning to change. For example, when libraries have been approached by banks who want to run pop-up services in areas of Dorset which lack bank branches, they have been unable to help. This has not been allowed as it has been viewed as benefitting specific businesses. Participants noted the inconsistency with other parts of the council who often act to support local businesses in many different ways, and with action to ensure rural communities have access to high street services.

Connect:

	Connect – sub-aims	Poll
2.1	Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer	11
2.2	Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection	13
2.3	Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries	3
2.4	Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free	7
2.5	Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door	8

- 8.5 The top three Connect sub-aims were:

- 2.2 Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection, with 13 votes.
- 2.1 Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer, with 11 votes.
- 2.5 Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door, with eight votes.

- 8.6 One participant was surprised that sub-aim 2.3 (co-ordination with community managed libraries) had not received more votes but felt the sub-aim as written was not very clear, and other participants may not have understood what this meant in practice. From a customer perspective, most people usually attend one library and may not understand the network concept.

Enable:

	Enable: our communities – sub-aims	Poll
3.1	Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces	14
3.2	Provide safe trusted spaces	6
3.3	Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth	3
3.4	Library services form part of community hubs	12
3.5	Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities	7

- 8.7 The top three Enable sub-aims were:

- 3.1 Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces, with 14 votes.
- 3.4 Library services form part of community hubs, with 12 votes.
- 3.5 Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities, with seven votes.

8.8 One participant felt that aims 3.1 and 3.2 (inviting and flexible spaces, and safe trusted spaces) were too similar and should be linked together to simplify and avoid duplication.

8.9 Bringing more people into the library to make best use of the space that is available was important to library service staff. They felt that this has always been a clear goal for library staff.

Enable our library team:

	Enable: our library teams – sub-aims	Poll
3.6	Make sure each employee feels valued and empowered, with career opportunities in the library service and Dorset Council more broadly	1 st
3.7	Be flexible about resourcing across our library network, allowing employees to develop a range of skills and experience	2 nd
3.8	Offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via apprenticeship programmes	3 rd
3.9	Have a strong partnership with, and wholly value the contribution of, our volunteers to the library service. We have a framework in place for supporting future partnerships to build on their success	4 th

8.10 The participants were asked to *rank* the four internally focused ‘enable’ sub-aims from one to four. The sub-aims below have been ranked most important (1) to least important (4):

- 1) 3.6 Make sure each employee feels valued and empowered, with career opportunities in the library service and Dorset Council more broadly
- 2) 3.7 Be flexible about resourcing across our library network, allowing employees to develop a range of skills and experience
- 3) 3.8 Offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via apprenticeship programmes
- 4) 3.9 Have a strong partnership with, and wholly value the contribution of, our volunteers to the library service. We have a framework in place for supporting future partnerships to build on their success

8.11 A participant felt she had heard the least around these aims so she would be interested to know more about what they mean in practice through this workshop. Staff wondered if there would be a job evaluation as the role is changing substantially. They are keen to understand how they are being paid for what they do in comparison to those in other roles across Dorset Council. Library staff have always felt somewhat removed from being part of the council, i.e. as if they weren’t perceived the same as a council employee.

8.12 Participants felt that sub-aim 3.6 (employees are valued and empowered) was the most important of all within this strategy theme. If the team do not feel valued and empowered, then the rest cannot follow. Development opportunities were felt to be an important aspect of this.

8.13 When asked what the most important things are to enable staff to deliver the strategy, they responded with:

- Being fully informed of the objectives and being asked how they can help to meet them.

- Having a more bottom-up, creative culture where there is responsibility at all levels and individuals feel they can share their ideas to develop the service.
- A skills review as there are a lot of skills within the service that could be capitalised on.
- Clear messaging to staff. Corporate information is more accessible now than it was in the past, but some key messages are still not communicated in ways which relate to all staff.
- The use of Teams for large meetings has helped to open up communication.

8.14 When asked what kind of skills staff will need across the service in the coming years and what support will be needed, participants said:

- Digital skills including confidence in using systems and training others.
- There are still some staff who are not comfortable hosting online events, and this could be a missed opportunity as need is still there for online events.
- Digital champion training is highly regarded – it is integrated and can be ad-hoc.
- With the move from traditional librarian to a more multifunctional role, the narrative of the customer service role needs to be clarified, e.g. to what extent are they a Dorset Council spokesperson versus a librarian? Many members of staff are not currently confident in delivering a wider Dorset Council customer service.
- The library assistant role needs to be valued and more training is needed to build up knowledge of other services if they are to be an effective point of contact/front door for the council.
- Soft skills/people skills are still important to develop. Customers will want to see people face-to-face so it is equally as important as digital skills.
- The skills to work with people in different vulnerable circumstances – they may be relied on a lot more in the coming years.

Insights on the tiered library approach and allocation of libraries to tiers

8.15 In north Dorset, staff explained that there has been recent investment of time and resources made in Gillingham. Staff have undertaken a lot of community engagement and audience development and feel expectations and potential have been raised in Gillingham in terms of service offer and future direction. There is scope for Gillingham to be the Library Connect in the north Dorset area. Cutting back their hours risks losing the value of this recent work and investment of time.

8.16 The rationale for having Blandford as a Library Connect was questioned as was the needs analysis ranking of Shaftesbury and its categorisation. Some staff felt the categorisations are not intuitive compared to how need in each community feels on the ground. As they are a rural county, they also felt that transport needs to be taken into account for those who are living in isolated areas far away from a Library Connect.

8.17 Some workshop participants questioned whether the desire for greater consistency which would be met by the tier system was a response to the wishes of users of the council; they did not recognise this as something which addresses community need. Having flexibility between libraries was felt to be a strength as it allows the service to adapt to its customer base more easily. There have always been different offers in different libraries and customers seem to understand that. Participants felt that it would be nice to have some consistency across Dorset, but some libraries are dealing with vastly different communities. It was reiterated to staff that their creativity is not limited by the new

model as the core offer still allows for localised delivery. The core library offer simply helps the service to promote its offer more clearly to non-library users.

- 8.18 Others welcomed the idea of named tiers with clearer descriptions of the offer but still had reservations about losing the tailoring to community needs which has been developed over many years. There was also a concern that people will no longer use the lower tier libraries and will instead go to their nearest Library+ or Library Connect.

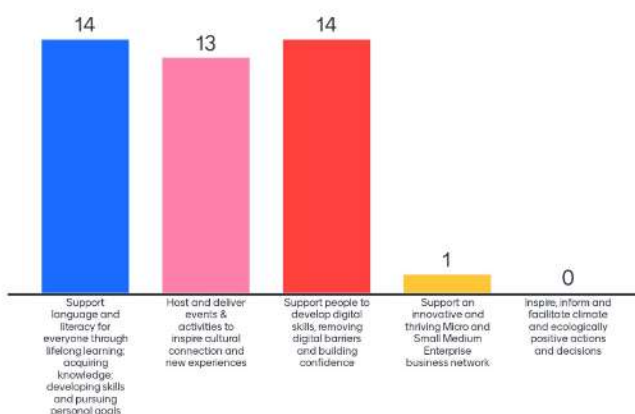
Insights on preferred opening times

- 8.19 The mixed views about the pros and cons of consistency continued into the discussion of opening times. Some participants felt that all libraries should have the same opening hours to avoid customer confusion as many individuals visit multiple libraries. However, some felt that flexibility is more important so that each library can meet its individual communities' needs and patterns of footfall. Marketing would be key so that customers are aware of which libraries they can attend and when. Some libraries near each other complement each other in terms of opening hours to give a spread across the week in the local area.
- 8.20 A few specific comments were made around opening hours:
- Families would appreciate libraries being open more on Sundays.
 - Many parents work later hours so staying open past 7pm would be ideal – however, some felt that late nights do not actually get as much footfall.
 - In terms of half days, participants discussed that they can be irritating for some customers, e.g. at Ferndown on a Wednesday they close at 1pm and people feel like they are getting 'thrown out'.
 - They can hold more events on full-day sessions and the atmosphere is more relaxed.
 - There is also the issue of where staff have to travel from – if they are coming from far away, it wouldn't be worth it for just a few hours.
 - They don't want to lose late-night hours – they're working closely with groups and are always booked out in the evenings.
- 8.21 A few ideas were suggested around new opening hours and staff felt that opening hours should be driven by feedback from customers and the results of the public survey. Another suggested that all libraries should count the number of customers throughout the day to see when footfall is heaviest.

Poll results from Mentimeter as shown to participants

Of the following five '*inspire*' sub-aims which is most important for library services to deliver? You can select up to 3 options.

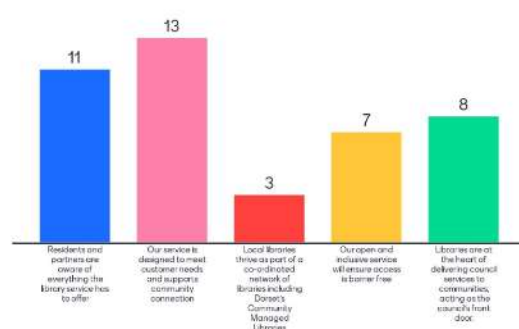
Mentimeter



14

Of the following five '*connect*' sub-aims which is most important for library services to deliver? You can select up to 3 options.

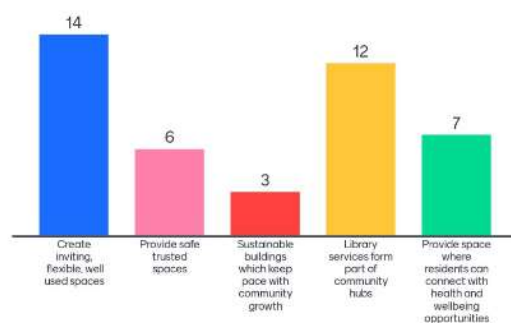
Mentimeter



14

Of the following five '*enable*' sub-aims which is most important for library services to deliver? You can select up to 3 options.

Mentimeter



14

Of the following four '*enable our library teams*' sub-aims which is most important for you as a member of staff?
Please rank

Mentimeter



KS2 children: Weymouth South Cubs

Tuesday 8 November – 6–7.30pm

Participants: 15 x 8-to-10-year-olds

Icebreaker questions

When was the last time the children visited a library and what did they do?

- 9.1 Among the group children had visited libraries a number of times. For some this was a regular occurrence.
- 9.2 Children often mentioned going to a library for reasons that involved books and reading. A couple of the children mentioned attending Lego, drawing and colouring sessions, and meeting authors.

Prioritisation of the strategic sub-aims

- 9.3 For the discussion of sub-aims with children, a simplified list of the strategic and sub-aims was used:
- Inspire:
 - have books to inspire you to enjoy reading and learning
 - have lots of different children's events and activities
 - have computers which you can use for free
 - help support businesses, so there are better jobs for you in the future
 - inspire action to help tackle climate change
 - Connect and enable:
 - share what libraries do and where they can be found
 - make libraries welcoming spaces for everyone
 - make libraries fun places to visit
 - provide events which make people feel happy
 - provide more help and advice
- 9.4 Participants were asked to pick their **top two** sub-aims they felt were most important for libraries to deliver. The sub-aims with the most votes were:
1. Make libraries welcoming spaces for everyone – 15 votes
 2. Inspire action to help tackle climate change – 11 votes
 3. Provide library events which will make people happy – six votes
- 9.5 When asked about the importance of libraries being welcoming, the children simply reiterated that all places should make you feel welcome. When asked about libraries helping to tackle climate change, children said they saw climate change as an important issue in itself and therefore it should be a top priority for all organisations including libraries.
- 9.6 When asked about the importance of libraries providing events that will make people happy, the children focused on the importance of 'fun' things to do. They saw their daily lives in terms of time spent doing things which are fun, and things which are boring. In this context 'events which will make people happy' sounded to them like an attractive offer.

- 9.7 When asked why ‘provide more help and advice’ had only got one vote, one participant suggested that libraries wouldn’t be their first port of call if they wanted support because they would go to their parents or other adults. However, if they couldn’t go to an adult, they thought they would go to a library.

Insights on preferred opening times

- 9.8 When asked when children liked to visit a library, they provided a range of responses. These included:
- After school – because visiting the library after school before heading home is an efficient use of their time, rather than going home and then having to travel out again.
 - Wednesdays after school – because there are a variety of activities for children provided on this day at the child’s preferred library such as Lego club and colouring.
 - On a Saturday either before or after lunch – children expressed the importance of fitting time in the library around lunch. One child mentioned she liked to visit late morning, so she has time to get herself ready for the day. One child mentioned that she and her family like to incorporate a visit to the library with picking something up for lunch.
- 9.9 The days the children visited the library depended greatly on the availability of their parents, as this age group do not travel independently. It also depended on whether their parents pick them up from school, or whether they attend an after school/childcare club – which is the case for many children with working parents. For this reason, some children only go to the library at the weekend, although for some whose parents work weekends, after school library visits were more common. Parents supporting the session stated that they would value limited opening of libraries on a Sunday, as they work five or six days a week and Sunday opening would allow them to access the services with their child.
- 9.10 Participants did not tend to mention school holiday times so the children were asked about this explicitly. One child said that she had been to the library midway through her school holiday because she was bored. She visited on a Saturday.

Quick polling on sub-aim – full results

Prioritisation of the sub-aims	Total votes
Make libraries welcoming spaces for everyone	15
Inspire action to help tackle climate change	11
Provide library events which will make people happy	6
Share information about what libraries do and where they can be found	5
Have lots of different children's events	5
Use libraries to support businesses so there are better jobs for you in the future	5
Have books to inspire you to enjoy reading and learning	5
Have library computers you can use for free	2
Make libraries fun places to visit	2
Use libraries to provide more help and advice	1



Figure 1: prompts used for quick poll of strategy sub-aims

KS3 children: Lytchett Minster School year 8

Wednesday 9 November – 10.10–11.10am

Participants: 27 x Year 8 pupils

Icebreaker questions

When was the last time the children visited a library and what did they do?

- 10.1 The children gave varied answers to this question. For one child their visit was recent; they went there to do homework and study. For other children, their visit was more than five years ago (this would have been when they were at infant school). When asked why they hadn't been back since they said, 'I don't like books'.

What services do libraries provide?

- 10.2 Many of the services the children were aware of were book-related. The children mentioned:
- Easter activities such as a treasure hunt where children looked for books and had the option to borrow them.
 - Book fair.
 - World Book Day.

Why did the children think we have public libraries?

- 10.3 The children felt that public libraries exist in order to provide access to information and resources, broadly drawing on book stock. The children contributed the following purposes:
- To enable people to borrow books.
 - To help people read.
 - To enable people to research and find out facts from books before the internet existed.
 - To be a popular business by getting people through the doors.

Prioritisation of the sub-aims

- 10.4 For the discussion of sub-aims with children, a simplified list of the strategic and sub-aims was used:
- Inspire:
 - have books to inspire you to enjoy reading and learning
 - have lots of different children's events and activities
 - have computers which you can use for free
 - help support businesses, so there are better jobs for you in the future
 - inspire action to help tackle climate change
 - Connect and enable:
 - share what libraries do and where they can be found
 - make libraries welcoming spaces for everyone
 - make libraries fun places to visit
 - provide events which make people feel happy
 - provide more help and advice
- 10.5 Participants were asked to pick their top two sub-aims they felt were most important for libraries to deliver. The sub-aims with the most votes were:

- Provide library events which will make people happy – 19 votes
- Have books to inspire you to enjoy reading and learning – 15 votes
- Have lots of different children's events and activities – 15 votes

10.6 When asked why these had received the most votes, often the reason given revolved around the fact that these sounded like positive changes which would attract more people to visit libraries and they viewed attracting more people as the most important goal of all, i.e. these were all seen as a means to attract more users.

10.7 In general, the children talked a lot about the provision of books and often saw the purpose of visiting a library as having access to books or to support reading. One participant linked this to supporting businesses in the sense that libraries provide books which can support learning, which can lead to people getting better jobs. Although 'help support businesses' as a sub-aim in its own right was not seen as a priority.

Insights on preferred opening times

10.8 When asked when children liked to visit a library, they provided a range of responses and the responses from some participants conflicted with others:

- Weekdays including Wednesday and Thursday after school were seen as ideal for some because children could do their homework after school, whereas weekends were for 'family time'.
- One respondent thought about times for different age groups – they suggested Monday to Friday, 9–11am would be popular with elderly people – at a separate time from 4.30–7pm which was seen as better for children. Other children were thinking along similar lines but viewed weekends as more ideal for children.
- Some children were very specific about Saturday afternoons (after lunch). Reasons included so children could spend longer at the library and if visiting on a Sunday, this would help children get ready for school.

Impact of proposed library strategy

10.9 The children were asked what the impact would be if libraries were not open when they needed them. Children said that they and others would miss out on the things they want/need to do if the libraries were closed at times when they wanted to use them.

Quick polling on sub-aim – full results including reasons offered

Prioritisation of the sub-aims	Why these things are good	Total votes
Provide library events which will make people happy	<p>If a library is boring people won't use the library.</p> <p>Events that make people happy will mean children will come.</p> <p>A positive atmosphere will encourage people to visit the library.</p> <p>If people have enjoyed their time, they will tell others and they and their friends will come.</p> <p>But lots of children will make the library noisy.</p>	19
Have books to inspire you to enjoy reading and learning	Fun, helps learning.	15
Have lots of different children's events	More children will read and this will amount to more customers	15
Use libraries to provide more help and advice	Books and other customers there can provide help and advice.	14
Have library computers you can use for free	<p>Computers are important for those who don't have one at home and those who may not be able to afford internet access/data.</p> <p>It is important to remove barriers for people to do important things, e.g. school work.</p> <p>Computers work well with books – people can look things up on the computer and follow up with specific books.</p>	11
Make libraries fun places to visit	So more people will visit.	11
Inspire action to help tackle climate change	<p>This is everybody's role not just the library's.</p> <p>Libraries can help with cost of living and high bills – they can provide warm spaces and resources for people to use for free. And while they visit they can learn things.</p>	10
Make libraries welcoming spaces for everyone	More people will come, and more people will read books. People would rather go to a place that is welcoming.	6
Share information about what libraries do and where they can be found	Knowing what libraries offer will attract more people.	4
Use libraries to support businesses so there are better jobs for you in the future	<p>On the one hand, a library isn't a place that should support businesses – a library isn't a place for people to work.</p> <p>On the other, libraries can support people's education and enable them to get better jobs.</p>	4



Figure 2: prompts used for quick poll of strategy sub-aims

Dorset Council #OneTeam (in two parts)

Part one: Wednesday 16 November – 10.30am–12pm

Participants: 19 participants

What reflections did participants have on the placement of the different tiers of libraries? Does the proposed network serve the needs of partners?

Citizen's Advice on north Dorset

- Blandford as a Library Connect works well as they are looking to increase face-to-face support in this area, e.g. through GP surgeries – therefore interested in co-location at Blandford.
- Fears Gillingham might lose out as there will be a lot of development in this area – these communities could benefit from a closer Library Connect.
- Suggestion for Dorset Council to work more closely with town councils in finalising the proposed approach. They are proactive in their communities and have good partnerships.

NHS Speech and Language on north and west Dorset

- They often need space to work with families and young children, particularly in areas where there are no pre-schools (e.g. Lyme Regis).
- Smaller libraries could help them capture people who can't travel to the clinic bases which are often in larger areas.
- Have often heard feedback from clients that libraries are less intimidating and more welcoming spaces than children's centres, so they would be a preferred venue.

SEND and early years on co-ordination with family hubs and other provision

- Co-ordinate proposed provision with the holiday activity and food programmes and gaps in provisions for that (Sturminster Newton used as an example of this).
- Would be good to look at the ASQ3 (national child development survey) data and join up work between health, library and family hubs based on the data about children's needs in their early developmental areas.
- Would also be important to align workforce development of library staff to the needs of the youngest children.

Dorset LEP on west and north Dorset, and installing 5G

- West Dorset has always been a challenge, but supports the Bridport library designation as a Library Connect.
- They are developing a careers hub. Experience has been that it has always been a challenge to encourage young people to access careers advice and support.
- Interested in libraries as bookable 'space', with good transport links/aligned with transport availability, as well as providing a core 24/7 offer.
- In Gillingham there is a large and growing population. They are supporting businesses to find and inspire young people.
- Needs consideration about 5G roll out and how libraries can play a role in this.

(Library service staff clarified there is some exploration of how libraries could be connection points to facilitate the roll out).

- Provided a map of number of businesses in specific locations and number of employees <https://www.dorsetleap.co.uk/dorset-businesses-map>

Dorset communities and partnerships on rurality of north Dorset

- Rurality of communities must be considered in terms of enabling access to library services. On top of this, there is significant deprivation in Gillingham and Sherbourne whose communities often lack access to services. Many don't have a car and of those who do, being so rural means increased costs for car fuel. There is therefore a greater need among these communities for public transport and a need to travel further to get to the services they require.
- Questions over how many north Dorset communities use Blandford as their central conurbation for shops/services so strategy needs to consider a more central Library Connect location.
- It is about both taking services to communities *and* bringing people to services. There are ongoing issues around transport for small villages.

Dorset Economic Growth on north Dorset and ensuring not to duplicate the service offers

- Collectively, Gillingham, Sherbourne and Shaftesbury have 30,000 residents and Blandford is not considered near them or a key destination. Furthermore, Sherbourne residents tend to use Yeovil for shopping and services.
- What other community and private sector provision already exists in areas of proposed Library Connects to avoid duplication (e.g. co-working spaces)? (Library service staff clarified that an assessment will be done around locally available services to ensure duplication is avoided).

Dorset digital skills and adoption on isolated communities

- Current pressures like the cost-of-living crisis are making day-to-day living harder for more isolated communities.
- In large swathes of central Dorset there are communities with poor broadband coupled with rural poverty – what role will the strategy have in meeting these needs?

DWP on west Dorset

- There is an overall issue around transport. In Bridport and surrounding areas, individuals struggle to access employment and training due to a lack of suitable transport. This is further compounded by the cost-of-living crisis.

Part two: Monday 28 November, 10–11.30am

Participants: 18 participants

Co-developing the library strategy action plan

In the second part of the #OneTeam workshop, partner services and organisations looked at each element of the strategy themes and sub-aims and indicated where their own activities could be co-ordinated with library service action and what timescales might apply to specific areas of cooperation. The results of this discussion were captured using a Miro whiteboard and as a PDF retained by Dorset Council.