

Essex Future Library Services Strategy

2019 - 2024



Essex County Council

An update on the Essex Draft Libraries Service Strategy

28 March Scrutiny Meeting



Contents

This presentation has been broken down in to six key areas to provide:

1. A Recap on
 - a. Why a new strategy is needed
 - b. What we are proposing
2. The journey to Draft Strategy (high level activity undertaken and where we are now)
3. High level insight into the level of responses to the consultation
 - a. Consultation Survey
 - b. Petitions
 - c. Other correspondence
4. Community hubs as described in draft strategy
5. Current outreach services provided by ECC Library Services
6. A look into the next steps

Under section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 Essex County Council is placed under a duty 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'.

Government guidance says:

'In considering how best to deliver the statutory duty each library authority is responsible for determining, through consultation, the local needs and to deliver a modern and efficient library service that meets the requirements of their communities within available resources.'

Why do we need a new strategy?

- **We are ambitious for the service - to make it relevant to the way we live now and fit for the future**
- **Library use has slumped:**
 - loans down 52% in 10 years from 8.4m to 4.1m (43% in last six years)
 - Demand for library computers down 34% in 10 years from 805,000 sessions to 532,000 sessions (22% drop in last six years)
 - Fewer than one in five Essex residents is an active library user (down from 351,000 in 2008/9 to 241,400 in 2017/18)
- **People aren't using libraries as they used to:**
 - Online search and shopping has transformed daily life

What are we proposing?

Our ambition is to shape a library service that's modern, focused and fit for the way we live now and in future.



We want a service that:

- Keeps books and reading at the heart of our library service offer
- Embraces digital technology and e-library services
- Has a smaller number of libraries which better meet community needs
- Works in partnership with our communities to run library services
- Offers a consistently good customer experience.

The Draft Strategy Journey

2016 – 2018: Community Hubs Project

- Refurbished Basildon Library as part of town centre hub at Basildon Centre
- Moved Silver End library into village hall, co-located with child and family services
- Libraries First promoted use of library spaces to other ECC functions
- New children's library and started work on accessible meeting hub at Chelmsford Library
- Space hire generated £84,000 in 2017/18

2017 - 2018: Mobile library service review

- Consulted on changes to respond to fall in use and ageing vehicles
- Proposals broadly supported, modified where not
- New timetable introduced April 2018 after public consultation, delivered by two vehicles on three-week cycle
- Supported seven community libraries

The Draft Strategy Journey

Spring 2018: Public engagement and research on views and priorities

- Countywide survey to 25,000 households: nearly 3,000 responses
- Interviews with users at 21 libraries
- Focus groups with children and young people in mainstream and special schools and with the Young Essex Assembly
- Public events in 11 libraries for community leaders and public to share ideas
- Deep dive into our monitoring data for trends in library use and where we could improve.

Summer 2018 – November 2018 :

- Analysed public engagement feedback, current library data, Essex statistics.
- Researched other local authority strategies, Government guidance and good practice
- Developed criteria for need, draft EqIA, draft strategy containing proposals for the future delivery of library services in the next five years
- Developed consultation survey and materials.

The Draft Strategy Journey

5 October 2018: Met DCMS Libraries Taskforce to discuss strategy and consultation plans

14 November 2018: Draft strategy published;

- ECC councillors, staff, media and key stakeholders informed

22 November 2018: Cabinet agreed to consult on the Draft Strategy

- **Presentation of proposals to Scrutiny Committee**

26 November to 5 December 2018: Mail out to active library users and stakeholders

- Briefing sessions for ECC, borough, city and district councillors

29 November 2018: 12- week consultation starts

1 December 2018 – 12 February 2019:

- Information drop-in sessions at all 74 libraries to provide more information and support to complete the consultation surveys

21 February 2019: Consultation closed

How people were informed

Emails and letters to:

- All active library users and library volunteers
- All town and parish councils, via EALC and all city, district and borough councils
- Partners organisations, community groups and other stakeholders

Briefing sessions

- For ECC, city, district and borough councillors, and for libraries staff

Social media and media campaign

- 5 press releases, c100 media enquiries, c600 items of media coverage
- 113 social media posts reaching c273,000, plus targeted posts to 75,000

Website

- Standing link on ECC home page throughout; Dedicated pages visited by 11,854 users

E-Bulletins

- Articles in 17 ECC 'Keep Me Posted' bulletins, including to schools and news subscribers - reached 128,000 subscribers

Where are we now?

21 February – late April 2019

Consultation Analysis

- Work is underway to analyse the responses. This analysis will go through a thorough quality assurance process, that will ensure that the content can be effectively used to base decisions on
- The programme will then focus on insights, conclusions, actions and mitigations to the responses, in order to finalise the strategy and key documents, ready to bring to Cabinet in Summer 2019

This work will take some time given the volume of responses, and will be the top priority of work for the team

Where are we now?

From the previous work on community hubs, last year's research and engagement and the response to the consultation we now have:

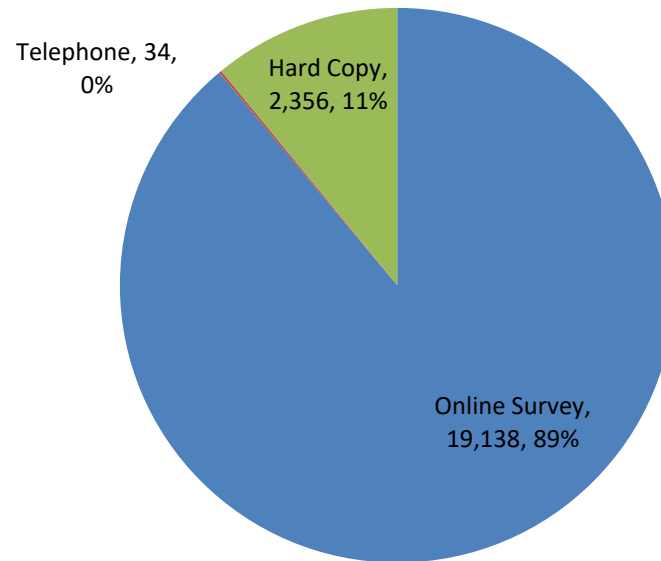
- A wealth of evidence about what people need from a library service, their views and priorities
- The importance of community spaces
- Real engagement and interest from sections of the community
- Evidence of buy in from community groups to work with us

All enabling us to move forward on a more sustainable basis to design a library service that is fit for the future.

Response to the consultation

The survey received **21,528** responses through the channels offered. 89% of responses were online.

Consultation Survey Reponses

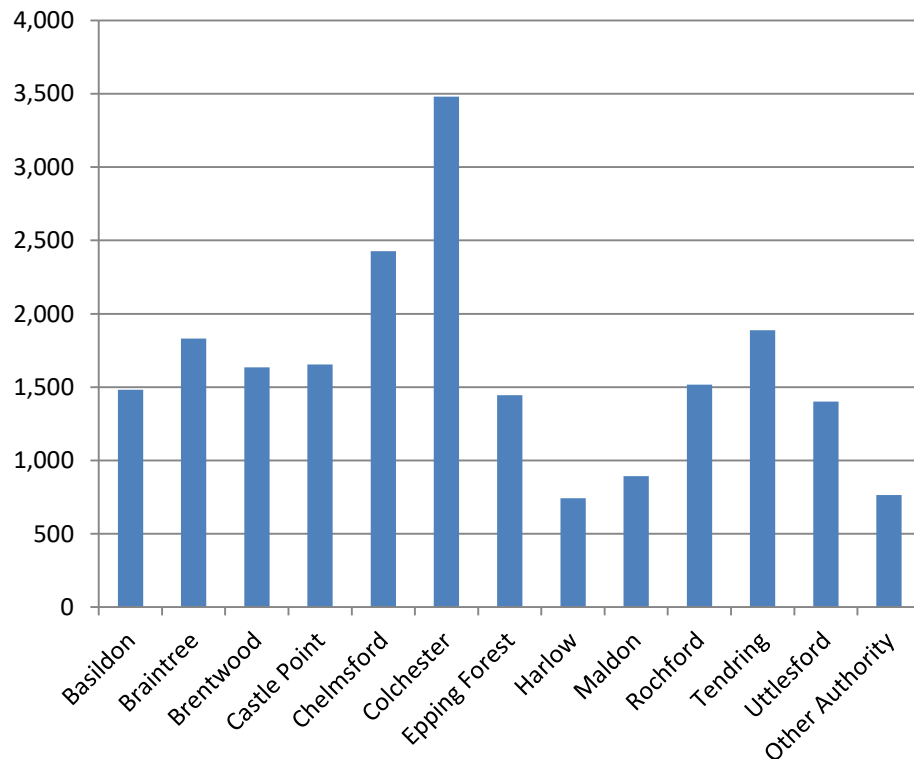


As at 31/03/2018 there were 241,400 active library users. The responses rate therefore equates to about **9% of users and 1.5% of the Essex population..** 97% of respondents to the consultation are library users.

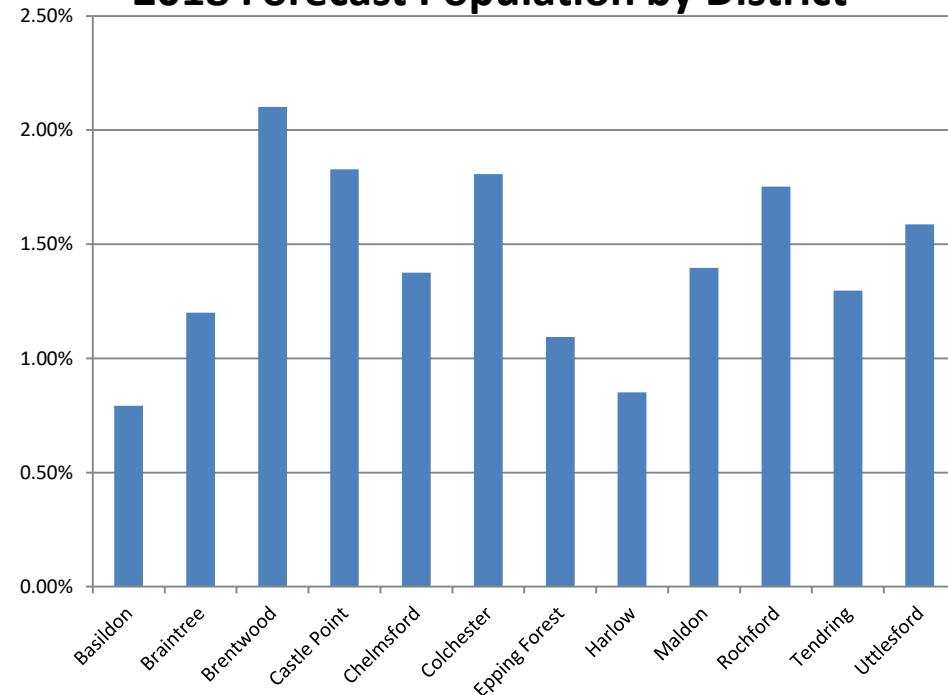
Consultation responses per district

- Highest response rates: Colchester (3,481), Chelmsford (2,426) = 29% of total
- Lowest response rates: Harlow (742) and Maldon (893) = 7% of total
- Overall response = under 2% of the population,
- Highest response compared to population: Brentwood (2.1%); lowest: Basildon (0.79%)

Survey Responses By District



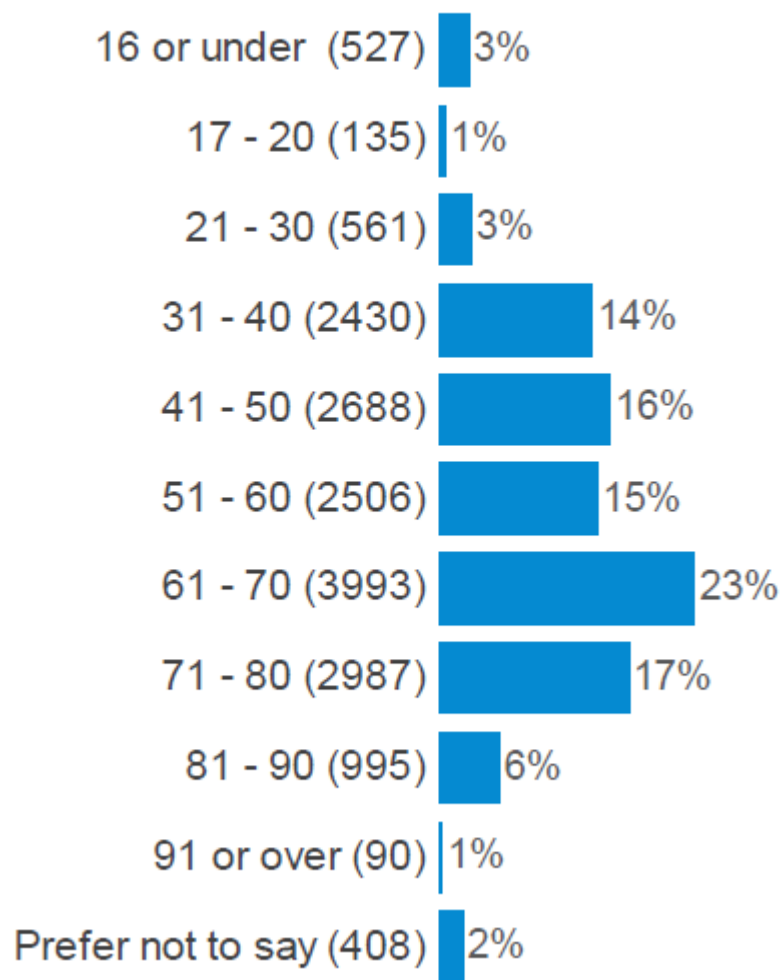
Percentage Consultation Response of 2018 Forecast Population by District



Responses by age group

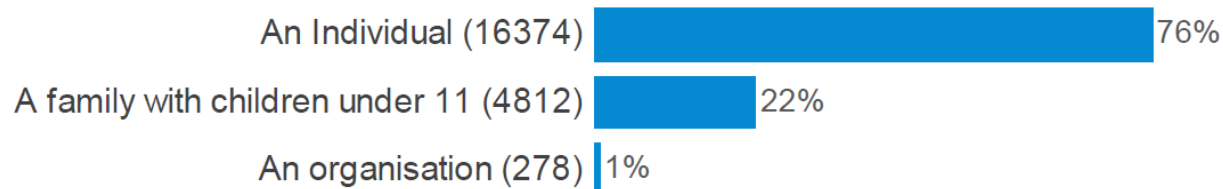
- Respondents are disproportionately older with 47% (8,065) of 17,320 respondents to this question over 60. 22% of active library users are over 60
- Recognising this we tried to increase representation from younger people. A facebook promotion targeted 18 – 55 year olds. Despite reaching 74,845 people it had little impact on survey responses.
- 3% (527) of respondents are under 16 however it is noted that there were 4,812 family responses with children under 11.

Q27. What is your age? (Base: 17320)



Response profile

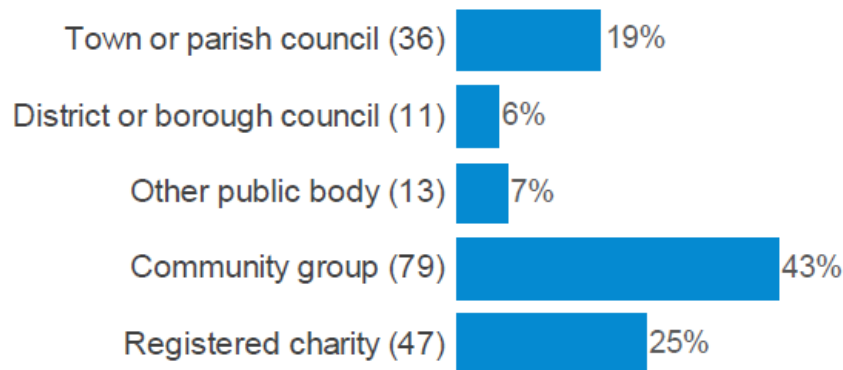
Q1. I am responding as: (Base: 21464)



278 organisations responded. 186 identified their organisation type
43% were from community groups

Responses from organisations

Q1b. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please select what organisation type: (Base: 186)



Petitions

- As at 6 March, 53 petitions received with a total of 58,245 signatures
- Petitions for same library will be pooled
- The passion and concern of petition organisers is recognised
- **In line with the petitions policy, all petitions received during the consultation will be considered but...**

Petitions will not be given the same weight as survey responses because

- They do not provide the detailed individual responses the survey does
- There may be some duplication of signatures
- There may be signatures from people outside Essex, even outside the UK, who do not use Essex libraries
- **Petitions with more than 2,000 signatures:** Buckhurst Hill (3,043), Coggeshall (2,278) Great Tarpots (2,538), Hockley (8,028), Shenfield (8,789) plus countywide petitions from Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) (15,382) and Save Our Essex Libraries (LibDems) (2,259).
- Petitions for Brightlingsea, Prettygate and Wivenhoe are still open

Correspondence

- 1,054 emails and letters received during consultation
- 743 contained additional comments or suggestion
- These have been passed to the external analysis provider to include in their analysis
- They include formal responses from borough, city, district, town and parish councils and a range of community groups and organisations
- They include posters and drawings by school children
- 78 Freedom of Information requests received

Common themes from enquiries and comments were about:

- Access and usage
- Value to the community
- Needs assessment and library tiers

Community Hubs

A motion passed at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 12 March called on the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer to continue to explore the opportunity to use all libraries as community hubs and to maximise the use of the buildings and sites to generate income for the Library Service.

- The draft strategy proposes working in partnership with other authorities and organisations to make the best use of public buildings and resources
- This would include sharing space in community hubs where appropriate.
- By supporting communities to set up community libraries, we can help them to create those libraries within existing or new community hubs, as existing community libraries have done:
- Bromley Cross community library is in the village pub, alongside a post office, coffee morning and other activities; Ramsey community library is in the village hall where lots of other activities take place.

Current Outreach by ECC Library Service

- Mobile Library Service including key national themes such as World War 1 stock
- Home Library Service - administered by the Library Service and largely delivered by volunteers
- Visits to Care Homes - delivered by the Library Service bringing stock to customers who can't access the physical libraries. The intention is to extend this service further and add activities
- Health Sector joint working –
 - Princess Alexandra Hospital (Harlow) - providing selection of stock to the inpatient mental health unit
 - Promotion of public and hospital libraries during Health Information Week - delivered jointly with health staff in Basildon, Colchester and Broomfield hospitals
- Community Libraries - ECC supports seven Community Libraries in response to desire from community groups. These libraries are locally designed and delivered

Current Outreach by ECC Library Service

- Rhymetime in Southminster primary school - recently launched and now has a regular customer base of approx. 8-9 adults and 9-10 children. Parents are happy to attend a session set in a school and the activity is augmented by making it possible for families to choose and take out books
- Summer Reading Challenge promotion in schools - in 2018 we carried out 472 school visits (93% of schools)
- Bookstart - working with Early Years partners, Registrars and Childcare settings to deliver packs to every child in Essex
- The Library Service also do promotional outreach activities to embed the library service within local communities and to attract new customers.
- Embedding within local community - supporting communities to deliver Fun Palaces, advertising services in key community buildings such as GP surgeries and Schools on the Reading Well programme and Mental Health reading lists, delivering talks on the library service to community groups, working with the Essex Loneliness Forum
- Pop up Library in Chelmsford Prison visitor centre

The current iteration of Future Library Strategy allows for

- Maintaining and expanding the mobile library service
- Training more librarians to deliver outreach, allowing our staff to take their passion for libraries and books into nurseries, schools and other community environments
- The continuation of our Home Library Service, which allows those with limited mobility to order books directly to their house
- Visits to Care Homes - delivered by the Library Service, bringing stock to customers who perhaps find it more difficult to access the physical libraries
- Providing an e-Library and online services available to all 24/7
- Joint working with the Health sector – providing library books to patients, whilst also helping to promote greater use of hospital libraries
- Exploring more opportunities for community hubs

Next Steps

21 February – late spring 2019: Review consultation analysis

- The Consultation will be analysed and go through a thorough quality assurance, to ensure the content can be effectively used
- Programme then focuses on insights, conclusions, actions and mitigations
 - Finalise strategy and key documents, ready to bring to Cabinet in Summer 2019.
 - Detailed equality impact assessments will be undertaken

This work will take some time given the volume of responses, and will be the top priority of work for the team

Early summer 2019: Final Strategy and key documents submitted for Summer Cabinet meeting