



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ST HELENS BOROUGH

LIBRARY STRATEGY

2021-26





CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Executive summary	6
National context	10
St Helens Library Service	12
St Helens Library Service - key statistics	16
The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	18
Customer feedback	20
What residents told us would improve the service	22
Why do we need a new strategy?	24
Vision and ambition	28
What will be different in five years time?	32
Core offer	34
Focusing resources at areas of greatest need	36
Proposals for community managed libraries	38
Resources and investment	41
Buildings	42
Customers	44
Staff and volunteers	46



FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce to you our St Helens Borough Library Strategy which sets out an ambitious plan for our Library Service for the next 5 years.

We're all proud of our libraries and the services they provide. Our fantastic library staff do so much more than help with book borrowing; for example assisting with digital skills, hosting community groups, holding exhibitions and events and so much more, and throughout the pandemic they went above and beyond to make sure customers had access to books and resources through the Home Delivery Library Service, Schools Library Service and the provision of online activity.

In many ways the pandemic accelerated changes which had been underway for some time. In recent years the way many of us use library services has changed, the digital library offer is a growth area, with digital e-book loans increasing by 133% during the COVID period, and we need to cater for this demand in the modern world.

It's well known that the council has to make significant budget savings in the next year because financial support from central Government has

shrunk from £127m a year in 2010 to just £13m this year. Such huge cuts will inevitably have an impact on the way we deliver many services, libraries included. While it may not be easy, together we can make the most of this opportunity, meeting the changing demands of residents while of course making sure we provide support to the communities most in need.

In this context, our 5-year Library Strategy brings forward a vision for the future that is exciting, modern and embraces community involvement. Not all the decisions we have to make will be easy, and your input is essential. Working with residents, parish councils, community groups, businesses and others we aim to make sure we have an innovative, modern, sustainable and accessible Library Service, providing support where it's needed and opportunity and access for all.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible throughout the consultation, hearing your views, and working with you to shape a Library Service fit for the future.



Councillor Anthony Burns
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, Culture & Heritage

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VISION

TO CREATE A 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY SERVICE THAT IS INCLUSIVE, VIBRANT, EXCELLENT, RESPONSIVE TO CUSTOMER NEEDS AND AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

BACKGROUND

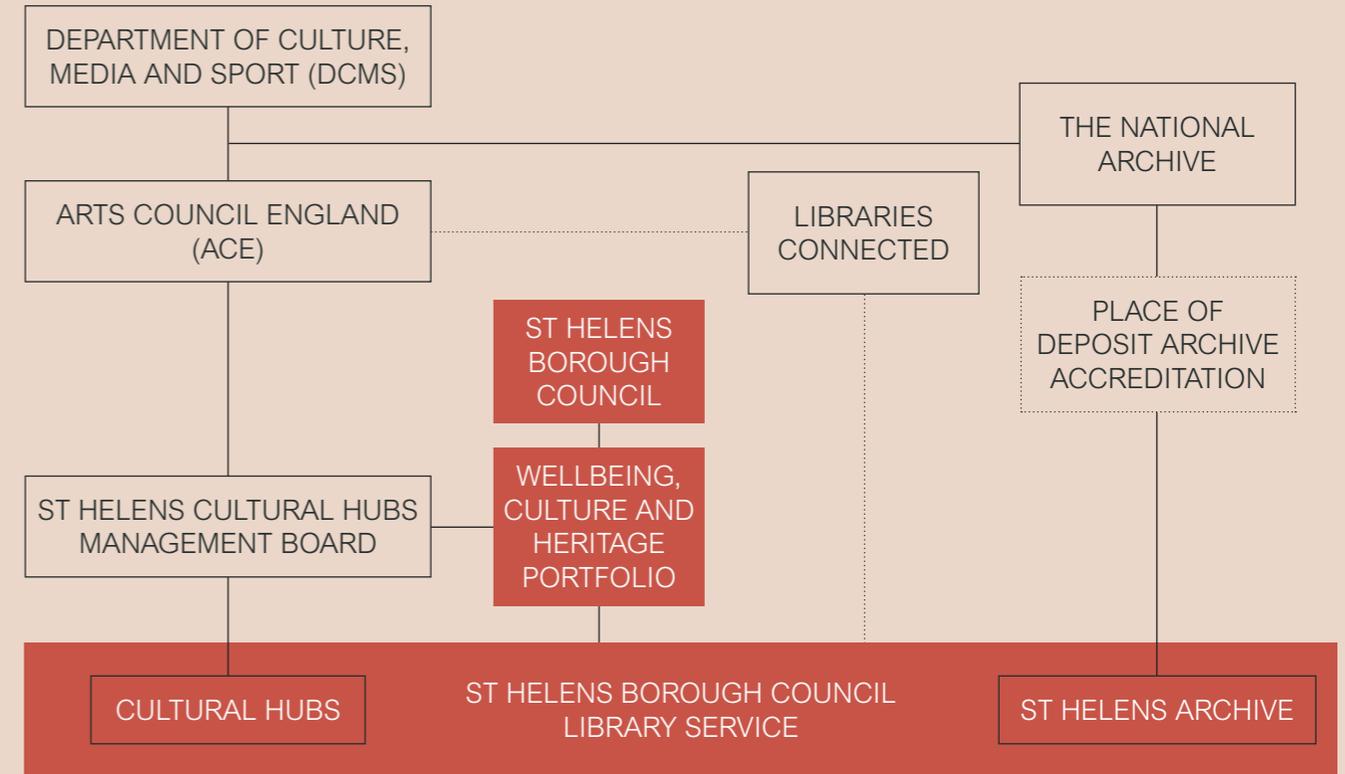
St Helens Borough Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to deliver a comprehensive and efficient free Library Service to all who live, work or study in the borough. St Helens Libraries serve a population of approximately 179,331 through:

- 13 library buildings
- St Helens Archive Service
- Home Delivery Library Service
- Cultural Hubs Programme
- Schools Library Service
- e-Library Service

OBJECTIVES

- Transforming the service to deliver from fit for purpose buildings and an offer that meets the changing needs of our residents and our communities
- Exploring different models of delivery including the appetite for community-led management and enhancement of the digital offer
- Reviewing the building assets and outline options in relation to these buildings which may include investment, transfer or as a last resort, closure.

GOVERNANCE



INTERDEPENDENCIES

- Borough Plan
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Town Deal Board
- Arts Strategy
- Heritage Action Plan
- Early Years Strategy
- Integrated Care Partnership Priorities

RISKS

- Services/partners not engaging, or co-locating
- Lack of engagement in a community managed service model
- Not having suitable facilities to co-locate/align
- Not fulfilling expected outcomes
- Lack of investment in the physical infrastructure

EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

LIBRARY AMBITION	BOROUGH PRIORITY						OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS
	 <p data-bbox="753 544 920 619">ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POSITIVE START IN LIFE</p>	 <p data-bbox="1006 544 1173 619">PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE AND CARE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES</p>	 <p data-bbox="1259 544 1426 619">CREATE SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR ALL</p>	 <p data-bbox="1512 544 1680 619">SUPPORT A STRONG, THRIVING INCLUSIVE AND WELL-CONNECTED ECONOMY</p>	 <p data-bbox="1765 544 1933 619">CREATE GREEN AND VIBRANT PLACES THAT REFLECT OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE</p>	 <p data-bbox="2050 544 2154 596">BE A RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL</p>	
Support reading and literacy	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	<p data-bbox="2240 662 2746 687">Improved literacy levels within our communities</p> <p data-bbox="2240 707 2983 818">We will support children to have access to books from birth, ensuring that library services are developed to accommodate language, communication, and developmental opportunities in those important early years.</p>
Improve digital services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	<p data-bbox="2240 866 2999 919">We will provide the latest technology, including self serve, wifi printing, access to online material and events.</p>
Promote learning and access to information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p data-bbox="2240 965 2952 1018">We will provide space in our libraries for people to study and work and support people to gain employment.</p>
Contribute to an improved arts and culture offer	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		<p data-bbox="2240 1061 2983 1114">We will continue to deliver and develop the Cultural Hubs programme for all ages in the community</p>
Provide a customer focussed service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p data-bbox="2240 1161 2952 1246">We will be agile and responsive in meeting customer needs, make sure our staff have the right skills to help and provide space and facilities within our libraries to meet, work and study.</p>

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Local Authorities are held accountable for the comprehensive and efficient provision of libraries within their boundaries, as outlined by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. However, the last ten years have seen substantial changes as

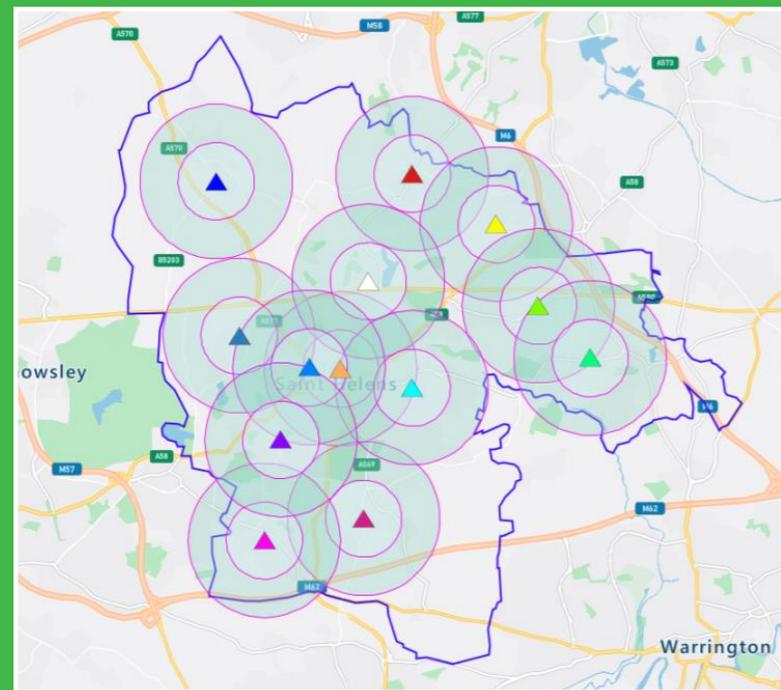
to how libraries are commissioned and delivered around the country. The drivers for these changes have included financial austerity, localism and community empowerment, the quick pace of technological change, and local needs.



ST HELENS LIBRARY SERVICE

The table below shows that St Helens has more libraries than most areas in the region. The borough has one library per 14,000 population whereas Halton for example has one per 32,000.

Borough	Sefton	Halton	Wigan	Cheshire East	Warrington	St Helens	Wirral	Cheshire West and Chester
Number of Libraries	6	4	15	17	12	13	23	23
Population	274,600	129,410	320,000	380,694	209,547	179,331	323,900	340,000
Libraries per head of population	45,767	32,353	21,333	22,394	17,462	13,795	14,083	14,783



As can be seen from the map which shows the location of each library and its one and two-kilometre catchments, many of the libraries are relatively close to at least one other library. The Library Strategy outlines the council's vision and ambition for the borough's libraries over the next 5 years.

The way our customers use council services, is changing and was accelerated during the COVID pandemic. Books are still the mainstay of the provision, but physical loans are declining whilst downloading of e-materials continues to rise. Computer usage is on the decline, but more people are using libraries to access WiFi and WiFi printing with their own devices.



We are seeing libraries increasingly used as meeting places by groups and more partners are using library buildings to deliver services to the community. In 2019 our library buildings supported 168 hours of community activity each week.

All this demonstrates the need for the service to continue to evolve to meet changing community needs, respond to the different ways customers want to access services, and ensures we deliver in partnership at a community level. To meet the council's priority of being a modern, efficient and effective council it is essential to ensure service delivery is as efficient and effective as possible.

The Library Service also delivers a range of other services including:

Cultural Hubs:

The Library Service was awarded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status by the Arts Council in 2018. The Cultural Hubs mission is to provide rich and diverse arts opportunities for audiences and participants within library spaces and to support artists to inspire, challenge and enrich the lives of residents.

St Helens Archive:

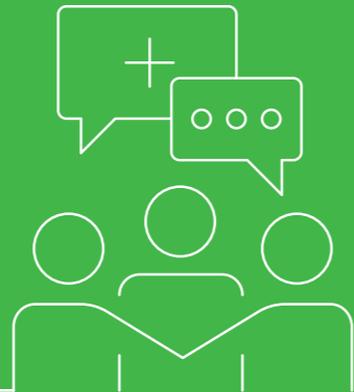
The archives are among the most important historical and cultural resources belonging to the people of St Helens. These unique, irreplaceable records offer insight into the diverse heritage and history of the borough. The National Archive (TNA) administers Archive Service Accreditation, and inspected our Archive in January 2020, taking the decision to defer re-accreditation due to the uncertainty that surrounded the Gamble Building. The Gamble building and the Archive Service form a key part of the Town Deal Investment plan.

Home Delivery Library Service:

This service became essential during the COVID-19 pandemic to those who were shielding, vulnerable and/or elderly. User numbers increased by 120%.

Schools Library Service:

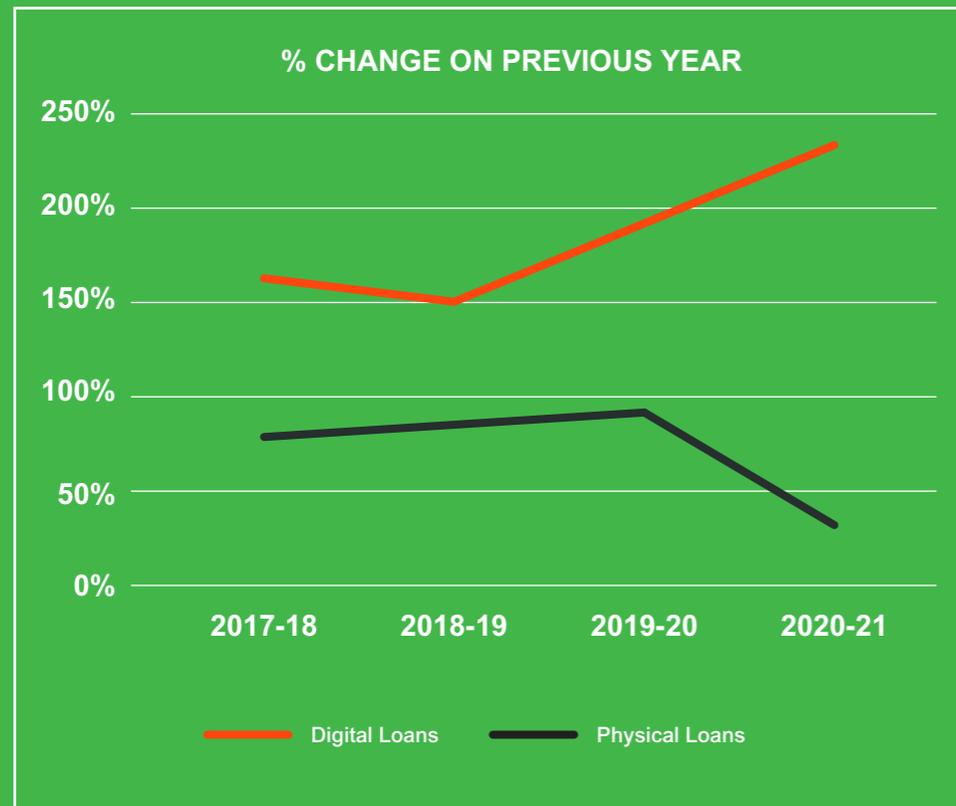
This is a traded service that offers fiction, project loans and curriculum resources to 75% of the borough's schools. The service is also offered to schools outside the borough boundary.



ST HELENS SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE

ST HELENS LIBRARY SERVICE

KEY STATISTICS

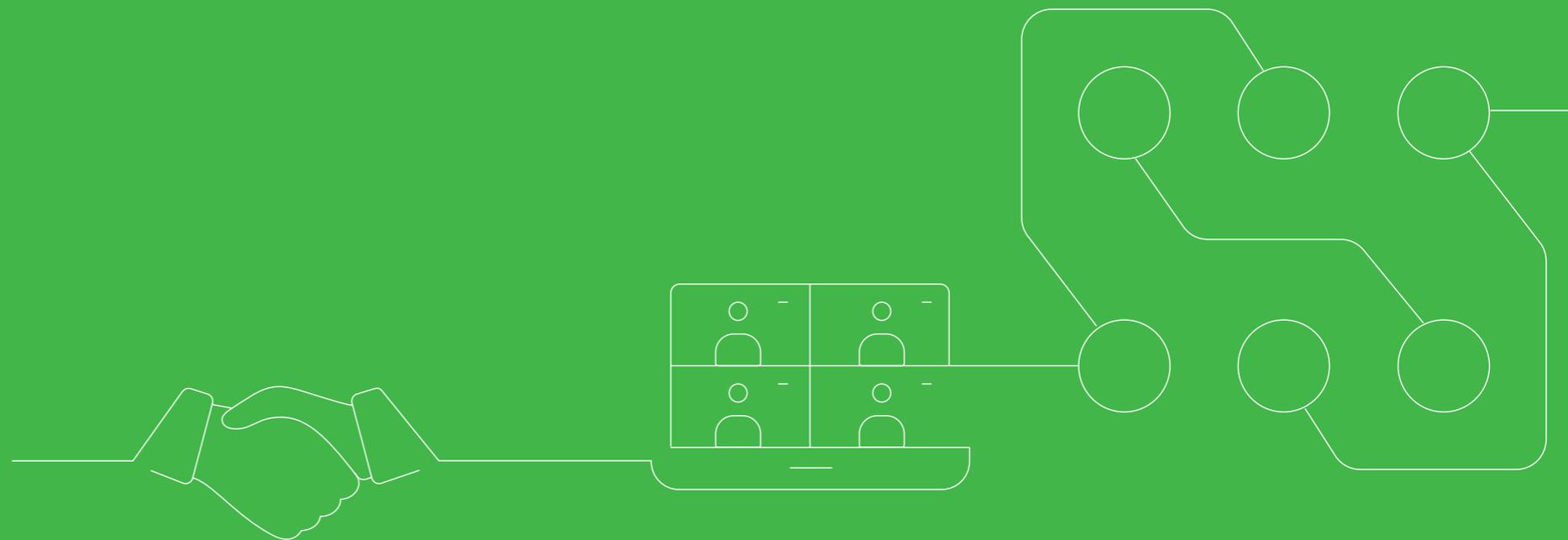


YEAR	2016/17*	2017/18**	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21***
Digital Loans	6,940*	11,003	16,447	30,835	71,947
Physical Loans	524,515	427,837	382,941	372,031	114,646

*denotes first year of digital loans service offer

** Central Library closed during this financial year, hence the reduction in performance of physical loans

*** COVID-19 pandemic resulted in all libraries closing in March 2020. This significantly affected the performance of physical loans, whilst digital loans increased.



THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Government decided to close libraries across the UK in March 2020 as part of a series of measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. St Helens Library Service responded by continuing to deliver but in different ways. This has been predominantly on-line, including promoting access to e-books, e-audio, e-magazines and e-comics as well as introducing new elements such as Click and Collect, online Rhyme Times, virtual tours of the

Archive, and importantly, phone calls to isolated library users who did not have digital access. This demonstrates the service's reach beyond physical library buildings. The successes and lessons learned during this period are reflected in this strategy

The Government has recognised the key role libraries will play in the recovery from the pandemic.



Home Delivery Library Service up **81%**



digital loans up **133%**



302 online events



1,116 new library members



CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

In 2019 the Library Service undertook an independent study of both users and non-users.

- 50% of those surveyed considered themselves to be regular library users.
- 80% of current users borrow books.
- 40% access library PCs.
- 80% of visits to the library took under 10 minutes.

- If the library they use most frequently were to close, users would be prepared to travel at least twice as long to access their nearest library.

Customers are proud and protective of libraries and were clear about what they wanted to see the service offer, however they recognised the need for change. They were asked to prioritise services; the results were as follows:

ESSENTIAL

- Books
- Computers for public access
- Photocopying and printing facilities
- Teens/children's activities (e.g. reading groups)
- Public toilets
- Free Wi-Fi

DESIRABLE

- Local history and archive service
- Training courses
- Audio books
- Newspapers
- Meeting rooms
- Home delivery service
- Special events (e.g. author visits, drama)
- E-books
- Magazines

NICE TO HAVE

- Cafe
- Comics
- 24hr online info (e.g. searches, browsing)
- Vending machines
- Computer gaming



WHAT RESIDENTS TOLD US WOULD IMPROVE THE SERVICE

- Better marketing of existing services, locations and hours of operation
- Hours of operation to reflect the needs of local communities
- Hosting events, not necessarily book related
- Reading groups across all age strata
- More choice of reading material
- Availability of refreshments
- Community focus and integration
- Click and collect service
- Delivery service



WHY DO WE NEED A NEW STRATEGY?

“THE WAY PEOPLE USE LIBRARIES, AND THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICES ARE CHANGING. FINANCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES ARE INCREASING. STANDING STILL IS NOT AN OPTION.”

LIBRARIES DELIVER: AMBITION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ENGLAND, 2016-2021,
DEPARTMENT FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT.



In 2021/22 the council will need to identify £25 million in savings. We are fully aware of the challenges that we face but are determined to continue to transform how we operate to tackle this enormous financial shift. It is important that the Library Service contributes savings along with other council services by implementing new delivery models. We also expect the costs to maintain and refurbish the aging estate of library buildings will increase over the next five years. We must target investment to improving the libraries that are most needed and ensure the service is delivered in the most accessible places possible.

Doing nothing is not an option. If we did not transform the service, within five years it is highly likely that the decline in usage would continue; the buildings would not be fit for purpose and communities would have less opportunity to be involved in shaping local services to suit their needs as less resources would be available to them. Efficiencies and greater convenience associated with sharing space, embracing digital technology and other planned improvements would not be achieved.

Libraries remain a valued part of the communities they serve. We have continued to invest in the service, including opening the new St Helens Library in The World of Glass in 2020. But in the last ten years, traditional use of libraries has fallen. We know there are significant budget pressures facing the service and as such, the council must consider all options to deliver library provision in new and more efficient and innovative ways to create an active and sustainable service.

The resident population of St Helens Borough (179,331 in 2017) is expected to grow steadily, albeit at a slower rate than for the North West

and for England as a whole. The borough has an ageing population with a higher proportion of people aged 65 years and over, and proportionally fewer people of working age between 16 to 64 years old. Public sector services in St Helens are working together to manage services for all communities and focus where possible on the areas of greatest need.

St Helens Borough Council recently agreed to review its delivery of services to ensure that we are tackling inequalities within the borough. Recognising that one size does not fit all and that the demographic and environmental conditions in each area differs, a Locality Delivery Model was agreed. The aim of the locality model is to establish the right service mix and standards in each agreed locality to suit the needs of the area. Locality management ensures that services are relevant and address local need as well as offering the opportunity to collaborate with partners at a local level, explore alternative delivery methods and target resources to where they are needed most. The strategy will need to take into account the Locality model and emerging locality management approach.

The Library Service reaches and supports the whole community regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, or educational attainment. This is reflected in what people want from their library, be that a quiet place to study, a shared space for community events, or access to books to encourage a love of reading from early years to old age. This does however create challenges. We need spaces that work for all these audiences and needs. Whilst we do not underestimate these challenges, the opportunities to create a sustainable service that has a lasting impact

on the lives of St Helens residents are great. The financial outlook for all local government is challenging and as a public body it is important we spend taxpayers' money wisely. Demand for many services is increasing and becoming more complex, whilst government funding is reducing.

St Helens Library Service is currently delivered in-house and managed by the council. There are alternative delivery models that some other authorities use, such as setting up a local authority trading company, transferring the whole service to a commercial company or charitable trust, or partnering in a joint venture. The council intends where appropriate, to keep some of the service in-house but will also explore and support the development of community managed libraries in the ethos of #StHelenstogether. We will continue to review options over the strategy period.

Public services do not operate in isolation - they are greater than the sum of their individual parts and this strategy has a key role to play in enabling the council to deliver on its strategic aims, be that through providing spaces and resources to help people in St Helens to increase their skills and prosper, or through providing safe, welcoming and stimulating spaces for users to engage with others.



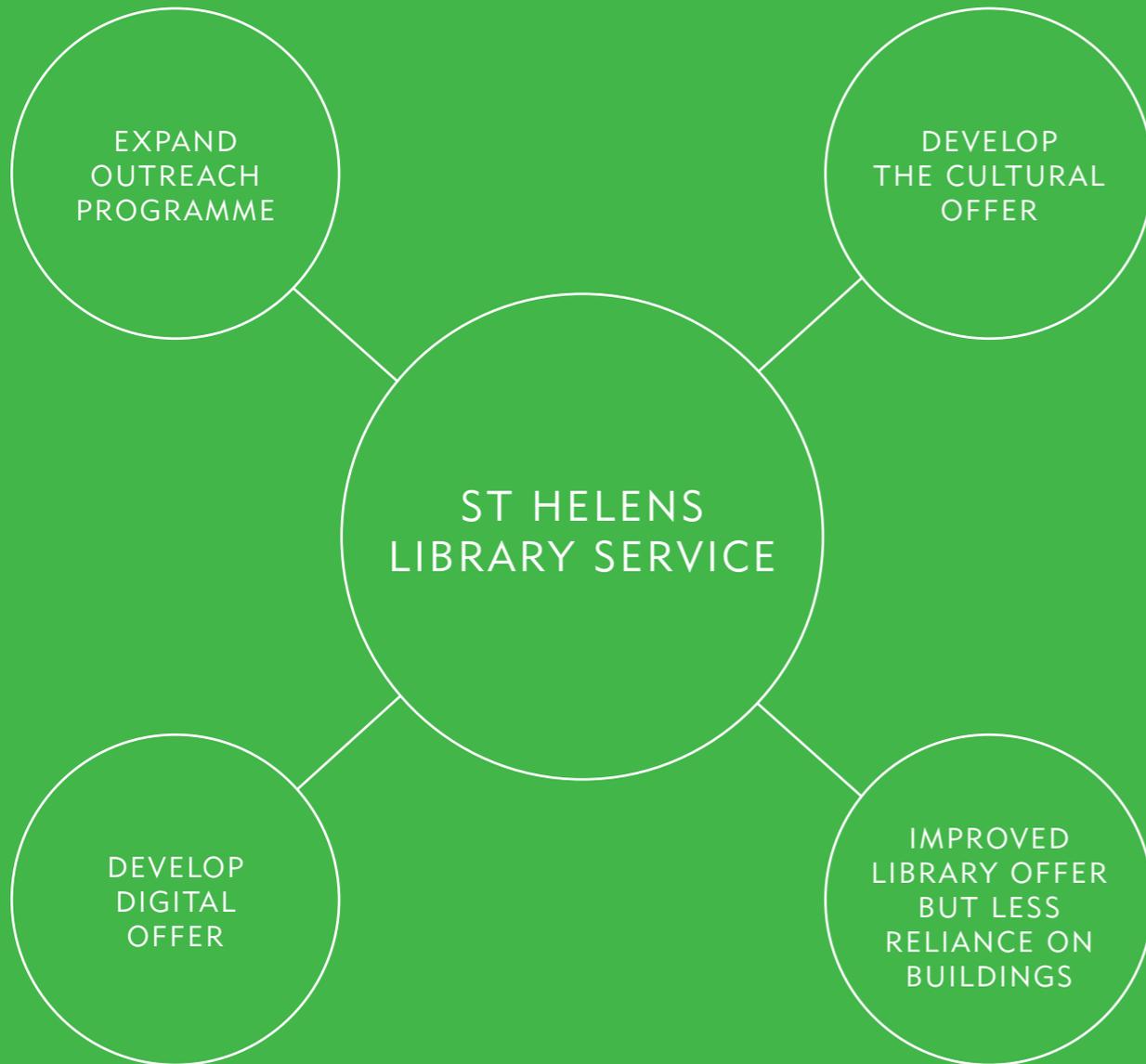
VISION AND AMBITION

OUR VISION OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS TO CREATE A 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY SERVICE THAT IS INCLUSIVE, VIBRANT, VALUED, SUSTAINABLE, RESPONSIVE TO CUSTOMER NEEDS AND AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

Our commitment is to deliver a library service across the borough by:

- Transforming the service to deliver from fit for purpose buildings and an offer that meets the changing needs of our residents and communities.
- Exploring different models of delivery including the appetite for community led management and enhancement of the digital offer.
- Reviewing the building assets and outline options in relation to these buildings which may include investment, transfer or as a last resort closure.





Over the strategy period, we will deliver a core offer, whilst also seeking new ways of working to ensure that we achieve the service ambitions:

SUPPORT READING AND LITERACY

- We will promote literacy and reading for pleasure for all ages, supported by vibrant, relevant stock that customers will want to read, alongside exciting reading events to increase our audience
- We will ensure every child has an opportunity to have fun and learn through family friendly activities and by creating services relevant to young people, including the opportunity to take part in Book Awards St Helens (BASH)
- We will support children to have access to books from birth, ensuring that library services are developed to accommodate language, communication, and developmental opportunities in those important early years.

IMPROVE DIGITAL SERVICES

- We will provide the latest technology, including self-serve kiosks and WI-FI printing, access to online reading and events, learning sessions and demonstrations enabling customers to use these services from home.

PROMOTE LEARNING AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- We will provide space in our libraries that helps support people back into employment or education and we will provide volunteering opportunities
- We will assist people to choose the right sources of information from reputable sources
- Our partnership with the British Library, offering a Business and IP Centre will provide local companies with free access to databases and business advice
- We will work in partnership with health colleagues to provide health promotion information, social prescribing programmes, activities and events supporting our communities to be the healthiest they can be.

CONTRIBUTE TO AN IMPROVED ARTS AND CULTURE OFFER

- We will continue to deliver and develop the Cultural Hubs, Arts in Libraries programme for all ages which is relevant to the local community.

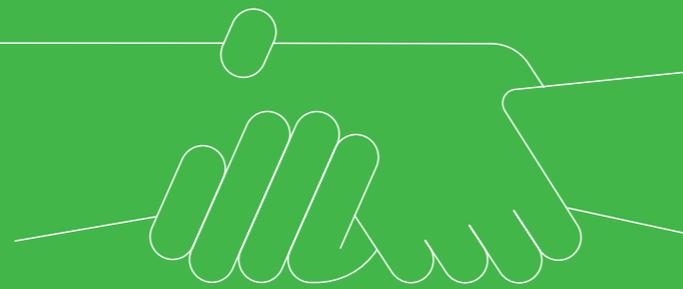
PROVIDE A CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICE

- We will be agile and responsive in seeking to meet customer needs, making sure our staff have the right skills and training
- We will provide space and facilities within our libraries for council staff and others within the community to meet, work and study.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT IN FIVE YEARS TIME?

We will consider this strategy to have achieved our ambitions for the Library Service if by 2026:

- We have a strong programme of outreach, providing library services and activities where they are most needed
- We have transformed how people access library services widening and developing access through digital technology and increased the number of people accessing the service online
- We have improved our library buildings and extended opening hours through volunteer support and the introduction of self-service library technology, to enable people to use libraries at times that are convenient to them
- St Helens residents and community groups are much more involved, with libraries run by or run jointly with community groups/partners and volunteers
- We make much better use of insight from our customers to ensure they receive consistently good service
- We will work with partners to secure further investment to improve and diversify the services offered
- There is an increased number of arts and cultural activities & events
- Gain National Accreditation for the Archive and increase the number of visits to the Archive
- Increase the numbers of schools using the Schools Library Service and customers using the Business Information Centre
- The service operates at a lower cost.



CORE OFFER

We have used the information we have gathered, together with consultation with library staff and residents to develop a series of standards for St Helens Library Service, these are set out in the table below:

	CENTRAL LIBRARY	BRANCH LIBRARY	E LIBRARY	HOME DELIVERY SERVICE
LOCATION	St Helens Town Centre	Located within community locations with high footfall	N/A	Targeted
BUILDING	Large building co-located with partners	Smaller space co-located with partners	N/A	Needs to operate from a library
ACCESS TO LIBRARY CATALOGUE	✓	✓	✓	✓
FACE TO FACE SUPPORT FOR LIBRARY CUSTOMERS	✓	✓	✗	✓
FREE PUBLIC IT AND WI-FI	✓ 50 PCs	✓ 20 PCs	✗ N/A	✗ N/A
STOCK LEVELS	40,000	10-20,000	40,000	20,000
CULTURAL EVENTS	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
FREE UNIVERSAL ACTIVITIES	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
COMPUTER GAMING ZONE/POD	✓	✓	N/A	N/A

	CENTRAL LIBRARY	BRANCH LIBRARY	E LIBRARY	HOME DELIVERY SERVICE
MEETING SPACE	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
AGILE WORK/ STUDY SPACES	30	10	N/A	N/A
WI-FI PRINTING	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
SELF-SERVE	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
STUDY/AGILE SPACE	20	10	N/A	N/A
CAR PARKING <50M	100 spaces	20 spaces	N/A	N/A
PUBLIC TRANSPORT <50M	✓	✓	N/A	N/A
REFRESHMENTS	Café	Vending	N/A	N/A
CHANGING PLACES	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
PUBLIC TOILETS	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A

FOCUSING RESOURCES AT AREAS OF GREATEST NEED

Public sector services in St Helens are working together to manage services for all communities and focus where possible on the areas of greatest need. As part of the development of the Library Strategy we have looked at a series of measures to determine where need is greatest. These measures are set out below:

Educational Attainment

- The Early Years Foundation stage
- Phonics screening
- Keystage 1 Assessment - reading
- Keystage 1 Assessment - writing

Health

- Number of patients admitted to hospital where depression / low mood is in their diagnosis
- % Health condition - where day to day activity limited a lot
- Under 18 conceptions

Deprivation

- % of households with no car or van
- Unemployed
- % of children in poverty
- Multi-deprivation indices

Demographic

- % Over 60 years of age
- % Under 15 years of age

Crime Rate

- % of children in poverty
- Multi-deprivation indices

Demand

- Visits to Libraries
- Library Issues

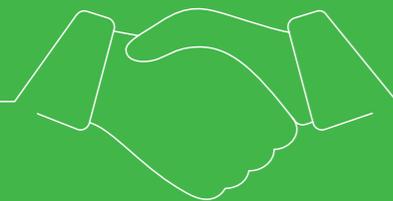
SUMMARY BY WARD

	THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	PHONICS SCREENING	KEYSTAGE 1 ASSESSMENT - READING	KEYSTAGE 1 ASSESSMENT - WRITING	NUMBER OF PATIENTS ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL WHERE DEPRESSION/LOW MOOD IS IN THEIR DIAGNOSIS 2019/20	% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CAR OR VAN ONS 2011	% HEALTH CONDITION - DAY TO DAY ACTIVITY LIMITED A LOT 2011	UNDER 18 CONCEPTIONS 2013-15	% OVER 60 YEARS OF AGE ONS 2019	% UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE ONS 2019	UNEMPLOYED (ONS 2011)	CRIME RATE DEC 19 - NOV 20	MULTI DEPRIVATION INDICIES	% OF WORKING AGE POPN CLAIMING JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE 2018	% OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY JULY - SEPT 2017	ATTENDANCE RANKING	ISSUES	SUM OF RANKING
PARR	16	16	16	15	15	15	16	15	1	16	15	15	16	15	16	11	4	233
TOWN CENTRE	13	12	15	16	16	16	15	16	4	10	16	16	15	16	15	3	1	215
BOLD	13	11	14	14	6	11	6	14	6	12	11	11	13	12	11	14	14	193
EARLESTOWN	9	13	11	13	10	13	10	4	2	14	14	13	14	14	14	10	12	190
THATTO HEATH	9	15	13	12	14	14	14	9	5	15	13	9	12	8	12	6	7	187
SUTTON	15	10	9	9	12	10	12	12	9	5	8	12	9	13	13	13	13	184
HAYDOCK	13	14	12	11	7	7	11	11	10	8	6	8	7	7	5	8	11	156
WEST PARK	10	8	6	6	13	12	7	6	7	7	12	14	10	11	10	5	7	151
MOSS BANK	7	6	10	8	9	9	13	13	11	9	9	10	11	10	9	1	2	147
BLACKBROOK	14	6	8	11	8	8	9	7	12	6	5	7	8	5	7	7	10	138
WINDLE	5	4	5	5	5	6	3	10	8	11	7	6	5	9	6	15	15	125
NEWTON	6	9	8	7	4	5	1	5	3	13	10	5	6	6	8	9	12	117
RAINHILL	1	1	3	4	3	4	8	1	14	3	4	4	4	2	3	12	14	85
ECCLESTON	2	2	1	2	11	2	2	2	13	4	3	2	1	1	1	16	16	81
BILLINGE & SENELEY GREEN	3	2	2	4	2	3	4	8	15	1	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	69
RAINFORD	4	8	5	1	1	1	5	3	16	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	59

PROPOSALS FOR COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES

We will maintain a comprehensive and efficient Library Service across St Helens. We will retain a network of council run libraries, but where there is evidence that there is community interest in running libraries, we will work closely with parish councils, community groups or partners to transition libraries to community management.

In the next few years, we hope that with our support, community managed libraries will have been established or will be in the process of being established in many locations. It may be that early adopters will encourage others to come forward.





RESOURCES AND INVESTMENT

In the context of significant budget pressure over the coming years, the council needs to do more than simply identify savings each year. It must transform services to make them sustainable and fit for the future. St Helens Borough Council needs to think very differently about how it will operate, be more innovative, entrepreneurial and commercially minded.

As plans develop, we will seek investment to modernise and enhance library spaces.

- We will explore additional sources of funding for our services including:
 - Grants for specific projects such as applying again for National Portfolio Organisation status through Arts Council England
 - Encouraging local fundraising to support delivery of library services
 - Reviewing fees and charges and exploring the introduction of the sale of complementary products
 - Further developing digital delivery channels
 - Seeking contributions from developers such as planning gain, where appropriate.

- During the strategy period we will invest in new technology and library spaces where opportunities present themselves.
 - Upskilling staff to improve the service to users
 - Continue to implement new technology to expand access.

BUILDINGS

This strategy is about the service, not the buildings. But we know that library buildings are often seen as valuable community assets and many people will be concerned about their future use. We will work to make the most efficient use of public buildings, whether owned by the council, other public bodies or community organisations.

With the introduction of the council's Locality Management model, it is hoped that most library services will be in shared spaces by 2026. We will review running costs and the condition of library buildings in council-run libraries, with a view to bringing all services up to a consistent,

standard and finding the most effective ways to respond to local needs. This includes considering the most appropriate location for our buildings. In the future, library services could be provided from a range of outlets, such as shared locations with others, new spaces provided as part of housing or retail developments or co-located in community centres, shops, leisure centres or other locations. In most cases, we would expect library services to be provided in alternative, improved locations.

Community asset transfer will be considered where appropriate.



ST HELENS LIBRARY IN THE WORLD OF GLASS



CUSTOMERS

We know that our customers are diverse. They are of all ages, backgrounds and abilities and have different aspirations. Equally each has their own preference for how and when to access services, and the types of services they access. We will continue to provide our services in a way that has regard to our duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

An impact assessment has been prepared to inform the development and ongoing implementation of this strategy. This includes having a range of stock that reflects and celebrates our diverse community and promotes good relations across all equality areas.

We will continue to seek feedback and use insight about customer preferences to develop services over time.



STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Employees

Our library employees are at the heart of our business. Feedback shows they are hugely valued and trusted by customers. St Helens Library Service will ensure that our employees have the skills and competencies they need to help deliver our future vision.

Staff will provide:

- Excellent customer service putting customers' needs at the centre of what they do.
- Expertise and digital knowledge to support customers in accessing information.
- Engagement and outreach with community members and organisations
- Collaboration working with partner organisations to promote and develop the Library Service.

Volunteers and community involvement

St Helens Library Service is connected to the communities that it serves. This includes a wide variety of volunteering opportunities and close work with community groups and partner organisations across the borough. During the COVID-19 pandemic the volunteering base in the borough has significantly increased and the Library Service needs to maximise and capture this interest.

Volunteers should play a vital role in supporting and enhancing the Library Service. It is important that volunteers complement the work delivered by our paid employees and work alongside them, enabling us to develop and improve the experience of our customers whilst helping to meet our budgetary challenges.

Training and guidance will be offered to community managed libraries in how to recruit, train and support volunteers. We aim to ensure our volunteers feel valued and receive something worthwhile from the time they give. We will also take every opportunity to recognise and celebrate the contribution they make to the Library Service and customers. Volunteers will also be supported to ensure that customers experience a consistent level of service.



CLASS VISIT AT CHESTER LANE LIBRARY