



Plan for Libraries

2017 - 2020



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I. INTRODUCTION

Plymouth needs a library service fit for the 21st century. The proposals set out in this report aim to show how we can transform the service to extend the reach of our offering across the city and provide value for money.

There has been a public library service in Plymouth for over 140 years. The last significant changes to the library service were the transfer from Devon County Council to Plymouth City Council in 1998, the closure of 3 small branch libraries and withdrawal of the mobile library service in 2001, and the implementation of self-service in 2010.

Visits to library buildings in Plymouth have declined significantly in the last decade and although recent research shows that book lending remains a high priority for our customers, we have an ambition to deliver much more, based around the Society of Chief Librarians' universal offers of Reading, Information, Digital, Health and Learning.

We are committed to investment in the library service to ensure we are relevant in the 21st century and have a sustainable infrastructure. We'll consider the needs of existing customers and aim to create a service that is an attractive proposition and inclusive for new customers.

We currently run 17 library buildings in a relatively small geographical area of 31 square miles. In addition we have a limited outreach and home library service and an online 24/7 library.

Staff are spread thinly across the library estate. The opening hours and what we are able to offer in each library is inconsistent. Buildings are in varying states of repair with many having little scope for enhancement.

We propose to have fewer libraries across the city but offer an enhanced and consistent service in clean, well maintained and attractive buildings.

We're committed to making sure the overwhelming majority of Plymouth's population remain within two miles of a library. However, we recognise that customers do not necessarily need to visit a physical library to make use of our services.

Our online services are available 24/7 and use of our digital library is increasing. It's important we respond to this demand by investing in an improved online offer.

We propose to invest more in online stock, upgrade our 24/7 library and invest more in premium online resources, which may include streaming films and music.

We'll also offer an enhanced 'click and collect' service with selected collection points across the city in addition to the option to collect in a library.

Investing in an upgrade to a web-based library management system will mean we can take a wide range of services out into the community and engage with residents who may never have used a library before.

And wherever we have a captive audience we'll be able to deliver 'pop-up' libraries that can flex and change to suit the needs of different communities, on a regular or ad hoc basis.

We'll continue to work with partner agencies to deliver a wide breadth of information and advice (including sessions in new and improved meeting spaces) and libraries will be gateways to a wider range of Council services.

Communication to customers will also improve, with an option to be contacted via text message.

In summary, our aim is to deliver five universal offers (in line with Society of Chief Librarians and Libraries Taskforce):



Through the following channels:

Online Offer
 Our online offer is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provides an online library catalogue, eBooks, audiobooks and magazines plus a range of premium online resources.

In-Library Offer
 Our library buildings will be fit for purpose and include meeting spaces so we are able to offer a full range of services based around the offers of Reading and Literacy, Information and History, Digital, Health and Wellbeing and Learning. They will be clean, modern and welcoming and run by friendly and trained staff.

Outreach Offer
 Our outreach offer will increase. Investment in technology will mean we are able to take the library into communities, providing a pop up library with click and collect, activities and services. This will include our Home Library Service for housebound users.

2. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

Plymouth City Council has a statutory obligation under the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it.¹ Each local authority is responsible for determining how best to deliver this, based around the needs of local communities within available resources.

'Comprehensive and efficient' is open to interpretation. National standards for public libraries haven't existed since 2008.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has the power to make a remedial order against a library authority following a local inquiry. This power been used on only one occasion since 1964, with a public inquiry in Wirral in 2009.²

In 2014, the Independent Library Report for England³ was published, which called for clear local decision-making and a national strategy to secure the future of public libraries in England.

This led to the setting up of the Libraries Taskforce. Reporting to Ministers via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Local Government Association (LGA), the role of the Taskforce is to enable the delivery of the recommendations from the Independent Library Report for England and to build upon and add value to existing good practice, partnerships and other activities that are already supporting public libraries.

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021 was published in December 2016.⁴ The purpose of this report is to provide a focus for collaborative action, and a clear articulation of the government's and Taskforce's vision and support for public libraries in England. It is not intended to dictate what library services each local authority must deliver and how.

¹ For a full discussion of libraries as a statutory service see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service>

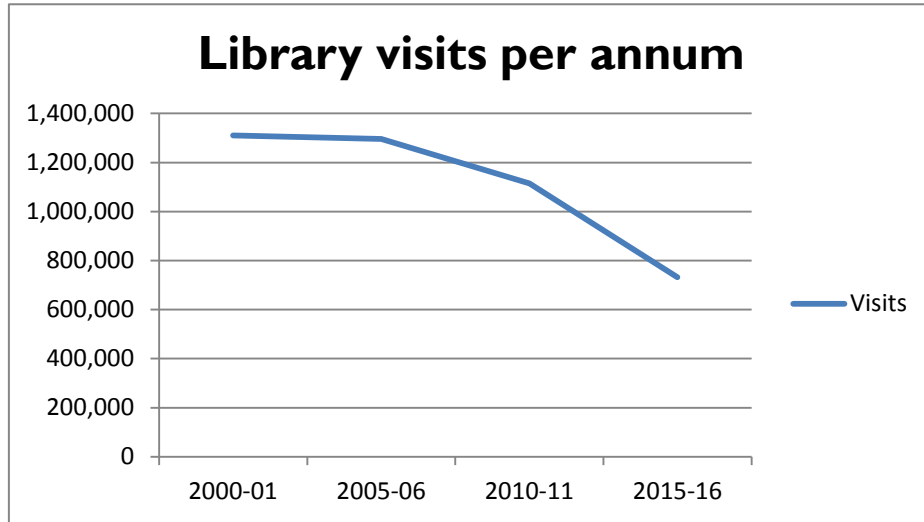
² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-local-inquiry-into-the-public-library-service-provided-by-wirral-metropolitan-borough-council>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>

3. THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN PLYMOUTH

There has been no change to the public library estate in Plymouth for 15 years although visits to our buildings have declined dramatically during this time.



The current estate consists of 17 static libraries of varying size and states of repair (**Fig. 1**). The overwhelming majority of Plymouth residents live within one mile of a library building (**Fig. 2**), but only seven libraries account for 80% of all visits.

Figure 1: Map of Plymouth’s library network

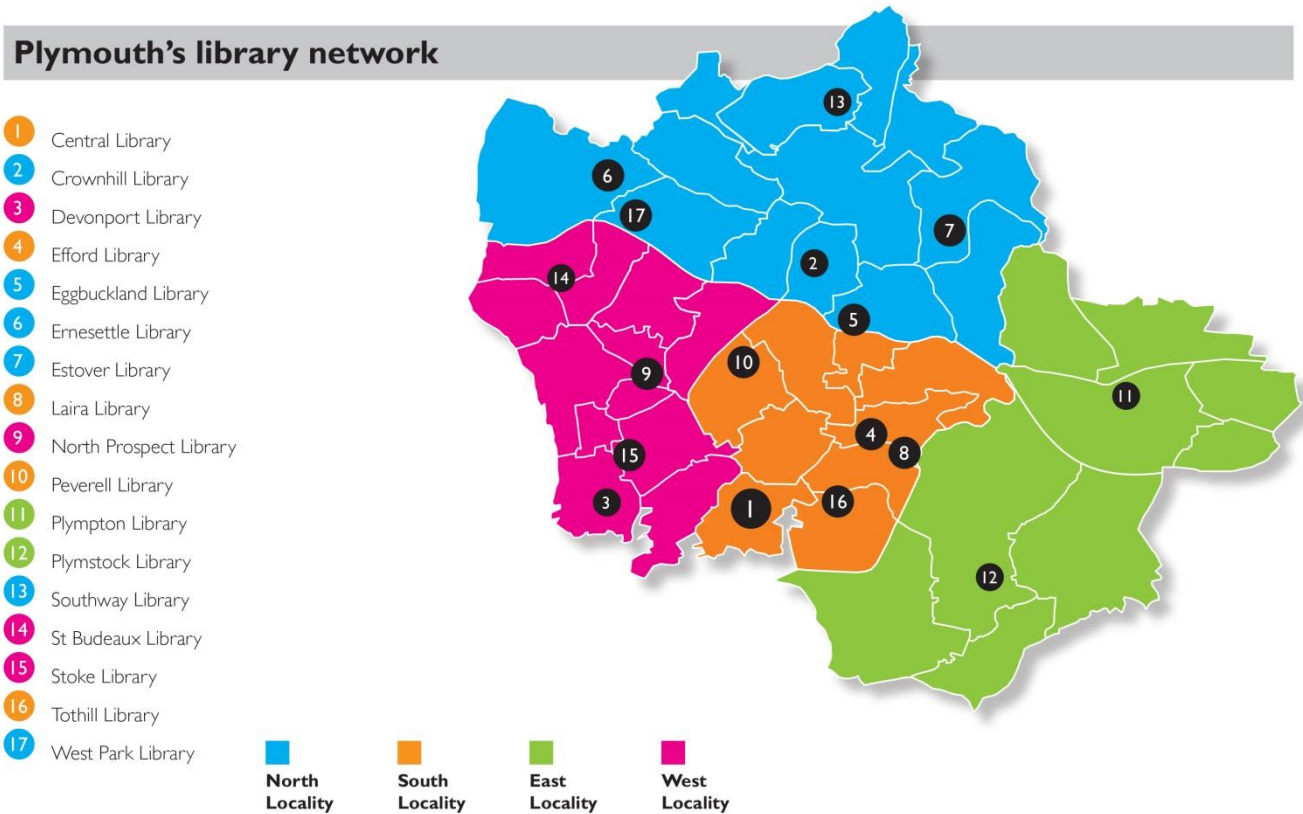
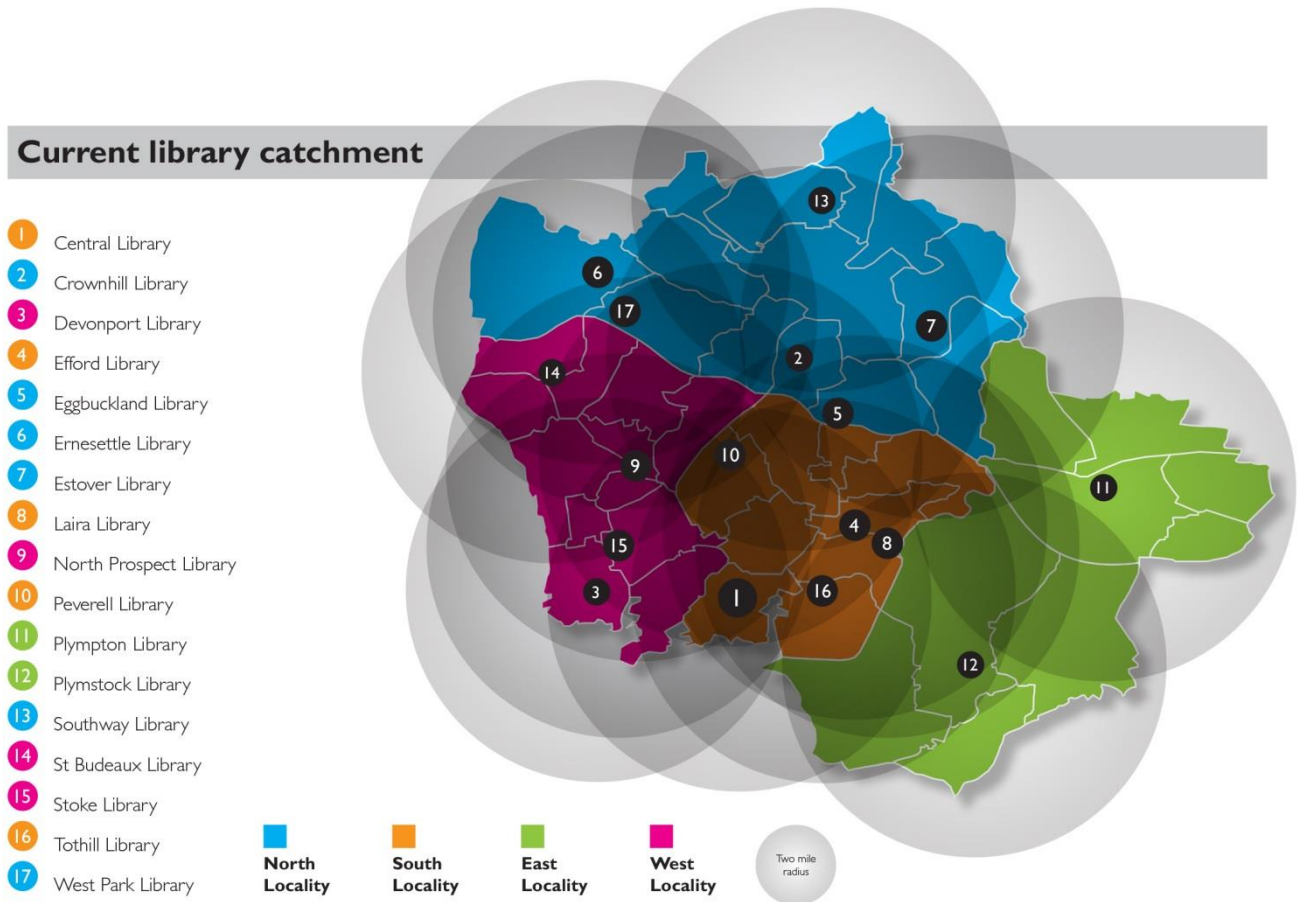


Figure 2: Map of libraries in Plymouth, showing two-mile catchment zones



Our four largest libraries (Central, Plympton, Plymstock and St Budeaux) operate the same 57.5 weekly opening hours as our 1st Stop Shop and Contact Centre. The rest of the libraries have opening hours ranging from 21 per week to 49 per week.

Plymouth does not face the same challenges as neighbouring county councils who have to consider provision across very large geographical areas.

Our Library Service to Schools is not included in these proposals.

4. WHAT DO PEOPLE IN PLYMOUTH WANT FROM A LIBRARY SERVICE?

During the summer of 2016, we held an open conversation with the people of Plymouth to find out what they wanted from libraries, now and in the future. We received 3,327 responses and you can see full findings in Appendix B.

Key findings

- 66% of respondents visit the library at least once a month. 35% visited infrequently or never
- 88% of respondents used Central, Plympton and Plymstock Libraries
- Most respondents walked to their library (62%) or travelled by car (44%)
- The most used services currently are books (92%), computers (78%), the 24/7 library (76%) and Wi-Fi (68%)
- Digital skills training (71%), help with job seeking (72%), access to council services (63%) and finding health information (62%) were the services respondents could see themselves using in the future
- 90% said the current library opening hours were convenient
- Of those who identified as non-users 76% had used library services in the past
- 86% of non-users last visited between one and 10 years ago
- 57% of non-users think that they don't have need to visit the library
- Free membership (85%) and free books to borrow (84%) were the most recognisable of the library offers; awareness was low for online resources

5. WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?

To reinvest in the library service estate to ensure sustainability for the future

Commitment to providing attractive and modern buildings in key areas across the city including the redevelopment of the St Budeaux site to ensure people in the west of the city have a facility that they can be proud of.

To reflect the changing needs of our users

Traditional book lending has reduced significantly over the last decade. The public expect library buildings to be *more* - a flexible community space with a wide range of services including digital, advice and information, health and wellbeing.

To improve the reach of our services

We need to engage with communities to raise awareness of our offer (*more* than just books). Reaching out and understanding community needs will help us to define an offer specific to their needs (not a one-size fits all).

To make the most of evolving technology and the digital world

Enhance our online offer appreciating that users don't need to visit a physical building to make the most of library services.

To support the Council in streamlining the delivery of services and to work with partner agencies to support health and wellbeing and advice and information

Accessing a range of Council services and partner agencies within the community setting.

To ensure sustainability in light of unprecedented budgetary challenges

Consolidating our estate where possible to reduce building and resource costs while investing in key areas to enhance our offer.

To align the library service to the Plymouth Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy






Delivering a new approach for providing essential and accessible community facilities, hosting a range of modern services that inspire learning and improve health and wellbeing.

The health and wellbeing of individuals is influenced by the communities in which they live and people's health can be affected by the nature of their physical environment. Improving access to good quality facilities such as libraries or places of worship, strengthening community relations, promoting a sense of pride and improving access to green spaces all impact positively on an individual's physical and mental health and overall feelings of safety.

6. OUR VISION

“Plymouth libraries will deliver modern services that inspire learning and creativity, improve health and wellbeing, and support digital inclusion.”

The following five offers have been identified as integral to the delivery of our vision for Plymouth libraries:

Library Offers		Corporate Plan Objective
 <p>Reading</p>	<p>Reading and Literacy</p> <p>We'll provide free access to books and literature for all, promoting reading for pleasure. Through initiatives including the Summer Reading Challenge, Bookstart and Reading Ahead the library service aspires to raising literacy levels across the city.</p>	<p>GROWING PLYMOUTH</p> <p>We will make our city a great place to live by creating opportunities for better learning and greater investment, with more jobs and homes.</p>
 <p>Information</p>	<p>Information and History</p> <p>We will ensure that everyone has access to information and services to help them make informed decisions. We will contribute to economic development, providing support for job seekers and small businesses through work clubs and PatLib.</p> <p>We will make the most of the library's history collections ensuring access and preserving for future generations.</p>	<p>CARING PLYMOUTH</p> <p>We will work with our residents to have happy, healthy and connected communities where people lead safe and fulfilled lives.</p>
 <p>Digital</p>	<p>Digital</p> <p>We will provide free Wi-Fi and computers with skilled staff on hand to help people make the most of the internet and digital world. An active digital inclusion programme will ensure that no-one is left behind.</p>	<p>PIONEERING PLYMOUTH</p> <p>We will be innovative by design, and deliver services that are more accountable, flexible and efficient.</p>
 <p>Health</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>We will provide access to public health information, including signposting and referrals. Through creative and social activities and initiatives such as Books on Prescription, Memory Cafes and Feel Better with a Book we will contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities.</p>	<p>CARING PLYMOUTH</p> <p>We will work with our residents to have happy, healthy and connected communities where people lead safe and fulfilled lives.</p>
 <p>Learning</p>	<p>Learning</p> <p>We will provide space, resources and opportunities to support lifelong learning for all. The Library Service to Schools supports learning in schools by providing quality resources, expertise and advice.</p>	<p>GROWING PLYMOUTH</p> <p>We will make our city a great place to live by creating opportunities for better learning and greater investment, with more jobs and homes.</p>

We will deliver our vision through the following outcomes, outputs and activities:

Outcomes

1. Improving accessibility to the library service
2. Delivering high quality services that are fit for purpose; reliable, efficient and relevant to local communities
3. Develop the library assets and workforce to enhance the customer experience

Outputs

1. Deliver and operate a rationalised and sustainable library network
2. Improve the availability and use of publicly accessible library spaces
3. Increase the opportunities for self-service delivery and access to council services
4. Develop an effective performance management framework to ensure continuous improvements to service delivery
5. Restructure the libraries staffing, to improve the opportunities and roles for staff across the service. This will improve the effectiveness of service delivery and staff empowerment
6. Improve the library service's infrastructure, including its buildings and IT, to modernise and encourage a more relaxing, creative environment
7. Improve and increase the number of events and outreach programmes in collaboration with partners, to improve delivery against key city agendas e.g. to improve health, employment, learning and literacy etc.
8. Increase the availability and take-up of digital library services

Activities

1. Produce a long-term investment programme to improve layout and design
2. Create better library facilities in the correct locations
3. Develop targeted marketing to customers from all communities to increase access and improve on the city's poor borrowing levels
4. Deliver more consistent opening hours across all libraries
5. Provide increased opportunities for learning and improving health and wellbeing through study groups, homework clubs, employment information and health workshops
6. Provide increased opportunities for self-service offerings across all libraries and train staff to promote digital
7. Deliver tailored customer services to local communities e.g. benefit advice in communities with high levels of social deprivation
8. Develop increased partnership working to deliver activities, events and advice on education, learning, health and employment and monitor performance across the library network
9. Simplify processes across a number of council services that can be effectively delivered from local communities e.g. licensing applications, benefit applications, bus pass applications
10. Develop effective community outreach offerings to enable increased partnership working and targeted delivery of key initiatives including health, education and employment
11. Provide effective training to staff on customer service excellence
12. Upskill and empower staff to be part of a network of organisations able to offer simple information and signposting on a range of priority health and wellbeing topics
13. Provide effective tools, e.g. self-service and software, that enables staff to promote channel shift through educating customers
14. Work with Cities of Service to deliver a framework for volunteer recruitment, training and retention

7. A NEW DELIVERY MODEL

Our ambition is to maximise use of the library service across the city – this doesn't necessarily have to mean visiting a library building.


Whilst we need to consider our network of static library buildings we should not be constrained by them. We need to consider the best way to improve accessibility to our services to as wide an audience as possible.

Therefore, our delivery model will consist of the following three key areas:

- **Online offer**
- **In-library offer**
- **Outreach offer** including the Home Library Service

Online Offer

Our online offer is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provides an online library catalogue, eBooks, audiobooks and magazines plus a range of premium online resources.



Our online offer is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 76% of the Conversation respondents access our 24/7 online offer to find, renew or reserve a book, 46% download eBooks and 46% use the online reference facility.

From the comfort of your own home you can search for your next read, browse our catalogue and reserve a book using our 'click and collect' service, or download an eBook. If you prefer to listen to your favourite books we've got a great selection of eAudiobooks too. Leave a review and get involved in a conversation about books.

You can read magazines on your tablet or computer, titles include BBC Good Food, Hello, Woman's Own, Men's Fitness, New Scientist and National Geographic.

Whether you're interested in music or undertaking research there's a wealth of online reference sites that can be accessed from home with your library card and PIN.

We will develop a 'click and collect' service where you can have your books delivered to a community location that is more convenient to you.

We're committed to improving our online offer based around the ever changing needs of our customers. This could include streaming music and films, plus a range of online resources for learning and study.

In-Library Offer

Our library buildings will be fit for purpose and include meeting spaces so we are able to offer a full range of services based around the offers of Reading and Literacy, Information and History, Digital, Health and Wellbeing and Learning. They will be clean, modern and welcoming and run by friendly and trained staff.



To enable us to deliver a quality and a modern service, our library buildings need to be fit for purpose. A library is only fit for purpose if we are able to offer our full range of services as set out in our vision. Our in-library offer needs to be consistent in breadth, quality and accessibility; when you visit a library in Plymouth you'll be welcomed by a team of trained and friendly staff into a clean, modern and inviting environment.

Each library building will support the following:

- **Reading and literacy**

Each library will be large enough to house a wide and varied selection of books and other printed material. There'll be room and meetings spaces to deliver activities for both children and adults to encourage cultural engagement and a joy of reading. Activities will include rhymetimes/storytimes, book groups for all ages, writing groups, Summer Reading Challenge activities, author visits and more.

- **Information and history**

The library will have enough space and PCs to run regular job clubs, helping people into employment. Support for small businesses and entrepreneurs will be available through our PatLib and Google Digital Garage initiatives. We're looking to grow our offer to include other online resources to support local business.

The libraries will have meeting spaces to allow us to work with partner agencies and local businesses to promote job seeking and economic development.

Knowledgeable staff and volunteers will offer family and local history sessions to support research through our in-library online resources.

- **Digital**

Through free Wi-Fi and a minimum of 12 public access PCs we'll ensure anyone visiting our buildings is able to embrace the digital world. We'll support those who may otherwise be excluded from digital interaction by providing equipment, training and support.

We will explore creative opportunities to expand our digital offer, building on our coding and digital making clubs. We want to introduce FabLabs or Maker Spaces into the library.

- **Health and wellbeing**

Libraries will support health and wellbeing in the community. We will utilise our meeting spaces to work with partners to offer health information, advice and signposting. Initiatives will include Books on Prescription and Dementia Friends sessions.

Libraries have always been and will continue to be a place of safety and support that will aid health and wellbeing within communities, combating loneliness and social isolation.

• Learning

Each library will have resources to support study and learning, including books and online resources. They will provide study and learning spaces for adults, children and young people, where communities and individuals can develop, share ideas and learn together.

There will be opportunities for exploration and creativity, offering workshops, groups and special events for children, young people and adults.



Our outreach offer will be tailored to suit customer need and demand. With investment in a new web based library management system we can provide a pop-up library wherever and whenever is appropriate to individual communities and need not be constrained by buildings and opening hours.

Users will be able to join the library, borrow books, receive demos of our online offers including eBooks and downloadable magazines, families can take part in reading and Rhymetime activities and receive health and wellbeing information.

Basically if there is a space and an audience we will work within the community to provide a pop-up library which increases the reach of the library service and is inclusive for those who do not consider visiting a library building.

These fun and informative pop-up library sessions could be regular events or happen on an ad-hoc basis to flex and change with activities already provided in the area.

Pop-up libraries will also give us the opportunity to market and promote our online offer and our enhanced in-library offer raising awareness with non and lapsed users about what a modern library service delivers.

Our Home Library Service is delivered through a network of volunteers to support the housebound. This includes deliveries of books and audiobooks to individuals at home, with the potential to loan eReaders or tablets in the future.

8. NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR LIBRARY BUILDINGS

Our clearly defined 'in-library offer' means that some of our buildings are not fit for purpose and have little or no scope for enhancement or opportunities to increase the footfall. In order to deliver a sustainable modern library service it is important that we assess our existing offer against a range of factors and comparators and have regard to an acceptable level of coverage across the city.

In respect of coverage we have aligned ourselves to the four geographical areas (localities) as defined by one of our key partners Livewell Southwest.

Using existing best practice each of our libraries has been assessed against the following criteria:

- Proportion of population in ward aged 0-17
- Proportion of population in ward aged over 60
- Total transactions (book issues)
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score 2015
- Total visits
- Cost per visit
- PC Hours used
- Total event attendance
- Suitability and sustainability of building (ability to deliver our new offer)

All criteria had an equal weighting, and each library was ranked 1 to 17 against each criteria.

All scores were then combined to give an overall ranking which indicated how well the libraries met the needs of users and communities (Figure 3).

Complete needs assessment is at Appendix C

Figure 3: Library needs assessment

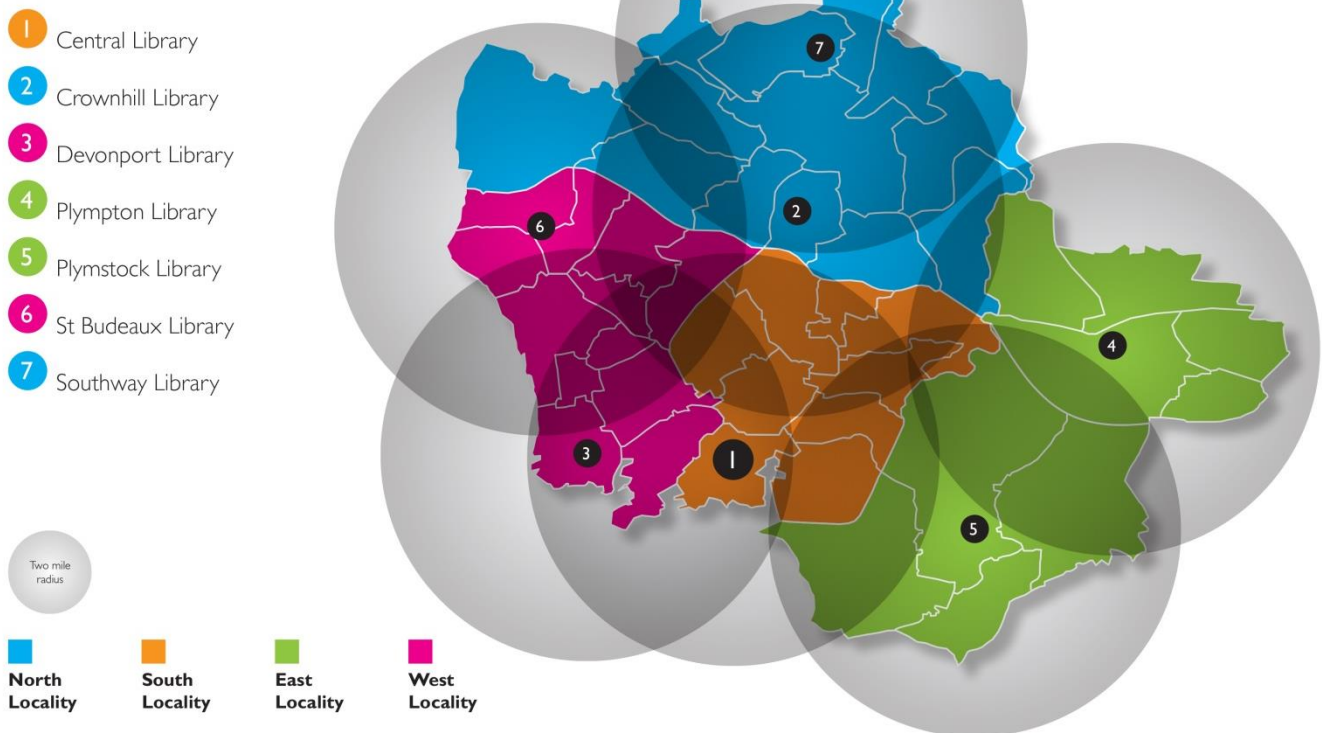
Library	Proportion of population in Ward aged 0-17	Proportion aged over 60 in ward	Total Population per ward	Issues (2015/16)	IMD score 2015 (1 is most deprived, 10 is least)	Visitors (16/17 estimated)	Cost per Visit	Total PC Hours Used	Total Event and Activity attendance	Building Performance Score	Combined Rank	Overall Rank
Plymstock Library	13	3	3	2	15	2	1	2	1	3	45	1
Central Library	17	13	13	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	53	2
Plympton Library	12	2	2	3	16	3	6	5	3	4	56	3
Crownhill Library	9	4	4	4	14	4	2	7	6	7	61	4
Devonport Library	8	10	10	8	4	7	5	3	7	2	64	5
Southway Library	7	6	6	5	12	5	7	6	9	6	69	6
St Budeaux Library	4	12	12	7	5	6	12	4	5	5	72	7
North Prospect Library	3	9	9	9	9	9	4	8	8	11	79	8
West Park Library	6	8	8	13	2	13	15	12	12	8	97	9
Estover Library	14	1	1	12	11	12	13	14	11	10	99	10
Peeverell Library	11	11	11	6	17	8	8	10	4	13	99	11
Efford Library	1	15	15	11	7	11	11	9	13	14	107	12
Ernesettle Library	5	7	7	16	3	15	14	13	15	15	110	13
Stoke Library	15	14	14	10	10	10	9	11	10	12	115	14
Eggbuckland Library	10	5	5	17	13	17	17	17	17	9	127	15
Laira Library	2	16	16	15	6	16	16	16	14	16	133	16
Tothill Library	16	17	17	14	8	14	10	15	16	17	144	17

9. OUR PROPOSAL

We are proposing the following option to address our drivers for change, enable the library service to better utilise its staff to deliver quality in-library services and deliver more services online and out in the community.

- An estate of seven libraries at Central, Crownhill (developed with meeting space), Devonport (developed with meeting space), Plympton, Plymstock, Southway (developed with meeting space) and St Budeaux (new development)
- Investment in all these buildings to ensure they are 'fit for purpose' enabling us to delivering our defined 'in-library' offer
- An enhanced online and outreach offer to extend the reach of the library service as a whole

Proposed library catchment



This proposal gives the most effective use of our existing estate and delivers all the outputs and activities in the key areas of the city.

This recommendation is supported by a commitment to invest in new technologies to support the new service (and allow for the new 'click and collect' service), significant investment in redeveloping St Budeaux Library and also bringing all remaining buildings up to date in respect of outstanding maintenance.

To ensure a smooth transition to the new service model we recommend that West Park Library will remain open until the St Budeaux site is redeveloped. We also recommend that Stoke Library remains open until Devonport Library is developed to include the new meeting space.

Plans to develop Derriford as part of the Plymouth Plan (both current options include a new library) could incorporate Southway and Crownhill libraries at a later point..

This plan has been developed to ensure that investment takes place before any savings are realised.

10. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. Do nothing and keep 17 library buildings open. Do not invest in buildings, ICT or the online offer. Retain limited outreach offer.

This option has been rejected as it does not address any of the drivers for change and doesn't allow us to deliver our defined library offers, outputs and activities.

2. Reduce library buildings from 17 to 10 to include Central, Crownhill (developed with meeting space), Devonport (developed with meeting space), Estover, North Prospect, Peverell, Plympton, Plymstock, Southway (developed with meeting space) and St Budeaux (new development). Investment in buildings where practicable. Investment in ICT to enable an enhanced outreach offer but no new investment for online resources.

This option has been rejected. Whilst it includes investment in some buildings to support our in-library offer we would be unable to provide our full range of services at Estover, Peverell and North Prospect due to limitations of the buildings. Enhancements to the online offer would not be possible.

3. Reduce library buildings from 17 to five, to include Central, Crownhill (developed with meeting space), Plympton, Plymstock and St Budeaux (new development). Full investment in ICT and the online and outreach offers. Despite Devonport Library ranking higher on the Library Ranking Analysis, it should be noted that St Budeaux was a preferred option due to redevelopment opportunities.

This option has been rejected as whilst it does address many of the drivers for change, it does not fit with the library needs assessment, would not provide an even geographical spread across the city and would mean that many would be more than two miles from a library building.

How can you get involved?

Email: planforlibraries@plymouth.gov.uk

Attend one of our open meetings: www.plymouth.gov.uk/planforlibraries

Facebook: [PlymouthLibraries](https://www.facebook.com/PlymouthLibraries)

Twitter: [@PlymLibraries](https://twitter.com/PlymLibraries)

