

**Leicester City Council  
Libraries Strategy 2008-2013**

**Enjoy** Leicester  
**Libraries**

**BETTER LIBRARIES - BETTER LIVES:  
Putting libraries at the heart of sustainable communities**

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### Foreword



Leicester is unique in its cultural diversity and we are proud that it is recognised as one of the most cohesive cities in the UK. The Council believes strongly that libraries have a critical role to play in making Leicester 'Britain's most sustainable city', a city in which everyone is supported to achieve their potential. The Libraries Strategy sets our vision for the service, building on the current strong foundations and setting out our aspirations for the next five years within the context of the 25 year transformational vision for Leicester "One Leicester". Fundamental to the Strategy is a commitment to

maximise the role of libraries as focal points for community and personal development.

This Strategy has involved thorough research into existing public library provision, and examination of best practice nationally. We have also considered how public library services relate to the newly evolving priorities for the City, particularly as expressed through the Corporate Plan, the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Local Area Agreement, the Cultural Strategy and the Community Cohesion Strategy.

Through a newly established Culture and Leisure Task Group, elected members have played an active role in the development of the Strategy, undertaking extensive library visits, commissioning a survey of users and non-users, and contributing to its recommendations. Over 1100 people responded to the survey and we would like to thank all who took the time to respond.

What has emerged is a bold and ambitious vision for the future; one that has the full backing of the Council and, we believe, of the public. There is a challenging timetable and we will need to be creative in the way that we generate the resources to put the plan into action, but there is no doubt about it. Libraries have an exciting future in Leicester!

**Councillor Wayne Naylor**

Chair of Culture and Leisure Task Group

**Councillor Andy Connelly**

Lead Member, Culture and Leisure

## 1 Our Vision

### Better Libraries – Better Lives: Putting Libraries at the Heart of Sustainable Communities



Leicester has an award winning Library Service. In 2007 our 'Welcome to your Library' project attracted a national 'Libraries Change Lives' award because of our innovative work recruiting and training volunteers from the refugee and asylum seeker communities to gain work experience and transferable skills, offering self-help sessions and study support groups.

The previous libraries strategy, implemented in 2001, 'Achieving Inclusion', generated a sustained increase in the take up of services, particularly by those groups in the city experiencing social exclusion. This work contributed to the City Council's achievement of 'Beacon' status for cultural services for hard to reach groups in 2006/7.

This strategy will deliver significant contributions to the agenda for investing in our children and supporting our communities, that we laid out in the "One Leicester" vision.

Our ambition is to build on our established strong foundations by engaging with local people and, maximising the positive role that libraries play in local communities. It is our intention that every user will be able to access a comprehensive range of library services. This includes providing books and other reading materials which encourage and enthuse children and adults to read more, giving access to information and to personalised learning advice and support, as well as providing opportunities for participation in arts and health activities.

Over the next five years we aim to significantly increase the number of people using library buildings and services by promoting reading and learning, improving access, and making sure our libraries are friendly, attractive and well equipped. We will continue to expand our partnerships with other agencies and Council departments to ensure that libraries are alive

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with activity, that library users receive a high quality service that meets their individual needs and that the Service plays a full and active role in the delivery of the Local Area Agreement.

Our key aims are that by 2013:

- Leicester Libraries Service will be recognised locally, regionally and nationally as a centre of excellence for engaging hard to reach communities in cultural participation and community learning, raising skills and aspirations through successful partnership working.
- Leicester's libraries will be a source of pride and community identity making a unique contribution to quality of life and well being, helping Leicester to become a harmonious place where people feel safe and comfortable.
- Leicester Libraries Service will be recognised for successfully developing the unique role of public libraries in encouraging reading as a valuable cultural activity and actively helping individual adults and children to improve their literacy as a vital life skill.

The overall objectives for the service are as follows:

### 1.1 Providing a high quality service for all

Libraries will provide a quality, family-friendly service for the city by engaging with local communities in planning, delivering and promoting services, and ensuring that we actively seek to meet the needs of hard to reach, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

Libraries will support the council's transformation agenda, reflect local needs, and by working with City Council services and other providers, identify the best local models for service delivery at a neighbourhood level. This will maximise opportunities for community engagement and the co-location and integration of services where appropriate.

### 1.2 Enhancing learning opportunities

Libraries will continue to support the learning needs of adults and children, developing innovative ways to increase take up of provision for informal learning, skills development, volunteering and work experience, contributing to the City's economic sustainability and to community cohesion. We will work in partnership with other providers to enable individual and confidential advice, support and learning opportunities for adults with literacy needs.

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### 1.3 Providing a sustainable infrastructure

Library buildings will be attractive, accessible and fit for purpose, able to support a wide range of partnership activity with a high quality bookstock that is of a range and size appropriate to meet the needs of city residents. The Central Libraries will be redeveloped as a flagship for the service, demonstrating the Council's commitment to sustainable regeneration and lifelong learning. Modernised community library buildings will contribute to Leicester's policies on energy efficiency and carbon emission reduction.

### 1.4 Reducing the digital divide

Libraries will ensure that the 'digitally excluded' have free and local access to ICT equipment and services

#### Did you know?

Leicester Libraries is the biggest provider of free public access computers in the City, ensuring that all citizens have Internet access. Most reference books are now provided online.

that keep pace with technological development in society. Through improved provision of online services and resources, library users will benefit from electronic access to informal learning, information and leisure opportunities in the library and will also have

24/7 access on home computers with the use of individual PIN numbers.

## 2 Priorities for Development 2008 – 2013

We can be proud of the achievements of the city's library services but we also acknowledge the things which are not so good. In this section we identify how we can build on our achievements to develop the service over the next five years.



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### 2.1 Ensure that all library buildings are welcoming, accessible and fit for a wide range of community uses.

The modern public library is a bustling place in which people of all ages can read, borrow books, use computers and the Internet and discover opportunities for informal learning and leisure activities. Looking at models of provision nationally and in Leicester itself, they are places where communities come together to learn, to enjoy and to participate. They often have multi-purpose spaces for community events, exercise classes, cafes, children's activities, council information points, health drop-ins and much more. Library users are equally diverse – at different times of the day you will find parents, carers and toddlers attending an early years session or a book club, lunchtime office workers listening to music, adults attending language and ICT classes, children doing their homework, or 'silver surfers' chatting online to distant family and friends. Leicester already has many of these activities in libraries and over the next five years we will work with local residents to develop services that meet local needs.



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### 2.1.1 Current provision



Leicester has 18 library buildings including two Central Libraries. The suitability of location and the design and condition of the buildings varies enormously across the city ranging from two exciting new buildings (The BRITE Centre and Hamilton) to libraries in buildings that have inadequate space, poor locations and unattractive appearances both internally and externally. Eight libraries lack basic facilities such as public toilets and several have poor disabled access.

#### Did you know?

Thanks to support from local people, in October 2007, the Big Lottery Fund awarded Leicester almost £1.5million to establish a 'state of the art' community centre in New Parks, with a café, music facilities for young people and spaces for community activity as well as a great new library.

The need for better book stock, more comfortable seating and more computers in the older library buildings were significant themes in our recent public survey. Unsurprisingly, this affects the level of use of the services. In contrast, our experience shows that new and refurbished libraries, when well located, attract very high levels of use, particularly from previous non-users and 'hard to reach' groups.

The Council has a commitment to offer high quality, well maintained play facilities, libraries and museums that are widely available and popular. In keeping with this we will work with our partners and other Council departments to identify solutions to the problems of individual libraries across the city network.

Working closely with Property Services as part of the corporate asset management review we want to create an infrastructure which is fit for purpose now and in the future, with more strategically located new

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build libraries and redevelopment of some current buildings where needed. This will be achieved by categorising libraries into 3 groups: those premises that perform well and are well located, those needing changes and improvement to be fit for purpose, and those where a service could be better delivered elsewhere, as part of a multi service centre.

There are key issues to be addressed regarding under-used and under-performing buildings. Resources are spread thinly across the city and where low use is the result of poor location or changing demographics, investment in the building is unlikely to achieve real value for money in terms of increased use.

### 2.1.2 Central library

“One Leicester” has ambitious plans for the regeneration of the city centre with a rich mix of historic and contemporary buildings and public spaces to be proud of. It aims to deliver a “vibrant city centre” with an excellent cultural offer. Leicester has been awarded New Growth Point status indicating that the population of the City is set to increase substantially, bringing with it an increased demand on public sector services. Improved cultural provision is key to the transformation of the city centre; the establishment of the Cultural Quarter, the creation of the Performing Arts Centre, and the Digital Media Centre, are well underway. In contrast, the current state of the two Central Libraries leaves much to be

desired. Bringing them together in a single building would provide city residents with tangible benefits and make a visible and significant contribution to City Centre Regeneration.

It would provide a premier location for accessible and exciting literature and arts events, taking participation in cultural activities to a much wider and diverse audience drawn from residents from all communities in the city, but particularly addressing the needs of city centre residents whose numbers are expected to grow. We would expect a new Central Library to reflect the best in current thinking about public library provision. It would be a central venue for informal and adult learning, advice and information and would enhance the range and quality of services to children and young people.

We propose that the need for a new Central Library become a required consideration in all city centre development schemes such as the redevelopment of the market place, and that any scheme would explore potential for inclusion of a café, multi purpose meeting, training and function rooms, and the potential for enhanced programme delivery through integration with other services.

### 2.1.3 Community libraries

For many city residents their local library is the main route by which they access library services. We will contribute to the development of the City Council’s

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plans for individual local neighbourhoods, working with other Council departments and external partners in the fields of health, education and community development to increase local people's access to a range of complementary services. This approach will identify how individual libraries should grow and adapt to complement existing provision and meet evident gaps. We will identify those libraries where local people can become much more actively involved in the development and delivery of services.

Dedicated facilities for children and young people are now an established part of community library provision and will form a core part of our plans for new buildings and refurbishments. Through partnerships with Sure Start and Children's Centres every library in the city now has a designated children's area, well stocked and with child-friendly furniture, though scale and quality varies according to available space and condition of the buildings. Having made great strides in provision for under-5s and younger children, over the next 5 years we will work with Youth Services and other organisations to develop better facilities and resources for young people.

### 2.1.4 Capital resources

Working within the Corporate Estates and Neighbourhood Management Strategies for all capital developments we will look carefully at how such developments may be resourced, maximising

opportunities to secure funding to achieve our objectives, through regeneration initiatives, through initiatives with private sector property developments such as Section 106, through new health provision such as the LIFT programme and through education infrastructure programmes such as Building Schools for the Future (BSF).

When planning new library buildings or refurbishments we will consider how investment in location, signage and lighting can contribute to neighbourhood regeneration by creating a high quality built environment, increasing footfall and reducing local fears about crime. We will maximise the potential for lowering energy use, reducing carbon emissions and improving waste management and recycling so that we actively contribute to the City's aspirations to make Leicester "safe, clean, and green".

### 2.2 Making our services more accessible



Through extensive outreach and partnership working, we have had considerable success in increasing library usage but we know there is more that can be done. Our recent consultation with users and, importantly non-users, has highlighted the need to find new ways of delivering traditional services as well as introducing additional services and activities that bring new people into our buildings to experience new types of learning activity. Over the next 5 years we will continue to address a number of challenges which are set out in detail below.

#### 2.2.1 Extending or changing opening hours to meet local needs

Changes in working patterns and in lifestyle have brought increasing demands to alter or extend library opening hours. Our recent survey confirmed that poor opening hours are an issue for some users and may be a factor in why some people do not make use of their library. The introduction of Sunday opening at Hamilton and BRITE Centre were experiments for the city and response has been variable. At Hamilton, Sunday opening is very successful because it benefits from the high footfall of the adjacent 24-hour Tesco store. Sunday opening the BRITE Centre Library has been more problematic because it is operating in an isolated position within the building (no other services are open on Sundays), and there is low footfall in the surrounding area on a Sunday. Extension to other libraries will be dependent upon community needs, flexibility of staff deployment and availability of resources. In recent months the Council has begun to positively address the issue of library opening hours, providing additional funding to increase opening hours on weekdays at Southfields, Braunstone and Highfields to improve access for local people. These actions are already making a contribution to the "One Leicester" vision of supporting and investing in communities.

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### **2.2.2 Targeting hard to reach groups**

Through the “Achieving Inclusion” strategy (2001 to 2006) the library service did much to remove barriers to participation for hard to reach groups, achieving considerable increases in library use, particularly in inner city areas. However, Leicester has 13 of the poorest wards in England, so meeting the needs of hard to reach groups in the city will remain a key priority.

Over the next few years we want to increase partnership working and community engagement, particularly in some of the outer lying estates where literacy levels are extremely poor and motivation to access education, training and employment is low. (The success of the library service in securing a Big Lottery Fund grant for new facilities in New Parks will support our ambition to enhance quality of life for local people.)

As stated in “One Leicester”, libraries will invest in children, providing opportunities for young people to be valued, listened to and supported through the transition into being responsible adults. We will develop new and additional services for young people aged 13 -16 who are amongst the most difficult to engage, to address adult literacy needs, overturn low levels of engagement in cultural activity, help residents achieve healthier lifestyles and provide more work experience and volunteering opportunities to enhance employment prospects.

### **2.2.3 Cultural diversity: responding positively to demographic change**

By 2011 Leicester is predicted to be the first City in Britain to have a majority ethnic minority population. Libraries have a role to play in ensuring that the City benefits positively, both economically and socially, from these changes enabling everyone to participate as an active citizen. We have an excellent track record of reaching out to Leicester’s diverse populations with the result that just over 50% of active library users are now from BME communities.

We will continue to ensure that library staff reflect the rich cultural diversity of the population, and that libraries offer the books and learning materials to meet the needs of all cultural groups. Libraries already provide books in over 30 languages and we have systems in place to respond quickly to requests for other languages although the growing number of languages is a challenge.

In response to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees taking part in a work experience and volunteering project in Central lending, we have established new in house, accessible and informal citizenship classes and opportunities to practice speaking English. These classes can now be delivered through other appropriate libraries. Through innovative outreach programmes and partnership working we will continue to identify and work with new

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communities, however small, ensuring that the library service supports their needs.

"Visitors from outside Leicester have praised the library's collection of Indian CDs, DVDs and books."

*Belgrave library user*

### 2.2.4 Contributing to community cohesion

Without a combination of reading, ICT and English language skills it is difficult for people to play an active role in society – a literate population is essential to the creation of an inclusive and cohesive society. Libraries already contribute to the "One Leicester" agenda to give access to all to "One Language", that is conversational English sessions.

One of Libraries' strengths is our ability to bring people together to develop a sense of community and promote civic values. Libraries provide free and neutral spaces and a wide range of resources and learning opportunities, which are highly valued by people from all communities.

Since 2006 we have developed no less than 126 partnership projects that promote active citizenship. Joint working with external agencies such as Connexions, Citizens Advice, Nextstep and Age

Concern at a neighbourhood level have made our libraries a great place to socialise and learn. Our priorities for the next five years will support cohesive communities whether in inner city areas or on outer city estates.

For new communities, libraries are an essential venue for people wanting to study to gain British citizenship, providing free access to many learning resources including ESOL (English language classes).

It's not all about study. Libraries can enhance intercultural understanding by recognising the City's different communities; libraries celebrate Eid, Divali and Christmas, for example, and actively participate in Leicester's Carnivals.

#### Did you know?

Leicester libraries now stock books in over 30 languages from Urdu and Hindi to Polish. If you want books in a language we don't have, just ask.

### 2.2.5 Supporting an ageing population

In common with most of the UK, the proportion of older people in Leicester is set to increase significantly and the Council has responded by establishing improved quality of life and well being for older people as a key objective. Libraries are already well used by

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older people: 10% of library members are over 65, including a significant number of members over 80. The needs of many older library members are no different from any other part of the adult population and our task is to ensure that we can meet the needs of the over 50s age group by making available a good stock of books, meeting the growing demand for "silver surfers" ICT training sessions and through increasing the cultural, leisure and healthy living activities in local libraries.

### Did you know?

From April 2008, anyone wanting to listen to rather than read their books, will be able to 'download' Talking Books player as well as borrowing from our stock of 6000 CDs and cassettes.

However it is vital for the library service to respond to the needs of the vulnerable elderly who have poor health, and who may suffer from a range of disabilities that have a devastating impact on their quality of life, such as visual and hearing impairment and lack of mobility. Specialist services delivered to vulnerable older people can make a significant improvement to their quality of life and be a factor in preventing isolation and further deterioration in their ability to maintain their independence. These services include the Home Library Service, which delivers books to the

individual homes of library users, as well as loan services to residential homes and a minibus service that provides a door-to-door service bringing people into their local library to browse and choose books for themselves.

### 2.2.6 Improving services for people with disabilities

Leicester values all its citizens and it is vital that we extend our services to everyone. There are core services that libraries need to ensure are in place for people of any age who have disabilities:

- We need good disabled access to buildings, clear appropriate external and internal signage, good layout and use of colour internally. Currently building access work will be completed by 2009 but external and internal signs are in many cases inadequate and the poor interiors and condition of some library buildings has had a detrimental impact on layout.
- We need a comprehensive Home Library Service for those who cannot leave their home without support. Currently our Home Library Service provides a delivery service for people with disabilities directly to their home, and also provides loans to residents of 50 residential homes in the city. In the future we want to expand and improve our services to the housebound and people in long-term residential

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care. We will do this through partnerships with Adult Services, voluntary sector organisations and the development of local volunteering programmes.

- The library minibus service provides transport to local community libraries in the city for 260 library users with disabilities on a 3-week rota. However the vehicle design and layout limit the access of those with some disabilities and a more fit for purpose vehicle would be desirable. There is currently no capacity to meet demands for additional minibus places, and in the absence of a new or additional vehicle, we can only increase the number of users by having a 4 weekly rota instead of a 3 weekly one.

"I have been using Leicester Libraries for a very long time, more than 20 years. And I have been very HAPPY with the service."

*Senior library user*

- Special resources such as large print books and talking books are widely used by older people but they are also vital for younger people with visual and physical impairments and for people with learning disabilities. The advent of 'downloadable' talking books for library members is an exciting prospect. This will

make available a much wider range of talking books for all ages.

- Libraries already provide specially adapted computers with specialist software. We will continue to ensure that library users with disabilities are not disadvantaged by new developments in technology that could exclude them from services.
- It is vital for libraries to have an inclusive approach to the needs of people with learning disabilities of all kinds. This includes adults and children with dyslexia and autism. Many individuals with such learning disabilities do not want to identify themselves as needing special resources and services and it is important for libraries to work with voluntary and statutory sector partners to identify ways in which the library service can make services more accessible to support the information and resource needs of adults and children and their carers. It is also essential to provide staff with the knowledge and awareness of learning disabilities to ensure that they do not limit the accessibility of libraries, by responding inappropriately to those with learning difficulties.

### 2.2.7 Tackling health inequalities

Libraries are already extensively involved in the promotion of positive health messages and in raising awareness of healthy eating and active lifestyles. There is much more that can be done in this area; in the next five years we want to extend our partnerships with health agencies, offering increased information and activities that promote healthy eating, tackle obesity (particularly amongst children), encourage active lifestyles, reduce stress, support people with mental health problems and help older people to live independent lives for longer. There are examples in other authorities of new public library buildings being provided in partnership with local Primary Care Trusts through the LIFT programme. This could provide a way forward in some neighbourhoods in Leicester.

### 2.2.8 Engaging with children, young people and their carers

Leicester aims to be a family-friendly city where children and young people flourish. Libraries support this ambition and have achieved many successes in recent years working closely with Surestart, Children's Centres, and schools to offer activities for parents and young children, homework and study support for older children and special study programmes for children who are excluded from school. As a result, the number of young library members, and take up of enjoyable, friendly learning activities for children and

families in libraries, has increased dramatically. Some library buildings and staff levels are already too limited to cope with the large numbers of children who go into the library after school; expansion of space and staffing is a considerable challenge for the service in the next five years. The most significant success has been with early years and the younger age range of children; there is still considerable work for us to do to make services more accessible to young people in the 12 plus age group and for children and young people with disabilities.

#### Did you know?

The Libraries Service is actively involved in health promotion. Working with Leicester City Primary Care Trust we promote "Discover Wellbeing", a programme of awareness sessions on topics such as stopping smoking, diabetes, heart disease, dental health, physical activity & obesity. Internet access points in libraries enable people with mental health problems with access to the NHS' latest self-help programmes.

Further challenges for the next few years will be to ensure that we are positioned to engage with the emerging strategies for Children's Centres, schools and youth services at a strategic and local level to

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provide accessible and relevant library services and to achieve equality of access and appropriate resources and services for all children and young people.

### 2.3 Promote reading and learning to improve quality of life



Enabling people to achieve their potential means equipping them with the right skills that they need to play an active role in the economic and social life of

the city.

The ability to read and write will remain fundamental for improving life quality and chances. In modern society it is also essential to be skilled and confident in computer and internet use. People who for a range of reasons have not developed basic literacy skills will also struggle to acquire numeracy, computer or language skills, and are often reluctant to go back into formal education institutions. In contrast, there is national and local evidence that libraries are seen as friendly, non-threatening places in which people can learn at their own pace, making them an ideal place to start.

"My library has a relaxed atmosphere. It's like a meeting place for friends where people can chill out, do homework, go on the computers."

*Teenage library user.*

Since 2001 Leicester's libraries have developed more than 250 partnership projects with local colleges, universities and schools to provide creative events and activities, ranging from book clubs and story time sessions to poetry writing workshops and work with excluded children. Innovations have involved libraries

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working with local playgroups to provide book loans to the under fives, and taking libraries out into shopping centres to promote summer reading schemes.



### 2.3.1 Starting young



We believe that a love of reading must begin at an early age. Through a partnership with all local Children's Centres, Early Years library staff posts have increased the number of 'toddlertime' sessions and promoted the national Bookstart programme for babies and early years. We have specifically targeted hard to reach groups, for example through the "Babies of the World' mother and toddler sessions for refugees and asylum seekers in the Central Lending Library. Two new Children's Bookbuses will come into service in 2008. The accessible, brightly coloured attractive vehicles will be key to attracting children up to the age

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of 11 in disadvantaged areas of the city to become regular library users.

We are already actively involved in a number of national young reader development programmes including the Reading Agency's national Summer Reading Challenge for young people. Leicester's own 'Book of the Year' programme engages young people in secondary schools across the city in reading a long list of books, then short listing and selecting a winner. Following the success of Book of the Year, we are now working with primary schools to engage younger children through the 'Our Best Book' project.

"My children and I attend toddler time sessions every Friday. I'd like to pass on my thanks to the people who organise and run this very popular activity which is at least partially responsible for my daughter's obsession with books of all kinds. A safe, fun and positive group."

*Central Lending library user.*

### 2.3.2 Adults and intergenerational reading



A key objective for the library service is to involve more parents and carers in the language and reading development of their children and this includes identifying resources and services to support parents and carers of children with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and autism.

Involving parents and carers has other advantages. Over the next few years, working closely with the Council's Family Learning Service, we aim to increase family based and intergenerational learning, using fun reading programmes for children as a trigger for re-engaging their parents and carers. Our staff are

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already trained and encouraged to help 'emerging' adult readers to find interesting material to read.

A Literature Development Officer promotes books and literature through events and author visits, encourages creative writing and supports unpublished writers. Creative writing events are inclusive, meeting the diverse needs of the city's ethnic minority communities, as well as people with physical and learning disabilities and those experiencing mental health problems.

Libraries support a number of book clubs around the city and they are a very adaptable means of engaging a wide range of different people in reading activity from the already avid readers to those who may be trying to improve their literacy and we will be seeking to increase the number of clubs over the next five years.

### 2.3.3 Cultural and leisure activities

Libraries play a key role in offering informal learning opportunities in many subject areas; this is increasingly important due the change in Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding which makes it more difficult to attract mainstream funding for non-accredited and non-vocational training. Over the next five years we will seek to extend a wider range of informal learning through cultural and leisure activities in libraries from exercise classes for older citizens to arts programmes offering DJ mixing skills for

teenagers. We see them all as part of Libraries' broader role in encouraging people to take the first steps in lifelong learning, and the acquisition of transferable skills.

#### Did you know?

The BRITE Centre includes a full size training kitchen to support healthy eating classes, its book stock gives access to a wide range of books on cookery and fitness. Thanks to a major Big Lottery Fund award in 2007, a new library and community learning centre in New Parks will include a community café offering a healthy choice of foods, a training kitchen and a multipurpose hall for fitness and dance classes to suit all ages.

Our aim for the next 5 years is to make a significant increase in the number of people, from the youngest to the oldest in society, who see reading and informal learning as a great source of personal pleasure, relaxation and enjoyment and who feel comfortable using their local library for a wide range of leisure and cultural activities along with traditional library services. Although this is an end in itself, informal learning can be the first step towards individuals feeling confident and motivated enough to explore the

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possibilities of more formal courses and gaining qualifications.

### 2.4 Support mainstream learning provision for children and adults



Libraries have a very strong track record of working in partnership with other Council departments and outside agencies to support and enhance mainstream education and accredited learning at community level. Libraries support the City's priority of raising educational attainment for both adults and young people and we have successful examples of providing adult work experience and volunteering opportunities which enhance employment prospects. This work is to be expanded over the next five years.

#### 2.4.1 Supporting education attainment

As outlined in 2.3, Libraries offer extensive support for children under 5 years and run a wide range of dedicated early years reading programmes. In 2007 an agreement between libraries and Children and Young Peoples Services has established libraries in all Children's Centres, which are electronically linked to the main library network.

Young children and their parents and carers are given library tickets that can be used to borrow books from the centre but can also be used at any community library in the city. This work complements Early Years education within Children's Centres, assisting young children to make a successful transition into Primary School.

Children's Centres are now developing a network strategy taking integrated services to the next stage within neighbourhoods. This is of crucial importance for libraries over the next five years, particularly as the number of Children's Centres with libraries grows. 'Bookstart' has already been recognised as a core activity in networked children's services. (The Bookstart programme includes a book gifting scheme, local access to early years language and literacy support, under-5s bookbus and family learning activities.)

Public libraries in Leicester support mainstream education in schools through reader development,

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which encourages children and young people to read for pleasure, and study support. Development work includes the "Book of the Year", in which all secondary schools participate, and "Our Best Book", which engages nearly two thirds of primary school in the City. The majority of City libraries have provided homework help and study support since 2001 and this provision has been reviewed to identify the best models for the future.

We are now seeking to enhance and build on our existing partnership with Children and Young People's Services and, with primary and secondary schools across the city, to extend the provision of study support programmes for children who have been excluded from school and who at risk of missing out on critical periods of education. The work done in the Central Lending Library to support the needs of children excluded from school has demonstrated how effective libraries can be in this field.

### **Did you know?**

Through the "Books for Babies" Bookstart scheme every baby born in the city is entitled to 3 free books packs in the first 4 years of their life?

Through this strategy we will ensure that libraries' reader development and study support programmes are embedded as core activities in all neighbourhood programmes in Extended Services in and around schools. We will also monitor the proposed changes in education qualifications, which aim to offer more vocational training opportunities to 16-19 year olds, to ensure that libraries play a full role in delivery at a local level.

Support for young people and adults pursuing qualifications up to and including A level standard have been prioritised and their wider reading needs are met through the lending service. We will continue to provide access to post A level study for independent learning and research at a higher level through the national INSPIRE scheme which enables members of the public to be referred to University libraries for the use of their more academic and specialised resources.

Lack of appropriate spaces to support work with children is an issue for many of our existing buildings. Our review of the community library network will include how facilities can be provided through joint programming of outreach activities (taking the library out into the community), through partnerships with schools offering extended services in and around schools, and through exploring the potential for new or improved library buildings as part of the next phase of Building Schools for the Future programme.

### Did you know?

In 2006/07, around 9,000 children attended homework and study support sessions in their local library, supported by Leicester's own library staff.

### 2.4.2 Promoting adult learning

Libraries are successful providers of accredited adult learning, signposting and supporting people into training and employment through established partnerships with the Council's own Adult Learning services, as well as with adult education and further education colleges in the City.

Libraries support a very wide range of training courses that develop key skills and lead to qualifications in English, numeracy and computing. Many libraries offer classes and study support for language skills for Leicester's diverse new and migrant communities, many of whom are enthusiastic users of library services. One of our innovations has been to host 'ESOL' teachers from local colleges to provide language support classes. (English for Speakers of Other Languages.) Some adult learning provision is provided in-house by library staff, such as the citizenship and language conversation classes

provided for asylum seekers and refugees, family history, silver surfers, ICT classes and reading clubs.

There are also options for self-study, including those offered by new technology, with libraries providing an essential access point for many people.

Local libraries have a very important role in providing a familiar, safe, informal and free neighbourhood environment for people who do not yet feel able to take a formal adult learning course. We want to expand the ways in which the library provision can complement the work of other providers through the direct employment of staff with expertise in adult learning. The library service can then directly provide free and discreet help for people to take the first steps into literacy, numeracy and computing if they lack the confidence to go to more formal adult learning classes.

### Did you know?

Any library member with Internet access at home can access reference material such as the Encyclopaedia Britannica – and it's all FREE OF CHARGE!

The new library and community learning centre opening in New Parks in 2009 will provide the first

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chance to implement and monitor the effectiveness of this approach.

### 2.4.3 Pathways to training and employment



As well as training courses, adults also need easy access to good quality, impartial information and advice to help them make appropriate training choices and be successful in the labour market. The Central Learning and Information Library in Bishop Street has been successfully established as a UK Online Centre providing online access in an unthreatening, informal environment; we are planning to expand the number

of libraries registered as UK Online Centres to 10 by 2010.

Computer use is still daunting to many and the service includes structured help and support for those who lack computers at home or who may not be ready to undertake formal education but want to take that first step by providing supported session on a one-to-two basis or in small groups.

In the next five years we will seek to improve and expand adult learning in libraries. In conjunction with Leicester Learning Partnership, we will explore the potential for key libraries to be part of the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) funded programme to develop 6 Access Centres in the city as one-stop-shops, providing multi-agency services for local learning and a support system with clear progression pathways to enhance life, learning or employment skills.

#### Did you know?

As part of the national Nextstep initiative, we employ a Learning and Work Adviser giving a free, confidential information and advice service to adults (age 20+). Surgeries are held on a weekly basis at 4 libraries and twice weekly at the Central Learning & Information Library.

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The City has ambitious plans to get 12,000 more people into work by 2012. Libraries will make a contribution to achieving this target. We have already run a number of highly successful volunteering and work experience schemes. We will continue to expand this work over the next 5 years, creating a city-wide volunteer programme for libraries for people of all backgrounds and ages, enabling them to gain essential skills and work experience, and sign post them to further training and employment opportunities.

"I am a widow, a mother of 5 and I was a full time housemaker. In January 2006, I got the chance to enrol onto the volunteering project (Refugees into Libraries) at Leicester Central Lending Library. I found all the staff to be really helpful, caring and I quickly felt I was in a very friendly and comfortable environment. I started to regain my self-confidence and became motivated enough to apply for vacancies in the library. Now I am a Library Assistant and I would advise anybody to take part in opportunities like these."

*Former library volunteer*

### 2.4.4 Libraries as cultural facilities

Libraries are part of the Council's statutory provision and as such form an important part of the Regeneration and Culture Directorate. Over the past few years the City has built a new reputation for itself as a dynamic and creative place with a rich mix of cultural facilities. The renewal of the libraries service will be an important element in ensuring that all of Leicester's citizens have access to cultural facilities not only through major city centre facilities such as new and improved art galleries, museums, theatres and public spaces, and hopefully, a new central library but also at a local level through high quality, comfortable, welcoming and accessible libraries.

### 2.4.5 The rise of new technology

Customer choices and demands change over time. Not so very long ago, public library resources for leisure, information and learning were wholly book or hardcopy print based - this is no longer the case. Developments in technology have been instrumental in bringing about changes in society; access to computers and to the Internet is now a core library service and a major reason for visits. In the Central Learning and Information Library in Bishop Street, over 70% of visitors want to use ICT with frequent queues at busy lunchtimes and after school. In all local libraries the computers are in heavy demand; Highfields, Westcotes, St. Barnabas, and Belgrave

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have high levels of demand often exceeding capacity. This reflects the growing importance of computers and Internet in society for learning, information and leisure - and the fact that many people in Leicester still do not have computer access at home.

### 2.4.6 The importance of books



Books remain a vital resource at the heart of library provision where they are essential for encouraging and improving literacy and increasing participation in reading as a cultural and leisure activity. We have developed effective stock management techniques to ensure that all users have access to a diverse and

"More computer terminals please! Sometimes they are all taken up by children doing homework or people listening to music."

Teenage library user

*Former library volunteer*

changing book stock through planned stock rotation and inter-library lending but the next five years presents a challenge to the library service in providing a quality bookstock to meet the needs of all city residents.

It is not a question of either books or technology. The need for more computers **and** concerns regarding the

"The computer facilities provided by the library have made a difference to my life. They help me to keep in touch with my friends back home, to find job opportunities and also to learn new things."

*Adult library user*

quality and depth of the book stock emerged as two of the main concerns for the public in our recent survey. So, as well as investment in book stock, there is also a need to ensure that we make appropriate investment in technology and electronic resources.

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### 2.4.7 Changing formats

The demand for loans of music CDs and DVD is overall in decline reflecting both changes to copyright laws (which prevent libraries from offering music less than 3 months old), plus the increased domestic use of low cost, internet-based postal services and music downloads. Over the next five years it will be important for us to determine when some services need to cease and whether it is necessary to invest in the development of new services to meet changing demands.

### 2.4.8 Access to archives

One of the growing demands on the library service is the interest in local and family history. The availability of on line resources and television coverage of family history research has encouraged many more people to undertake their own genealogical research, to uncover their own family tree. However, a regularly expressed frustration for library users is that a large part of Leicester's local and family archives are kept in the County Records office in Wigston Magna, some 4 miles from the city centre. This has resulted in a certain level of duplication with the Central Library needing to build up its own research resources to meet most common demands.

There may be an opportunity to explore alternative options for improving access to these important records. We will be discussing this with the Museums

Service (who now manage the Joint Arrangement with the County Council for the Records Office).

### 2.5 Using technology to improve services and reduce the digital divide



Customers have always used public libraries for information, leisure and learning and the use of ICT has not changed the role but the means of delivery. There are numerous examples of this:

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- Answering enquiries, once dependant upon reference books, is now almost all provided through the Internet in a timely and accurate way;
- Network technology now means that electronic reference resources can be accessed at all community libraries;
- Study support and learning materials for children and young people are now more likely to be available through the use of ICT;
- The format of talking books, particularly needed by the elderly and disabled people, has gone from tape to CD and, from 2008, will be available in a downloadable format which will give access to a vast range of stock at a lower cost to the library service;

Leicester Libraries Services already makes highly effective use of technology. We are part of the national People's Network, which since 2002 has seen the provision of free public access computers and Internet access at all UK libraries. In Leicester they have become a core service and this has been responsible for a huge increase in the number of library visitors.



As described earlier in the Strategy, there is a continuous and growing demand by the public for ICT training in libraries across the city. This has been driven by the free provision through the People's Network and the availability of library staff that have benefited from bespoke in-house training to enable them to provide one-to-one help for people who are new to computers. However, only a small number of libraries such as the Central Learning & Information Library, The BRITE Centre and Hamilton have training rooms where ICT courses can be delivered without disrupting other library activities. This is something that we need to address as part of the review of library buildings at neighbourhood level.

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New technology now underpins the whole running of the libraries service. The current Galaxy library management system keeps records of members, book loans, overdue charges, counter sales, stock rotation, processing over 2 million issues in 2006/7. Virtual library services are now well established in the City. Through the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), online reservations and renewals are already available 24/7.

There are two key challenges here. We will need to maintain the skills expertise and innovation that libraries have in these important areas of technology and we need to maintain the high quality of service delivery by an ongoing programme of funding to replace both software and hardware as current systems inevitably will need replacing in 3-4 years.

### 2.5.1 Piloting new services

Libraries are recognised by the Council as a service that is at the leading edge of good practice in customer service delivered through ICT. We are delighted that our track record of service development and the high public take up of electronic services through the People's Network and Galaxy has led the Council to identify libraries as the department that will pilot 3 key new services on behalf of all:

- The use of SMS texts to send information to service users. Initially this will be about requested books.

- The development of more interactive web sites for council services that contain podcasts, downloads, voting and opinion metering, blogs, messaging and the ability to personalise the view of a site by the individual user.
- The development of modern financial management such as electronic payments for goods purchased as well as electronic ordering (as a part of the project to replace the current financial management information system).

### 2.5.2 Planning for the future

Libraries across the country need to anticipate and maximise the benefits of continued changes in technology that can improve services. In Leicester we are fully aware of these changes and are building them into ideas for service delivery – this can be demonstrated through the following examples:

- Society is increasingly moving away from desktop PCs to portable and handheld devices and from fixed network to Wi-Fi access. The benefits to libraries can be immense, as can be seen a new generation of award-winning library buildings springing up around the country. Going wire free enables creative, welcoming open plan spaces, informal seating and café style access to technology. We need to plan for this in terms of the design and layout of new and refurbished libraries and in advance of

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2010 when the current generation of People's Network computers requires renewal.

- The importance of 'future proofing' our technology investments is brought home by Leicester Regeneration Company's aspiration to see the roll out of a high bandwidth cabled network which would allow the creation of super fast Wi-Fi 'hotspots' across the city centre. The new Central Library would form an obvious place to host public access to the high speed network, enabling visiting tourists and business people to come in and log on – either via a public access terminal or via their own laptop or the new generation of mobile phones and PDAs (personal digital assistant).
- One of the key developments transforming libraries is RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) which, inserting small 'chips' into books or other lending materials, enables self-service check-in and check-out of books, improves security, reduces the loss of books through theft, increases the efficiency of stock taking, and frees up staff so that they can spend more time in direct contact with the public. Although The BRIT Centre and Hamilton libraries have self-service terminals, New Parks will be the first library to have RFID technology when it opens in 2009. Future central book lending services will be self-

service, meeting anticipated needs for high turnover of good quality stock for those who live and work in the city centre. It will also benefit residents from other parts of the city who want to select in person rather than use the reservation system to have a specific book delivered to their local community library.

### 2.5.3 Investing in the future

There are strong arguments to support renewed investment in technology. Increased use of RFID, providing the means of self service issuing and discharge of books, frees staff time to fully develop their more complex role as learning and information assistants working one to one with the public helping them to use computers, support learning and select resources. The latest library management systems provide sophisticated tools for monitoring and managing library services thereby enabling greater cost efficiencies.

#### Did you know?

Our 'Welcome to your Library' project has successfully developed work experience and volunteering opportunities for refugees. The Home Office funded our "Refugees into Libraries" programme enabling volunteers from the refugee community to gain work experience and transferable skills in libraries.

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Children, adults and older people are all enthusiastic users of the People's Network which provides highly cost effective computer access for many people who would otherwise remain on the wrong side of the 'digital divide'. In combination such systems support the implementation of government policy in the 3 key areas of social and digital inclusion, adult skills and employability, and transformational government.

### 2.6 Strengthen the library workforce



Leicester's achievements in workforce development have been acknowledged nationally. In 2001, a successful competency based approach to recruitment

was implemented throughout the service for all library posts so that they are no longer based on criteria and qualifications which are out of touch with the needs of modern public libraries and their work in local communities. We have pioneered work experience and volunteering programmes within libraries with some participants going on to successfully apply for jobs in the libraries service as well as in other organisations. This has enabled the service to develop a diverse workforce that reflects Leicester's social and cultural plurality and has strong links with local communities.

However, we have challenging ambitions for the Library Service over the next 5 years and we will not be able to achieve those ambitions unless we can ensure that the Libraries' workforce has the right mix of leadership, skills, knowledge and commitment, enabling staff to provide a high quality service that meets the changing needs of society.

As more of our libraries are redeveloped, there will be even greater need for customer-focussed communication, engagement and training skills. Staff will increasingly spend their time in assisting users to navigate the information highway, helping them to gain confidence and skills in using new technology to access information, and signposting them to a wide range of other service providers – in health, education training and employment. Awareness, knowledge and sensitivity are also needed by staff to deliver the priority identified in this Strategy to support and

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encourage hard to reach and excluded groups to engage with libraries.

To achieve this 'front line' staff will need to be supported and trained. We will take advantage of staff secondments to widen people's experiences and access funding programmes, such as Train to Gain. We will continue to tap into national and regional training initiatives, and we will share our experience and expertise with other authorities.

"The library is a fantastic service. The staff are friendly, helpful and knowledgeable."

*Knighton library user.*

ICT training is already delivered in-house and staff are trained to assist users who are unfamiliar with the use of computers. In the next five years it will be a high priority for the library service to support people with literacy and basic skills needs.

Many people with such needs lack the confidence to sign up to formal learning programmes and the library is often in the position of being able to offer the informal learning approach which is less intimidating. Therefore we will be piloting specialist literacy and skills development posts that will work across the library network liaising with the local community and

delivery partners to co-ordinate and deliver exciting new programmes of learning.

Effective running of the libraries network means that we need to have the right number of staff in the right places at the right time! There will need to be a stronger commitment to flexible working practices to enable staff deployment to meet the needs of a citywide service. There are currently a high number of part-time posts, built up over time in order to cover the range of opening hours in a cost-effective way.

This presents complex timetabling requirements for managers and there are high training and recruitment costs. (There is a high staff turnover as part-time staff leave to take on full-time posts elsewhere.) We will look for examples of best practice elsewhere and seek to phase in any changes.

As part of this Strategy we will undertake a review of the current staffing structure, competences and capacity. Our aim will be to:

- Put additional resources into front line services;
- Provide strong leadership able to advocate for the service at a strategic level, to advance cross-departmental working and to promote libraries as key venues for integrated service delivery;

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- Ensure all local managers have the ability to respond innovatively to challenging needs and to manage the complex range of services offered from a contemporary city library service;
- We will also implement an associated workforce development plan to support the delivery of this Strategy;

We have consulted libraries staff at an early stage of the Strategy development, and their views have helped shape its priorities. We know that they share our vision for the 'libraries of the future' as centres for community learning; they support the national trend that is changing roles of librarians, away from the traditional custodian of books to that of personal information and learning advisers. We will ensure that staff are fully informed and involved in the review and will support and manage the process of change.

### 2.7 Improve value for money and performance



Library Service performance has shown continuous improvement in key areas since 2001. Traditional library service measures of performance have shown high increases in borrowing and visitor numbers and we have succeeded in engaging 'hard to reach' groups.

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### Active members

	2002/3	2006/7	% increase
Number of active members	58,048	69,253	19.3%
Book issues	1,291,447	1,496,689	15.89%



Figures for active members are based on book borrowing in the previous 12 month period. (They exclude library members who have not borrowed

books in that period, or who use other services but who do not borrow books.) However, these positive figures mask signs that, in the last 15 months, the number of active members is starting to decline, which can be attributed to user concerns about the number and quality of the bookstock. (There has been no increase in the book fund since 1997 when the budget was £650,000.

In 2005 the book fund fell to just £572,000 and would now need to be £900,000 to have the same buying power as 1997!) This concern is reinforced by the book issue figures that, whilst showing a steady increase, have not done so at the same rate as active member numbers. This indicates a reduction in the number of books borrowed per person.

### Did you know?

People love Leicester's libraries! In a recent survey we got visitor satisfaction rates of 90%.

A downward trend is not inevitable. New stock has had a remarkable effect – both The BRITE centre and Hamilton benefited from a one-off investment in new stock resulting in a surge in use. Investment in children's stock and services by Sure Start and Children's Centres has also resulted in high increases

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in the number of children who are library members as well as higher issues of books.

The challenges will be to improve the range and volume of stock and to increase the number of new or refurbished buildings, which has been demonstrated as a significant means of attracting new users and encouraging existing users to borrow more books.

### Visits

	2002/03	2006/07	% increase
Number of library visits	1,666,744	2,122,445	27.34%

Library performance can no longer be purely assessed on the number of people borrowing books. The number of visits to libraries far exceeds the number of active members. This is because many people who are not registered library members visit libraries on a regular basis, for example, to consult reference material, to obtain information, and increasingly to use computers and the Internet.



The large increase achieved in visits also reflects the fact that the range and number of activities now offered through libraries has dramatically expanded. In 2006/07 there were 451,604 ICT sessions, 18,000 children attending under-5s activities, 9,000 children attending library study support sessions, 60,600 attending family learning activities, and 1,364 adult learning sessions attended by 5,359 people. Libraries are busy places!

### ICT use

	2003/4	2006/07	% increase
ICT use	348,724	451,604	29.5%

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Use of computers and the Internet in libraries is increasing significantly year on year and this trend looks set to continue. The recent public survey indicated that it is a priority area for growth and this will undoubtedly be a challenge for the service. Continuing to increase use is not just a matter of funding additional PCs. There are revenue implications in terms of technical support and annual maintenance costs. In addition, a number of libraries do not have space for more computers and will not be able to meet local demand without refurbishment, extension or even relocation to bigger premises.

### 2.7.1 Library use by 'hard to reach' groups

The Libraries Service has been particularly effective in targeting disadvantaged and socially excluded people making a significant contribution to the Council's 'Excellent' rating in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) audit in 2005, and to the Council's achievement of Beacon Status for Cultural Services for Hard to reach Groups in 2006/07. The following figures provide an overview of our performance in relation to key demographic groups.

- 36.45% of active borrowers are under 16 years, compared to 20.68% in the local population.
- 10.33% of active borrowers are aged 60 or over, compared to 16.15% of the local population.

- 3% of active borrowers and 16.2% of library users have a disability.
- 51% of active members are now from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.
- 63.26% of users are from groups C2, D, E.

From these figures we can conclude that the previous strategy, 'Achieving Inclusion', obtained huge increases in the use of libraries by black and minority ethnic communities, by socio-economic groups C2, D, and E, and by children and young people. The use of libraries by people with disabilities and older people also grew but to a lesser extent and we will be seeking to further improve these figures as a priority over the next few years.

### 2.7.2 National comparative data

Recent comparative data from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) enables us to compare Leicester's performance with other English unitary authorities and this shows the following:

- In terms of recent levels of expenditure on staff Leicester has been about average, with a similar result for the numbers of staff employed. (Although many authorities spent and employed considerably more.)

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- The service has been below average in terms of the amount of money spent annually on books and stock, failing to meet the national standards for either replacement of library stock or the number of items purchased per head of population. As a consequence Leicester ranks 24th out of 46 authorities in terms of the number of book issues per 1,000 population.
- More positively, and no doubt linked to our ICT provision and extensive partnership activity programmes for people of all ages, Leicester performs extremely well in terms of the number of visits per 1,000 population ranking 2nd out of 46 authorities.
- Despite the creation of two new library buildings (funded through New Deal for Communities and Section 106) in recent years Leicester has, in common with many other authorities, struggled to keep up with the growing maintenance and refurbishment requirements of an aging buildings infrastructure.

We can conclude from this that, although library performance has been improving and the service has attracted awards and acclaim for its pioneering best practice, some aspects of performance in relation to other authorities nationally has been affected over recent years by a lack of investment.

### 2.7.3 Value for money

To date the service has maintained delivery and value for money by making savings and generating external income:

- In 2001 we ended a joint arrangement with Leicestershire County Council for Bibliographical Services and created a small and effective in-house unit at less than half of the cost.
- We have adopted more efficient stock acquisition strategies, negotiating higher levels of discount from suppliers, buying more paperback books and improving stock rotation around the libraries. As a result book issues increased substantially between 2002 and 2006 and in 2007 the Council was praised for its national 'best practice' in stock management.

#### Did you know?

Many of Leicester's Libraries have an extensive collection of Bollywood films, music & books. From the classics to the latest blockbusters, we have something for everybody.

- We have actively sought external partnership funding to extend service provision. Children's book stock has benefited from external funding from Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Surestart

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and, in the last year, from Children's and Young Peoples Services as part of a partnership to provide libraries in Children's Centres.

- We secured substantial sums of external capital funding including New Deal for Communities for the new BRITE Centre in Braunstone, Section 106 funding for the new Hamilton Library, and more recently £1.492million from the Big Lottery Fund for a new community learning centre in New Parks.

### Did you know?

You can renew your books anytime of day or night by calling: 0116 299 5430. All you need is your library card number and PIN (Personal Identification Number). If you don't have one, or have forgotten it, please ask again at any library.

- Earned income has continued to be derived from fines and charges, which are increased from time to time. Local sale of redundant stock is undertaken periodically, and there is some, limited, income from room hires. (There are limits on what can be achieved in these areas. The declining market for music CDs has had a negative impact on income and, for public

libraries in a city with high levels of economic and social disadvantage, charges will never generate more than a small percentage of library income. Care will always be necessary when setting charges not to deter the most disadvantaged users.)

### 2.7.4 Future challenges

Our commitment to the development of services that contribute to a better quality of life for the disadvantaged, vulnerable and hard to reach communities in the city is as strong as ever. The task for the next 5 years will be to continue to improve our performance, working with communities to extend the range of libraries offering cultural and learning activities, increase book issues and maintain high levels of user satisfaction, whilst managing the competing priorities of budgets and the inevitable effect of inflation on salaries and core costs.

Existing planned budgets can deliver a significant number of our aims and we will continue to work positively and creatively with our partners to secure external and additional funding for individual projects and targeted work with communities. However this is unlikely to address the fundamental problems of both the inadequacy of the book fund to meet the city's needs and the inability of the service to halt the decline in the overall quality of the building infrastructure so that all libraries can be attractive, comfortable and safe spaces which communities want.

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Libraries will need to make a strong case for strategic investment based on our ability to deliver positive outcomes for local people across the city. In other words, Better Libraries – Better Lives.

### 2.7.5 Monitoring and evaluation

We will continue to monitor our performance carefully and we will be adapting our performance monitoring systems to reflect the changes that are taking place nationally:

- From April 2008 we will adopt the new national Public Libraries Performance Management Framework. This will provide Leicester with improved tools to measure and understand its performance in the areas of access, resources, quality and efficiency and to compare its performance against other authorities.
- The new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will draw on new national indicator (NI) sets. NI 9 will measure the percentage of the adult population (aged 16 plus) who say they have used their public library service during the past 12 months.
- The Department of Culture, Media and Sport may develop supplementary performance measures for libraries and other services within their remit.

- Public libraries will continue to develop and use local performance and output measures. The Local Area Agreement will be the most important mechanism for setting priorities for action and spending by the Council and its partners.

## 3 Response to the Task Group Report

The Libraries Service very much values the work done by the Culture and Learning Scrutiny Task Group, and is grateful for their support for and interest in the service throughout the process.

The Task Group have made 12 recommendations. These proposals have either been built into the Action Plan, or will be part of the Service Improvement Plans in the years covering 2008-13.

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Summarised Task Group Recommendations	Action Plan
The need to invest in library buildings  Refurbishment , improved signage and improved entrances to make libraries more welcoming	5.1
Further increases in library opening hours	5.2
Continued investment in more technology	5.6
An increase in funding for bookstock	5.8
A rebranding of Libraries Service name to more accurately reflect its role	SIP/Proposals to Cabinet

## 4 Conclusions: Better Libraries – Better Lives



The previous strategy, implemented in 2001–2006, has successfully brought the library service in Leicester into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, creating an accessible service for residents, particularly those from hard to reach groups, resulting in increased use of libraries. The new Libraries Strategy is the first crucial step in seeking the support, investment and high profile needed for the service for the next decade to ensure that the development is sustainable and that potential for the future realised.

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Alignment of the Libraries Service with both national and local strategies is vital. As may be seen from our recent success in getting a major award from the Big Lotteries Fund's Community Libraries programme, by linking with the national strategy for libraries, Leicester will be able to benefit from externally funded action plans to encourage improvement and innovation, and will benefit from increasingly strong advocacy, both nationally and regionally for public library services.

By demonstrating in this Strategy how libraries resonate strongly with the objectives of the newly emerging Sustainable Communities Plans and the Local Area Agreement, we will be better placed to develop strong partnerships with voluntary and statutory services, with Education and Adult Learning, with Children's Centres and Youth Services, with cultural providers and health bodies.

"It's great for my little girl to come to Toddler Time and learn to play and share books with other children. Otherwise we'd be at home. She watches TV but I like her to be out learning how to get along with other children."

*Toddler Time parent*

Working together we are confident that we can attract the additional resources needed to create the 'libraries of the future' in Leicester, establishing high quality buildings in the right locations, with a strong staffing base and an exciting range of partnership activity that meets local needs.

## 5 Action plan

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<p><b>5.1 Ensure that all library buildings are welcoming, accessible and fit for a wide range of community uses.</b></p>		
<p>Central Library Services modernisation would be included for consideration in all future city centre development proposals, including the Market Place.</p>	<p>Funded as part of a major redevelopment scheme</p>	<p>2008-2013</p>
<p>Develop an interim plan to improve existing Central Library buildings to increase use pending agreement for and opening of a new building. (Priorities: new lift in Learning and Information Library is underway, but improved lighting, better window presentation and use of entrance area, and guiding and presentation in the Lending Library, plus additional costs encountered to fit toilet facilities are needed.)</p>	<p>Cost included in sum below Landlord budgets for lift</p>	<p>By March 2010</p>
<p>Within the Corporate Estates Strategy, categorise community libraries into 3 groups. Of those which are to be retained long term make critical improvements to bring them to a good standard of repair and appearance. (Priorities: internal decoration and furnishings; external signage, repairs and painting; provision of public toilets and external entrance areas.)</p>	<p>£1,000,000 internal capital bid</p>	<p>By March 2011</p>

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<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Remove barriers to access to libraries for people with physical and learning disabilities. (Priorities: improved disabled access to buildings; more disabled toilet facilities; internal and external signs in appropriate colours, design and lettering; improved library layouts; suitable furniture and equipment.)	Include costs in capital bids above	By March 2011
Deliver a new build library and community-learning centre in New Parks as a model for future community library provision in the city.	Funding secured (£1.492 million Big Lottery Fund)	By October 2009
To inform the Corporate Estates and Neighbourhood Management Strategy, prepare a report with comprehensive site-by-site analysis of strengths and weaknesses of individual library buildings in readiness for the emerging model for neighbourhood services. Categorise libraries into 3 groups to focus on those needed long term and those that should be part of new groupings of services, or re-sited, and the consequent investment needed.	Officer time	By September 2008
Identify locations of libraries that may potentially meet Section 106 and other criteria for capital funding, developing a file of relevant evidence to support future bids.	Officer time	By September 2008
With Property Services review community libraries, site by site, to identify long-term energy efficiency requirements.	Officer time	By March 2009
Embed consideration of energy efficiency, reduced carbon emissions and reduced impact on climate change in all capital building plans.	Include costs in all new capital budgets	Ongoing

**Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p><b>Principal Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local users and non-users of city centre libraries will have been consulted as part of the feasibility study for new Central Library provision. The resulting plans will take account of their needs and views.</li> <li>○ New Central Library provision will form a central venue for informal and adult learning, enhancing the range and quality of family oriented and children’s services.</li> <li>○ Community libraries will have a clear and visible identity within local neighbourhoods. Improved internal and external appearance and facilities will attract increased numbers of users.</li> <li>○ Through Section 106, and other funding, a number of local libraries will be able to deliver improved services to existing and new residents.</li> <li>○ Residents of New Parks will have an exciting new library with easy access to a wide range of resources and leisure, learning and social activities which will increase their quality of life.</li> <li>○ People with disabilities will have better access to library buildings, services and resources.</li> <li>○ All residents will benefit from the consideration within all capital building plans of energy efficiency, reduced carbon emissions and reduced impact on climate change.</li> </ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.2 Making our services more accessible</b>		
Develop a citywide community engagement plan to increase residents' participation in planning and developing library services.	Officer time	By March 2009
Engage with Council departments and external agencies and increase the level of partnership working in all libraries to achieve better services for target groups.	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing
Identify those libraries where greater flexibility of opening hours would enhance the service and increase use by local people. (Changes not involving an overall increase in opening hours can be made within existing budgets.)	Internal bids for extra revenue to cover any additional hours	By March 09
Target hard to reach groups, particularly in outlying estates. (Priorities: excluded and disengaged young people aged 13-16 years; adults with low literacy levels and skills.)	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing
Increase citywide support for asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers by increasing the number of library staff able to offer language and citizenship support programmes.	Existing and external budgets	By March 2012
Increase community libraries involvement in Leicester's arts, heritage and sporting calendars, planning ahead to the Olympics in 2012.	Existing and partnership funding	By December 2011

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Facilitate access to library services and resources by older people, meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and those most at risk of exclusion.	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing
Work with key partners to develop and promote new services and resources to close the gap in provision and access for people with disabilities.	Existing and external budgets	Ongoing
Extend partnership programmes that promote healthy lifestyles, nutrition and exercise (in those libraries which have appropriate spaces and facilities).	Existing and external budgets	Ongoing
Enhance libraries' partnerships with Children's Centres to improve access to services to families in all city neighbourhoods, working with them to establish networked Early Years services.	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing
Engage with emerging model for delivery of Youth Services at a strategic and local level to create a libraries model for youth provision that can be adapted for use in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing
Achieve equality of access to library services for children and young people with disabilities through assessment of current provision, identification of gaps in access and resources, and development of an improvement programme for 2008-2013.	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<p>Principle Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Residents will have been able to participate in planning and developing library services to meet local needs.</li> <li>○ A greater level of neighbourhood level partnership working will promote libraries to hard to reach groups who can benefit from using library services and resources.</li> <li>○ Adults with low literacy skills will have access to free, confidential advice, support and learning opportunities in ways that suit their needs.</li> <li>○ More people in need of language support and citizenship programmes will have access to free services provided in-house by library staff.</li> <li>○ Local people will have more opportunities to participate in a wider range of cultural activities.</li> <li>○ Older residents will have more choice of how they access library resources and service delivery in their neighbourhood.</li> <li>○ There will be improved access to a wider range of resources and services for children and young people, including those with disabilities.</li> <li>○ More housebound and disabled people will benefit from the Home Library Service.</li> <li>○ The profile of key health messages will be raised and more people will participate in 'healthy living' programmes.</li> <li>○ Libraries will provide young people with the kind of the services they want to use; young people will benefit from participating in positive activities in libraries buildings in which they feel at ease.</li> <li>○ Families with young children will have access to more effective services.</li> </ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.3 Promote reading and learning to improve quality of life</b>		
Revise the Reader Development Strategy to increase the involvement of hard to reach groups in interesting and relevant reading activities.	Officer time	By December 2008
Develop a Literature Development Strategy to engage a hard to reach groups in creative writing and encourage participation in literature events and activities.	Officer time	By December 2008
Establish new partnerships to support language and literacy development for children and young people, involving more parents and carers in the language and reading development of their children.	Officer time	Ongoing
Engage with local communities to improve the range and quality of the bookstock and other lending materials, providing interesting and readable books for local residents whatever their level of literacy.	Officer time and existing budgets	Ongoing
Use a more imaginative approach to providing materials that engage people with low literacy in reading through magazines, games and graphic novels.	Officer time	Ongoing
Encourage more book borrowing by improving the promotion, display and signposting of book stock in all libraries.	Existing budgets	Rolling programme

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Extend informal learning opportunities in libraries by extending the range of arts, cultural and leisure activities on offer.	Existing, partnership and external budgets	Ongoing
<p><b>Principle Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parents and carers will have a better understanding of children’s language and reading development and will be more able to support their children’s learning.</li> <li>○ More people will become library members and will be able to borrow from a wider range of books to find something to interest them.</li> <li>○ More people will feel comfortable and able to engage in reading and writing activities.</li> <li>○ Quality of life will be improved, as more libraries are able to offer local people an enhanced range of informal learning and leisure opportunities.</li> </ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.4 Support mainstream learning provision for children and adults</b>		
Increase family-based and intergenerational learning undertaken by libraries, using the successful model established with Children's Centres.	Existing and partnership budgets	2008-2013
Increase the level of partnership working with schools across the city, particularly in relation to Building Schools for the Future and Extended Services in and around schools.	Existing and partnership budgets	Ongoing
Embed reader development and study support as core activities in all neighbourhood programmes for Extended Services in and around schools.	Existing and partnership budgets	2008-2010
Consult with local communities on the provision of informal adult learning in libraries such as ICT provision, reading clubs, silver surfer programmes, family history, citizenship, English language conversation, literacy and other skills for life.	Existing budgets	Ongoing
Explore the potential for key libraries to form part of the East Midlands' network of community based "Access Centres" providing a one-stop-shop for local learning.	Not yet known	2008-10
Expand the number of libraries registered as UK Online Centres from one to ten.	Existing and external budgets	By 2010

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Creating citywide volunteer programmes for libraries for people of all backgrounds and ages.	Existing budgets and external funding	2008 - 2013
<p><b>Principle Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Families will benefit from increased social interaction and learning opportunities.</li> <li>○ Children and young people will benefit from stock that is relevant to their studies and from library support services that are complementary to school provision.</li> <li>○ Local communities will be involved in decisions about the informal adult learning that will be provided at their local library.</li> <li>○ Local people will be able to take part in volunteer and work experience programmes in their local libraries, increasing confidence and skills and enhancing their employability.</li> </ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.5 Respond to changes in society and technology</b>		
Undertake a review of available electronic music and entertainment formats and identify how to respond to changes in public demand in a cost effective way.	Invest any savings in book stock	Report by September 2009
Introduce a new service of 'downloadable' talking books, offering a number of MP3 players available for loan to older people and those with disabilities.	Existing budget	April 2008
As part of the consideration of Central Library Services, consult with the Museums Service regarding the options for improving access to the City's records and archives.	Not known at this time	By March 2009
<p><b>Principle Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local people will benefit from access to library stock and resources that reflect new developments in technology.</li> <li>○ Older people and those with disabilities will benefit from the improved quality of service and the more extensive range of talking books that are available free in downloadable form.</li> <li>○ Options for improving local people's access to the City's records and archives will be explored.</li> </ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.6 Using technology to improve services and reduce the digital divide</b>		
Review the effectiveness of the current library management system (software and hardware) in readiness for going to tender for its replacement.	£362,000 internal bid for capital	2011/12
Review the capacity of the People's Network of computers to meet the growing need in the city for access to digital services and resources ready for replacement in 2012.	£170,000 internal bid for capital	2012
Work with partner organisations to identify potential for additional library access points in the city (as currently available through Children's Centres)	To be identified	By March 2010
Incorporate the RFID and appropriate wireless technologies into all new build projects and all major library refurbishments. (New Parks library will pilot RFID for the first time.)	Build costs into capital budgets	On a project by project basis
Use ICT to develop efficiencies in electronic invoicing, faster payment of suppliers (leading to faster delivery of new stock) and improvements to the reservations service.	Existing resources	2009
Increase the use of ICT to personalise communications with customers, e.g. use of SMS text messaging to send information about reservations or library events and activities.	Existing budgets	2008

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p><b>Principle Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ People of all ages, particularly those without home access to computers, will benefit from the up to date public access technology that is available throughout the library network.</li><li>○ Advances in library management systems and RFID technology will make it easier and more efficient for library members to use services.</li><li>○ Library members will have access to newly published books more quickly.</li><li>○ Customers will have more choice about how we communicate with them. Communications will be speedier.</li></ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.7 Strengthen the library workforce</b>		
Undertake and implement an organisational structure review to strengthen capacity and underpin the delivery of the strategy.	Existing budgets	By March 2009
Undertake a workforce development review to ensure that staff in the new structure has the relevant skills and competencies and are appropriately organised.	Existing budgets	By March 2009
Develop a staff-training plan to support the delivery of key outcomes of strategy. Implementation to be supported by a realistic staff development budget.	Existing budgets	By March 09
Ensure that competencies are embedded into the appraisal system.	No budget implications	Ongoing
Increase library staff involvement in integrated and partnership working in key areas of service delivery (such as Children's Centres and Extended Services in and around schools).	Existing funds and partnership budgets	2008-2013
Pilot a library post of Volunteer and Skills Development Worker in the New Parks Library and Community Learning Centre.	Funding secured through Big Lottery Fund	2009-2012

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p><b>Principle Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Library users will be served by informed and knowledgeable staff that can support their learning and information needs.</li><li>○ Integrated working in local neighbourhoods will provide more cohesive and accessible services for local people.</li><li>○ New Parks residents will benefit from increase local access to structured volunteering and work experience programmes in the library and community cafe.</li></ul>		

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

Action	Budget implications	Timescale
<b>5.8 Improve value for money and performance</b>		
Consult regularly with library users and non-users both through participation in national surveys and by periodic citywide or local surveys to address particular issues.	Existing budgets	Ongoing
Raise our performance against key national indicators.	Existing budgets	Ongoing
Bring bookstock in all libraries up to the quality required to meet needs of city residents, preventing library performance falling further behind comparator authorities	Seek an increase in current book budget of at least £50,000 p.a.	By March 2009
Carry out an annual assessment of customer service standards at every library.	Existing budgets	Ongoing
Carry out continuous monitoring of stock acquisition, to achieve quality and value for money.	Existing budgets	Ongoing
Tender for a cost effective package for servicing and processing of stock.	Officer time	2008/09

## Leicester City Council: Libraries Strategy 2008-2013

<b>Action</b>	<b>Budget implications</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p><b>Principle Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Library customers will benefit from high quality customer service and improved range and availability of stock and resources.</li><li>○ Local residents will actively engage with libraries to inform decisions about improvements in service delivery.</li><li>○ Improved stock supply will achieve the quality and range needed by the city.</li></ul>		

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