

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Committee: | Culture and Communities Select Committee |
| Date: | 29 November 2021 |
| Title: | Library Service Update |
| Report From: | Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services |

Contact name: Emma Noyce, Assistant Director: Culture and Information Services

Tel: 0370 779 8373 **Email:** Emma.noyce@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to conclude completion of the Library Service Transformation to 2021 Programme, update Members on the impact that Covid-19 has had on the delivery of Library Services and provide a forward look on current priorities, challenges, and opportunities.

Recommendation

2. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Executive Summary

3. This report comprises three parts:
 - The first section completes the Library Service's T21 programme by confirming the delivery of all savings and how these were achieved. It updates on the status of key projects linked to the T21 programme.
 - The second section reflects on performance during the pandemic and the impact of successive lockdowns and restrictions on operations. This includes information on areas of exceptional performance and information about the challenges the Library Service continues to face following the disruption to activity for much of 2020 and 2021.
 - The third section takes a forward view, highlighting some key new areas of work for the library service which take forward the vision and strategy.

Transformation to 2021

4. In January 2020, Hampshire County Council launched a public consultation on the future of its Library Service. This consultation included proposals to deliver £1.76 million in savings and set out ambitious plans to create a modern, resilient service which could meet the needs of people who live, work and study in Hampshire, whilst at the same time remaining financially sustainable. The consultation ran for 12 weeks and received over 21,000 formal responses.
5. The Covid-19 pandemic started at the very end of the public consultation phase. Whilst consultation responses were unaffected, it was recognised that the impacts of the pandemic (for example, on the achievability of projected income targets) meant that savings proposals needed to be remodelled.
6. On 28 July 2020 the Executive Member for Recreation and Heritage (EMRH) agreed the proposals for the future strategy of the Service and the savings programme required. These savings have now been delivered in full. Table 1 summarises the savings actually achieved through the revised workstreams.

Table 1:

| Workstream | Saving activity | Saving £'000 | Workstream saving £'000 |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Delivery Efficiencies | Withdrawal, relocation, or reduction of poorly used collections and eResources | £79 | £263 |
| | Purchase of new stock linked to closure of 8 Council run libraries | £71 | |
| | Rationalisation of poorly used physical magazine titles and setting up a single supplier | £35 | |
| | Rationalisation of newspaper titles improving consistency of offer across libraries | £25 | |
| | Ending a fixed term contract position in the stock services team | £24 | |
| | Other stock purchasing efficiencies | £18 | |
| | Purchase of new stock linked to the Transition of Tier 4 Libraries to ICLs | £11 | |
| Operations | Early Achievement (Staff)/Vacancy Management | £362 | £1,375 |
| | Staff savings from Opening Hour Reductions | £778 | |
| | Staff savings from Library closures | £197 | |
| | Staff savings from Community Library transitions | £38 | |
| Delivering Differently | Non-staff savings from Closures | £142 | £153 |
| | Non-staff savings from Community Library Transitions | £11 | |
| Total | | | £1,791 |

7. The **Delivery Efficiencies workstream** focused on delivering an efficient service. Savings were achieved by removing poorly used resources, reduction in purchase of new stock for those libraries which transferred to independent models, savings on procurement of magazines & newspapers and other stock purchasing efficiencies. A total saving of £263,000 was delivered by the Delivery Efficiency workstream.
8. The **Operations workstream** delivered savings through reductions in staff FTE. The decision to close libraries and reduce and standardise opening times across the library service required a complete review of the frontline staffing structure. Rosters were redesigned to create suitable standardised shift patterns for each library, these were consulted on during a Staff Consultation held between 21 September and 5 November 2020.
 - 292 individuals were in scope at the start of the Staff Consultation.
 - 76 applications received for voluntary redundancy; 50 Individuals (26.97 FTE) were accepted.
 - No compulsory redundancies were necessary.
 - 61 proposed roles were amended in response to consultation feedback.
9. All leavers exited the organisation by 31 March 2021 and the new structure took effect on 1 May 2021.
10. A saving of £1,013,000 was delivered by the staff restructure. A further saving of £362,000 was delivered through Vacancy Management. This was a key focus throughout T21, with every vacancy fully scrutinised to try to reduce the impact on future staff reductions. A total saving of £1,375,000 was delivered by the Operations Workstream.
11. The **Delivering Differently Workstream** implemented the closure and decommissioning of eight council-run libraries: Blackfield, Elson, Fair Oak, Horndean, Lee-on-the-Solent, Lyndhurst, Odiham and South Ham. This delivered a saving of £142,000 (excluding staff costs).
12. It also delivered the transition of the Tier 4 Community Libraries to Independent Community Libraries: Lowford, Kingsclere, Milford-on-Sea and North Baddesley. This delivered a saving of £11,000 (excluding staff costs).
13. From the outset a proactive approach was taken to identify communities that may have had an interest in running or being involved with an independent community-managed library. Of the eight council-run libraries, all but one (Blackfield) have continued or are planning to continue with a library offer in some form. All of these libraries closed to the public by 31 December 2020, with the first Independent Community Library (Lee-on-the-Solent) opening in April 2021 (opening was affected by lockdown restrictions).

14. The four existing council-run community-managed libraries all closed and reopened in line with Government Covid-19 restrictions. During the closure period Hampshire County Council was able to exit the premises with no impact on the public.
15. All existing stock, furniture and shelving was gifted to the independent libraries where required. The EMRH invited applications for awards of up to £10,000 from the Recreation and Heritage Community Fund for each of the eight libraries agreed for closure and the four existing community-run libraries. So far, £99,800 has been awarded to these groups.
16. With regards property, one of the library buildings was leasehold with the lease ended in line with the library being decommissioned. Seven were freehold, two have been or are in the process of being sold and five have completed or are in the process of completing an Asset Transfer to a local organisation. A summary of the status of each library can be found in Appendix 1.
17. A Capital Grant of up to £10,000 was also available to each of the five local organisations taking on ownership of a library building through the Asset Transfer process. So far, £13,000 has been awarded. However, three organisations are still to claim as the Asset Transfer has not yet completed.
18. Emsworth Library was one of the libraries proposed for closure, but the decision was made to retain the library and move it to Emsworth Community Centre to realise significant annual savings compared to the current leasehold property. The library reopened in the new location within the Community Centre on 30 September 2021, with the lease ending on the previous library building on the same date.
19. Chineham Library was also proposed for closure but following the review of the Public Consultation feedback, the decision was made for it to remain part of the Library Service estate with a focus on operating the building more efficiently. Building work was undertaken to adapt Chineham Library to host a long-term partner and the School Library Service (SLS) have now relocated from South Ham Library to Chineham Library. This has proved to be a beneficial solution for both parties. SLS provide internal income circa. £14,000 per year and are a complementary partner to the existing library. Reputationally, the move was well received.
20. A total saving of £153,000 was delivered by the Delivering Differently workstream. All savings relating to this workstream are non-staff related, any staff savings formed part of the Operations savings achievement.
21. Looking forward, the approach that the Library Service took to its T21 programme acknowledged that further savings would likely be required in the future. This means that the Service is now well equipped to deliver £500,000 towards the

Department's SP23 savings target without affecting front-line services (for example, through management level reductions and back-office efficiencies enabled by the T21 programme). This means that the Library Service now has a period of relative stability and is able to focus on recovering its services post-pandemic and developing its strategy to support residents and communities across Hampshire.

Performance and Covid 19 impact

22. Hampshire Library Service headed into March 2020 in a strong position, as evidenced in CIPFA's Public Library Statistics 2019/20 report. This saw the service achieve the highest number of physical book issues, eBook issues and physical visits of any English county authority.
23. When the service reluctantly closed its doors a few weeks later in accordance with Government requirements, it faced challenges beyond anything faced previously.
24. A rapid enhancement of the online service enabled customers to maintain access to reading material via the eBook platform and important services such as 'Rhymetime' and 'Story Time' were able to be offered virtually. Loans of eBooks surpassed 1 million, views of library videos exceeded 550,000, while the Facebook platform achieved a 'reach'¹ of over 3.7 million during 2020/21.
25. Physical books, though, remained beyond the reach of library customers during the initial weeks of lockdown. With many of these customers being vulnerable and/or lonely, the service prioritised adapting its offer, firstly to ensure safe access to physical books for this customer group, and then to others.
26. By mid-May 2020, around 250 of the most vulnerable customers were being supported by 77 volunteers through the provision of physical books by the Home Library Service, while a further 900 'buddy' phone calls to help combat loneliness were made.
27. More widely, the service developed the incredibly successful Ready Reads scheme, based on its premise of 'We select, you collect'. Launching in early June 2020, this meant that all customers could still access physical books safely, and in accordance with ongoing Government restrictions. In excess of 4,000 customers used this service in the period to 12th July 2020, when libraries were first able to welcome customers back through their doors. A customer survey of the Ready Reads service attracted over 850 responses - 78% of respondents said the Ready

¹ 'Reach' is the number of unique users who had any content from our Facebook Page or about our Page enter their screen, it's the count of Facebook users who came into contact with our brand on Facebook.

Reads Service helped them feel less isolated, 85% of people said the service helped them cope with lockdown, while 80% said it improved their wellbeing.

28. The School Library Service continued (SLS) physically supporting all of its nearly 500 schools (and through them, over 150,000 pupils) throughout the pandemic, with a particular focus on providing for the children of key workers. In addition, the SLS ePlatform was quickly enhanced, thus enabling schools to signpost their pupils to the wide range of literary resources available via this means.
29. Learning in Libraries also reacted swiftly to the changing situation, with delivery quickly shifting from face to face learning, to online delivery. In the 2020-21 academic year, 401 courses were completed with 3322 learners. The achievement rate was 93% and the attendance rate was 85%.
30. All of the above meant the service was well placed to meet the challenges of the further lockdowns later in 2020 and early 2021, and Hampshire's libraries have proved invaluable in helping residents access information, overcome loneliness and get online.
31. As restrictions eased from July 2021, libraries have welcomed back many customers and safely reinstated face to face service delivery of activities such as Rhymetime.
32. It is evident, though, that there is still some way to go to return to pre-Covid levels. Footfall by September 2021 was back to 50% of pre-pandemic levels, while physical book issues had reached 73%. These continue to rise, and Hampshire compares favourably in these respects to other library authorities (see Table 2).

Table 2:

| as a % of 2 years ago | September | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|
| | Hampshire % | National % |
| Footfall | 50 | 42 |
| Libraries open | 100 | 98 |
| Physical book issues | 73 | 74 |
| eBook issues | 190 | 163 |

33. Income from areas such as room hire also has some way to go return to the levels of two years ago, and this presents additional financial challenges on top of general service recovery.
34. It is important to recognise that some customer habits may have changed permanently. Issues of eBooks have been at consistently double the pre-pandemic level in each of the last 18 months. Although this is a great positive in the sense that it provides a new form of library access to new audiences, its sustainability is a sector wide issue and brings with it further cost challenges. The publishing and licensing restrictions around e-lending means that costs are greater, income is lower, and choices are narrower than for physical books. In

addition, the move to digital can present issues from a wellbeing and social isolation point of view. Therefore, Hampshire Libraries continues to focus on providing a good balance of physical and digital services.

35. There is plenty for the Library Service to be proud of in terms of its performance and the way it has helped Hampshire residents in recent times. It is recognised though, that further challenges lie ahead as the service responds and adapts to the needs of customers.

A forward look

36. As Hampshire Library Service looks forward, we continue to recover the best elements of our service, embed new ways of working and find more effective and efficient ways of providing our services in local communities. We continue to deliver our strategic aims to grow a vibrant, modern library service based on three core pillars:

- Promoting reading and literacy - supporting reading for pleasure for everyone and particularly focusing on providing a good foundation for reading and literacy in the early years, to give children the best start in life.
- Supporting healthy, creative communities - developing our libraries as community hubs, delivering our services in communities in new ways and working with partners to bring benefits to all.
- Providing access to digital services - ensuring that those that need it have the skills and opportunity to access information and services online, with a particular focus on those who are at risk of digital exclusion.

37. All of this is set within a context of operating as an efficient public service, with a keen focus on opportunities to increase income and sustain services by operating with a commercial mindset. Our focus remains on making connections and improving partnership working to reinvigorate the service, drive up footfall, outreach and income generation.

38. During 2021 we have embarked upon a range of new initiatives and partnerships, which further the ambitions set out in our strategy. Some examples include:

- The Holiday and Food Activity Fund (HAF): working with local children's partnerships in areas of deprivation and providing outreach sessions to HAF providers. Sessions held in libraries include code clubs, chatter book style sessions and nature groups. This provides opportunity to introduce potential 'hard to reach' families to their local library and to help them benefit from our extended services and partnerships (so far 500 contacts

have been made, with 60 new joiners). A total of £7,800 funding was received from the Department for Education to support this work.

- Domestic Abuse Initiative: Following a very successful pilot this developing initiative sees a growing number of libraries providing a supportive environment for survivors of domestic abuse to access information and support from literature, library computers and trained staff. Funding of £11,700 was received from the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Support Services Fund 2021/22 to support this work.
- New partnerships are being developed. For example, Hampshire CAHMS is locating to four suitable library sites for hosting Autistic Spectrum Disorder assessments in the community. The Library Service is also working with Barnardo's to implement a more cohesive approach to the speech and language pathway, through the delivery of various courses in Libraries.
- The Learning in Libraries team is delivering face to face English as a Second Language courses to Afghan families who have recently resettled locally. These families have also joined the library service and are supported by the School Library Service who have provided them with laptops and dual language children's books. The Library Service is now working towards 'Library of Sanctuary' Accreditation.
- The Library Service is working with a range of partners and is in conversation with the Arts Council and British Library to explore the development of an 'Eco-Excellent' Library in Hampshire, acting as a hub for information, resources and community partnerships linked to climate change.
- The Home Library Service is continuing to deliver the Reading Friends Service established during the Covid-19 pandemic to reach out to vulnerable customers who may be feeling isolated and lonely. The aim is to develop and expand this service to reach out to more vulnerable customers, especially with the winter months ahead.
- The Library Service is working closely with a range of District and Borough Councils to ensure that Libraries are at the heart of their developing cultural strategies and high street regeneration plans. There is increasing recognition that cultural venues including libraries play an important role in healthy and prosperous high streets.

39. We strive to ensure business, services and charitable organisations understand the value of the library service; our prominent position in local communities, the numbers of people who engage with us and the diversity of our audience. Our biggest hurdle is to debunk perceptions about what libraries do, and to help clarify

the breadth of services we are willing and able to partner with and provide services, space, and promotion to.

40. In October 2021 we launched a 'Celebrating Libraries' campaign, which will run throughout autumn and use a variety of assets (both physical and digital) to advertise libraries and the services they offer. Our aim is to refresh our image, promote our services and activities, and encourage visits to branches. We have also created a variety of advocacy packs for our team to help ensure they make the most of networking opportunities. It is early days but initial figures are showing a positive response:
- 5,825 views
 - A reach of 139,480 on paid social media
 - 10,466 clicks on Google adverts
 - 989 people have completed our 'find your library personality' quiz
41. We continue our ambition to get people to 'think local - think library' to see the benefit of a local solution for outreach, sponsorship and space. We are managing some excellent district partnership working across a variety of sectors, but we do find particular challenges in some areas where the library service can compete in an overcrowded community sector. It is therefore important that in these districts and communities the library remains a viable location and relevant presence. In the autumn we will be starting work on a 'delivering differently' project to understand how best we can work differently with partners to extend our reach into the community – focusing first on locations in Gosport and Havant.

Climate change and equalities

42. This report reflects previous decisions where the relevant Climate Change and Equality Impact Assessments were completed at the time. Assessments will continue to be completed for future changes as needed.

Conclusions

43. The Library Service has completed its Transformation to 2021 programme and is now well placed to deliver its SP23 savings programme without impacting customer-facing services.
44. The period of successive lockdowns and restrictions during 2020 and 2021 have required the library service to develop new ways of working. In the future, the focus will be on retaining the best of these, whilst recovering physical services so that they can continue to deliver to their full potential.

45. The Library Service now looks to the future, preparing a delivery plan to sit alongside its future strategy; forming new partnerships and developing new initiatives to ensure that the Library Service continues to play a key role in supporting informed, healthy and creative and communities across Hampshire.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

| | |
|---|-----|
| Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity: | yes |
| People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives: | yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment: | yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities: | yes |

Other Significant Links

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Links to previous Member decisions: | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| | |
| Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| | |

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents | |
| <p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p> | |
| <u>Document</u> | <u>Location</u> |
| None | |

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

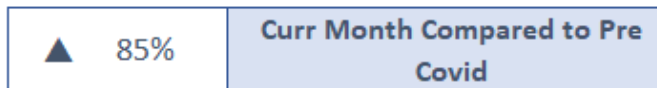
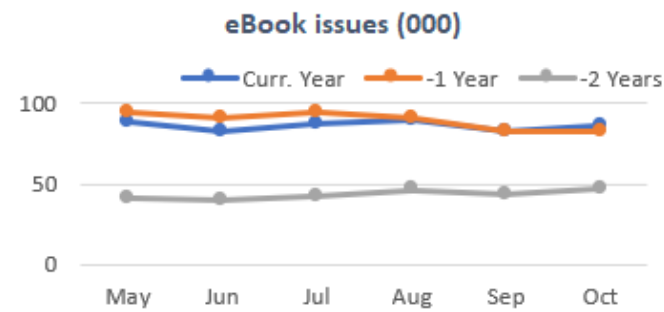
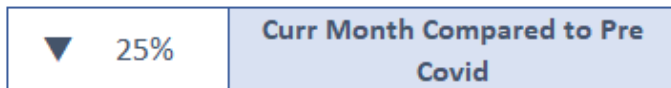
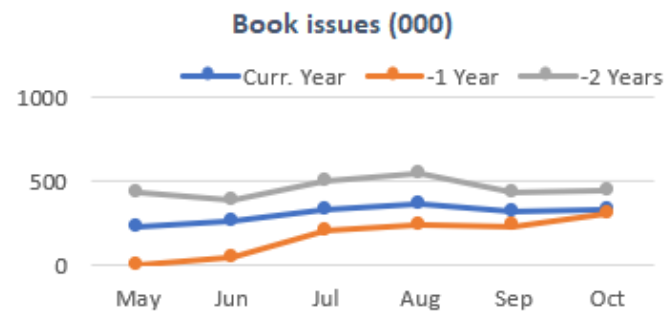
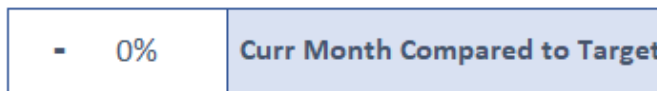
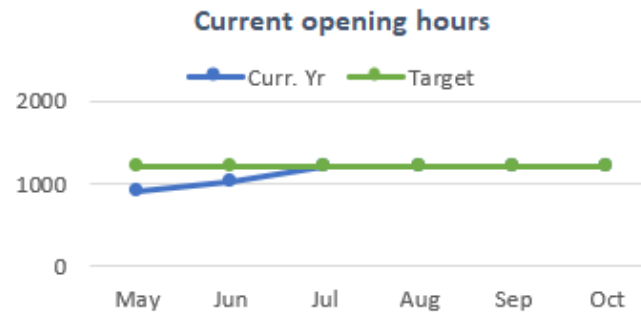
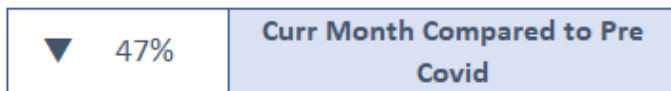
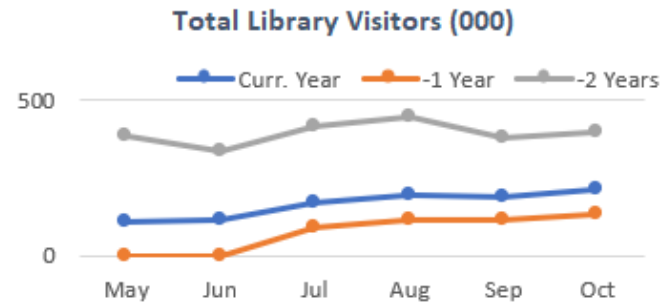
This report reflects previous decisions where the relevant Equality Impact Assessments were completed at the time. Assessments will continue to be completed for future changes as needed.

Appendix 1

| | | Blackfield | Elson | Fair Oak | Horndean | Lee-on-the-Solent | Lyndhurst | Odiham | South Ham |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| Saving | Proposed | £22,000 | £76,000 | £37,000 | £37,000 | £54,000 | £25,000 | £14,000 | £74,000 |
| | Achieved | £22,000 | £76,000 | £37,000 | £37,000 | £54,000 | £25,000 | £14,000 | £74,000 |
| Library Service | Summary of change | Council run Library closed | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL | Council run Library closed and transitioned to an ICL |
| | Date HCC Library Closed | 31/12/2020 | 29/12/2020 | 31/12/2020 | 30/12/2020 | 29/12/2020 | 07/11/2020 | 30/12/2020 | 29/12/2020 |
| | Date HCC Library Decommissioned | 25/01/2021 - 29/01/2021 | 14/01/2021 - 22/01/2021 | 22/02/2021 - 02/03/2021 | 01/02/2021 - 10/02/2021 | 04/01/2021 - 13/01/2021 | 09/11/20 - 27/11/20 | 11/02/2021 - 19/02/2021 | 07/06/2021 - 18/06/2021 |
| | Organisation setting up new ICL | No community group | Elson Community Library & Hub Group | Fair Oak Community Library | Merchistoun Community Library | Lee Hub Group | Lyndhurst Community Association | Odiham Community Library | Westside Community Association |
| | Location of new ICL | N/A | Elson Library | Fair Oak Library | Merchistoun Hall | Lee-on-the-Solent Library | Lyndhurst Library | Odiham Library | South Ham Library |
| | ICL Open date | N/A | 26/06/2021 | 26/07/2021 | 13/11/2021 | 12/04/2021 | No confirmed date so far | 14/06/2021 | No known date yet |
| | ICL Offer | N/A | Traditional Library offer and lending system for the community being run by volunteers. The space is also being used as hireable spaces to local groups and agencies e.g., counselling services. Small café also available on site so people can browse and get a tea or coffee. | Traditional library offer and lending system being run by volunteers. | Traditional library offer and lending system being run by volunteers. | Traditional library offer and lending system being run by volunteers. Expanding with clubs and other offers as the group consult with the local community. | Book swap of children's books and adult fiction only. Ongoing book sales of all other stock donated, and books donated by members of the public to raise money for the community centre. | Library set up in existing space, run by volunteers with the support of the parish council. Traditional lending system in place, computers also available for community use too. | Small library offering. Building to be used as hireable space and space for community-based activities as an extension of the community centre. |

Appendix 2

Library Performance Comparison (2019 -21)



Library Service Infographic (March 2020 – July 2020)

Hampshire Libraries

f +230%
Facebook reach
3,688,294

+1,666%
626 videos 550,000 views

+63%
6,353
Facebook likes

Bringing
the library
to YOU

+48%
10,007
new online
joiners

+37%
338,340
emagazine
issues

+153%
529,775
enewspaper
issues

+82%
BorrowBox
active users
12,477

+92%
ebook downloads
568,342

+101%
audiobook downloads
499,713



77 volunteers supporting
250 Home Library Service users

1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 compared with
the previous year