

## Decision Report – Cabinet Member Key decision

decision date – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017

### Library Service – Vision, strategic direction and approach to service re-design

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr. David Hall – Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development

Division and Local Member(s): All

Lead Officer: Michele Cusack – Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning

Author: Oliver Woodhams – Strategic Manager, Community and Traded Services

Contact Details: Tel.: 07977 400667

	<b>Seen by:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
	County Solicitor	Honor Clarke	20/10/2017
	Monitoring Officer	Julian Gale	13/10/2017
	Corporate Finance	Kevin Nacey	14/11/2017
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	17/10/2017
	Property / Procurement / ICT	Richard Williams	10/11/2017
	Senior Manager	Michele Cusack	10/11/2017
	Local Member(s)	All	27/10/2017
	Cabinet Member	Cllr. David Hall	18/10/2017
	Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr. Simon Coles	09/11/2017
	Relevant Scrutiny Chairman	Cllr. Tony Lock	09/11/2017
<b>Forward Plan Reference:</b>	FP/17/08/16		
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>This report recommends a proposed vision and strategic direction of travel for the Library Service for the medium term. An analysis of potential delivery models is included as Appendix 1 to the report, and the report recommends that an in-house service delivery model is retained for the next three years. The report also recommends an outcomes framework to guide service delivery for the 3 year period, and a vision for the re-design of the service. The proposals were considered at the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017.</p>		
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>That the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Agrees to retain a predominantly in-house service delivery model for the library service for the 3 year period considered in this report; and</b></li> </ol>		

	<p><b>2. Endorses the proposed outcomes framework and strategic direction for re-designing the in-house service, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, having regard to the high level Equalities Impacts assessed in Appendix 3 to the report.</b></p>
<p><b>Reasons for Recommendations:</b></p>	<p>Following a pre-options appraisal of alternative delivery models (summarised in Appendix 1), this report recommends that Somerset maintains an in-house service delivery model for the next three years for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Library Service is highly integrated with a wide range of SCC departments and external partners, and this is an area of rapid, ongoing development. The growth in joint work between the Library Service and other SCC services is likely to be more productive and un-constrained whilst the service remains in-house.</li> <li>• In order for the service to further reduce costs in line with the forecast funding reduction for the council as a whole whilst continuing to fulfil its duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, fundamental service re-design will be necessary. This re-design can be more effectively managed in-house – externalisation may subsequently be considered from a more sustainable financial position.</li> <li>• Although some Library Services have externalised successfully, and there is some evidence of the benefits of externalisation, many Library Service alternative delivery models are relatively new. As such, evidence of the long term success of alternative delivery models is limited.</li> <li>• Substantial one-off resources would be needed to fund specialist legal and project support, and to address pension deficit and backlog maintenance issues. These costs materially impact on the business case for externalisation, and are likely to be unaffordable at the present time given the County Council’s general reserve position.</li> </ul> <p>This is not to say that externalisation or a shared service option with another Library Service is not the right solution for Somerset’s Library Service in the longer term. If the Cabinet Member supports the recommendation, service commissioners will review the case for externalisation in 2020, by which time there is likely to be more evidence on the track record and potential benefits of alternative delivery models. In the meantime, if any specific shared service opportunities arise for the Library Service these will be considered on their own merits.</p> <p>The outcomes framework and 3-year strategic approach for the re-design of the in-house service are recommended because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vision and modernising direction of travel for the service are in line with national priorities for the development of public library services (set out in detail in the Libraries Taskforce report ‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition</li> </ul>

	<p>for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021'), and customer feedback indicates that the wider range of services offered are valued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising the library service to support a wider range of outcomes offers the best value for money for Somerset County Council, and will help to support other statutory services.</li> <li>• The direction of travel proposed will enable us to maintain a thriving and dynamic library service in Somerset whilst putting the service onto a sustainable financial footing for the longer term.</li> <li>• An initial, high level Equalities Impact Assessment (attached as Appendix 3 to this report) has assessed high level impacts and found these to be acceptable. Impact will continue to be reviewed as the vision is taken forward and key proposals are developed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Links to Priorities and Impact on Service Plans:</b></p>	<p>Somerset's Library Service supports the Council's priority outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young People are supported through early years reading activities, skills development (Code Clubs, technology activities, volunteering opportunities) and study space with free Wifi.</li> <li>• We provide books on prescription and other health and wellbeing information resources, a wide range of health and wellbeing activities, and combat social isolation by bringing people together.</li> <li>• Through business events, access to digital making equipment and our specialist business resources collections, we support businesses to develop and thrive.</li> </ul> <p>Appendix 2 to this report contains more detailed information on how council priorities align to the proposed strategic direction and outcomes framework for the libraries service.</p>
<p><b>Consultations and co-production undertaken:</b></p>	<p>The proposed strategic direction and outcomes framework have been discussed with a wide range of stakeholder groups, and their feedback has shaped the development of the recommendations presented here. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libraries staff and union representatives have been engaged through a number of staff meetings across the County.</li> <li>• The project team have met with a wide range of parish, town, district and county councillors, representatives of library friends groups and other local stakeholders at a series of community engagement meetings.</li> <li>• A customer satisfaction survey was carried out in June / July 2017, and the results of this survey have been considered in the development of the strategic approach.</li> <li>• The vision and outcomes framework document has been shared with the Friends of Somerset Libraries group (who have acted as a valuable 'critical friend' through the many changes we have made to the service in recent years). Their feedback has been considered in the development of the approach.</li> </ul>

- The library service has engaged with a range of other SCC services – in particular Economic Development, commissioners of Children’s Services, the Directors for Adult Social Care and Public Health, and the Property Service – in the development of the approach presented here.
- The proposed strategic direction and outcomes framework and the proposal to retain an in-house service have been discussed by the County Council’s Senior Leadership Team and the Commissioning Board.
- The proposals within this report were considered by the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October; all county councillors had the opportunity to comment on the proposals at that meeting, and a number of public questions were received and answered.
- The vision, strategy and outcomes framework document was circulated to all County Councillors for their feedback prior to finalising this report.

This engagement is ongoing and a co-production approach will continue into subsequent phases of the re-design programme. Feedback from community engagement meetings will shape specific proposals for the re-design of the libraries network, shared service and income generation opportunities, and further engagement with staff and union representatives will shape proposals for new staff structures and roles. A full consultation will be undertaken on all proposals for specific libraries and workforce changes, and feedback from staff and public consultation will be considered fully before final decisions are made.

Working with the finance service, officers have developed an estimated budget profile for the Library Service over the next three years, set out here as a forecast reduction in the net budget available to the service:

	2017/18 (£'000)	2018/19 (£'000)	2019/20 (£'000)	2020/21 (£'000)
<i>Estimated service budget for the year:</i>	3,890	3,690	3,560	3,570

**Financial Implications:**

After accounting for the absorption of inflation (likely to be unfunded in the 2018/19 budget, in line with corporate financial planning assumptions) the service is likely to have to deliver a real terms cost reduction of around £500,000 over the next three years. This cumulative level of reduction, whilst challenging, is at a lower level per annum than the service has delivered in recent years. The strategy proposed has been developed to enable the Library Service to continue to deliver an effective service which fulfils its statutory obligation and offers the best value for money within this likely level of resource reduction.

It is important to note that this decision recommends a strategic

	<p>direction and approach, and not specific proposals for service re-design. Further decisions on specific proposals will be taken following consultation, and financial implications can therefore only be estimated at this stage.</p> <p>Elements of the approach proposed will require capital investment, which will be subject to the development of the council's capital programme and budget. Provisional capital allocations for technology refresh across the library estate have been factored into current capital planning assumptions; the service has also bid for further investment funding to support the strategy. As above, specific proposals for investment will be subject to further decisions, and financial implications will be reassessed at each stage.</p> <p>The recommendation to maintain an in-house service delivery model for the near future is partly based on affordability considerations – the likely costs of externalising the service are considerable (for further details, see Appendix 1).</p>
<p><b>Legal Implications:</b></p>	<p>The Council has a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The council must also consider various other legal obligations (e.g. the public sector equality duty and best value duty) when considering changes to service provision, and the council must ensure that any consultations it carries out meet the requirement for procedural fairness.</p> <p><i><u>The duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service</u></i></p> <p>Case law and previous judicial reviews make it clear that the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service cannot be divorced from the reality of the financial constraints acting on the council. It is legitimate for councils to seek to make overall budget decisions and then subsequently to consider how best to structure their library service provision in the light of the available funding resulting from those budget decisions. However, decisions on structuring service provision may only be made once the council has established the baseline for a "comprehensive and efficient" service in its area. It is clear that this baseline will be different in each local authority's area since it will depend on local factors such as need and aspiration, demand, social exclusion, economic deprivation and local demography and geography.</p> <p>In order to meet its duty under the 1964 Act the council must ensure that it properly considers the following elements in the development of proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A robust assessment of need – the Council must consider how library service provision meets the needs of the population as a whole, as well as how the needs of specific groups are met.</li> <li>• The provision of reasonable access to library services for</li> </ul>

	<p>all residents taking into account distance and time taken to reach a library and the availability of digital technologies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from a robust and meaningful consultation exercise.</li> </ul> <p><i><u>The Public Sector Equality Duty</u></i></p> <p>In carrying out the service redesign the council has a duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. In practice this will mean carrying out a comprehensive equality impact assessment, and then taking the results of that assessment into account in formulating the plan. The impact assessment should be updated regularly as the service design proceeds and the outcome should be taken into account at each stage. It should be noted that the impact assessment will be one of a number of factors that must be taken into account – each of them legitimate considerations which must be balanced in a way which is proportionate.</p> <p><i><u>The Best Value duty</u></i></p> <p>The Best Value duty requires Councils to take steps with the object of continuously improving the way services are delivered and need to consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision. In contrast to the Equality Duty Best Value requires the council to take action, rather than merely paying “due regard”.</p> <p>Before the conclusion of the service review SCC will need to discharge its duty to consult a wide range of persons including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• representatives of council tax payers</li> <li>• those who use or are likely to use the service</li> <li>• local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses</li> <li>• anyone else who has an interest in the delivery of the service.</li> </ul> <p>This consultation must be done as early as possible and make provision for the groups concerned to put forward options on how to reshape the service.</p> <p>The strategic direction proposed sets out a plan to re-design the library service, and the approach set out in section 8 of Appendix 2 will ensure that the Council complies with the various legal duties.</p>
<p><b>HR Implications:</b></p>	<p>The proposed strategic approach sets out an objective to re-design frontline workforce roles, and the proposal to re-design the library network could lead to a reduction in the number of staff required to run the service. Both of these areas have</p>

	<p>significant HR implications; staff roles are likely to change, job grades may be re-evaluated, and the size and structure of the frontline workforce is likely to change.</p> <p>As specific proposals are developed, staff and unions will be consulted in accordance with HR procedures and policies, and feedback will be considered by decision makers at appropriate points. The HR advisory team will support the project and ensure procedures are followed correctly.</p> <p>At this early stage it is difficult to assess the extent of change; it is possible that some redundancies may result from the implementation of the proposed strategy. The project team will seek to avoid any compulsory redundancies.</p>
<p><b>Risk Implications:</b></p>	<p>The high level recommendations proposed here do not post any significant direct implications for risk. If the approach for re-designing the Library Service is supported, specific proposals will be developed through a programme approach, by a project team who will maintain a detailed risk register. At this stage, the following high level risks have been identified – these will be developed and properly assessed and mitigated as the project is taken forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A risk that communities are unable or unwilling to support local libraries, which may increase the impact of the proposed network re-design process.</li> <li>• A risk that lower numbers of volunteers are recruited, compared to levels anticipated.</li> <li>• A risk that technology solutions are less effective than anticipated, or cause significant disruption during implementation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Implications (including due regard implications):</b></p>	<p><b><u>Equalities Implications</u></b></p> <p>An initial, high level Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report. The results of this initial assessment indicate a wide range of potential impacts across protected characteristics that could result from the Library Service Re-design proposals set out in the proposed strategy. At this stage, with only high level strategic objectives (as well as an estimated budget reduction) identified, and no specific proposals developed, it is difficult to evaluate equalities impacts with any degree of detail. In light of this, we have given an initial consideration of those protected characteristics that could be affected by a change in the delivery of the Library Service.</p> <p>There is good evidence that people with the protected characteristics of Age (younger children and elderly people), Gender (females) and Race (Black and Ethnic Minority Groups, non-British White groups) are more likely to use Library Services, and some evidence that people with the protected characteristics of Pregnancy / Maternity and Low Income are</p>

also more likely to use Library Services. This in itself means that these groups are likely to be more affected by any change to Library Services. Impacts of the strategy proposed at this stage are likely to be positive and negative for these groups:

- Potential positive impacts include improved technology through investment in new hardware and software; improved library opening hours through a greater use of volunteers and through communities supporting libraries; a wider range of services provided as a result of restructuring the workforce; a greater use of volunteers, releasing capacity for frontline library staff to be more effective.
- The likely reduction in funding to Library Services may potentially have some negative impacts. Whilst hopefully making Library Services more sustainable, a greater reliance on volunteers or community support could diminish the quality of some aspects of the Library Service in some areas. We hope that communities will come forward to support libraries in all areas but we have to be realistic about the prospect that Somerset County Council could be operating fewer library buildings in the future. The project will work to mitigate these impacts as far as possible.

Libraries in smaller, more rural communities tend to be less well-used than others, and many have lower levels of certain categories of need. People who live in rural areas are potentially more likely to be impacted by the review and re-design of the libraries network, although this should be balanced by the potential positive impact of improved opening hours and a more vibrant and sustainable future for some of our more rural libraries, where local community support enables this.

In the event that the council operates fewer library buildings as a result of implementing this strategy, some people may need to travel further to access Library Services. This can have a disproportionate impact on elderly people, disabled people, and people with the protected characteristic of maternity. These groups are less likely to drive, and may find it more difficult to access alternative Library Services.

For some people with protected characteristics (some people with disabilities, some elderly people, some transgender people, some people from minority ethnic groups, some bisexual or homosexual people), changes to much-valued services can create a heightened state of anxiety that directly relates to a protected characteristic. Changes in the location of services, technology platforms, staff, or the introduction of new volunteer roles or community-supported libraries, could all impact on these groups.

Finally, the majority of staff who are likely to be affected by the changes are likely to be female, or over 50, or have lower than



average incomes (or they may have a combination of these protected characteristics). Again, impacts of the strategy proposed at this stage are likely to be positive and negative for these groups:

- Potential positive impacts include lower levels of work-related stress as improved capacity could be delivered by an increase in the use of volunteers and / or by support from community groups. New job roles are likely to be more enriching, and could be better paid.
- Potential negative impacts include anxiety and stress related to potential workforce changes. Some affected staff could lose their jobs if the county council ends up running fewer library buildings.

### **Community Safety Implications**

No direct impact on local crime rates is anticipated to occur as a result of the strategy proposed, however libraries have a key role to play in the development of stronger communities, reduction in social isolation and exclusion, and the overall quality of life. This being the case, changes to library service provision could have an indirect implication for Community Safety through an impact on these secondary factors. The strategy proposed has been developed to maintain a thriving and dynamic library service across Somerset, and we hope that the service will continue to have an increasing positive impact on wellbeing, social isolation, and the development of stronger communities. However, the likely reduction in funding to Library Services may potentially have some negative impacts. Again, whilst making Library Services more sustainable, a greater reliance on volunteers or community support could diminish the quality of some aspects of the Library Service in some areas. We hope that communities will come forward to support libraries in all areas but we have to be realistic about the prospect that Somerset County Council could be operating fewer library buildings in the future. The project will work to mitigate these impacts as far as possible.

### **Sustainability Implications**

The main implications for sustainability have been assessed as follows:

- Community solutions for libraries and the continuing development of a shared assets programme across the service are likely to lead to a more efficient and sustainable use of buildings, lowering carbon emissions and improving sustainability through the re-use of surplus assets. Investment in new technology is also likely to lead to more efficient use of energy resources.
- In the event that the council operates fewer library buildings as a result of implementing this strategy, some people may need to travel further to access Library Services, which could have a marginal impact on congestion and carbon emissions.

### **Health and Safety Implications**

No significant Health and Safety implications of the proposed strategy have been identified at this stage. As noted above, anxiety and stress levels for staff working in the Library Service may be positively affected in the longer term, but are likely to be negatively affected during the implementation of the strategy. Lone working is currently a significant health and safety issue for Library Service staff, and it is hoped that lone working will reduce if a greater number of volunteers can be recruited to support service delivery. Changes to technology or service provision may increase anxiety for some library service users, and this could have an impact on staff health and safety. Health and Safety and incident reporting procedures are robustly applied within the service, and the potential concerns noted here will be kept under review through standard monitoring and risk assessment processes.

### **Privacy Implications**

Potential privacy implications are considered to be limited. Personal data of library card holders is maintained within the Library Management System (LMS), and the strategy proposed may mean that volunteers and / or external entities need to access this system (this happens at Porlock Community Library now, and the model could be extended if other communities take a similar role in the management of local libraries). Data protection will be maintained through robust training for volunteers, and through data sharing agreements with community organisations.

### **Health and Wellbeing Implications**

The strategy proposed has been developed to maintain a focus on supporting Health and Wellbeing, and we hope that the Library Service will continue to have an increasing positive impact in this area by supporting people to make informed choices and deal with specific health conditions, reducing social isolation, and improving mental health and well-being. However, the likely reduction in funding to Library Services may potentially have some negative impacts. Whilst hopefully making Library Services more sustainable, a greater reliance on volunteers or community support could diminish the quality of some aspects of the Library Service. We hope that communities will come forward to support libraries in all areas but we have to be realistic about the prospect that Somerset County Council could be operating fewer library buildings in the future. The project will work to mitigate these impacts as far as possible.

**Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):**

The Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place considered the proposal to maintain an in-house library service, and the proposed strategy for re-designing the service, at its meeting on

	<p>3<sup>rd</sup> October. The minutes of that meeting are available at <a href="http://www.somerset.gov.uk">www.somerset.gov.uk</a>, and the committee resolved to support the proposal to maintain an in-house service for the next three years, to allow the service a period of certainty in which to implement further change.</p>
--	---

## 1. Background

1.1. The way people use libraries is changing, and Somerset's Library Service is undergoing a journey of change and modernisation. Over the last few years, the service has re-focused service delivery to meet a new, wider range of objectives, supporting the Council's priority outcomes:

- Children and Young People are supported through early years reading activities, skills development (Code Clubs, technology activities, volunteering opportunities) and study space with free Wifi.
- We provide books on prescription and other health and wellbeing information resources, a wide range of health and wellbeing activities, and combat social isolation by bringing people together.
- Through business events, access to digital making equipment and our specialist business resources collections, we support businesses to develop and thrive.

In parallel, the Library Service has delivered over £1m of savings during this period.

The service is currently performing well and has delivered a number of successful, innovative projects and initiatives which have gained national recognition. The Library Service is guided by its vision statement:

*Somerset Libraries are a dynamic, evolving and integral part of the community that open up a world of opportunities for reading, understanding and discovery.*

1.2. In order to continue to support the County Council's wider priorities, and put the Library Service on a sustainable financial footing, a long term strategy is required. This report sets out the recommended vision and strategic direction for continuing to modernise and develop the service, delivering a wider set of outcomes to support the wider council, within a financial envelope which is likely to become more challenging over the period considered. Other Library Services (including 'Libraries Unlimited' in Devon) have moved out of local authority control, and the Library Service commissioning team has considered whether this approach would be right for Somerset at this time.

1.3. Overall the development of the service in recent years has been a very positive story – in 2017, the service is far more efficient than it was five years ago and our reputation as a forward-thinking, dynamic service has grown both nationally and locally. However, as the service approaches its centenary year, there are some pressing issues which need to be addressed if we are to sustain the improvement and modernisation journey:

- The network of library service delivery points has not been reviewed for many years; it is therefore not as well-aligned to current need and demand for the service as it could be, and delivers lower value for money in some areas. Some of our smaller libraries are much loved but are not well-used.
- The asset base of the service is in need of investment in some areas. The

condition of many of our technology assets and furniture is constraining our ability to deliver across the outcomes framework, and some library buildings are in a poor condition.

- The libraries workforce is very capable and highly valued, and many staff within the service consistently deliver well above and beyond expectations. However, reductions to staffing budgets and successive expenditure freezes have reduced resilience and morale within the frontline workforce. Staff are frequently stretched and a gap is starting to emerge between the capacity and structure of the libraries workforce and the resources required to deliver the wider range of services and community engagement we aspire to.

**1.4.** If the Cabinet Member endorses the strategic direction and outcomes framework set out in Appendix 2 to this report, a service re-design process will be taken forward as follows:

- Informal engagement with staff and stakeholders is already underway and will continue into November 2017.
- Feedback from this informal engagement will inform the development of a comprehensive needs assessment, as well as the further development of the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) attached as Appendix 3 to this report. Staff and stakeholder views will also shape proposals for workforce re-design and potential volunteer roles.
- The needs assessment and EIA will be used to develop specific proposals for each of our current libraries, as well as a proposed overarching plan for the delivery of Library Services in Somerset (which will include outreach services). In parallel, we will also develop detailed proposals for the restructure of the frontline workforce and potential volunteer roles. We envisage that these proposals will be finalised during December 2017.
- Early in 2018, we will consult thoroughly (with staff, customers, Somerset residents and stakeholder and community groups) on all of these proposals. Results of the consultation will be analysed, and proposals will be reviewed in the light of this analysis and changed where appropriate. The consultation results will also be used to further refine and develop our needs assessment and EIA.
- A final decision on specific proposals is likely to be taken in May or June 2018.

## **2. Options considered and reasons for rejecting them**

**2.1.** Alternative delivery models for the Library Service are considered fully in Appendix 1 to this report, which sets out the reasons why externalisation of the service is not considered to be the best solution at this time. This option will be reconsidered after the service re-design process is concluded.

**2.2.** The strategic direction proposed is being put forward in order to achieve the vision statement set out in paragraph 1.1 above, and the outcomes set out in Appendix 2 to this report. An alternative approach to reducing the cost of the service would be to cease the ongoing development of the service, and 'roll back' the offer to a very narrow interpretation of the duty in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 by focussing on 'transactional' lending and internet access. Savings could be achieved in two areas – firstly, by reducing management,

commissioning and development team capacity, and secondly through a more comprehensive and significant investment in self-service and automated premises management systems to enable transactional service delivery with minimal staff input.

This option has been rejected because:

- It would not offer value for money. The demand for transactional lending and internet access services is declining and being supplanted by a richer level of customer engagement which could not be delivered without the development team resource or automated solutions. This approach would, we feel, lead to a 'hollow shell' service delivery model and would precipitate a decline in the use of the service. It would do nothing to resolve some of the issues described in paragraph 1.3 above.
- Somerset would be left with a Library Service which still cost a significant amount in revenue terms, but which did not contribute to the delivery of wider priority outcomes. We would miss an opportunity to reposition our Library Service to prevent demand and support delivery, to alleviate pressures in health, social care and other council services.
- A narrow interpretation of the 1964 act would likely be challenged and there would be an almost inevitable negative reaction to such an approach. Library customers across the country now expect the richer level of activity-led service delivery, which would largely cease under this alternative option.
- Anecdotal feedback from the few authorities that have implemented automated premises management systems extensively indicates that these come at a significant cost – payback periods are lengthy and overall this may not be a cost effective solution. Furthermore, the little evidence we have on the impact of these approaches indicates that library usage by the vulnerable groups we are increasingly seeking to support has declined in 'staff-less' libraries. Automated premises management systems will be considered as we develop the technology strand of our proposed strategy, but on a pilot basis rather than as a 'whole service' solution.

### **3. Background Papers**

- 3.1.** Library Service update and proposed strategy – report to Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017 (available from [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk)).