



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	Enfield Council Library Strategy
Report to:	Cabinet – 26/02/2025 Council – 27/02/2025
Date of Report:	14/02/2024
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ergin Erbil, Leader of the Council
Director:	Perry Scott, Executive Director – Environment and Communities
Report Author:	Lucy Nasby, Policy and Performance Manager
Ward(s) affected:	All
Key Decision Number	5851
Classification:	Part I Public

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides feedback on the recent consultation on the review of libraries in the borough and seeks approval for a revised draft Library Strategy, which includes the closure of 7 libraries and changes to the service delivery at the remaining 9 libraries.
2. The officers consider that the revised draft Library Strategy provides a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons living, working or undergoing full-time education within the local authority area, for the purposes of section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Recommendations

Cabinet

- I. Recommend that Full Council adopt the revised draft Library Strategy, which is appended to this report (Appendix 1).
- II. Note the findings from the Equality Impact Assessment shown in Appendix 3 and the feedback to the consultation exercise summarised in Appendix 5.
- III. Endorse the proposals within the library strategy to:
 - i. Retain the library service at Ordnance Unity Centre, Edmonton Green, Ponders End, Fore Street, Millfield House, Palmers Green, Enfield Town, Oakwood and Ridge Avenue.
 - ii. Retain the home library service and digital library service.
 - iii. Close Bullsmoor, Enfield Highway, Enfield Island Village, Bowes Road, Southgate, Winchmore Hill and John Jackson libraries.
 - iv. Formally declassify Angel Raynham library located within the primary school as a public library.

Council

- I. Adopt the revised draft Library Strategy, which is appended to this report (Appendix 1).
- II. Note the findings from the Equality Impact Assessment shown in Appendix 3 and the feedback to the consultation exercise summarised in Appendix 5.
- III. Endorse the proposals within the library strategy to:
 - i. Retain the library service at Ordnance Unity Centre, Edmonton Green, Ponders End, Fore Street, Millfield House, Palmers Green, Enfield Town, Oakwood and Ridge Avenue.
 - ii. Retain the home library service and digital library service.
 - iii. Close Bullsmoor, Enfield Highway, Enfield Island Village, Bowes Road, Southgate, Winchmore Hill and John Jackson libraries.
 - iv. Formally declassify Angel Raynham library located within the primary school as a public library.
- IV. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Environment and Communities to make minor textual revisions to the draft strategy prior to publication.

Background

3. Officers have undertaken a review of the Council's current library offer and developed an approach that intends to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who live, work and study in the area, with reduced costs, by reducing the number of library buildings.
4. Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 local councils have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it. In providing this service, councils must encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service and lend books and other printed materials free of charge.
5. Enfield Council's current statutory library provision consists of 16 public libraries, together with the digital library service and a home library service. In addition to these 16 libraries, Angel Raynham library is also classified as a public library, however it is located inside Raynham Primary School, is not accessible to the general public, and is not staffed by the Council's library service. Finally, it has its own stock of books and the operating costs of this library are funded by Raynham Primary School.
6. The way people use and access our libraries has changed over the past 10 years. There is an increasing need for warm public spaces in winter and cool public spaces in summer; and our libraries have become community hubs and family hubs, offering a breadth of services and support. Enfield has also maintained one of the highest number of libraries of any London borough, and far higher than the average across the capital.
7. The Council also faces budget challenges and is having to do more with less following over a decade of government underfunding, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, historic inflation and interest rate rises, and the ongoing cost of living crisis resulting in more residents needing our support.
8. To meet the Council's principles to deliver accessible and responsive services and be financially resilient, officers have considered how the library service can be delivered in a more efficient way, while ensuring that it continues to meet people's changing needs and remains comprehensive.

Phase One Engagement: key findings

9. The Council ran a phase one engagement between 13th December 2023 and 6th March 2024. In this engagement, the Council wanted to hear from stakeholders about our current library service. The Council wanted to understand whether they used our library service, their experience of our libraries and their ideas on how the Council could deliver our library service more efficiently. In total, there were over 1,000 responses to the phase one engagement. This included 912 responses to the questionnaire, 79 responses to the easy read questionnaire, 9 emails and two feedback sessions. Overall, 1,000 respondents equates to 2.3% of active library users between 2022-2024 and 0.3% of the borough population.

10. The key findings from this engagement have been used to inform our final recommendations. The findings of the phase one engagement are attached as Appendix 4 of this report.

Easy read questionnaire and responses:

11. The easy read version of the questionnaire asked a reduced number of questions in an accessible, easy to understand format. Therefore, the responses to closed questions on the easy read version have been reported separately.

12. 92% of the easy read respondents live in Enfield¹ and 93% had used Enfield library service in the last 2 years.² Of the 56 respondents who told the Council why they go to the library, the majority of respondents used Enfield libraries to borrow books (77%), followed by using computers (48%), to read, study or work (45%), print a document (38%) and to get help and advice (32%).

13. The libraries most visited by easy read respondents in the last two years were Enfield Town (39%), Edmonton Green (28%), Oakwood (18%) and Ponders End (18%).³ In addition, 44% had library books delivered to their home. Of the 52 respondents who told the Council how they travel to libraries, the most common mode of travel is to walk (50%), followed by bus (31%) and car (18%).

General questionnaire responses:

14. 90% of respondents live in Enfield⁴ and 93% of respondents had used Enfield library service in the last 2 years.⁵ Of the 797 respondents who said what they use our library service for, the majority used Enfield libraries to borrow books (84%), followed by reading, studying or working (40%), printing documents (33%), and computer use (32%).

15. The libraries most used or visited in the last two years were Enfield Town (68%), Palmers Green (32%), Ridge Avenue (26%), and Edmonton Green (21%).⁶ The libraries least used in the last two years were Millfield Theatre (3%), Bullsmoor (3%), Bowes Road (5%) and Enfield Island Village (5%).⁷ Respondents most commonly use or visit libraries either less frequently than every other month (32%) or weekly (20%). Of the 741 respondents who said how they travel to libraries, the most common mode of travel is to walk (38%), followed by bus (29%) and car (23%), and most respondents used their selected libraries because they were close to home (41%).

Combined responses:

¹ Base: 74 responses

² Base: 74 responses

³ Base: 57 responses

⁴ Base: 896 responses

⁵ Base: 864 responses

⁶ Base: 797 responses

⁷ Base: 798 responses

16. The summary below combines responses from open ended questions on the questionnaire, easy read questionnaire, and further feedback received by email.

17. The consultation asked how the Council could improve the library service and facilities or make our libraries better and noted the themes across the 643 responses received. The most common themes are reported below:

- *Suggestions for improving infrastructure or layout of the library (26%)*. For example, more work and study spaces, more quiet spaces, more seating, and improved toilets and parking facilities.
- *Enhanced community engagement activities and services (25%)*. This included more activities and groups for children and adults, more community/voluntary activities and events to engage and bring people together, and greater promotion of the activities and services on offer in our libraries.
- *Accessibility and diversity (25%)*. This included offering a greater selection of books, more copies of popular books and extended opening hours.

18. Respondents were then asked to share their ideas on what the Council could do differently to deliver our library service more efficiently and make savings to our library budget. Officers noted the themes across the 584 responses and reported the most common themes below:

- *Increasing commercial income (29%)*. For example, through allowing libraries to be used for venue hire, renting library space to businesses and clubs, charging for special events and printing, selling books and stationery or opening a café.
- *Reducing opening hours and premises costs (19%)*. This included reduced opening hours and taking steps to reduce operating costs. For example, energy saving measures for heating and lighting and limiting free printing.
- *Increase volunteering, charitable donations, applying for grant funding and lobbying central government (14%)*. For example, increased community engagement to encourage more volunteers and formation of friends of libraries groups, holding fundraising events, accepting charitable donations and applying for grant funding.

19. Overall, 20% of responses felt that the library budget should not be reduced. Respondents were asked to give further comments or feedback about our library services. Of the 334 responses received, 41% praised the existing library service and staff.

Responses from representatives and organisations:

20. Within the questionnaire responses reported above, 4% (41 respondents) were from representatives and organisations. The libraries most visited among this group were Enfield Town (56%), Edmonton Green (46%) and

Palmer's Green (21%).⁸ The representatives of organisations who responded most commonly used libraries for visits with their organisation or group to use general library facilities (48%) or to deliver support or training to users of their organisation or group or hold meetings (38%).

Phase Two Consultation: Key Findings

21. In the consultation, the Council wanted to gather feedback from stakeholders to further develop and improve our draft proposals. The phase two consultation also helped the Council raise awareness of the draft library strategy among stakeholders and explain the Council's rationale for the proposed changes, developments and opportunities arising out of the draft strategy. From the consultation, the Council wanted to understand how the proposals will impact respondents and their suggestions on how the Council can mitigate this impact and establish whether stakeholders had any alternative suggestions which made the same or similar levels of savings for the library service. The phase two consultation launched on 22nd August 2024 and ran for 12 weeks, ending 14th November 2024.
22. The phase two consultation consisted of a questionnaire for all stakeholders. The questionnaire was available in an easy read format and stakeholders could request a translation of the questionnaire. Officers also commissioned MEL Research, a social research agency, to undertake face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of residents.
23. In total, there were over 2,446 responses to the phase two consultation. This included 1,715 responses to the questionnaire, 133 responses to the easy read questionnaire, 522 face-to-face interviews and 76 emails and letters. Overall, 2,446 respondents equates to 5.7% of active library users between 2022-2024 and 0.7% of the borough population.
24. The Council also received 1,300 signatures to two petitions objecting to the proposed library closures registered with the Council.
25. The key findings from this consultation have been used to inform our final proposals. The findings of the phase two consultation are attached as Appendix 5 of this report.

Easy read questionnaire and responses:

26. The easy read version of the questionnaire asked a reduced number of questions in an accessible, easy to understand format. Therefore, the responses to closed questions on the easy read version have been reported separately.

Respondents

27. 94% of respondents were responding as a local resident⁹ and 96% of respondents had used an Enfield library in the past two years.¹⁰

⁸ Base: 41 respondents

⁹ Base: 128 responses

¹⁰ Base: 129 responses

Potential impact of proposed closures

28. The most common impacts identified by those responding to the easy read questionnaire were that they will lose access to the library service (36%), and it will have a negative impact on the community (30%).¹¹
29. When asked how the Council could support easy read respondents to still use the library service in Enfield, if the proposed closures impacted them, over half of respondents (58%) used this as an opportunity to state their desires to keep all libraries open and almost a quarter said that the Council should reduce the number of libraries proposed to close (23%).¹² Some respondents stated mitigations such as improving the library service with more study space, changes in opening times and the extension of council services to the smaller local libraries.

Proposed changes to opening hours

30. 47% of easy read respondents said that the proposed extensions in opening hours worked for them.¹³ This decreased to 42% for respondents who used a library proposed to close. Of those who said that the proposed extensions in opening hours did not work for them, 67% used this as an opportunity to state their desire to keep libraries open.¹⁴

General questionnaire responses:

Respondents

31. 94% of respondents live in Enfield,¹⁵ of which 44% live in the Southwest of the borough.¹⁶

Vision and Priorities

32. 77% of respondents agree with our vision 'that all Enfield libraries will be hubs for learning, creativity, information, health and wellbeing, welcoming everyone who lives, works or studies in Enfield'.¹⁷ 197 respondents suggested an alternative vision, of which 84% used this as an opportunity to state their desire to keep library services as is. These respondents stated that libraries should be within walking distance and suggested to retain specific libraries, due to their importance to the community.
33. The majority of respondents agree with the proposed priorities in the draft library strategy. Respondents were more likely to agree with our first priority to 'support lifelong reading and literacy for all' (96%).¹⁸ Respondents were least likely to agree with our priority that libraries should 'support good health and wellbeing' (78%).¹⁹ 493 respondents suggested alternative priorities of

¹¹ Base: 84 responses

¹² Base: 101 responses.

¹³ Base: 124 responses

¹⁴ Base: 46 responses

¹⁵ Base: 1,715 responses

¹⁶ Base: 1,588 responses

¹⁷ Base: 1,708 responses

¹⁸ Base: 1,712 responses

¹⁹ Base: 1,711 responses

which 55% used this as an opportunity to state their desire to keep library services as is.

Potential impact of proposed closures on households

34. The majority of respondents stated that the closures of John Jackson (50%),²⁰ Bowes Road (52%),²¹ Enfield Island Village (56%),²² Enfield Highway (55%)²³ and Bullsmoor (59%)²⁴ will have mostly a neutral impact on respondents' households.
35. While for Southgate (55%),²⁵ Oakwood (60%),²⁶ and Winchmore Hill (62%)²⁷ libraries, the majority of respondents said that the closures would have a negative impact on their households.
36. Those who use a library which is proposed to close were more likely to state that the proposed closure of a library will have a negative impact on their household, than respondents who do not use a library proposed to close. This was significantly higher for Winchmore Hill Library (68%),²⁸ Oakwood Library (67%)²⁹ and Southgate Library (61%)³⁰, compared to library users who do not use a library proposed to close (32%,³¹ 27%³² and 26%³³ respectively).

Negative Impact of library closing on household		
	Uses a library / libraries proposed to remain open and does not use a library / libraries proposed to close	Uses a library / libraries proposed to close
Bullsmoor	19%	22%
Enfield Highway	24%	28%
Enfield Island Village	21%	26%
Bowes Road	22%	32%
Winchmore Hill	32%	68%
Southgate	26%	61%
Oakwood	27%	67%
John Jackson	20%	34%

²⁰ Base: 901 responses

²¹ Base: 886 responses

²² Base: 861 responses

²³ Base: 851 responses

²⁴ Base: 836 responses

²⁵ Base: 1,136 responses

²⁶ Base: 1,181 responses

²⁷ Base: 1,154 responses

²⁸ Base: 920 responses

²⁹ Base: 949 responses

³⁰ Base: 901 responses

³¹ Base: 186 responses

³² Base: 183 responses

³³ Base: 184 responses

37. Of those that feel negatively about the proposed closures, their main concerns were about losing access to the library services and a negative impact on the community by reducing spaces and resources for younger and older residents.

38. The most common mitigation for individual respondents is visiting an alternative library in Enfield. Enfield Town is the most popular alternative library (62%) for respondents.³⁴ However, the majority of individual respondents said there could be no mitigation for the impact of closing the libraries on their household.

Mitigations for negative impact of proposed library closure		
	Mitigations Identified	No mitigations identified
Bullsmoor ³⁵	46%	60%
Enfield Highway ³⁶	40%	50%
Enfield Island Village ³⁷	37%	53%
Bowes Road ³⁸	32%	56%
Winchmore Hill ³⁹	37%	58%
Southgate ⁴⁰	42%	54%
Oakwood ⁴¹	41%	58%
John Jackson ⁴²	32%	59%

Potential impact of proposed closures on organisations

39. According to representatives of schools, businesses, community groups and organisations, the most significant impact will be their members and service users losing access to the library service (74%).⁴³

40. Representatives also expressed concerns about the accessibility of alternative libraries and stated the importance of libraries as community hubs, especially for older people, children and vulnerable groups. The Council then asked representatives how it can mitigate the negative impacts of closing the 8 libraries on their organisation's service users and members. Most representatives used this question as an opportunity to reiterate their

³⁴ Base: 335 responses

³⁵ Base: 201 responses

³⁶ Base: 244 responses

³⁷ Base: 234 responses

³⁸ Base: 286 responses

³⁹ Base: 730 responses

⁴⁰ Base: 638 responses

⁴¹ Base: 728 responses

⁴² Base: 294 responses

⁴³ Base: 48 responses

desire to keep libraries open (59%) and some stated that there were no mitigations for the proposed closures (18%).⁴⁴ Some representatives raised the importance of strengthening relationships with the community sector to ensure more people use the remaining libraries and that space is provided in these libraries for community activities (8%).

41. If an organisation used a library which is proposed to close, the Council asked representatives how it could support their organisation to deliver its service from an alternative library in Enfield. Most representatives used this question as an opportunity to reiterate their desire to keep libraries open (45%).⁴⁵ 15% of respondents said that funding for transport costs would support their organisation to deliver its services from an alternative library.

Proposed changes to opening hours

42. The proposed extension in opening hours of the remaining libraries were received well by many, with a substantial proportion of respondents stating the proposal works for them (46%).⁴⁶ However, those who use a library proposed to close were less likely to say that the proposed extension worked for them. 42% of respondents who used a library proposed to close said the proposed extensions did not work for them.⁴⁷

43. Respondents were then asked if the proposed extensions in opening hours would make them more likely to visit the remaining libraries. 40% of respondents said the proposed extension in opening hours would make them more likely to use the libraries,⁴⁸ with Enfield Town being the most popular library selected to visit (57%).⁴⁹ However, those who use a library proposed to close were less likely to say the proposed extension in opening hours worked for them, with 53% saying the proposed extension would not make them more likely to visit the remaining libraries.⁵⁰

Feedback on proposed changes and alternative suggestions

44. Overall, 54% of respondents would like the Council to keep the library service as it is,⁵¹ this increases to 63% for those who use the libraries proposed to close.⁵² 12% of respondents would like the Council to implement all the proposed changes, 21% would like the Council to implement some of the proposed changes, 6% would like the Council to do something else with the library service and 6% didn't know / were not sure.

45. Of those who said they would like the Council to implement some of the proposed changes, 59% said they would like the Council to reduce the

⁴⁴ Base: 39 responses

⁴⁵ Base: 20 responses

⁴⁶ Base: 1,633 responses

⁴⁷ Base: 1,280 responses

⁴⁸ Base: 1,651 responses

⁴⁹ Base: 663 responses

⁵⁰ Base: 1,296 responses

⁵¹ Base: 1,633 responses

⁵² Base: 1,278 responses

number of libraries proposed to close.⁵³ This increased to 70% for those respondents who use a library proposed to close.⁵⁴

Combined responses:

Library Usage

46.95% of respondents had used the Enfield library service in the past two years.⁵⁵ Almost half of respondents had used / visited Enfield Town library in the last two years (49%).⁵⁶ This was followed by Oakwood (34%) and Winchmore Hill (32%).

Feedback on proposed changes and alternative suggestions

47. When asked for suggestions from respondents on what the Council could do differently to deliver the library service more efficiently and make savings to the library budget. Officers noted the themes across the 847 responses and reported the most common themes below:

- Keep libraries open / keep libraries as is (72%): Majority of respondents used this question as an opportunity to reiterate their desire to keep the library service as is and reduce the number of libraries proposed to close.
- Alternative uses and revenue generation (16%): Respondents proposed that the Council use library spaces for other community services to share operating costs or to rent spaces in libraries to local businesses, community organisations or for individual hire to increase income without closing libraries.
- Cost-saving measures (14%): Several suggestions focused on ways to save money without closing libraries. These include stopping free printing services, reducing opening hours, increasing library charges, and employing more volunteers to reduce staff salary costs.
- Libraries are essential for children, students, and the next generation (12%): Respondents emphasised the importance of retaining libraries due to their importance for children and students. Respondents emphasised the importance of libraries as safe spaces and study spaces for students and expressed concerns about the impact of closures on educational attainment and literacy.
- Spaces are needed for older people and the community (9%): Respondents emphasised the importance of libraries for older people and vulnerable groups as warm spaces and opportunities for social connection and digital support.

Face-to-face interviews:

Respondents

48. 522 Enfield residents were surveyed and to ensure that the data was representative, quotas were set by age, gender and ward of the local authority. Over a third of participants (36%) said that they used the Enfield

⁵³ Base: 314 responses

⁵⁴ Base: 237 responses

⁵⁵ Base: 1,647 responses

⁵⁶ Base: 1,743 responses

libraries in the last two years,⁵⁷ of which 40% said they had visited Enfield Town Library.⁵⁸

Potential impact of library closures

49. Overall, the majority of participants felt somewhat indifferent about the potential library closures. More participants were likely to say that the closure of Winchmore Hill Library and Enfield Highway Library would have a negative impact on them (22%⁵⁹ and 17% respectively⁶⁰). Visiting an alternative library and using the digital library service are the most popular alternatives for participants in light of library closures. Enfield Town Library is the most popular alternative venue for those who said that they would visit an alternative library (50%).⁶¹

Proposed changes to opening hours

50. Proposed extension of hours was well received by most participants (69%),⁶² with a similar proportion (70%) stating that the proposed extension would make them more likely to use the remaining libraries.⁶³ Those most positive about this change are likely to live in within wards with lower deprivation levels. Older participants (65+) are notably more likely to say that the proposed extended hours would not work well for them (29%).

Feedback on proposed changes and alternative suggestions

51. There are mixed feelings regarding the proposed changes to Enfield's library services. Over a third of participants (38%) would like library services to stay the same, a quarter (26%) would like to see all the changes proposed implemented and 18% would like to see just some of these changes implemented.⁶⁴ However, when probed further participants stated that perhaps fewer libraries should be closed instead of all of the 8 venues, with mentions of tailored or further support for residents around library closures.⁶⁵

52. When asked about any further suggestions around the proposed changes, many participants used the opportunity to reiterate their desire to keep all libraries open.⁶⁶ Comments regarding the potential negative impact that closures may have to the community remain prominent for those concerned, suggesting that communication and actions that prioritises community support and access to resources such as books and the internet would be well received by residents. There may also be a suggestion here to communicate what the spaces may be used for and any plans for further investment into the borough.

Letters, Emails and Petitions

⁵⁷ Base: 522 responses

⁵⁸ Base: 188 responses

⁵⁹ Base: 223 responses

⁶⁰ Base: 225 responses

⁶¹ Base: 66 responses

⁶² Base: 522 responses

⁶³ Base: 522 responses

⁶⁴ Base: 522 responses

⁶⁵ Base: 36 responses

⁶⁶ Base: 200 responses

53. During the consultation, the Council received 76 emails and letters from stakeholders. Of which, 74 (97%) were in objection to the proposed closures. In these letters respondents expressed concerns about the negative impact of the proposed closures on the local community, especially for older and younger people. Many respondents also expressed concerns about the impacts of the proposed closures on their households, as they are regular users, the library is close to their home, or their family use it.
54. Of the letters and emails received, 6 suggested alternative ideas to the proposed closures. This included ideas around cost saving measures, that library spaces are used for other community services to reduce operating costs or rented out to increase revenue generation.
55. The Council received 1,300 signatures to two petitions objecting to the proposed library closures registered with the Council.

Post consultation strategy amendments

56. Following the phase two consultation, officers have made the following changes to our initial recommendations based on feedback received during the consultation:

Recommend that Oakwood Library remains open:

57. During the second phase consultation, the Council received a high level of responses raising concerns about the impact of the proposed closures and the accessibility of alternative libraries in the Northwest of the borough. Some respondents raised concerns about not being able to use the tube to access a library in the borough, having previously been able to do so to access Bowes Road, Southgate and Oakwood libraries and about the accessibility of parking at alternative libraries.
58. On the basis of this feedback from the consultation, officers recommend that one of the libraries in the Northwest of the borough that was previously proposed to close should remain open. Of the three libraries in the area (Bowes Road, Southgate and Oakwood), officers are recommending keeping Oakwood library open. This is because it has the highest usage of the three, is fully accessible, is near transport links, requires the least maintenance work and is the furthest distance from an alternative library.

Work with community groups to provide community library provision in Enfield Island Village

59. It was proposed that Enfield Island Village be closed, in part due to its proximity to Ordnance Unity Centre. However, during the second phase consultation, stakeholders expressed concerns about the accessibility of travelling to Ordnance Unity Centre through active travel and public transport from Enfield Island Village. Having considered this feedback, it remains officers' recommendation that Enfield Island Village Library should be closed. This is because it had the second lowest percentage of active users per quarter (40%) in 2023/24, the lowest number of issues and

renewals per hour open (2.9) in 2023/24 and the third lowest percentage of ICT hours used per hour open (17%). This low usage means it would not be efficient to continue to provide public library provision at the Enfield Island Village Library.

60. In light of the feedback, officers intend to explore whether the Council can work with community groups to provide pop-up library provision in their community spaces in the Enfield Island Village area, in addition to the statutory service in the nine libraries.

Explore providing surplus books to schools and early years settings impacted by library closures

61. During the second phase consultation, the Council received a high level of responses raising concerns about the impact of the proposed closures on schools and early years settings, and the impact on children's literacy levels. The potential impact of the proposals on children and young people and the mitigations and justifications for this is considered in detail in the Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix 3. Nevertheless, in light of this feedback, the Council will ask schools and early years settings who are located near libraries recommended to close if they would like surplus books to create their own school library service to further mitigate any negative impact.

Review of proposed extensions in opening hours

62. While the proposed extensions in opening hours were well received by many respondents, the significant majority of respondents stated that they wanted a reduction in the number of libraries proposed to close. In light of this, as stated above, officers are recommending that Oakwood Library should remain open, meaning that the total number of libraries closing will be reduced. As a result of the additional costs associated with this, officers have reviewed our proposed extensions in opening hours to enable the Council to keep Oakwood Library open, while still making the desired savings from the library service.

63. Following this review, officers are now recommending that:

- The 4 large libraries (Enfield Town, Edmonton Green, Palmers Green and Ordnance Unity Centre) remain as proposed in the consultation. These libraries were popular alternatives for those impacted by the proposed closures and have the highest usage levels.
- The opening hours at the 3 smaller libraries (Ridge Avenue, Fore Street and Ponders End) remain as they currently are rather than being extended as was originally proposed in the consultation.
- The opening hours at Oakwood Library and Millfield House Library remain as they currently are.

64. In accordance with this recommendation, the 9 remaining libraries will be open for a total of 454.5 hours per week. This would mean that the opening hours at the 9 libraries will have a net increase in their weekly opening hours of 18 hours per week. Officers consider that this revised proposal will enable

the Council to have a geographical spread of 9 libraries with suitable opening hours in fit for purpose buildings.

65. Once the new operating model has been implemented, officers intend to annually review our opening hours to ensure they are at optimal times for communities.

Library Strategy

66. The library strategy sets out how the Council will deliver library services, use our library buildings, and support, develop and empower our staff to make a positive impact on people's lives in Enfield.

67. Our vision is for Enfield libraries to be hubs for learning, creativity, information, health and wellbeing, welcoming everyone who lives, works or studies in Enfield. To achieve this, officers have identified 5 priorities and three principles:

68. Our priorities are:

- Support life-long reading and literacy for all
- Create hubs of activities for communities
- Support good health and wellbeing
- Improve skills and access to work
- Deliver a sustainable service that's fit for purpose

69. Our principles are:

- Focusing resources in areas of greatest need
- Ensuring an accessible library service for everyone
- Delivering a financially resilient library service

70. The strategy is informed by analysis on the use of libraries; the varying needs of communities in different parts of the borough (population and deprivation data); the accessibility of our library buildings by different travel modes; feedback from the first phase engagement and second phase consultation with stakeholders; and the operating and maintenance costs of library buildings.

71. To meet the Council's principles to deliver accessible and responsive services and be financially resilient, officers have considered how our library service can be delivered in a more efficient way, while ensuring that it continues to meet people's needs and is comprehensive. Therefore, the library strategy proposes to:

- Retain the library service at Ordnance Unity Centre, Edmonton Green, Ponders End, Fore Street, Millfield House, Palmers Green, Enfield Town, Oakwood and Ridge Avenue.
- Retain the home library service and digital library service.
- Close Bullsmoor, Enfield Highway, Enfield Island Village, Bowes Road, Southgate, Winchmore Hill and John Jackson.
- Formally declassify Angel Raynham as a public library.

72. It is acknowledged that the majority of respondents to the consultation and engagement did not support the proposed closures of libraries. However, officers consider that the draft library strategy will deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service for Enfield. The changes are justified by the need to improve and enhance the library service at the retained 9 libraries, and the need to deliver the library service in a more efficient manner to make it financially sustainable. The draft library strategy will also make a contribution towards the legitimate aim of balancing the Council's budget by making savings which will contribute towards closing the funding gap in the Council's budget.

Summary of recommendations

Closure of library buildings

73. Based on the analysis set out in this report and the appendices, officers are recommending the closure of 7 library buildings that currently form part of the statutory library service. It is estimated that the closure of the 7 buildings will achieve an annual revenue saving in the range of £0.5 to £0.56 million once fully implemented. These estimated savings are the operating costs and staffing posts for the buildings that will close. Additionally, the buildings also require maintenance work and by delivering the library service from fewer buildings, the Council will also be saving an estimated £4.8 million in future upkeep and maintenance costs over 10 years. It is estimated that the buildings could generate a capital receipt of between £3 million and £3.85 million.

Bullsmoor

74. Officers are recommending the closure of Bullsmoor Library given its relatively low usage, proximity to Ordnance Unity Centre as an alternative provision and the opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.

75. The library is in Bullsmoor ward which is ranked 8th for level of need out of the 25 wards in Enfield. However, the library is comparatively one of our least used libraries. In 2023/24 it had the lowest number of visits per hour open (4.4) and percentage of ICT hours used per hour open (6%) of all council run smaller libraries in Enfield. The library is in close proximity to Ordnance Unity Centre, which is 1.5km away. This would take the average person 19 minutes to walk or 5 minutes to cycle. For those unable to walk this is a 4-minute car journey or 11-minute public transport journey.

Enfield Highway

76. Officers are recommending the closure of Enfield Highway Library given its relatively low usage, proximity to Ponders End (1.5km) and Ordnance Unity Centre (1.6 km) as an alternative provision and the opportunity to reduce

library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.

77. The journey to Ponders End would take the average person around 21 minutes to walk or 8 minutes to cycle. For those unable to walk, it is a 6-minute drive or a 10-minute public transport journey bus journey. Alternatively, Ordnance Unity Centre is a 23-minute walk for an average person or a 10-minute cycle.

78. Whilst Brimsdown has a high level of local need, it is ranked 5th for level of local need out of the 25 wards in Enfield. Enfield Highway has below average usage compared to other council run smaller libraries in Enfield.

Enfield Island Village

79. Officers are recommending the closure of Enfield Island Village Library given its relatively low usage, proximity to Ordnance Unity Centre (1.8 km) as an alternative provision and the opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need. This journey is a 25-minute walk for an average person, or a 7-minute cycle. For those unable to walk, it is a 7-minute drive or a 13-minute public transport journey.

80. As explained above, during the second phase consultation, concerns were raised by stakeholders about the accessibility of travelling to Ordnance Unity Centre through active travel and public transport from Enfield Island Village.

81. Having considered this feedback, it remains officers' recommendation that Enfield Island Village Library should be closed. This is because it had the second lowest percentage of active users per quarter (40%) in 2023/24, the lowest number of issues and renewals per hour open (2.9) in 2023/24 and the third lowest percentage of ICT hours used per hour open (17%). This low usage means it would not be efficient to continue to provide public library provision at the Enfield Island Village Library. Therefore, officers intend to explore whether the Council can work with community groups to provide pop-up library provision in their community spaces in the Enfield Island Village area, in addition to the statutory service in the nine libraries.

Bowes Road

82. Officers are recommending the closure of Bowes Road Library given its lack of accessibility for users with a disability, low usage and proximity to Palmers Green and Oakwood libraries. This is an opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.

83. The library is in New Southgate ward which ranks 15th out of the 25 Enfield wards for level of local need. It is considered that it would be reasonable for library users to travel to alternative provision at Palmers Green and Oakwood libraries, due to the good transport links. Palmers Green is 1.8km away, which would take the average person 23-minutes to walk or 8 minutes

to cycle. For those unable to walk, this would be a 6-minute drive or 16 minutes by public transport. This library is 5km from Oakwood Library which would take 14 minutes to travel by car or 18 minutes by public transport.

84. Bowes Road Library is comparatively one of our least used libraries and during 2023/24 had 7,076 visits. The library is not accessible for users with a disability as it does not have step free access or a public toilet, which are both available at Palmers Green and Oakwood.

Winchmore Hill

85. Officers are recommending the closure of Winchmore Hill Library, as it is in an area of low need and is located within a reasonable distance of other library provision (Ridge Avenue and Palmers Green respectively). This is an opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.
86. Winchmore Hill is ranked 24th out of the 25 wards in Enfield for level of local need. It is considered that it would be reasonable for library users to travel to alternative provision at Palmers Green and Ridge Avenue, due to the good transport links.
87. Palmers Green is 1.8km away. This would take the average person 25 minutes to walk or 6 minutes to cycle. For those unable to walk the journey would take 13 minutes by public transport or 6 minutes to drive. Alternatively, Ridge Avenue Library is 1.8km away. This would take the average person 24 minutes to walk or 6 minutes to cycle. For those unable to walk the journey would take 6 minutes to drive or 8 minutes by public transport.

Southgate

88. Officers are recommending the closure of Southgate Library, as it is in an area of relatively low need and is located within a reasonable distance of alternative library provision at Palmers Green and Oakwood. This is an opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.
89. Southgate is ranked 14th out of the 25 wards in Enfield for level of local need. It is considered that it would be reasonable for library users to travel to alternative provision at Palmers Green and Oakwood, due to good transport links.
90. This library is 2.7km from Oakwood Library which is a 35-minute walk or 13-minute cycle. For those unable to walk, it would take 8 minutes to travel by car or 10 minutes by public transport. The nearest large library is Palmers Green which is 2.9km away. This would take the average person 32 minutes to walk or 9 minutes to cycle. For those unable to walk the journey would take 13 minutes by public transport or 8 minutes to drive.

John Jackson

91. Officers are recommending the closure of John Jackson Library given its low usage and proximity to Enfield Town and Ponders End as an alternative provision. This is an opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.

92. Southbury is ranked moderately (11th) for level of local need. However, given the proximity to Enfield Town (2.9km) and Ponders End (1.8km), there are appropriate alternative provisions for this age group. Enfield Town is a transport hub and main shopping and leisure area, and residents who visit John Jackson Library are likely to already travel to Enfield Town for other reasons, as well as to visit the library.

93. Enfield Town Library is 2.9km away. This would take the average person around 25 minutes to walk or 8 minutes to cycle. For those unable to walk or cycle, it would take 9 minutes to travel by car and 14 minutes by public transport. Ponders End is another alternative library, which is 1.8km away, this would take the average person around 24 minutes to walk or 6 minutes to cycle. It is also a 6-minute journey by car or 21 minutes by public transport.

Declassifying Angel Raynham Library located within the Primary School as a public library

94. Angel Raynham, though currently classed as one of our 17 libraries, is part of a primary school and is not accessible to the general public. It was historically used as a library as part of a Children's Centre in the building but is now only used as a school library. Taking this into consideration, along with the proximity to alternative library provision, officers are recommending giving this library permanently to the school and permanently closing the public library.

Continue to deliver library service in existing library buildings

95. Officers are recommending that the Council keeps the following buildings open, with the potential to stretch assets further through new income generation and delivery of hub models.

96. The 9 libraries which the Council will retain as part of the statutory service represent 89% of visits in 2023/24, 84% of ICT minutes used in 2023/24 and were used by 83% of active users in 2023/24. This shows that they are well used by the communities they serve. The 9 libraries will be collectively open for 454.5 hours per week. This is a net increase in the weekly opening hours of 18 hours per week when compared to existing opening hours at the 9 libraries.

97. The closure of the 7 library buildings will enable the Council to invest in our remaining libraries to ensure that they are attractive, comfortable and inspire a love of learning and discovery. To ensure our buildings are modern,

accessible and climate resilient the Council needs to invest over £3.5 million in our libraries over the next ten years.

98. Officers believe that this will enable the Council to deliver a comprehensive, accessible and responsive service that is financially resilient, while continuing to meet people's needs.

Ordnance Unity Centre

99. Officers are recommending that Ordnance Unity Centre Library remains open. Enfield Lock has a lower than average level of local need (10th of the 25 wards in Enfield) and the library has a large floorspace which is sufficient to support an increase in usage as a result of the closure of nearby smaller libraries.

100. The Council is increasing the opening hours at Ordnance Unity Centre by 4.5 hours per week. This will ensure that the service offer is consistent with Palmers Green Library.

Edmonton Green

101. Officers are recommending that Edmonton Green Library remains open. Edmonton Green is ranked 1st out of the 25 wards for level of local need in Enfield. It has the highest percentage of children in relative and absolute (49%) low-income families out of all the wards in Enfield, which is significantly higher than the borough average (25%). The ward also has the highest proportion of adults on unemployment benefits (10%) and adults with no qualifications (30%).

102. Edmonton Green is a large library which is in a convenient location for residents in neighbouring wards to use, and its size means it can support any increase in usage as a result of the closure of other libraries.

103. The Council is increasing the opening hours at Edmonton Green by 7.5 hours per week. This will ensure that the service offer is consistent with Enfield Town Library.

Ponders End

104. Officers are recommending that Ponders End Library remains open with no change to the proposed opening hours. Ponders End is ranked 4th out of the 25 wards in Enfield for level of local need. The ward has the highest percentage of children aged 0-15 (25%) and the second highest percentage of adults receiving universal credit (46%). The ward also has the third highest percentage of adults with no qualifications (29%). Of the areas of the highest deprivation and need in Enfield, Ponders End is the furthest from a large library (3.1km).

Fore Street

105. Officers are recommending that Fore Street library remains open. Fore Street Library is in Upper Edmonton, which is within the top 10% most

deprived wards within the country and is ranked 3rd out of the 25 wards in Enfield for level of local need.

106. Fore Street Library reopened in July 2022 and its refurbishment was supported by the Good Growth Fund. The 'Living Room' Library creates an open shop window space in the front of the library for exhibiting drawings and models, as well as hosting talks, presentations and advice surgeries. It is recommended that this multipurpose space is used as a flagship model for how our other libraries could be redesigned to ensure they are hubs of activities for communities, subject to available funding.

Millfield House

107. Officers are recommending that Millfield House Library remains open. Haselbury is within the top 20% most deprived wards within the country and is ranked 7th out of the 25 wards for level of local need. The ward has a high population density (8,960 people p/sq. km) and a high percentage of households in fuel poverty (17%), so any change to the library service in this area could particularly impact these households, who may require a warm public space in winter.

108. Millfield House Library is managed by Platinum Performing Arts, which will be a condition of their lease. Therefore, although the library's usage is low when looking at issues/renewals and ICT equipment usage, given the very low running costs of keeping this self-serve library open, the Council is not making any changes to this provision at this time.

Palmers Green

109. Officers are recommending that Palmers Green Library remains open. While Palmers Green has relatively low levels of local need (ranked 16th out of 25 wards in Enfield for level of local need), Palmers Green is a large library which is in a convenient location for residents in neighbouring wards to use, and its size means it can support any increase in usage as a result of the closure of nearby smaller libraries.

110. Given that the library has the lowest net expenditure of all the large libraries, Palmers Green represents a cost effective and efficient library which can be further developed to deliver an enhanced offer to Enfield residents. The Council is increasing the opening hours at Palmers Green by 4.5 hours per week. This will ensure that the service offer is consistent with Ordnance Unity Centre Library.

Oakwood

111. As explained above, officers are now recommending that Oakwood Library remain open. In the second phase consultation, the Council consulted on the closure of this library as, while the library is well used, Oakwood ward has the lowest level of local need. It was initially considered that it would have been reasonable for library users to travel to alternative provision at Enfield Town and that this was an opportunity to reduce library costs whilst ensuring

the Council provides a comprehensive library service that responds to local need.

112. However, during the second phase consultation the Council received a high level of responses raising concerns about the impact of the proposed closures and the accessibility of alternative libraries in the Northwest of the borough. Some respondents raised concerns about not being able to use the tube to access a library in the borough, having previously been able to do so to access Bowes Road, Southgate and Oakwood libraries, and about the accessibility of parking at alternative libraries. Therefore, of these three libraries, officers recommend keeping Oakwood library open as it has the highest usage, is fully accessible, is near transport links, requires the least maintenance work and is the furthest distance from an alternative library.

113. There is a high proportion of residents aged 65+ in Oakwood and neighbouring Cockfosters and Ridgeway wards, and it should be considered how the Council can further engage this cohort in the library service and provide services to support them to age well. The library also has a community room at the back of the building, and it should be explored how the Council can further maximise its usage to increase income at the library and share premises.

Enfield Town

114. Officers are recommending that Enfield Town Library remains open. While Enfield Town has a relatively low level of local need (ranked 17th out of 25 wards in Enfield for level of local need). Enfield Town is a large library which is in a convenient location for residents in neighbouring wards to use, and its size means it can support any increase in usage as a result of the closure of nearby community libraries.

115. The Council is increasing the opening hours at Enfield Town library by 1.5 hours per week. This will ensure that the service offer is consistent with Edmonton Green Library.

Ridge Avenue

116. Officers are recommending that Ridge Avenue Library remains open. While Bush Hill Park and its neighbouring wards have a low level of local need, (21st out of the 25 wards), this library has a high number of visits and maximises value for money, in terms of space, as it is co-located with the borough's archive service.

Other options considered

117. During the consultation, the Council welcomed any ideas from stakeholders which could achieve the same level of savings for the library service as our proposals. In this section, officers have outlined some of the options they have considered from feedback in the phase one engagement and phase two consultation when developing their final recommendations.

Keep the library service as is

118. In the phase one engagement and phase two consultation, respondents requested that the Council does not make any changes to the library service offer and should seek to make savings elsewhere.

119. The Council faces budget challenges due to over a decade of government underfunding, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, historic inflation and interest rate rises, and the ongoing cost of living crisis resulting in more residents needing our support. Therefore, the Council is having to make significant budget savings across all services, including by delivering services in a more efficient manner. In light of the need for a fair allocation of resources, it is not considered that the library service should be excluded from this exercise.

Reduction in opening hours

120. In the engagement and consultation, respondents suggested reducing opening hours to make savings to the library revenue budget. To make the same revenue levels of savings the Council would need to significantly reduce opening hours. This was not considered viable because it would be an inefficient use of 16 buildings and would still need investment for the maintenance work required in each building. Officers do not believe such a model would meet the Council's statutory obligations in delivering a comprehensive and efficient library service.

Replacing library staff with volunteers

121. In the engagement and consultation, respondents suggested that the Council increase the number of volunteers to reduce salary costs for the library service and therefore avoid the closure of libraries.

122. Volunteers provide a valuable contribution to our library service in addition to paid library staff, providing over 10,000 hours of support per year. The roles of volunteers include delivering our home library service, being ICT buddies and supporting baby and toddler rhyme times. As part of the library strategy, the Council wants to continue to promote our volunteer offer at our libraries to increase participation and complement the service delivered by our library workforce.

123. While it is recognised that the desired revenue savings could be achieved through replacing staff with volunteers, this approach was not recommended by officers as a comprehensive and efficient library service could not be guaranteed. It is considered that the Council would not be able to guarantee the formal opening hours required for a consistent library service or to meet community need.

124. Officers also believe that having a trained and knowledgeable workforce is crucial for delivering the universal library offers and ensuring that key council priorities are consistently delivered through our libraries.

125. Furthermore, Council would still need to fund the operating and maintenance costs of the buildings and undertake the necessary repairs and maintenance work over 10 years (£8.3 million).

Community managed libraries and outsourcing

126. In the second phase consultation, the Council welcomed expressions of interest from organisations, such as community groups and/or voluntary association or charities or similar, that felt they had the capability and funds necessary to operate and maintain and repair a library. No organisation submitted a completed business case to the Council, during the consultation period. The responses received were expressions of interest in the use of the buildings, if they were declared surplus to the library estate and did not state their interest in operating a community managed library, as per the criteria outlined in the consultation.

Proposal	Outcome
Voluntary sector organisations and a local business asked to lease the library buildings if the libraries closed for private use.	This was a not a proposal to run a public library.
A private developer enquired about the purchase of a library building.	This was a not a proposal to run a public library.
A local enterprise wanted to lease a library building and depending on the commercial viability of its operations, conditionally offered to let the Council manage and fund a library from the site.	No business case was submitted and this proposal would have required the Council to fund ongoing revenue and capital costs for the service.

Alternative uses and income generation

127. In the consultation, respondents suggested that the Council use library spaces for other community services or to rent them out to local businesses, to increase the council's revenue generation.

128. Officers review our library service each year to find ways to drive best value such as finding new contracts to deliver such as visa verification, pro-actively renting out our spaces to partners and groups, being part of a stock buying and sharing consortium and seeking funding such as S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

129. Officers consider that it would not be possible to further maximise the income from our libraries to sufficiently cover the maintenance work required for the 16 buildings and the operating costs for the 7 libraries proposed to close. Many of our libraries do not have sufficient square footage to support the permanent co-location of services or businesses, which would be required to generate this income.

Replacement of branch libraries with a mobile library

130. In the consultation, respondents suggested that if libraries were to close, they should be replaced by a mobile library. The capital cost of purchasing a van is estimated to be £200,000⁶⁷ and there would be ongoing revenue expenditure to staff the vehicle, which is estimated to cost £50,000.⁶⁸

131. Officers consider that the revised draft Library Strategy provides a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons living, working or undergoing full-time education within the local authority area, for the purposes of section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Officers do not believe that a mobile library would be necessary for the library service to meet this duty, due to the geographical spread of 9 libraries in the borough. If a resident faces significant difficulties in visiting an alternative library, the Home and Digital Library Services can provide books and resources to these residents.

Open+ Model

132. In the consultation, respondents suggested that the Council operate an Open+ model to reduce salary costs for the library service. The Open+ model would enable library users to access the library service and self-serve using their library card, without staff being present in the building.

133. The set up and ongoing operational costs of an Open+ model means that this is unlikely to deliver the desired savings as it would require costly new technology. Officers estimate that it would cost over £700,000 in capital expenditure to install the technology and the Council would still need to fund the necessary repairs and maintenance work in all 16 buildings over 10 years (£8.3 million). Furthermore, the Council would also need officers to monitor the CCTV cameras in all the libraries, when staff are not present in the building, to ensure site and visitor safety and safeguarding.

Implementation

134. The implementation of the new model will be undertaken through the following workstreams, if and when the new strategy is approved by Full Council:

Workstream	Key Milestone	Indicative Timescale
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⁶⁷ The estimate is based on the capital expenditure invested by other local authorities in a Mobile Library.

⁶⁸ This estimate is based on a Mobile Library Manager post with oncosts.

Transition to the new staff model	Review of staff roles and locations	March – June 2025
	Staff consultation	
	Communication campaign about new service model	
Move co-located library services to new sites	Home Library Service is moved to Enfield Town Library	July 2025
	Library Resource Unit is moved to Civic Centre or another Council building	
New model is implemented	Closure of 7 buildings	July 2025
	New opening hours implemented at 9 retained libraries	
	Communication campaign about new service model	
	Asset management plans are produced and agreed for the 9 retained libraries	
Library services furniture is removed from the closed buildings	Remove furniture and resources from the 7 buildings.	July – August 2025
	Furniture and resources to be reviewed and distributed to 9 retained libraries	
Property is declared surplus to library service and handed over to Property Services	New model is fully operational and surplus properties are handed over to property services	September 2025

135.A detailed project plan for the implementation will be produced following approval of the strategy by officers and will be regularly reviewed by the Executive Director and Cabinet Member.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

136.The Council Plan 2023-2026 sets out our vision and priorities to invest in Enfield to deliver positive outcomes for our communities. Our library service plays a critical part in enabling the Council to deliver on our priorities, in particular our priority for strong, healthy and safe communities; thriving children and young people; and an economy that works for everyone. Our Council Plan also includes principles for how the Council will deliver positive outcomes for all, by creating a fairer Enfield, through collaboration and early help, and by ensuring financial resilience for the Council – these principles have underpinned our approach in developing the new library strategy.

137. Furthermore, these interconnected strategies and policies have also informed the development of the priorities and principles in our library strategy.

- Fairer Enfield 2021 – 2025
- Early Help for All Strategy 2021 – 2025
- Empowering Young Enfield 2021 - 2025
- A Cultural Strategy for Enfield 2020 - 2025
- An Economy that Works for Everyone, Enfield's Economic Development Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024 - 2030
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Town Centre Action Plans

Financial Implications

138. The new library strategy will create revenue savings of between £0.5m and £0.56m once fully implemented. It is anticipated that there could be posts at risk of redundancy and in line with the Council's policy these will be funded from the flexible use of capital receipts given that they are because of restructuring the service and lead to ongoing revenue savings.

139. If the strategy is approved, then the closed libraries will be declared surplus. The assets will continue to be managed by Property services and their future will be considered in line with the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan. The future of each asset will be subject to its own separate decision which will include a business case and financial appraisal of each asset, where the options for disposal or alternative use will be explored.

140. If all the assets were disposed this is expected to generate a capital receipt in the range of £3m to £3.85m. It is not Council policy to ring fence capital receipts for specific purposes. Any future investment over the next 10 years in the remaining libraries will require its own strategy and will be subject to a business case that will consider the affordability of the investment required.

Legal Implications

141. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide a local library service in accordance with section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act requires each local authority to provide a library service that is "comprehensive and efficient for those that live, work or study in the area".

142. In fulfilling this duty, the Council is required to have particular regard to the desirability:

- of securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general

requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and

- of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and
- of securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such and any other authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full co-operation between the persons engaged in carrying out those functions.

143. While there is no definition of what 'comprehensive and efficient' library service may mean in practice, case law confirmed that it did not mean that every resident had to live close to a library but rather that it meant providing a service that is accessible to all using reasonable means including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraint on council resources. Decisions about a local library service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough. It is therefore a local decision on how the library service best meets this requirement practically, including how many libraries there are, where they are, when they are open, and what each one offers. For the reasons explained in this Report, officers believe that the revised draft Library Strategy will secure a comprehensive and efficient library service, taking account of the factors outlined above.

144. The Department for Culture, Media & Sport has published guidance to assist councils in considering library service provision as a statutory service. The guidance states that a Council is required to meet the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available. What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. It is therefore the role of councillors and officials at a local level to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service. This must be done:

- (a) in consultation with their communities
- (b) through analysis of evidence around local need
- (c) in accordance with their statutory duties

145. The guidance also states that Councils have the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs. There are no longer prescribed national standards, which risked ignoring the specific circumstances or needs of individual library authorities.

146. In preparation of its library strategy, the Council must consider several legal obligations, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Best Value Duty (duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness). In particular, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty imposed on it under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

147. Under 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and in carrying out their functions, the Council needs to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set in the Act to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

148. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (outlined above) cover the following protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Council also considers the impact on those who are care experienced and those facing socio-economic advantage.

149. When discharging the duties set out in the above paragraph, the Council must record the steps it had taken by in seeking to meet its statutory requirements. In that regard, a detailed Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared (at Appendix 3) following a public consultation and is the subject of analysis at paragraphs 158-161. Members, in consideration of the officer's recommendations contained in this report, must consciously and carefully consider the Equality Impact Assessments. They must assess the risk and extent of any adverse discriminatory impact and the ways in which such risk may be mitigated or eliminated before taking a decision to adopt the proposed Strategy and not merely as a "rear-guard action", following a concluded decision. Members are also reminded, that they are taking a fresh decision on the proposed Strategy and any views they formed when making their earlier decisions should not override their duty to approach the decision afresh, and in light of all the material factors and relevant information presented.

150. Case law has established that the public sector equality duties must be "exercised in substance, with rigour, and with an open mind" rather than as a "box ticking" exercise. Therefore, a conscious and considered approach to the statutory duty must be undertaken by members.

151. It is for the Courts to determine whether due regard has been had. However, it is for members to decide on the weight it accords to equalities considerations, and to the countervailing factors identified above (such as the need to deliver the service in a more efficient manner given the financial pressures faced by the Council).

Due regard to eliminate discrimination

152. Users of libraries which are to close would be adversely impacted by the proposals. As set out in the EqIA, the elderly, children and the disabled are likely to face a particular disadvantage, as they may find it more difficult to access a different library. However, this impact can be mitigated by (a) users of libraries which are to close travelling to other libraries, and (b)

through users linking into the use of the home library and digital library service.

153.As explained further below in the section headed “Equalities implications”, the proposed closures may also place users from certain protected groups at a particular disadvantage as a higher proportion of women, those from White ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as a second language, those who are non-religious, those who are socio-economically disadvantaged and older / younger people are users of the libraries that are to close. Again, this impact can be mitigated by (a) users of libraries which are to close travelling to alternative libraries; and (b) through users linking into the use of the home library and digital library services.

154.Any particular disadvantage that protected groups may face is justified for the reasons set out above in this report. The Council is pursuing the legitimate aims of improving and enhancing the library service at the retained 9 libraries, while delivering library services in a more efficient manner to make them financially sustainable.

Due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity

155.The library service already seeks to promote and advance equality of opportunity in its services through hosting events to encourage reading and improve literacy, particularly for our low income families who are unable to access paid reading materials e.g. summer reading challenge and parent toddler reading groups. The library service also provides accessible spaces for older children to work in a quiet space and also with provision of access to computers for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. The library service also caters for and encourages those who are isolated to access the community, to access warm spaces, access to large textbooks and to engage with becoming digitally enabled. The library service hosts diverse community groups to use library space to ensure that equality of opportunity is advanced. The EqIA acknowledges that the protected groups, may be less likely to access the library service as a result of the closure of 7 libraries. Whilst this is likely to impact on their equality of opportunity the library service will continue to promote equality of opportunity in the remaining libraries as outlined above given their larger footprint and accessible locations across the borough to mitigate against any adverse impact. Further, mitigation through users linking into the use of the home library and digital library services enable the advancement of equality of opportunity to continue to be met.

Due regard to the need to foster good relations

156.The library service currently hosts various events across its libraries and in its community spaces to foster good relations within its community such as LGBTQ+ history month, celebration events for the Gypsy Roma Traveller Community, community coffee mornings and Age UK events. While closing some libraries is likely to impact upon these events, it is considered that the library service will continue to promote these inclusive events across the

remaining libraries to mitigate against any adverse impact. The library service will continue to engage with local community groups representing different protected groups to ensure the service development, book collection, and calendar programming planned will be inclusive of all. The service, through regular reviews, will identify underserved groups, to ensure libraries serve everyone and increase activities and resources that are inclusive of different protected groups within its areas.

Equalities Implications

157. The development of the library strategy has been informed by the findings of a detailed Equality Impact Assessment, which has been completed to identify the impact of the changes on people who share different protected characteristics. This can be found in Appendix 3.

158. It is recognised that, despite the mitigations outlined in the Appendix 3, it is likely that the proposed closure of a library will have a negative impact on the users of that library, regardless of their protected characteristics, as it is the loss of a community asset. The EqlA identifies that the closure may place particular groups at a particular disadvantage, including disabled people, older people, people from White ethnic backgrounds, people who speak English as a second language, people who are non-religious and families with infants, young children or disabled children.

159. Even if there is any particular disadvantage for any particular protected group, officers consider that the draft library strategy is justified by the need to improve and enhance the library service at the retained 9 libraries, and the need to deliver the library service in a more efficient manner. The draft library strategy will also make a contribution towards the legitimate aim of balancing the Council's budget by making savings which will contribute towards closing the funding gap in the Council's budget. The proposals are proportionate in light of the mitigating measures summarised below (set out in the EqlA found in Appendix 3) and the pressing budgetary pressures.

160. Once the new model is implemented, officers will regularly review usage of our library service to ensure all communities are represented and served by our new model. This will ensure that the identified mitigations for those who use libraries proposed to close are relevant and meet the needs of residents.

Potential negative impact	Action required to mitigate the potential negative impact
<p>The closure of 7 libraries will impact protected groups who are current library users, and any person who wishes to access our library provision.</p> <p>The groups most likely to be disproportionately impacted are disabled people, older people, people</p>	<p>Alternative Libraries There will be a network of 9 libraries across the borough that are available for everyone to access.</p> <p>Officers will update the library website with bus and train information, as well</p>

from White ethnic backgrounds, people who speak English as a second language, people who are non-religious and families with infants, young children or disabled children.

The closure of 7 libraries may have a specific negative impact on children and young people living in those areas who may not be able to use the services, to borrow books or as a safe study space. This could have consequential impacts on young people's literacy, reading and wellbeing.

The closure of 7 libraries may cause a greater risk of isolation and digital exclusion for older people living in those areas.

as local car parking arrangements, for each library.

The library service will offer familiarisation visits for those who may feel anxious about visiting new libraries. This could help them to feel welcome visiting other libraries, encourage them to attend groups and activities and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.

Officers will engage with existing groups running in libraries which close to make alternative arrangements for their offer. Officers will work with these partners as part of the implementation of the library strategy to transfer, where possible, their services to alternative libraries.

Ongoing Review of Library Service

Officers will regularly review usage of our library service to ensure all communities are represented and served by our new model.

Officers will regularly review our programme of events and activities to ensure that there is a diverse range which caters for different protected groups.

Officers will regularly review how the Council are engaging with voluntary and community organisations and health partners to identify how the Council can improve partnership working.

Officers will regularly review equalities data on the protected characteristics of library service users to see whether this is representative of ward / borough populations.

Officers will annually review our opening hours to ensure that they are at optimal times for communities.

Digital Library Service

	<p>The Council has a digital library service, which enables library users to access free e-learning, e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers and e-magazines on their digital devices at home.</p> <p>Officers will continue to promote awareness of our digital service, providing training for customers on how they can use it access the digital library offer at their convenience.</p> <p>Library Consortium Enfield library users can use their library cards at 22 local authorities' libraries, including neighbouring authorities: Waltham Forest, Haringey and Essex.</p> <p>Home Library Service For residents who face significant difficulties in visiting an alternative library, the Royal Volunteer Service can deliver services on our behalf to their home. There is no charge for this service and the Royal Voluntary Service visits our home library users once every two weeks.</p>
<p>The closure of libraries will impact some disabled people, older people and families with infants and young children who will need to travel to different libraries.</p> <p>Some may find it difficult to travel to alternative libraries if they are required to walk certain distances, travel longer distances or take a journey which requires them to change buses or trains to get to a library.</p> <p>There may also be financial barriers for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage to travelling to alternative libraries.</p>	<p>Signposting on the Council website Officers will update the library website with bus and train information, as well as local car parking arrangements, for each library.</p> <p>Eligibility for free public transport People aged over 60, disabled people, and children under 10 are eligible for a free travel with an Oyster photocard, this enables them to travel for free on TFL services (for people aged 60+ this is from 09:00 weekdays and anytime on weekends or bank holidays). This mitigates against the cost of travelling to alternative libraries for children, older people and disabled people who are able to travel.</p> <p>Digital Library Service The Council has a digital library service, which enables library users to</p>

	<p>access free e-learning, e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers and e-magazines on their digital devices at home.</p> <p>Officers will continue to promote awareness of our digital service, providing training for customers on how they can use it access the digital library offer at their convenience.</p> <p>Home Library Service For residents who face significant difficulties in visiting an alternative library, the Royal Voluntary Service can deliver services on our behalf to their home. There is no charge for this service and the Royal Voluntary Service visits our home library users once every two weeks.</p>
<p>Some groups who are more likely to experience social isolation, (such as older people, carers and disabled people), and rely on regular visits to their local library for social connection. This will negatively impact those whose local library will close.</p>	<p>Alternative Libraries There will be a network of 9 libraries across the borough that are available for everyone to access.</p> <p>The library service will offer familiarisation visits for those who may feel anxious about visiting new libraries. This could help them to feel welcome visiting other libraries, encourage them to attend groups and activities and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.</p> <p>Staff will signpost vulnerable residents to additional support agencies.</p>
<p>The closure of 7 libraries may have a specific negative impact on children and young people visiting these libraries with their primary school or early years' provision as a class visit. The 9 retained libraries have capacity to support a further increase in usage by nearby schools and early years provision, and as part of the strategy the Council will increase its partnership working and outreach with schools and early years providers to support literacy development.</p>	<p>Alternative Libraries The 9 retained libraries have capacity to support a further increase in usage by nearby schools and early years provision, and as part of the strategy the Council will increase its partnership working and outreach with schools and early years providers to support literacy development.</p> <p>Ongoing review of library service Officers will regularly review how the Council is engaging with schools and early years providers and identifying how the Council can improve our</p>

	<p>partnership working to support literacy development.</p> <p>Explore providing surplus books to schools and early years settings impacted by library closures During the second phase consultation, the Council received a high level of responses raising concerns about the impact of the proposed closures of schools and early years settings, and the impact on children’s literacy levels. The Council will ask schools and early years settings who are located near libraries recommended to close if they would like surplus books to create their own school library service.</p>
<p>The closure of 7 libraries will have a negative impact on local voluntary and community sector organisations, partners and businesses which use these libraries.</p>	<p>Tailored support Officers will engage with existing groups running in libraries which will close to make alternative arrangements for their offer. Officers will work with these partners as part of the implementation of the library strategy to transfer, where possible, their services to alternative libraries.</p>
<p>The closure of 7 libraries may lead to an increase in users of the Home Library Service.</p>	<p>Home Library Service Officers will monitor any increases in usage of the home library service and if necessary, target resources to support any increase in demand.</p>
<p>The closure of 7 libraries may lead to an increase in users of the Digital Library Service.</p>	<p>Promote Digital Library Service The Council has a digital library service, which enables library users to access free e-learning, e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers and e-magazines on their digital devices at home.</p> <p>Officers will continue to promote awareness of our digital service, providing training for customers on how they can use it to access the digital library offer at their convenience.</p>
<p>The closure of 7 libraries may lead to increase in usage in 7 fewer sites, leaving some buildings becoming increasingly busy and unsatisfactory to use.</p>	<p>Ongoing review of library service Officers will regularly review library footfall and issue and renewals and look to schedule activities in ways which complement how libraries are being used.</p>

	<p>The Council will consider ways to provide more flexible space in libraries, such as using meeting room spaces as study space in examination season.</p> <p>Officers will annually review our opening hours to ensure that they are at optimal times for communities.</p>
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Workforce Implications

161. The proposals to close libraries, alter opening hours and other matters will have some impact on staffing. A separate restructure paper will be drafted for staff and Trade Union consultation in accordance with the Council's usual policies and procedures for managing change and the procedures relating to redeployment. If the proposals are agreed, then staff and union consultation will commence.

Property Implications

162. The Library Strategy proposes a reduction in the number of library buildings. If adopted, 7 buildings are proposed to be declared surplus to the operational requirements of the library service and their future usage as Library premises. In line with the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan these buildings will continue to be managed by the Property Services team who will determine their future on a case-by-case basis dependant on several factors including but not limited to; other operational requirements, estimated rental value, estimated freehold value, backlog maintenance costs, energy efficiency and Equality Act compliance. It is estimated that the 7 buildings could generate a capital receipt of between £3 million and £3.85 million if disposed.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

163. Our libraries promote good mental and physical health and wellbeing by connecting people with knowledge, opportunities, services and with each other, supporting the delivery of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Libraries are a trusted source of information about health conditions, including prevention, treatment and prognosis. This can support people to manage their illnesses and conditions through free and accessible information and signposting to additional support. This also aligns with recent central government plans to increase the availability and accessibility of "Healthchecks" at a population level as part of primary prevention activities. Libraries are well placed to support the essential move of many aspects of primary care from traditional "GP Surgeries" into the community as a whole.

164. Our libraries provide warm public spaces in winter and cool public spaces in summer, which are essential for our response to the cost-of-living crisis and climate crisis. By welcoming communities into our libraries as a safe and comfortable place, events and activities can improve mental wellbeing by reducing isolation and feelings of loneliness, as well as provide physical comfort.

165. The library strategy outlines a series of actions which our library service will undertake to support good health and wellbeing. The Public Health Department of the council have a statutory duty and requirement to support the development of such initiatives and the terms of the annual Public Health Grant to local authorities reflects this.

166. It is recognised that, despite the mitigations outlined in the Appendix 3, it is likely that the proposed closure of a library may have a negative impact on the users of that library's health and wellbeing, as it is the loss of a community asset.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications

167. The closure of the proposed 7 library facilities will reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions under the Council's reporting from the electricity and gas consumption in these buildings (based on 2023/24 figures). Broken down into savings per library is detailed below:

Library	tCO2
Bowes Road ⁶⁹	2.9
Bullsmoor	19.0
Enfield Highway ⁷⁰	46.1
Enfield Island Village	3.9
John Jackson	20.6
Southgate ⁷¹	22.1
Winchmore Hill	8.6

168. These carbon savings are directly related to the energy consumption in these buildings and will be relevant only if and while the library spaces are not in use.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Library Strategy

Appendix 2 – Needs Assessment for the Library Service

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 4 – Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report

Appendix 5 - Phase Two Consultation Summary Report

⁶⁹ Data for Arnos Pool and Bowes Road Library. The running of the leisure centre is not impacted by the recommended closure of the library. Data is only available for electricity.

⁷⁰ Data for Enfield Highway Business Centre.

⁷¹ Data is only available for electricity.