



# Library Transformation Strategy

2021-2025

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# Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

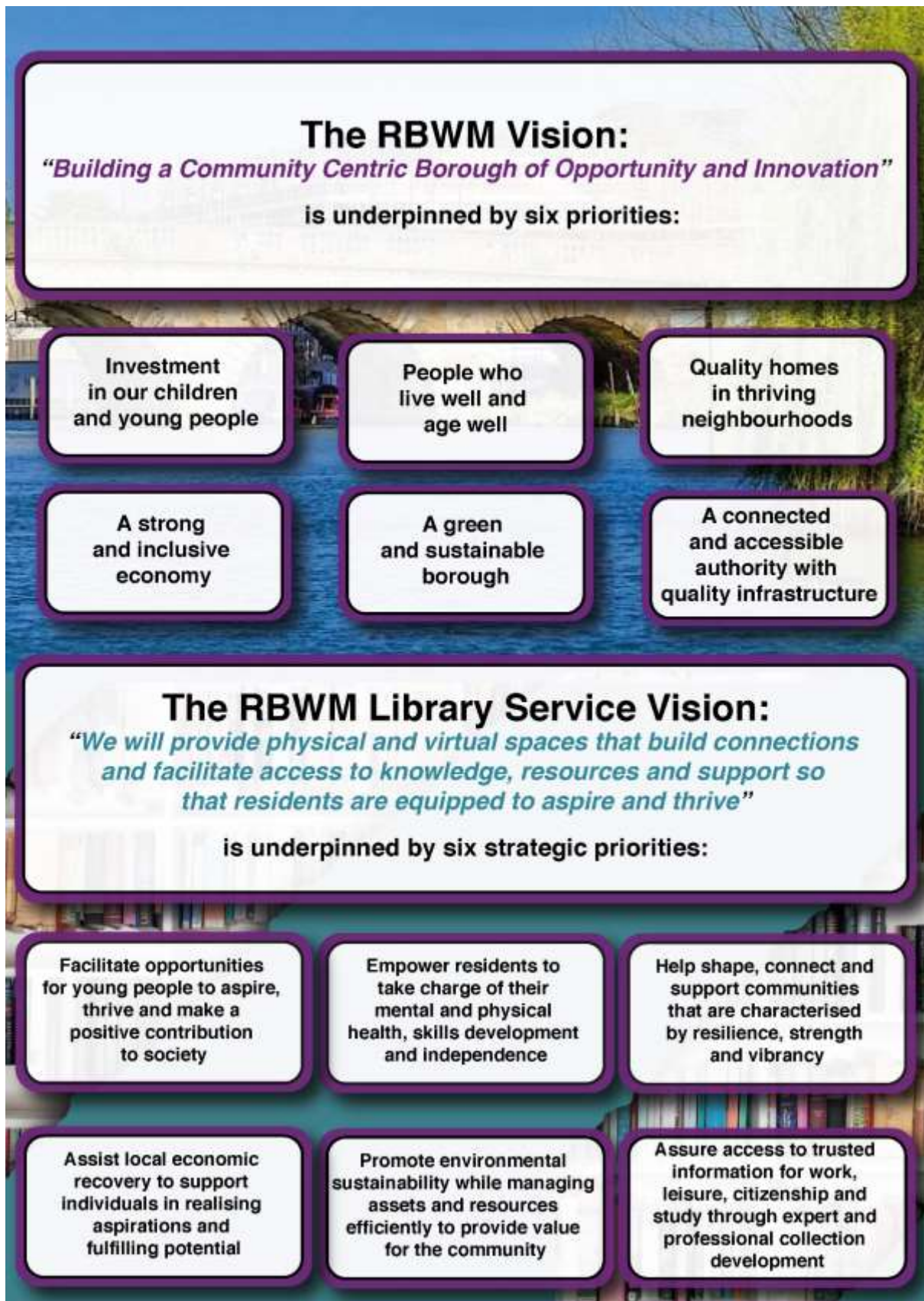
## Library Transformation Strategy

### 2021-2025

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## 1. Vision and Strategic Priorities



## **2. Executive Summary (Deputy Leader of the Council)**

*This Library Transformation Strategy shows a strong, resilient and agile service adapting and changing to meet the demands of the community.*

*There are 11 library buildings across and in all corners of the Royal Borough in Ascot, Boyn Grove, Cookham, Cox Green, Datchet, Dedworth, Eton Wick, Maidenhead, Old Windsor, Sunninghill and Windsor.*

*Each one has its own identity and unique place in its community, whether it's next to a school, near shops or part of the Day Centre. The main libraries are in the centre of our two largest towns Windsor and Maidenhead. The buildings are the Royal Borough's presence and pivot to reach out to the community for many things such as literature, reference, mental health, economic assistance, digital and much more as well as a space that can be hired for activities bringing people together and into the libraries.*

*This strategy recognises how the libraries are evolving using their unique strength as a trusted provider of information and resources to be a critical part of the community.*

*The biggest resource are the staff, teams and volunteers who have incredible professional skills, empathy, a genuine desire to help and regularly adapt the service as needed. The teams will continue to look at diversity, need and technology to grow and shape the libraries.*

*Books are at the heart of the library and this is a key priority for the Royal Borough libraries so continually evolving and promoting literature and culture will be key to the success. Residents who are unable to visit physical library locations will continue to benefit from an enhanced Select and Deliver / Home Library Service which will ensure they have access to all the books they wish to read.*

*The Royal Borough sees its work with partners as being a key part of its future to support needs close to each location and tailor resources.*

*The Royal Borough aims for high quality, value for money and exceptional service for residents and partners. This strategy sets out the vision for 2021-2025.*

***Cllr Samantha Rayner***

*Deputy Leader of the Council, Corporate & Resident Services, Culture & Heritage, and Windsor*

### 3. Introduction

- 3.1. A robust, objective and evidence-based Library Transformation Strategy (LTS) is required to help deliver corporate and community priorities through a Library Service that helps release the power and assets within communities to meet local need.
- 3.2. This strategy outlines how the library service will continue to adapt in an agile way to changing circumstances, opportunities and demands, and will assist councillors, senior officers, library professionals, stakeholders, communities and customers to understand the role that library services can play in delivering council and public service objectives, community priorities and place-shaping aspiration.
- 3.3. As demographic, technological and financial challenges increase so Councils must give communities more power to develop their own resilience and independence.
- 3.4. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Library Service has demonstrated that low cost, high impact support and expertise from trained library staff, has encouraged communities to develop and implement their own mitigations against isolation, disadvantage, and digital exclusion.
- 3.5. Evidence shows that this approach lowers costs in Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing, the NHS and other Public Services while empowering communities.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.6. Councils remain statutorily responsible for overseeing and ensuring the delivery of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service<sup>2</sup> and are also responsible for supporting the overall health and well-being of their communities.
- 3.7. This strategy will promote books, digital resources, reading and literacy.



*School Library Visit*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/The%20health%20and%20wellbeing%20benefits%20of%20public%20libraries.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>

## 4. Background

- 4.1. The Royal Borough's Library Service initiated an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in 2013.
- 4.2. The aim of the new initiative was "*Volunteering that creates Opportunities*" and the objective was to "*Maintain and plan for a sustainable delivery of extended services offered by volunteers*".
- 4.3. To support the ABCD programme Library staff are trained to use NHS approved MECC (Making Every Contact Count) skills to encourage the people they interact with to come up with and implement their own solutions and changes in behaviour to effect a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.4. Up until the start of the Pandemic, more people visited libraries than attended Premier League football games, the cinema, and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined. Maidenhead Library regularly had more than a thousand visits a day with residents using the versatile and flexible space to access a wide variety of information, resources, books, support and services.
- 4.5. Under 24s made up the largest demographic of library users prior to the pandemic. The 18-35 age group used library services more during the pandemic. This may be accounted for by the withdrawal of access to spaces for study or a safe space for young people to be. As soon as Windsor Library was permitted to open again bookings for study spaces were over-subscribed and young people had to be turned away.



*Young People in Maidenhead Library*

- 4.6. RBWM libraries are supported by a large cohort of volunteers, many of whom are young volunteers. During the consultation and engagement period many more residents stepped forward to offer their services to their communities through the library service. This support will be coordinated by a highly trained professional to ensure the best outcomes for communities.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.makeeverycontactcount.co.uk/>





*Library Volunteer*

4.7. Through libraries, partners also have recourse to significant reach into local communities, providing a cost-effective way to link capacity with need.

4.8. RBWM Library Partners include

- Age Concern
- DASH and the RBWM Domestic Abuse Coordinator
- Cards for Good Causes and other charities
- Public Health, Mental Health Recovery College and MIND
- The National Autistic Society
- RBWM Learning Disability and Dementia Support Teams
- Education, Schools, Children's Centres and CLASS (Community Learning),
- Broom Farm
- BookTrust and The Reading Agency,
- Braywick Rangers and Braywick Nursery,
- The Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Registrars
- Community Wardens and Thames Valley Police,
- Maidenhead Book Festival, Windsor Festival and Windsor Fringe,
- Economic Growth and Sustainability Services
- Family Friends
- Parish Councils and local Trusts
- A range of other organisations and groups who use library spaces for exercise classes, clubs and associations, hobbies, crafts, meeting spaces, after school activities and exhibitions.



*Partnership working with Thames Valley Police at Dedworth Library*

- 4.9. As well as access to books, information, sign-posting and digital support Royal Borough residents access library spaces in large numbers for study, social contact, community group exercise and council services support. Library staff are trained in the full range of Council Customer Services and can assist residents at every library location during all library opening hours.
- 4.10. There is strong evidence that during the pandemic quality interaction, reach, support, and access to physical resources have been significantly limited and have curtailed the library service's ability to deliver a curated social experience and a wider range of benefits to communities. This was particularly felt in relation to opportunities for structured and unstructured forms of interaction and engagement, study space and access to browsing facilities.

## **5. Legal and Statutory Requirements**

- 5.1. Library services must comply with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and other legal obligations, including the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). In providing this service, a library authority must secure adequate stocks sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements of adults and children; and encourage adults and children to make full use of the library service<sup>4</sup>.
- 5.2. When making changes to the Library Service, equality analysis must be carried out to demonstrate that decision-makers are fully aware of the impact that changes may have on those with protected characteristics.
- 5.3. Library services must be delivered efficiently, within the resources available.
- 5.4. If a representation is made to the Secretary of State about a library service not meeting its legal obligations, the library authority will be required to demonstrate that, in drawing up its strategy, it had
- consulted with local communities alongside assessing their needs using robust evidence to make its judgements about local need
  - considered a range of options to sustain library service provision in its area
  - undertaken a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of its proposals
  - considered accessibility, quality, availability, and sustainability.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>



## **6. The future of RBWM Library Provision**

### **6.1. Statutory Library Provision in the Royal Borough will consist of:**

- Three Town Centre Libraries open 7 days per week: Maidenhead Library, Windsor Library and Ascot Library
- Three dual use community libraries linked to local schools: Cox Green Library, Cookham Library and Dedworth Library.
- Five Community Libraries at Old Windsor, Boyn Grove, Datchet, Sunninghill and Eton Wick.
- A Container Library at Wraysbury.
- The establishment of pop-up libraries in Sunningdale, Holyport and Furze Platt will be explored with potential partners.
- The service will work with partners to secure financial support to fund library opening hours.
- A digital offer that includes e-books, magazines, newspapers, films, music and training courses.
- An online reference service that includes Genealogy, Business Support and a wide range of reference resources.
- A programme of activity both digital and physical to reflect the four national universal offers to support Reading, Information & Digital, Culture & Creativity and Health & Wellbeing
- A commitment, as expressly laid out in the legislation, to encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and to provide advice as to its use, making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required. A Communication and Engagement Plan will be developed and implemented to ensure this element of the Service is prioritised.
- A commitment, as expressly laid out in the legislation, to securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children who live, work or study in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

## **7. Key priorities to be delivered by RBWM Libraries**

### **7.1. *Traditional Library Services***

- Customers will visit RBWM Libraries to browse and borrow books.
- Requests, reservations and Inter Library Loans will be provided.
- The HouseBound and “Select and Deliver” Service will be expanded to ensure vulnerable residents and those in more remote communities have access to books, human contact, and digital support.

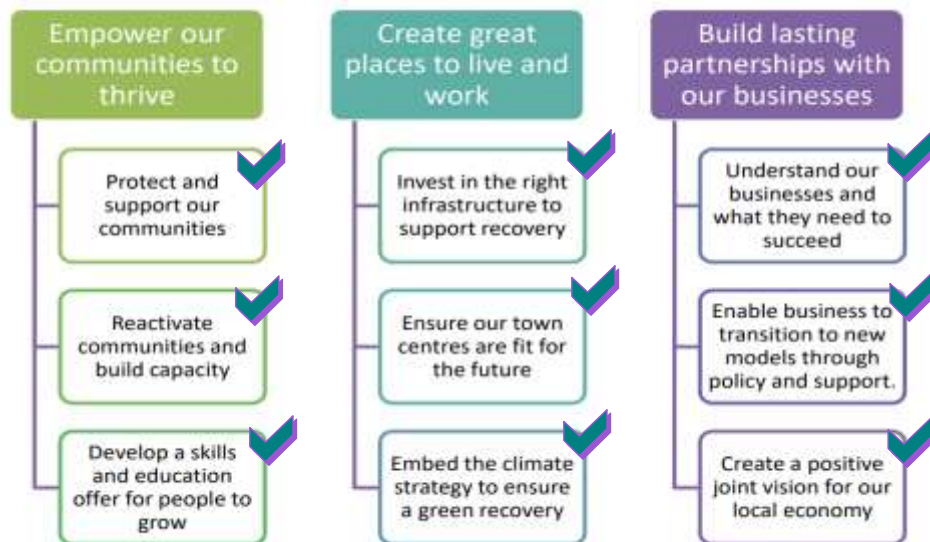
- Provision of e-resources (e-mags, e-books, e-newspapers, films, music, training options and online reference tools) will be carefully curated to ensure quality, range, and value for money.
- IT and digital support will be provided including Public PCs, Hublets, Wifi, Printing, scanning, and copying facilities.
- Virtual Reality, Interactive and Immersive Experiences, Library Minecraft, Lego Robotics, Coding Clubs, and similar activities will continue to be delivered.
- IT training, drop-in sessions and digital support from volunteers and staff will be expanded.
- Digital Devices for Loan, Synaptic Tablets for residents with visual impairment and a Library App will be introduced.
- The library volunteer and ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) programme will be directed to emerging priorities. Young volunteers will continue to be supported.
- The Inclusions Service will be delivered in a targeted manner, alongside partners, to ensure all Royal Borough children and vulnerable adults have access to reading for enjoyment.
- Curation and professional stock development, including maintenance and development of a high-quality Local Studies collection will ensure resources are accessible to all residents.
- The Green Agenda will run through all library initiatives.
- The RBWM Library Offer will be underpinned by the Libraries Connected Universal Offers.<sup>5</sup>
- Libraries will continue to be place based – in the locality with resources and spaces attuned to the unique needs of individual communities designed to create spaces that are fully flexible to accommodate changing requirements during the annual cycle and to allow the building to host cultural events, exhibitions and other community activity.

## 7.2. *Economic Recovery, Business Support, Training and Skills Development*

- The Service will work closely with the Economic Recovery Team to support the borough recovery strategy by developing the online information offer.
- It will focus on young people who have been adversely affected in their education and employment prospects.
- It will build on partnerships with Berkshire Opportunities, Job Centre, Kickstart, Further Education Centres and schools, to create signposting pathways to help young people navigate available resources effectively.
- It will develop the RBWM jobs, skills and business support webpages, adding links to Library business resources, jobs and skills resources and library online resources

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/universal-library-offers>



 = Library Transformation Strategy Work Strands delivering against these renewal priorities

### 7.3. *Developing Library Staff as Community Builders and Connectors to promote health and wellbeing, support aspiration and reduce dependency*

- Library staff will ensure exclusion is avoided, safeguarding is robust, health and safety regimes are compliant and efficient, signposting is effective and individual privacy is protected.
- Staff will be trained in Making Every Contact Count (MECC), Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), Domestic Abuse, Sensory and Autism Awareness and Safeguarding as well as professional library and information skills.
- They will help residents navigate access to digital and physical information sources and books to enrich lives, reduce dependency and encourage good decision-making.
- With assistance from trained library staff support services will emerge from within the local community to meet the unique needs of that community (“what the community cares enough about to do something about”).

### 7.4. *Reading Development Schools (RDS) Service:*

- The Reading Development Schools Service is a charged for professional library service that makes thousands of books and Topic Boxes available to Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead schools with unlimited options to exchange titles.
- The Service currently engages with over 40 schools. Just under half of this number subscribe to the RDS Service.

- Schools can access reading group and other special collections, online resource sessions and reader development sessions related to the Library Universal Offers.
- Demand for the Royal Borough's Reading Development Schools Service has increased as children and parents turn to books to support mental and emotional health as well as academic achievement after significant disruption to young people's education because of the pandemic.



*Library Service Summer Reading Challenge supporting literacy*

#### 7.5. *Digital Reading Development Offer (DRD Offer)*

- The DRD Offer has been extended to meet increasing demand due to the pandemic.
- A programme of Author and Mental Health digital events for young people is underway.
- Social media has been a key element of this offer which includes Library Instagram and YouTube accounts as well as Facebook and Twitter, with thousands of followers.
- The e-lending offer has also been extended through expanding current collections and investing in new collections from different suppliers.
- The Service will continue to try to meet the increase in demand for digital library services but the significantly higher cost of e-books and digital reference resources, prohibitive licencing restrictions and the very limited range of titles to choose from does not make it possible to meet statutory requirements through a primarily digital offer. This is a challenge for the sector that is being brought to Government attention via appropriate Government Select Committees.
- It must also be noted that the digital offer is not a replacement for the physical library. There is no evidence that digital library services can deal effectively across the board with equality, loneliness, accessibility and mental health challenges or that it complies fully with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) or Public Library legislation. However, it must be

acknowledged that there are many people in the community who benefit significantly from digital library services.

- A blended offer is required to fulfil the Council's obligations to its residents and its statutory duties.

## **8. RBWM's "Best Practice" Community Library Model**

- 8.1. RBWM Libraries are community hubs that operate as a gateway to physical and digital information and are used by a range of partners to bring people together, giving them access to a greater breadth and depth of services and support
- 8.2. The community library model requires one single part-time staff member on site for a limited number of hours per week to facilitate and coordinate the range of activities and support services delivered by volunteers, charities and other organisations while helping residents navigate access to digital and physical information sources and books.



*Library Volunteer assisting customer*

- 8.3. The aim in redesigning the overall library service is to continue to grow its capacity and resilience within the community while ensuring partners who use library spaces contribute to running costs of the buildings to support a sustainable library delivery model.
- 8.4. Library spaces will be available to the community 7 days a week during and outside of opening hours.
- 8.5. Each community library will provide statutory library services for all published opening hours with a trained library officer on site to support volunteers, deal with complex enquiries, manage the building, take escalations and ensure safeguarding is robust.

- 8.6. There is strong evidence that the Community Library approach boosts communities' resilience and independence. As a trusted partner within the community the Community Library delivers high quality services and value for money while keeping residents safe and supporting their aspirations

## **9. Outcomes, Impact and Key Performance Indicators**

- 9.1. The LTS has been developed through an extensive consultation and engagement process with stakeholders, partners, residents, and library customers.
- 9.2. The pandemic has had and will continue to have an impact on library services and all services will be delivered in a covid-safe way.
- 9.3. The primary aim of the Library Transformation Strategy is to deliver sustainable and resilient library services that support Corporate and Community priorities in the most cost-effective way possible. To achieve this the RBWM Library Service will
- support cultural and creative enrichment
  - support increased reading and literacy
  - improve digital access and digital literacy
  - help everyone achieve their full potential
  - contribute to healthier and happier lives
  - contribute to greater prosperity
  - help build stronger, more resilient communities
- 9.4. The impact of the above will be measured in terms of
- Audience participation and feedback
  - Feedback from partners in Education and Achieving for Children, partners who work with vulnerable and digitally excluded residents, the Economic Recovery Team and community engagement partners
  - Feedback from residents in terms of their health and wellbeing
  - Numbers of volunteers and number of volunteer hours delivered via the service
  - Transactions: Loans and visits to libraries (both physical and digital)





*Children's craft activity*

## **10. Next Steps**

- 10.1. Develop Local Partnerships to add community asset value to serviced locations.
- 10.2. Develop and implement a Communications and Engagement Plan to promote library services effectively.
- 10.3. Raise awareness amongst Elected Members, partners, senior leaders and residents of the opportunities to make use of library spaces during and outside of library opening hours.
- 10.4. Take advantage of library design which has ensured maximum flexibility to facilitate multiple potential uses of the space for cultural activities, educational services, health and wellbeing events, community support and volunteering opportunities.
- 10.5. Make every effort to ensure the digital offer is inclusive to all and fully blended with the physical offer.
- 10.6. Work to ensure digital inclusion continues to be a priority across the service.
- 10.7. Develop the Housebound / Select and Deliver service to ensure all residents are able to access library services regardless of mobility, disability, distance from a static library or any other barrier.
- 10.8. Agree Service Level Agreements with all funders to ensure the libraries remain viable and sustainable and that the agreed objectives of funders are measured and met.

- 10.9. Explore pop-up library options within communities, initially focused on Holyport, Sunningdale and Furze Platt communities, and elsewhere should demand arise.
- 10.10. Review all Library Policies and Standards with a view to updating them in line with the Library Transformation Strategy
- 10.11. Work with the Disability and Inclusions Forum to ensure no residents are negatively impacted during the implementation of the Strategy.

# Online Resources

www.rbwm.gov.uk



- @RBWM\_Libraries
- RBWM Libraries
- RBWM\_Libraries

