



**Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson – Executive Director of Place**

Report to:	<b>Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>27 July 2021</b>
Subject:	<b>Performance of the Library Service Contract - Year Five Review Report</b>

**Summary:**

This report is to provide an update of the contract performance information to enable the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee to fulfil its role in scrutinising performance of the fifth year of the out-sourced Library contract to Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL).

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider and comment on the performance information included in the report and to:

- (1) Consider and support the ongoing development and proposed Year 6 developments highlighted in the report, and
- (2) Highlight any additional priorities for consideration.

**1. Background**

The decision to outsource Lincolnshire County Council's statutory library service was taken to enable the delivery of a cost effective, high quality, library service in an on-going environment of financial constraint.

Key aims of this outsourcing:

- Increase levels of service performance.
- Improved customers' experience.
- Service transformation.

The Library Service contract with GLL commenced April 2016 for an initial 5-year period with an option to extend for a further 5-year period. This extension has recently been granted, taking the contract to 31 March 2026.

GLL have been contracted to deliver the following elements: -

- **Universal Services:** including
  - (a) a website providing an online public access catalogue, e-books, e-audio, e-magazines;
  - (b) telephone access to a range of library services via liaison and co-operation with the Council's Customer Service Centre.
- **15 Core Libraries in the following locations:**

Boston, Bourne, Gainsborough, Grantham, Horncastle, Lincoln, Long Sutton, Louth, Mablethorpe, Market Rasen, Skegness, Sleaford, Spalding, Stamford, and Woodhall Spa.

Grantham has not yet transferred to GLL and is still operating as an LCC library, whilst solutions continue to be sought. Bourne Library is in shared accommodation and members of staff at the Bourne site remain employees of South Kesteven District Council, as they were before the contract with GLL. GLL supplies books and other resources to both libraries, together with professional advice and guidance to support the provision and development of library services.

- **Targeted provision:**
  - (a) the provision of Home Library Services to Eligible Users;
  - (b) services to people who are blind or partially sighted through Listening Lincs;
  - (c) reading development activities with the aim of promoting an increase in the love of books and reading (including the Bookstart Services).
- **Support for up to 40 Community Hubs:**
  - (a) provide, maintain rotate and renew at least 4,000 books to each Community Library;
  - (b) undertake stock maintenance which requires checking of stock for items to be discarded;
  - (c) undertake stock cataloguing and processing;
  - (d) ensure that Community Library users will be able to access the services through the Library Management System (LMS);

- (e) ensure that Community Library users will be able to reserve, collect and return stock at other Community Libraries, the Core Libraries and Mobile Library Vehicles;
- (f) deliver a range of free training, advice, and support to community organisations. This will include day to day operations, including use of the computerised Library Management System (LMS).

- **A mobile library service:**

- (a) 1 x Rural and 2 x Click and Pick Mobiles which take library resources to over 200 Lincolnshire communities which do not have easy access to a core library or community hub;
- (b) 2 x Access Mobiles which take library material to housebound residents who cannot travel to a core library, a community hub or a mobile stop;
- (c) 2 x Community Mobiles which deliver collections of books to care homes, sheltered housing complexes and day centres.

- **The delivery of other paid for services:**

Such as reading, music and drama groups and services to schools.

## **2. Review of Year 5**

### **2.1 Review of Year 5:**

In year five of the contract (2020/21) GLL has continued to make significant improvements to library services, despite the changing landscape that the Covid-19 pandemic brought.

When buildings closed in March 2020, during Lockdown 1, Lincolnshire Libraries did not stop supporting their communities, with efforts turning to digital engagement and phone calls to keep in touch. Library staff, working from home, continued to support customers to the best of their abilities. Over 1,000 remote customer enquiries were answered via email or social media direct message helping customers join online and access digital services.

Over 500 proactive phone calls were also made to shielding and vulnerable Access Service users, with staff checking that users were safe and well and aware of local resilience groups and how to contact them should assistance be required.

Library related activity swiftly moved online, and popular library activities were run via the Services @Lincslibraries Facebook and Twitter pages. A weekly schedule to ensure the interests of young and old were catered for was devised, alongside regular promotion of digital library service and online resources still accessible. Weekly activities included: Story and Rhyme times videos, Craft Club, Brain Booster quizzes, Code and Lego Clubs, DEAR Time, #StaffPicks, #KidPicks and #TeenPicks and many other reader development activities including an eBook Doctor service offering tailored reading recommendations.

The planned procurement of a new digital platform offering online access to over 4,000 eNewspapers from over 100 countries in 60 languages was swiftly brought forward during the start of Lockdown 1 and PressReader launched in mid April 2020. Like library services across the country, Lincolnshire saw a huge increase in the use of eBook, eAudio, eMagazine, eNewspaper and eMusic lending platforms, with issues increasing year on year by 176%.

Online information resources such as Britannica and Oxford Reference were used by home schoolers. Through partnerships with online family history resource providers, remote access to Ancestry and Find My Past was enabled for library members whilst researchers were unable to visit libraries to use the systems in the 'normal' way, via the library computers.

Due to pandemic restrictions digital issues surged, with eBook and eMagazine/Newspaper loans increasing 249% and 224% respectively compared to the previous year. Engagement with the services #LibrariesAtHome and #BetterAtHome online activities also soared with over 103,500 social media interactions and over 470,000 website visits.

Library users' appetite for physical services and stock was not dampened by the pandemic either. From reopening on 13th July 2020 and through a variety of service offers to 31st March 2021 nearly 200,000 visits were recorded to core and mobile libraries. This eight-and-a-half-month period also saw over 20,000 more physical items issued compared to twelve months of e-issues, despite the huge surge in digital usage.

Physical library services recommenced on Monday 13th July 2020 with core libraries and rural mobiles offering click and collect 'Takeaway' services and the Access Service providing no contact deliveries to rural housebound and shielding readers. Customers' joy at again being able to access physical stock was palpable with Lockdown 1 certainly not dampening demand. Since restarting physical Access Services in July 2020 over 3,000 COVID Secure Home Library Service deliveries have been made and unanimously welcomed back (albeit at a distance) by the vulnerable users they support.

For readers unable to reserve items via the online catalogue library staff provided 'Ready Reads', packs of titles, chosen especially for the customer based on their pre-stated reading preferences. Staff also prepared 'Grab Bags' of themed adult and children's stock for those visiting ad hoc. Core libraries, excepting Bourne, moved into a Browse and Borrow offer in early September 2020 and again customers were overjoyed to be able to choose their own titles and let the serendipity of browsing play its part in helping them find new reads.

Throughout the year, and its various lockdowns and restrictions, the vital role libraries play in supporting their communities, especially the most vulnerable, has been highlighted. As has the skills, empathy and flexibility of library staff and their commitment to meet the reading, information, and digital needs of their local communities. As a result, for the national lockdowns in November 2020, and from January to March 2021, libraries did not have to close their doors again. Library staff were designated as 'key/critical workers' during Lockdown 3 with a formal letter from Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage

MP that was distributed to library staff nationwide for use should they be challenged when traveling to and from work during the lockdown period.

Between November 2020 and March 2021, core libraries reverted to their previous Click and Collect offer with rural and access mobiles continuing their no contact deliveries. During Lockdown customers' positive feedback regarding their appreciation of being able to continue to access physical stock increased, as did their appreciation of the assistance library staff offered from their COVID Secure counters at library entrances with regards to printing, scanning and information enquiries whilst public access computers were not accessible. From 13th July 2020 to 31st March 2021 a total of 410,265 physical items were issued by core and mobile libraries and over 93,000 individual reservations of stock fulfilled by library staff.

Working jointly during Lockdown 3 all GLL Library Partnership provided an enhanced #BetterAtHome programme of online content including weekly adult and children's author talks, a weekly quiz with TV Maths whiz Bobby Seagull and well-being focused yoga and Pilates videos. An online readers group was also set up with free eBook loans for the titles being provided by a service called Freading.

With the national Summer Reading Challenge being revised to a digital offer and launched in early June, Fridays were designated #SillySquad day on the services @Lincslibraries social media channels throughout the summer, with reading and craft activities programmed morning and afternoon to engage primary school aged children and their families. To promote the digital scheme library staff contacted every Primary School in the county asking that teachers share details of how pupils could participate with their classes.

Customer feedback regarding the online offer was overwhelmingly positive and appreciative and the programme evolved through the year with changes and improvements to types and times of engagement as restrictions changed. Over 1,200 online activities and reader development events were held on the @LincsLibraries Facebook and Twitter channels in 2020/21, with over 103,500 social media interactions during the year. Local and National media coverage of Lincolnshire's online library offer, especially during Lockdown 1, was also positive with articles in digital and hard copy local media. There was also a weekly slot on the BBC Radio Lincolnshire Melvyn Prior Show as part of their 'Make a Difference' segment, highlighting the wide range of digital resources provided by the library service.

As it was not possible to hold the usual Summer Reading Challenge and half term children's activities in October, December and February, core library staff instead created free themed children's activity and craft packs. These were designed to provide children and their families with the same seasonal and reading related fun ideas and activities that would normally take place at site, but instead could be carried out at home. A total of 2,188 packs were gifted to families and children and were met with much positive feedback and appreciation.

The annual National BookStart Week in May, known as Pajamarama, also moved online with library staff providing story and rhyme time videos alongside BookTrust's digital content via the @Lincslibraries social media channels. As physical events were not

possible the free books provided by BookTrust, and usually gifted to pre-school children attending, were instead distributed to local Food Banks to ensure those children most in need did not miss out on discovering the joy books can bring. Following the restart of physical services in July staff worked hard to ensure distribution of the free BookStart Baby, Treasure and Additional Needs Packs were brought back in line with the usually expected timescales. In total 15,574 BookStart packs were distributed across the county by the library service for gifting through Registrar's and Early Years' settings to families with new-born babies and pre-school children in 2020/21.

Linked to their commitment to end loneliness and support mental health and wellbeing through the proven power of reading, The Reading Agency received funding in late 2020 as part of the country's COVID recovery response for the national rollout of their Reading Friends and Reading Well mental health scheme. The funding was provided by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, as part of Baroness Barran's commitment to combating loneliness.

As part of the Reading Well scheme in March 2021 Lincolnshire Libraries were provided with 49 Reading Well book collections of 82 titles that supported mental health and well-being for adults, young people and children in both hard copy and digital format. While the library service already held the titles and promoted the scheme, the boost of additional free stock was extremely welcomed and much needed to help individuals cope with the unprecedented challenges the pandemic and especially national lockdowns had presented. Collections were distributed to core libraries, mobiles and hubs with all core libraries running a Reading Well stock promotion from 12th April reopening to ensure the titles were centre stage and easily accessible to customers.

Lincolnshire Libraries were successful in January 2021 in gaining funding from the Reading Agency for an 8 week Reading Friends reading befriending programme for people who were lonely and isolated during Lockdown 3. Activity was delivered in February and March and focussed on Listening Lincs and Access service users, who, through staff's existing interactions we knew were feeling isolated. Participants received weekly or fortnightly phone calls (depending upon their preference) with library staff they already knew and trusted to help them feel connected and get through Lockdown 3. The 121 calls had their foundation in a shared love of reading and books but often included wider topics and themes covered in the titles discussed and opportunities to reminisce as well as hopes for the future.

2021 was a national Census year and in autumn 2020 Lincoln Central Library was successful in its application to The Good Things Foundation (working on behalf of the Office for National Statistics) to become an official Census Support Centre for Lincoln and the surrounding area for a 9-week period from March 2021 to assist people in completing their census forms online. The many and varied requirements to be an official centre meant that other sites could not be put forward for consideration. However, by being involved in the Census Support Project GLL were able to access more and better information about how the Census would be run and so cascade to all, ensuring library staff across the county were better informed and equipped to deal with enquiries and signpost customers to the correct sources of information and support.

Staff at Lincoln Central Library received full and detailed training from The Good Things Foundation and the Office for National Statistics in how to complete the census, assist the public, troubleshoot, and provide answers to enquiries on census issues. Due to lockdown 3, support was primarily given via the telephone, which did present challenges, especially when dealing with individuals with additional needs. The team at Lincoln also made contact with various local outreach organisations to reach street people, and those isolated and shielding. While challenging at times, overall, the experience was rewarding, and the team had the joy of speaking to and supporting a wide cross section of their community. Staff were sung to, reduced to tears at people's stories of their lives and able to reassure those concerned about the online process and explain why the Census is such a vital tool in allowing local councils to allocate funds where they are needed most.

Alongside positive feedback from customers the team were also praised by their Good Things Foundation Census Coordinator, who feedback: *"They have done really well with their efforts, engaging locally and with existing service users. They are one of my best performing centres and keen to help as many people as possible complete their census"*. At the end of the official support period the Coordinator also informed us that Lincoln was the third busiest Support Centre in the north of England only falling short to Birmingham Central and Bradford and that their efforts had helped Lincoln to have an excellent uptake and completion rate of the Census.

## **2.2 Performance Review, KPI's:**

In order to monitor the progression of the contract, 11 Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) were devised, alongside baselines for performance and monthly targets. This was completed in conjunction with GLL as per the contractual agreement.

In light of the COVID pandemic LCC suspended formal KPI monitoring in 2020/21. Instead, performance data relevant to the service offer each month was submitted by GLL. The tables in Appendix A detail the variety of service offers during 2020/21 and also performance data relating to these offers.

In previous years there has been a significant decrease in public access computer use, and a potentially related but smaller decrease in visits against the KPI target. The age and limitations of LCC's library IT provision presented significant problems for customers and staff alike and negatively impacted GLL's ability to deliver high quality services in line with customer expectations.

During 2020/21 GLL worked with LCC to ensure a resolution to this, creating a modern, fit for purpose, IT offer. This included the implementation of new equipment to enable IT needs of both customers and the Library Service are met.

The model agreed included:

- Installation of new high-speed communications lines and upgrading of existing IT infrastructures.
- Refresh of all public access computers at core and hub libraries.

- Refresh of all public printing/photocopying/scanning facilities at core and hub libraries.
- Provision of web-based printing facilities at core libraries.
- Provision of web based public PC booking facilities for all core and hub libraries.
- Installation of public Wi-Fi at all core and hub libraries.
- Refresh of staff and volunteer computers at all core mobile and hub libraries.
- Transfer of the Library Management System (LMS) from Civica's Spydus system to Capita's Soprano system.

While the last year has seen restrictions in public IT use due to lockdowns and COVID Secure measures, customer feedback has remained positive. GLL have seen significant changes in how customers use the provision and while there are still those needing an hour or more access, we know from customer feedback that many are getting what they need to get done in far less time, due to the speed of the new provision.

Due to the swift shift to online in how society has had to operate in the last year GLL have found that the need for access to printing and secure scanning facilities has significantly increased. This has also been reflected in the use of the new Papercut Wi-Fi printing system, as it means users do not need to log onto to a PC at all as they can securely send their documents straight from their device to print, either while at site using Wi-Fi or from home before their visit.

The first phase of the IT transfer commenced in December 2019 with the roll-out of new public IT provision in core libraries with Hub installations following in February 2020. Unfortunately, the March 2020 Covid-19 lockdown meant that this work had to be paused for a number of months. Following the easing of restrictions in mid-2020 the installation of the new public IT provision was completed at all core and hub sites. As reported in Year 4 customers' response to the new IT provision was extremely positive with multiple compliments received.

The new Wi-Fi provision has also been of real benefit during the year's reduced service offers, especially during Click and Collect. It meant that staff could, from behind their screen at the entrance, help people connect on their phones/tablets and then guide them on how to join online themselves (so that staff only had to issue the card rather than take confidential information at the door), order items, find out how to use eResources or send documents for printing. During Lockdown 3 staff were also able to answer enquiries at entrances where, as Public Network (PN) use was suspended, staff within site could research the question and, if the individual at the entrance had a smart phone that could connect to Wi-Fi, email them web links so they could check the information found was relevant (as obviously the customer was not in front of them or on a PN with staff to assist) and if so were able to print the information or (more often) forms needed.

The restrictions of the last year have very much shone a spotlight on the digital inequalities in our communities and how those with no or limited IT skills and/or without

access to IT facilities are now at even more of a disadvantage. The perception that everyone has a smartphone or tablet that will mean they can fully engage with the digital world, and that they can also afford the required Wi-Fi and/or data charges, is quite inaccurate. GLL are proud that Lincolnshire Libraries have been at the forefront in supporting their communities and individuals on a day-to-day basis this last year, and while use of the new IT may be evolving and perhaps becoming more sophisticated, there is still a need within our communities for the most basic IT support and access.

The second phase of the IT transfer was the refresh of staff IT and the Library Management System (LMS) transfer. Again, due to Lockdown 1, the installation of staff IT had to be delayed with roll out finally being able to take place in July 2020. However, the planning and building of the new LMS continued throughout Lockdown 1 with library staff working remotely with the Capita team to ensure that the planned summer 2020 implementation did not fall significantly behind schedule. Following site-based testing on the new staff IT in late July 2020; the LMS transfer to Soprano took place between the 3rd and 6th August 2020, less than a month behind the original schedule.

With the LMS transfer completed, the next stage in GLL's modernising of stock and IT systems is the implementation of Collections HQ. This is a software package that links to the LMS and provides staff with an additional tool to monitor and respond to stock demand and usage. As well as helping inform what GLL buy, it also helps in understanding what stock goes well where and so how to better allocate and distribute stock around the county to meet our customers' needs. Work started to build and programme the system in late 2020, with its testing phase commencing in March 2021.

### **2.3 Service Transformation/Innovation**

Redeveloping the service to ensure a COVID secure environment and service has been the major focus during Year 5. Government guidance/legislation and the Recovery Toolkit provided by our national sector lead body, Libraries Connected, have had to be applied to and made specific to each site as of course no two buildings are the same. Having the GLL National Libraries Director as part of the Libraries Connected COVID work group, that drew up the initial Recovery Toolkit, was of particular benefit and meant that accurate and practical guidance was quickly received and implemented. As the different service phases of the past year have been implemented and gone from theory to real life, further site-specific developments and adjustments have been necessary to ensure a COVID secure environment was maintained, and that customer service and delivery was not compromised.



Image 1: example posters and signage used across the core sites

## 2.4 Community Hubs

### 2.4.1 Community Hub Background:

The development of community hubs was driven by the desire to give communities more control and a bigger role in delivering services, whilst ensuring services remained affordable within the Council's reduced budget.

GLL provide on-going professional support in the form of Library Development Officers [LDO's], including operational management of book stock, volunteer training and development, support of volunteers as well as supporting hubs to be professional and safe places for the members of the public to utilise; ensuring that the national picture in libraries performance and innovation is reflected locally.

LCC provide the provision of computers for public use, volunteer use and access to GLL IT helpdesk. For those hubs that have chosen to remain in Council-owned premises preferable rates of a peppercorn rent for the initial years of their lease between the Community Hub and the Council were applied.

All Community Hubs have been supported financially with the allocation of £15K a one-off capital payment to assist with set-up/improvement works and an annual revenue payment of £5,167 whilst they remain operating as a Community Hub for a minimum of 6 hours per week for 50 weeks per year.

Overall, there is a commitment to support up to 40 Community Hubs and during the period 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, GLL provided support to 36. Of these 36, 34 are community group run. A library provision is also provided at Belton Lane Children's Centre and all three Lincolnshire Hospitals; these are managed by the staff at each location but again supported by GLL. See Table 5 below:

Table 5: Community Hubs – for the period 01.04.20 – 31.03.21

Ref	Hub Name	Ref	Hub Name	Ref	Hub Name
1	Alford	13	Donington	25	Pinchbeck
2	Belton Lane (Children's Centre)*	14	Ermine	26	Ruskington
3	Birchwood	15	Heckington	27	Saxilby
4	Boultham	16	Holbeach (Co-op)	28	Scotter
5	Bracebridge (Bridge Church)	17	Hospital Hub* (Lincoln, Boston and Grantham)	29	Spilsby (Co-op)
6	Bracebridge Heath	18	Ingoldmells	30	Sutton Bridge
7	Branston	19	Keelby	31	Sutton on Sea
8	Burgh le Marsh	20	Kirton	32	Swineshead
9	Caistor	21	Metheringham	33	Waddington (Co-op)
10	Cherry Willingham	22	Navenby	34	Wainfleet
11	Crowland	23	Nettleham	35	Welton
12	Deepings	24	North Hykeham	36	Wragby

*\* These 'hubs' do not receive the £5,167 annual revenue grant nor £15,000 capital grant. They are classified as a hub for the purpose of the GLL support to community hubs contractual payment clause.*

Community Hubs are independent and so have autonomy around opening hours, activities available and other potential utilisation of the site. All income received is retained by the hub, for reinvestment into the site.

In May 2018, following the closure of Learning Communities, and at LCC's request, GLL took on the running of Birchwood, Boultham and Ermine Community Hubs whilst a new provider was sought. Two of the Hubs, Birchwood and Boultham were handed over to a new provider, Ignite, in January 2019, with GLL's Library Development Officer providing detailed and extensive training and support. Discussions are on-going with a potential provider to take over management of the Ermine Community Hub.

#### **2.4.2 Hub Performance:**

Whilst Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are not measured for Community Hubs an annual review is conducted to examine sustainability and the positive impact a Community Hub has on their respective communities. There is a standard agenda to aid discussion covering risk; concerns; service to customers and best possible use of resources/finance. This decision was made to intentionally minimise the emphasis on traditional performance management in order to best enable these hubs to achieve

independence and reflect community need. Due to Covid, the review did not happen in 2020/21 as many were closed for the majority of the year.

Community Hubs need to be sustainable to ensure they will be there in years to come. Hubs have achieved this through a range of income sources/funding which they require to cover the costs of running activities, e.g., grants, donations, hiring out space, etc.

As part of the contract with LCC, GLL has a small team of Library Development Officers (LDOs) whose job is to support and advise the 36 Community Hubs and the 700+ volunteers that help run these independent organisations. Throughout the three lockdowns and periods of extended closure for the Community Hubs the LDO team have ensured contact and communication continued. In the run up to the phased reopening of hub services in Summer 2020 and Spring 2021 the LDO team have provided significant support in the planning and reopening of hubs ensuring a positive and COVID Secure service through:

- Support / advice regarding government guidance and the Libraries Connected toolkit – especially regarding how to apply core principles to site and service offer.
- Stock work required to ensure site can reopen.
- Training volunteers in the new Library Management System, including adapting training so that is specific to volunteers and their access rights.
- Training volunteers in library specific COVID secure procedures.
- Refresh training for volunteers in new IT.
- Refresh training for volunteers in library procedures.
- The LDOs also provided additional support to Hubs at their reopening, including additional visits and trouble shooting.

### **3. Conclusion**

Building on Year 5, GLL will continue to focus on the recovery of the service during Year 6 (April 2022 – March 2023) which includes:

- Reinstating events and activities.
- Returning to normal (pre-covid) hours when all restrictions have lifted, and we no longer require additional resources to ensure confidence in COVID secure procedures.
- Continuing to support our communities as a trusted source of information during the impact of COVID.
- Supporting small businesses.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

n/a

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Library Service Year 5 KPI Data
Appendix B	Library service – 2020/21 Example feedback

### 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Louise Egan, who can be contacted on 01522 554503 or [Louise.egan@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Louise.egan@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

This page is intentionally left blank