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Open Report on behalf of Glen Garrod, Executive Director Adult Care and Community Wellbeing

Report to:	**Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee**
Date:	**25 July 2023**
Subject:	**Performance of Library Service Contract - Year 7**

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 seventh 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:

(1) consider and comment on the performance information included in the report;

(2) consider and support the ongoing development and proposed Year 8 developments highlighted in the report; and,

(3) highlight any additional priorities for consideration.

1. Background

The decision to outsource Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) 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 customer's 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 been granted, taking the contract to 31 March 2026.

Appendix A illustrates the elements GLL have been contracted to deliver.

2. Review of Year 7

2.1 Review of Year 7

Year seven saw the service continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic with significant year on year increases in visits (65%) and Public Network (PN) use (95%). While issues had already recovered strongly in Year six, Year seven saw a further year on year increase of 15% with a total of 1,930,279 items borrowed. In person events and activity attendance grew significantly also, with over 67,000 people attending 5,550 sessions across the 15 core libraries.

These included story and rhyme times, Lego clubs, half term crafting, and the summer reading challenge for children. For adults, craft clubs, IT taster and support sessions, local and family history sessions, and reading and writing groups were delivered. Library staff also run weekly Connect over a Cuppa community coffee mornings, giving local residents the opportunity to meet others in a warm and welcoming community location.

Most Core Libraries across the county also held a packed programme of Jubilee related activities and events during the May half term. Activities included Jubilee Tea Parties, Right Royal story times, children's crafting and biscuit bunting decorating workshops and were attended by just under 1,500 people.

In addition to staff run activity, by working with local organisations a further 1,474 activities were held at core libraries by community groups in Year seven, totalling over 4,500 hours of community use and exceeding the KPI[1] by 133%.

June saw the launch of the service's new Library Star Challenge across core and mobile libraries. Aimed at pre-school children and their families, the scheme encouraged regular library use to develop an early love of books and reading. Children were given a colourful star sticker to put in their Challenge booklet at each visit. Once all the stars were collected the child received a small prize and a certificate to prove what at Super Shiny Library Star they are! From June to March nearly 2,500 pre-school children signed up to the Challenge.

StoryTrails, the UK's largest immersive storytelling experience, was at Lincoln Central Library on Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st July 2022 celebrating the city's well-known heritage alongside the lesser-known stories of local people. At the event visitors explored stories across virtual and augmented reality and through a series of installations, bringing the physical and digital together and helping them experience Lincoln like never before. Event activity included, augmented reality app, an immersive cinema experience, AR iPad experiences, Virtual Reality experiences using VR headsets and BBC archives footage and 'Big Me, Little Me' 3D scanning, with the opportunity for visitor to be scanned and create and manipulate an avatar of themselves. Library staff also provided a range of craft activities including moulding your own pottery imp. Over 1,600 people attended the weekend's event, with many stopping for the best part of the day so that they could experience all that was on offer. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive with many

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[1] Key Performance Indicator.

emerging from the immersive cinema experience with a tear in their eye, having been touched by the stories told.

The annual Summer Reading Challenge took place in all core libraries and mobiles between July and September, with a STEM[2]/science-based theme. As part of a local 'Read to Swim' initiative with colleagues from the GLL North Kesteven Leisure Partnership, children completing the Challenge at Lincoln and Sleaford Library's received a voucher for a free swim at the One NK or Sleaford leisure centres. In total over 3,000 children participated, giving an increase of 57% compared to 2021 and 6% on 2019. Given 2019 was the highest participation figure since the core libraries model was introduced, this 6% increase is not insignificant.

National Libraries Week (an annual celebration of how libraries contribute to and support communities), focused on how libraries can inspire learning for all, and help unlock and fulfil potential at every stage of life. Over 100 activities were held and ranged from visits by adult education providers to chair based yoga and learning to knit to basic sign language.

High levels of customer satisfaction were evidenced in the 200 compliments received by the Service and the impressive Annual User Survey results, which saw Lincolnshire Libraries record the highest Net Promoter Score (+90%) of all GLL Leisure and Library Partnerships. The Net Promoter Score is a measure of customer satisfaction and loyalty focussing on whether customers would recommend the service to others, with ratings being between -100% and +100%. The 2022/23 score of +90% is an 8% increase from 2019 (the survey was not undertaken in 2020 or 2021 due to covid).

Scores for other aspects of the service were equally high, as outlined in the table below:

Net Promoter	Stock Condition	Stock Choice	Staff	PC's, Wi-Fi & Study Space	Range of Activities	Customer Experience
+90%	4.74 out of 5 (95%)	4.69 out of 5 (94%)	4.93 out of 5 (99%)	4.78 out of 5 (96%)	4.65 out of 5 (93%)	4.89 out of 5 (98%)

By putting customers and communities at the heart of service provision, core and mobile libraries have in Year seven been able to further develop the role libraries have to help local residents find out about and access the wide variety of opportunities, facilities and support available to them. Working with the local community, for example through links developed with the LCC Holiday Activities and Food Project, provider Imagination Gaming delivered sessions for eligible children in the large community rooms at Lincoln and Louth Libraries during the winter and spring school holidays. Imagination Gaming's sessions provided activities that stimulated the imagination through game playing and provided an opportunity to promote library membership and resources to the children attending along with their families.

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[2] Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Building on work in Year six, GLL undertook further work developing the social value calculator for libraries in Year seven. The findings reveal that in 2022/23 the core and mobile libraries generated £24,360,928 in social value for their local Lincolnshire communities.

Lastly, we were pleased to facilitate a visit to Lincolnshire by Baroness Sanderson and Sheila Bennett, Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS). The visit was linked to the Baroness' research into library provision across the country, following her appointment by the Government to serve as the independent chair of an advisory panel to help develop a new national strategy for public libraries. Since the visit, the Baroness stated her favourite library from all seen across the Country was one of our Community Hubs.

2.2 Performance Review, KPI's

In order to monitor the progression of the contract, 11 KPI's were devised, alongside baselines for performance and monthly targets. This was completed in conjunction with GLL as per the contractual agreement. Appendix C illustrates the performance for 2022/23.

The demand for stock continued throughout year seven, with 1,930,279 issues across core, mobiles, and digital platforms. This is a 4% increase on the annual target and 15% increase compared to the previous year.

There is no doubt that the pandemic brought about changes in how library stock is accessed and used, and that the digital library has in essence become the 16th core library. However, the strong return of physical issues, alongside digital issues, and active use of ePlatforms remaining at higher levels than pre-pandemic, seemed to indicate that the pandemic had not resulted in a simple shift from physical to digital.

While visits and PN use did not meet the KPI targets, compared to 2021/22 (Year 6) visits were up 65% and PN use increased by 95%. This is a national trend and has formed the new 'norm'.

Visits have grown year on year, the trend of visiting less often but borrowing the same amount of stock has continued. We are still seeing more visits in the morning and middle of the day than later in the afternoon. The lunch time rush in larger libraries from office workers 'popping in' to change books over lunch has not fully returned due to the rise in home working. Instead, we are tending to see these users on Saturday when they often visit with their family, or on a specific weekday every couple of weeks in line with their new working habits.

Customers using PN facilities now tend to fall into one of two camps, either those who still have no access to IT at home or those that have just a smart phone or tablet and so still need to use the PN for printing or completing online forms that are not compatible with mobile devices. As a result, the average PN session is 37 minutes in duration, which is significantly lower than April 2016, when the targets were established. This is due to

advancements in the IT provided and actions being completed quicker. We are reviewing this KPI to ensure moving forwards targets are realistic to the new environment GLL are working within; Wi-Fi hours of use increased by 221% between Year six and Year seven with individual sessions of use averaging just under 4 hours. There is a real demand for study space for people to use their own devices rather than the PN's.

Nationally, Libraries Connected (sector lead body) have been monitoring recovery trends by collecting usage data from library services across the country and also comparing to high street footfall data. The national picture of visits being at 70%, issues at 90% and PN use at 50% of pre-pandemic levels is mirrored in Lincolnshire, with core and mobile libraries being slightly ahead in terms of issues with rates being close to, if not at, 100% of pre pandemic levels most months.

2.3 Service Transformation/ Innovation

During 2022/23, Louth Library worked with local organisation, the East Lindsey Area of Sanctuary (ELAS), to welcome a group of Ukrainian refugees and their host families to weekly coffee mornings. To support the group further, the library also hosted the Grimsby Institute during these weekly sessions who provided free ESOL classes to the group. This initiative was featured in a Libraries Connected national briefing note regarding the vital role libraries have in welcoming, settling and integrating Ukrainian refugees in Britain. Ukrainian language stock is being provided at Louth and a number of other larger core libraries where there is demand.

Following the closure of bank branches in Louth, Gainsborough and Horncastle, Barclays now deliver community banking support at the town libraries three times a week so that local residents can receive specialist support on financial matters and use the library's secure IT provision if they are without access at home. To launch their new community banking offer at Horncastle Library, Barclays arranged for the Premier and Women's League cups to visit the site. The daylong event proved extremely popular with nearly a weeks' worth of visits in one day and many new joiners to the library.

Following the successful LCC and GLL bid to the DCMS/Arts Council National Libraries Improvement Fund in 2021, securing £211k of capital investment funding, work took place in Year seven to deliver the Business Bubbles project. The works involved physical alterations at Lincoln Central and Spalding libraries to create small confidential working spaces that are available for hire by small and start-up businesses. Additionally, at Lincoln Central Library, redevelopment of the study booths area has allowed for the creation of an open plan business lounge area for working and meetings. Alongside the physical works, the Service has also expanded its digital offer through the introduction of COBRA, an online information resource for small and start-up businesses.

The project supports the Council's strategic objective of developing services and facilities offered by the library service to extend the benefits of libraries to small business. It also complements the Council's economic infrastructure offer to small businesses, which provides lettable office space, as the library-based Business Bubbles take this offer to another level by offering space rentable by the day or hour. Through working with

colleagues in Business Lincolnshire and the Growth Hub Advisors network GLL looks forward to developing this new offer in Year eight of the contract.

During the year all GLL library partnerships moved to working with an organisation called We Buy Books for the collection and recycling of withdrawn stock. We Buy Books works with one of Europe's largest paper and cardboard recycling firms to ensure that 100% of the withdrawn items we send are made into something useful once more. Additionally, following the sourcing of a new supplier, all library membership cards are now made of 100% recycled material; and are fully recycle-able once they reach their end of life.

In January 2023, GLL became an official gifting partner for The Good Things Foundation, who working with Virgin Media, O2, Vodafone and Three established the 'National Databank' scheme to gift data. Most core libraries were provided with a supply of data vouchers for gifting to individuals experiencing data hardship. Weekly Databank Surgeries were introduced in March 2023 in all sites to gift the data vouchers to those that meet the criteria or who were referred from local partners such as Food Banks and Job Centres. The scheme runs until 31st December 2023 and the initial supply of vouchers for gifting have a monetary value of over £30,000.

Finally, Year seven saw development work take place on a new library app which links into the Library Management System offering a more customisable and user-friendly experience through users own mobile device. Through the app, which is available on IOS and Android devices, users can search the catalogue, reserve and renew items and manage their account just as they would via desktop PC. The app also contains links to information such as site's What's On listings, opening hours, links to the service's digital library and social media platforms. There is a scan barcode function where users can scan a book's ISBN when out shopping to see if the library has a copy and if so, reserve it then and there. The basic app build took place in November and early December 2022 with testing by staff taking place in early 2023. A soft launch of the app took place in late March 2023 so that library staff and the 500+ hub volunteers could be trained in its use, ready for supporting customers when it was launched the following month.

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 (LDOs), 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 £15,000 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.

During the period 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, GLL provided support to 36 Community Hubs. Of these 36, 34 are community group run. 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 1 below:

Table 1: Community Hubs – for the period 01.04.22 – 31.03.23

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.

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.

2.4.2 Hub Performance

KPIs are not measured for Community Hubs due to the agreement held between LCC and each site. This decision was made to intentionally minimise the emphasis on traditional performance management to best enable these hubs to achieve independence and reflect community need.   Regular discussions are held with the groups and are further monitored via the LDOs.

During 2022/23, the LDO team provided nearly 300 hours of training to over 250 new and existing Hub volunteers. LDOs also attend volunteer meetings, often outside of their scheduled working hours, to ensure groups are fully supported.

3. Conclusion

Building on Year seven, GLL will focus attention on ensuring the business bubbles project is successful and will concentrate on the development of a new entrance at Boston Library, working with the Landlord.

Partnership working with Serco and the CSC will be undertaken over the new natural language and AI initiatives that are to be implemented during 2023/24.

4. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Components of Year 7
Appendix B	Social Value
Appendix C	Library Service Year 7 – KPI Data

6. Background Papers

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

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