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# **Proposals for Libraries and Community Centres for Consultation**

## **Supporting Information**

## **1. Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide an overview of progress to date of the Community Services & Library Needs Assessment (CSLNA) engagement exercise relating to developing proposals for the transformation of Neighbourhood Services across the city
- Present an initial set of draft proposals for Neighbourhood Services across the city

## **2. Background and options with supporting evidence**

### **Background**

The Community Services and Library Needs Assessment is a transformational programme for Neighbourhood Services scoping in the whole service at all settings, including multi-service centres, community centres and libraries.

- 2.1. The local authority has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964 “to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons” who want to make use of it.
- 2.2. The programme is delivered within the context of the Council’s financial position. The Revenue Budget 2025/26 report states that “the medium-term financial outlook is the most severe we have ever known”. As part of the strategy to balance the budget for the next three years the Council plans to make ongoing savings to the revenue budget of over £20m per year.
- 2.3. The Neighbourhood Services net budget for scoped services (excluding the ward and community engagement function) for 2024 / 25 is £5,924,000.
- 2.4. Should all proposals outlined in the report be delivered the revenue saving from the Neighbourhood Services budget would be up to £2.1 million (up to 35% of the current net budget), to contribute towards a divisional savings target for Neighbourhood & Environmental Services of £7.2 million. The saving achieved would be dependent on the outcome of public consultation and subject to changes made as a result of the process.
- 2.5. Neighbourhood Services promote health and wellbeing, bring communities together and provide places for people to meet. They help residents with books and reading and with study and learning. They support people to access information and digital services and provide cultural events and creative activities for children and adults. Neighbourhood Services support community groups and activities, Adult Skills and Learning, food banks, room hire, conferences, events and functions. Neighbourhood Services actively promotes and develops volunteering in our centres.
- 2.6. An in-depth assessment of need has been undertaken across all communities and the whole of the city to assess present and future needs relating to core Neighbourhood Services functions.

2.7. The programme aims to provide our communities with the right type of service offering for the future, based on robust evidence gathering, within the constraints of a significantly reduced divisional budget.

2.8. All Neighbourhood Services facilities are included in the scope of the CSLNA programme as follows:

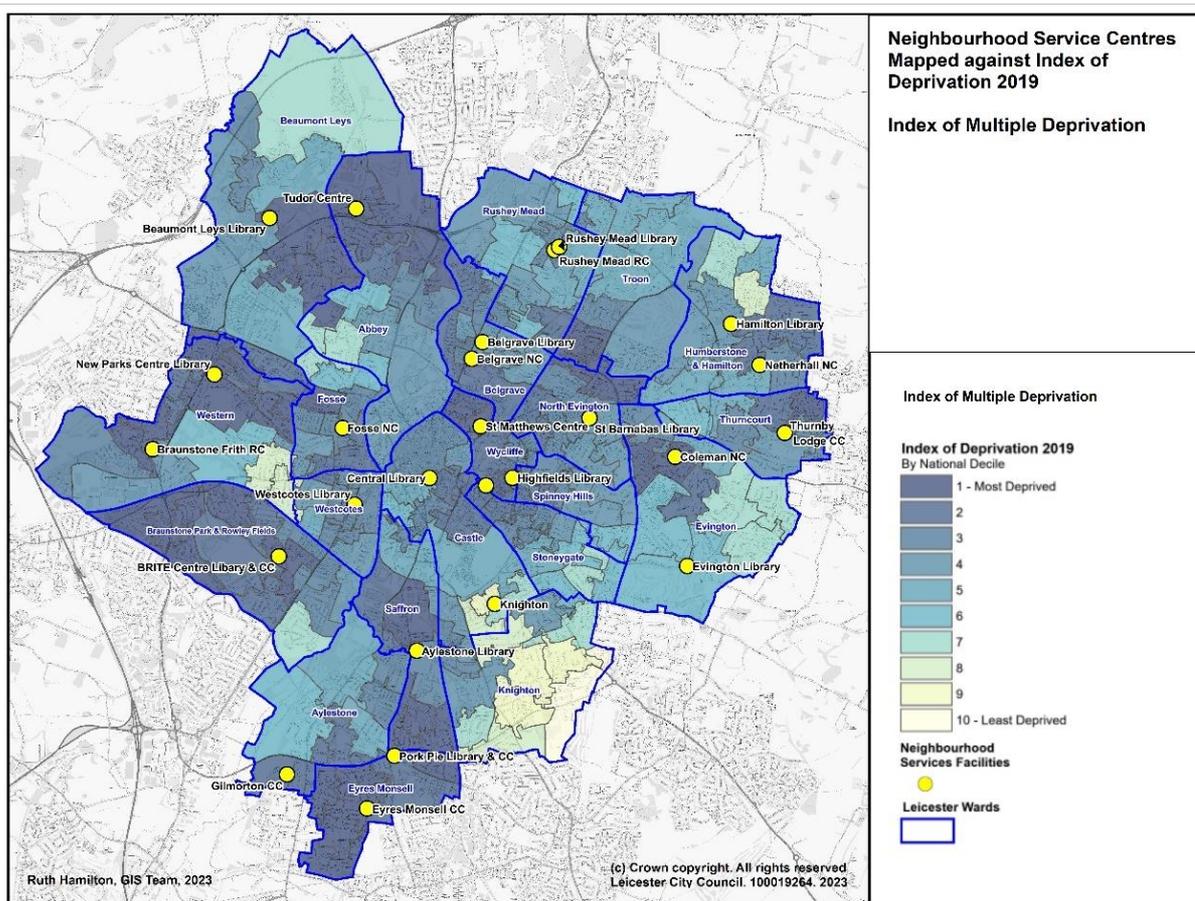
- Aylestone Library, located in Aylestone Leisure Centre
- Beaumont Leys Library
- Belgrave Library
- Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre
- Braunstone Frith Recreation Centre
- BRITE Centre & Library
- Coleman Neighbourhood Centre
- Evington Library
- Eyres Monsell Community Centre
- Fosse Centre & Library
- Gilmorton Community Rooms
- Hamilton Library & Community Centre
- Highfields Library
- Knighton Library
- Leicester Central Library
- Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre
- New Parks Centre Library
- Pork Pie Library & Community Centre
- Rushey Mead Recreation Centre
- Rushey Mead Library
- St Barnabas Library
- St Matthews Centre & Library
- Thurnby Lodge Community Centre
- Tudor Centre
- Westcotes Library

In addition, Neighbourhood Services also delivers the following in scope services:

- Book Start programme in partnership with Booktrust, sharing reading resources with babies and young children under 5 years old.
- Home Library Service providing book deliveries to housebound individuals
- Children's Bookbus providing regular library services to children and young families in disadvantaged areas of the city
- Online library including e-books, e-audio, e-magazines and e-newspapers for loan
- Reader development programmes for children, young people and adults

The Ward and Community Engagement Team is not within the scope of the CSLNA programme.

2.9. The following map shows the current location of Neighbourhood Services facilities in Leicester city, mapped against the 2019 index of multiple deprivation.



It is to be noted that a number of other Council services also have a physical (building) base in city neighbourhoods. These include Sport Services (7 leisure centres), Adult Learning (1 neighbourhood-based centre), Children, Young People & Family Centres (12 centres) and Youth Services (2 centres). City Centre based services with public facing buildings include Arts and Museums Service (6 centres), the Adult Learning Service (1 city centre and 1 neighbourhood-based centre) and Customer Services (1 Customer Service Centre).

2.10. In developing the following proposals, Neighbourhood Services have worked closely with other Council services, to share resources and ensure opportunities for shared services are explored.

2.11. A number of external (non-Council run) services are also accommodated within Neighbourhood Services facilities. These include:

- DWP work coaches
- Food banks
- Police beat offices
- Pre-schools

### Public and stakeholder engagement

2.12. A public engagement exercise was undertaken between July and October 2023. The engagement activity was independently run by Activist Group commissioned by Neighbourhood Services. The engagement activity targeted both users and non-users of the services. The purpose was to find out:

- (a) where needs are greatest across the city
- (b) how people are currently using library and community centre services

- (c) what people think they will need from their libraries and community centres in the future
- (d) what models and good practice exist

Activist have produced a written report summarising their findings which is available on our website.

#### 2.13. The key engagement activities undertaken were:

- **Focus Groups:** between July to August 2023 12 focus groups were held at Neighbourhood Services locations around the city, including a young people's focus group held at the central library. The focus groups explored 5 different themes based on the nationally defined Libraries Connected Universal Offers and the Children's Promise: health and wellbeing, digital and information, culture and creativity, reading, and children's services. Over 200 people attended in total.
- **Engagement questionnaire:** between 3 July to 25 September 2,340 surveys were completed. Surveys were available online and on paper with community languages and large print versions available.
- **Children and young people's survey:** between 26 Sept to 17 October 2023 511 children's surveys were completed by children and young people aged up to 16 years old.
- **Stakeholder interviews:** 15 leaders from both internal and external stakeholder organisations were interviewed between July – August 2023
- **Staff Workshops:** Neighbourhood Services staff from all levels of the organisation attended three workshops led by Activist between July and August 2023.

#### 2.14. The key outcomes of the engagement work show:

- **Reading:** People have told the Council that one of the most important library services offered to them is access to reading and literacy materials
- **Health and wellbeing:** People have told the Council that libraries and community centres offer respite and relief from life's challenges, supporting their wellbeing and helping to address isolation.
- Residents, and partners, trust Leicester's library and community centre staff.
- There is a significant growing need for more mental health support in Leicester, as well as support with improving people's physical health post-Covid.
- Libraries and community centres offer highly valued free, or low cost, communal and socialization spaces for Leicester residents
- **Information and digital:** People have told the Council that libraries and community centres help people with access to free IT, Wi-Fi, information, face to face advice and support signposting needs.
- Leicester residents continue to have core information, advice and IT access support needs. Libraries and community centres can, and should, play a role in supporting these needs across all age groups and demographics.
- People have told the Council that one of the most important services offered by libraries and community centres is space to safely and quietly study and learn. There is a significant need for safe out of classroom hours study space for children, young people and adult learners. Residents would like the existing offer to be expanded further, and existing facilities and availability of workspaces improved
- **Culture and creativity:** People would like to see more creative and cultural activities and events being offered, tailored to each unique locality and reflecting the blend of communities and cultures that live in the immediate surrounding areas.

- There is an opportunity to align any refreshed library and community centre offer with a broader refresh of the cultural offer and marketing of Leicester as a city destination, particularly through programming in the Central Library
- **Children's promise:** A significant proportion of Leicester children are understood to grow up in poverty, with related impacts on school readiness and future life outcomes. Libraries and community centres can play a role in helping children, young people and their families with these early year challenges, in part through the provision of pre-school literacy and reading support.
- There is a significant need for safe out of classroom hours study space for children and young people.

2.15. The survey asked what ideas people thought the Council should investigate which are being tried elsewhere to better meet the needs of residents. 'more multi-service centres,' 'reviewing opening hours to match peak demand' and 'involving community organisations in running services' were the most popular ideas to consider.

Table 1: "Many councils are changing how they operate community centres and library services in order to better meet the needs of residents. Please tick up to three ideas that you think we could look at."

Option	Total	Percent
<b>Have more multi-service centres to bring community centres, libraries and local services together</b>	<b>1014</b>	<b>58.78%</b>
<b>Involving community organisations more in running services</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>36.00%</b>
<b>Reviewing opening hours to match peak demand</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>34.55%</b>
Making more use of volunteers	377	21.86%
Making more use of customer self-service in public libraries	375	21.74%
Providing more services online	294	17.04%
None of the above	211	12.23%
Other	91	5.28%

## Secondary Research

2.16. The Neighbourhood Services project team undertook an extensive secondary research exercise to support the needs assessment. Research included:

- Leicester city population analysis, health and employment data
- Service overview including performance data
- Usage and service cost information
- Benchmarking information
- Service delivery (analysed through the national Universal Offers)
- Building profiles (for each Neighbourhood Services facility)

The report is available on our website.

## **Developing the model: key principles**

- 2.17. The following principles have been applied in developing the model for a transformed neighbourhood services offer to meet the needs of city communities.
- 2.18. The local authority has a statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. Within Neighbourhood Services delivery of the statutory service should be prioritised.
- 2.19. The transformation of neighbourhood services should prioritise need within the city, whilst recognising the core remit of the service, the different types of need, the availability of other services and providers to respond to this and the different ways in which the service can be delivered.
- 2.20. Wherever possible building-based services should be co-located in neighbourhood based multi-service centres to ensure best use of facilities and to deliver joined up, efficient and convenient services in one place and to serve the widest possible catchment area.
- 2.21. Communities should have the opportunity to take on the running of services where this is appropriate. Community organisations can often provide added value services and may have a deeper reach into local communities through their networks. Support can be provided for community organisations to develop business plans to take on the running of services where this can bring benefits to local people.
- 2.22. Buildings retained within the council delivered service should be viable for the future. Whilst building condition should not drive service planning, buildings should be efficient and sustainable to optimise the services able to be delivered from a reduced estate in the future. Investment in technologies such as library self-access systems should be explored to make the best use of retained buildings.

## **Proposed model**

- 2.23. The proposed model for Neighbourhood Services would build upon the current approach to further develop well-located multi-service centres offering a range of council services under one roof. This approach would be underpinned by the extensive use of digital services to reduce costs, maximise access to services and benefit from virtual offers such as e-books, e-magazines, and online access to the full range of library catalogue services.
- 2.24. Multi-service centres will operate as hubs to support wellbeing by integrating a range of services provided by the council and its partners. The centres will serve wide areas of the city, in quality buildings, with good accessibility and surrounding transport networks to cover broad catchment areas. Bringing services together under one roof provides benefits for local people for ease of use and for a convenient combined offer. The centres provide cost benefits to the Council through reducing building running costs and sharing resources. The services offered will be tailored to local need and appropriate to the building. Services could

include a library, community room hire, work coach sessions, adult learning sessions, housing advice, children’s activities and community groups.

- 2.25. The Central Library service will deliver a broad offer with extended reading and cultural programmes, serving residents living in all areas of the city. The service will continue to offer extensive fiction and non-fiction collections with titles available by request at local community libraries. A regular programme of author events and cultural activities will respond to the need identified by our needs assessment for more cultural and creative activities.
- 2.26. There will be a renewed focus on four nationally recognised “Universal Offers” and the “Children’s Promise” developed by the Libraries Connected organisation. This core offer will respond to feedback from residents during the engagement phase of the needs assessment to provide interventions, resources and activities around health and wellbeing initiatives particularly around mental health through tackling loneliness and social isolation, reading, digital and information support and cultural and creative activities. Details of the “Universal Offers” can be found here: [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#)
- 2.27. Online services including e-books, e-newspapers and e-magazines will continue to be provided. The Children’s BookBus will provide regular services in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the city and a volunteer-supported Home Library Service will deliver books to housebound residents.
- 2.28. A reduction in staffed opening hours at retained sites will enable the widest network of facilities to be sustained. Opening hours would be standardised into 2 bands across the network with centres banded according to busy-ness. The proposed staffed opening hours are informed by a survey of footfall by day and hour. Responding to feedback from the needs assessment, the proposed staffed opening hours have been carefully considered to ensure library staff are available at peak times and at times when key groups require in-person support and staffed access. The suitability of the proposed opening hours will be tested through consultation. The proposed opening hours are available on our website.
- 2.29. Library self-access systems would be introduced to extend opening hours at 6 libraries. The self-access system would enable registered customers aged 16 years and over, and children under 16years who are accompanied by an adult, to access the library outside of staffed opening times using their library card and PIN. Self-access libraries would be monitored by CCTV and customers would be given an induction in order to use the service. Self-access customers would have access to book loans, study space, computers and Wi-Fi through existing self-service facilities. Special arrangements would be in place to ensure year 11 GCSE students under the age of 16 could use self-access systems. Library self-access systems have been trialled at Evington and Knighton libraries since 2022 providing weekday access from 8 – 10am and late access in the evenings until 8pm.
- 2.30. The proposed network of retained facilities would be as follows:

Centre	Staffed Hours	Extra Library Self-Access Hours*	Notes

Aylestone Library	30	Yes	Located in Aylestone Leisure Centre
Beaumont Leys Library Hub	40		
Belgrave Library Hub	40	Yes	
BRITE Centre & Library	40	Yes	
Hamilton Library & Community Centre	30	Yes	
Highfields Library Hub	40		
Leicester Central Library	45		
New Parks Centre Library	30	Yes	
Pork Pie Library & Community Centre	30	Yes	
St Barnabas Library Hub	40	Yes	
St Matthews Library (relocated within St Matthews Estate)	30		
Thurnby Lodge Community Centre	30		New small community library and multi-service hub
Westcotes Library Hub	30		

\*Library self-access hours would operate outside of staffed hours to provide additional availability for customers aged 16 years and over who have signed up to the scheme. Under the proposal these libraries would be available for self-access from 8am until 8pm Monday to Friday over and above the regular staffed opening times.

2.31. Neighbourhood Services would no longer run the following facilities.

- Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre
- Braunstone Frith Recreation Centre
- Coleman Neighbourhood Centre
- Eyres Monsell Community Centre
- Evington Library
- Fosse Neighbourhood Centre & Library
- Gilmorton Community Rooms
- Knighton Library
- Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre
- Rushey Mead Library
- Rushey Mead Recreation Centre
- St Matthews Centre (library to be relocated in local area)
- Tudor Centre

Where appropriate, community organisations would be supported to develop a business case to take on the running of community libraries and community centres.

2.32. Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and Library would close due to the low usage of the building and the availability of other nearby libraries such as Westcotes and New Parks Libraries. The building is not considered viable for transfer to the community due to the high cost of running, maintaining and repairing the building. The council's estates team would develop disposal options for the building.

- 2.33. St Matthews Library would be relocated within the local area. Neighbourhood Services would withdraw from the community centre due to the poor condition of the facility and the cost of running, maintaining and repairing the building, including the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in part of the structure. The council's Housing division which owns the building would work with the estates team to develop options for the facility in the context of the current building condition.
- 2.34. Where no viable business plan was put forward, buildings would be considered for alternative use by the Council. Where this was not possible, a range of disposal options would be considered.

### **Opportunities for communities to run services**

- 2.35. Community organisations would be supported to develop business cases to take on the running of facilities no longer operated by the Council where buildings are considered viable. This would include the lease of community buildings under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy subject to a viable business plan demonstrating enhanced provision for local residents.
- 2.36. Resident and community groups would also be supported to take on the running of three libraries from which the council would withdraw:
- Evington Library
  - Knighton Library
  - Rushey Mead Library
- 2.37. The council would work with residents to support the development of Community Managed Libraries (CMLs). Community Managed Libraries have become increasingly popular over the past decade with over 420 recorded across the UK in 2022. Leicestershire County Council supports a network of 34 CMLs which are run by local communities. Support would be available to enable local people to explore opportunities and to create formal organisations to take on the running of services. It is noted that different models exist for running CMLs and therefore the council would work with residents to develop the most suitable model for the local community. For example this may involve the formal transfer of the library building itself in some cases but not others, depending on the capacity and ambition of local organisations.
- 2.38. Volunteer opportunities would be further developed within Neighbourhood Services to enhance the services we offer and to provide benefits to participants.
- 2.39. The library bookfund would be reduced from £415k to £300k based on withdrawal from 4 library sites. The proposal retains the current budget for the 12 retained sites and for e-book provision.

### **Bookstart programme**

- 2.40. The Bookstart programme supports the development of language and literacy skills in 0 – 5 year olds to prepare for school readiness and provide early exposure to books and reading through book sharing sessions with targeted families. Whilst the book gifting programme supported by the Book Trust organisation would be

retained, it is proposed to end funding for the associated book sharing programme for young children, parents and carers. Options to fund the programme from alternative sources would be explored.

### **City wide services**

- 2.41. Quality reading and informal learning programmes would continue to be delivered by a small team of specialist staff in partnership with local and national agencies. Programmes include the children's Summer Reading Challenge, the primary school's Our Best Book awards, half term activity programmes and national "Libraries Week."
- 2.42. There will be no reduction to the Children's Bookbus service which would continue to operate regular routes and stops with a focus on covering areas of disadvantage. The routes and stops would be reviewed following the transformation of the service.
- 2.43. The Home Library Service would be expanded and linked to the volunteer offer to support more housebound residents with door-to-door book deliveries wherever they live in the city.
- 2.44. Small library collections will continue to be delivered at identified Children's Centres to provide additional access to books for children and young families.

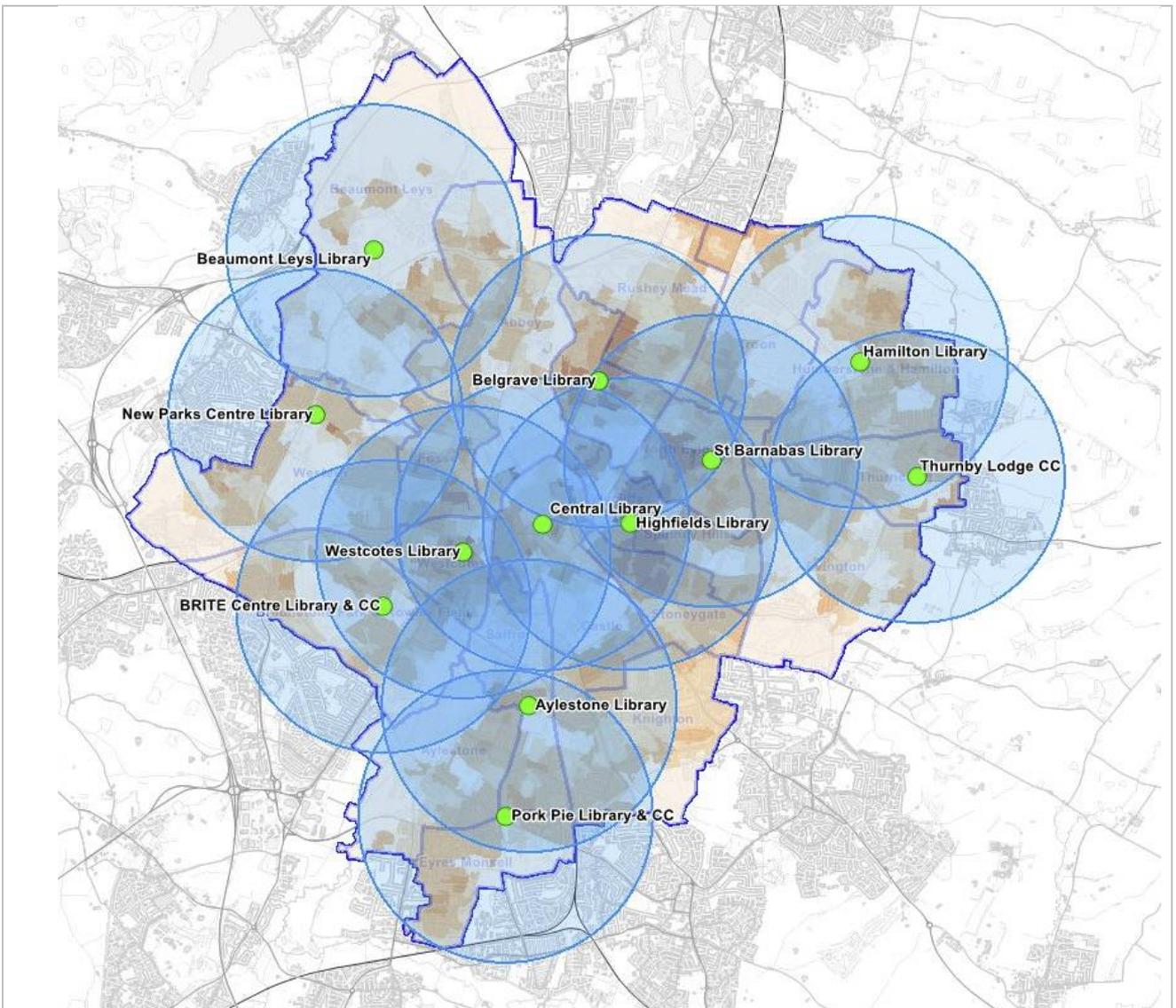
### **Investment**

- 2.45. The capital programme for 2025/26 includes £1m to facilitate the transformation of Neighbourhood Services. This includes investing in retained buildings, and to support the development of opportunities for the community to run services. The funding will respond to the feedback from the needs assessment exercise to improve the presentation and functionality of multi-service centres to ensure buildings are fit for the future.

### **Rationale**

- 2.46. The proposed delivery model for Neighbourhood Services will continue to provide a geographically distributed citywide network of library and community services which prioritises the statutory (library) service. Whilst it has never been possible to provide a physical building in every local neighbourhood, the proposed model continues to offer citywide coverage with the vast majority of city residents living within 1.25 miles of a library and community building.

The following table shows the location of retained Neighbourhood Services facilities, each with a radius of 1.25 miles shown. Over 96% of city residences are within 1.25 miles of a library under the proposed model.



2.47. A number of factors have been considered with regard to retention and release of buildings. The evidence gathered through the public engagement exercise and the data collected in the secondary research report have been used to inform the proposal for the city. Beyond prioritisation of the statutory (library) service and geographical spread of service points across the city, considerations include need (demonstrated through the multiple-indices of deprivation), suitability for multi-services, alternative/nearby provision (both council and external), current levels of busy-ness, building condition and running costs.

2.48. The release of buildings with opportunities for community organisations to take on the running of these facilities has the potential to add value for local communities. Feedback from the needs assessment public engagement survey showed 36% of respondents thought the Council should explore “involving community organisations more in running services”. Ten Neighbourhood Services buildings have been transferred to date under the Council’s Community Asset Transfer policy demonstrating the capacity of local groups to take on the running of services and the range of community benefits they can deliver. Our secondary research demonstrates that all but one comparator Local Authorities who responded to our survey no longer run community centres.

2.49. Data from the annual CIFPA library survey returns show that Leicester has by far the highest library opening hours within its comparator group. 95% of Leicester’s libraries are currently open for 40 hours or more each week. Feedback from the needs assessment public engagement survey showed that 35% of respondents thought the Council should explore “reviewing opening hours to match peak demand”. As the current opening hours are highly inconsistent between library sites, it is proposed to offer consistent weekly staffed opening hours of 40 hours and 30 hours per week based on busy-ness of the facility. A spread of opening hours is proposed to ensure access for all groups and at times when staff support is required for particular sessions, for example for under 5s sessions, after school access for under 16 years and some evening and weekend access for those working during the day. The Central Library would be open Monday to Saturday to provide service for all city residents.

2.50. The way in which people are using our libraries is changing. There is an increase in the use of online services, particularly in terms on book borrowing and loans of other online resources including newspapers, magazines and audio books. Our research shows that loans of e-resources have trebled since 2019-20 rising from 38,663 to 115,067 loans in 2023-24. Whilst physical book loans have remained strong, it is clear that 24/7 online access to reading materials is becoming increasing convenient for some customers. It is proposed that the service continues to build it’s e-libraries to provide quick and easy access to books and reading for all residents with access to the digital services.

**Outcomes**

2.51. The success of the Neighbourhood Services transformation will be assessed by the following outcomes.

By three years’ time we will be able to say that the Neighbourhood Services review has achieved the following:

Primary Outcome	Supporting Outcomes
1. Our service meets the needs of the whole community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are reaching more people</li> <li>• People know what we are offering</li> <li>• We reach the people who need us most in Leicester</li> <li>• People have access to more of the services they need</li> </ul>
2. Our service is more efficient to deliver best value within the resources available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our services are delivered from fewer but better facilities</li> <li>• Our facilities are used more efficiently to optimise the services available for local people</li> <li>• Services are delivered through a wide range of systems to improve access for local people</li> </ul>
3. Local people are more involved in the running of library and community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support is available for community organisations to be able to take on the running of services.</li> <li>• More of our services are run by local organisations</li> <li>• More local people volunteer for our services</li> </ul>

4. Our service is sustainable for the next 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes are delivered on time in line with the Council's budgetary strategy</li> <li>• Our services are affordable within the available budget</li> <li>• Our facilities are welcoming and fit for the future</li> <li>• More partners and services share our facilities</li> </ul>
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### Alternative options considered

2.52. A range of alternative options have been considered for delivering neighbourhood services in Leicester. The following table lists the full range of alternative service delivery model options considered:

#### Sourcing options considered for Leicester's neighbourhood services

Options	Options excluded	Recommended longlist
<b>Make</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arm's length company: provides little additional benefit over in-house provision and few prospects for training.</li> </ul>	a. <b>In-house management:</b> existing track record of transformation and maintains continuity and control in period of change.
<b>Buy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outsourcing to the private sector: there are no specialised operators.</li> <li>• Private sector joint venture: complex to establish and no suitable operators in the market.</li> </ul>	b. <b>Outsourcing to voluntary and charitable sector (VCS):</b> brings some financial benefits.
<b>Share</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared service: no immediate candidates for full-service sharing. Takes time to develop.</li> </ul>	c. <b>Sharing with local partners:</b> more formal collaborations with other bodies could widen offer.  d. <b>Consortium working:</b> some efficiencies made possible through collaboration.

<p><b>Divest</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sale: the service could not be sold as a going concern as it requires public subsidy.</li> <li>• Closure: part of the service (libraries) is a statutory service and cannot be closed.</li> </ul>	<p>e. <b>Spin-out to charitable body:</b> can bring cost savings and other benefits.</p> <p>f. <b>Transfer to community management:</b> can reduce operating costs.</p> <p>g. <b>Volunteering:</b> can enhance service and/or provide savings.</p>
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2.53. Outsourcing to the VCS is not considered viable at this time. There is not a competitive market for library provision and one plausible provider. Even a truncated procurement exercise and contract process would require significant resources and delay the introduction of transformational change.

2.54. A shared service for the library service: there is no shared service currently in development and there are limited economies of scale from sharing library services.

2.55. Spinning out the service to a charitable body: the financial benefits for a charitable spin-out have been reducing and the set-up process would delay the wider savings required.

2.56. In addition, alternative options for in-house service delivery have been considered. One option considered is for the Council to directly operate fewer buildings under the new model, but for longer opening hours. This option is not preferred due to the associated reduction in geographical coverage.

### Next Steps

2.57. It is proposed to undertake consultation on proposals for libraries and community centres for a 12-week period between 2nd April – 29th June.

2.58. The consultation programme will be delivered to ensure as many partners, stakeholders and service users as possible are able to have a say on the proposals. Consultation activity will include.

- Mapping of stakeholders, partners and service users
- A press release and launch through all communication channels
- A series of drop-in sessions at Neighbourhood Services facilities across the city to raise awareness of the consultation
- A series of public meetings delivered in convenient and accessible venues across the city
- Stakeholder and partner meetings to gather feedback
- A consultation questionnaire available online and with hard copy and translated versions available
- A children's and young people's questionnaire

2.59. Following a public consultation exercise the feedback from partners, stakeholders and residents will be analysed and the proposals for transformation of

Neighbourhood Services reviewed. A final set of proposals will be developed for review by the Assistant Mayor for Culture and Neighbourhoods and the Executive. Possible outcomes are:

- The proposals are fully supported with the appropriate mitigations in place
- The proposals are partially supported
- Alternative proposals are recommended resulting from the feedback from the consultation
- The proposals are not recommended following feedback from consultation and further work is required to develop alternative service transformation proposals.

### **3. Summary of appendices:**

- a. Service assessments and rationale for proposals

## **Community Services and Library Needs Assessment**

### **Appendix a - Service assessments and rationale for proposals**

#### **Developing the model: key principles**

The following principles have been applied in developing the model for a transformed neighbourhood services offer to meet the needs of city communities.

1. The local authority has a statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. Within Neighbourhood Services delivery of the statutory service should be prioritised.
2. The transformation of neighbourhood services should prioritise need within the city, whilst recognising the core remit of the service, the different types of need, the availability of other services and providers to respond to this and the different ways in which the service can be delivered.
3. Wherever possible building-based services should be co-located in neighbourhood based multi-service centres to ensure best use of facilities and to deliver joined up, efficient and convenient services in one place and to serve the widest possible catchment area.
4. Communities should have the opportunity to take on the running of services where this is possible. Community organisations can often provide added value services and may have a deeper reach into local communities through their networks. Support can be provided for community organisations to develop business plans to take on the running of services where this can bring benefits to local people.
5. Buildings retained within the council delivered service should be viable for the future. Whilst building condition should not drive service planning, buildings should be efficient and sustainable to optimise the services able to be delivered from a reduced estate in the future. Investment in technologies such as library self-access systems should be explored to make the best use of retained buildings.

#### **Leicester Central Library**

*It is proposed to retain Leicester Central as a core component of the statutory library service delivered by the Council.* The Central Library provides a breadth and depth of library services accessible to all residents within the city. As a result the library has the highest number of book issues (123,000) and computer usage (28,000 hours) in the city. The Library is located off Town Hall Square but does require investment to improve visibility and wayfinding.

#### **Aylestone Library (Aylestone Leisure Centre)**

*It is proposed to retain Aylestone Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the Council.* The service is co-located within Aylestone Leisure Centre and benefits from very high footfall due to cross-service usage. The cost of the service is low due to running costs and high footfall achieved through the shared building. The leisure centre is in good condition having recently been refurbished. Investment in the library is proposed to improve visibility and presentation of the service. Location is

excellent as the building is on a key arterial route into the city and has extremely good public transport access. Need is assessed as high - the library and leisure centre sit on the boundary between Aylestone and Saffron wards, serving an area of significant deprivation in the north of Saffron with usage of services very high.

### **Beaumont Leys Library (Multi-Service Centre)**

*It is proposed to retain Beaumont Leys Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The service is co-located with a housing office and with other council services and hosts a regular DWP Job Shop. It is positioned next to Leicester Leys leisure centre at the rear of the Beaumont Leys shopping centre. These facilities serve a broad catchment area in the north-west of the city. There is continued development of the Ashton Green area with the local plan identifying this as one of three strategic growth areas for the city for new homes. The library serves an area of high deprivation in Beaumont Leys and Abbey wards and will cater for the expansion of new homes in the north of the Beaumont Leys ward. Running costs are fair despite the size of the building and long opening hours due to co-location of services and high usage. Access by public transport is very good with frequent bus services running to the shopping centre, however there is a short walk through the shopping centre to reach the public services located to the rear. The usage of the library is high (over 73,000 visits) and need is assessed as high with Beaumont Leys ward 8<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the city and limited alternative providers nearby.

### **Belgrave Library**

*It is proposed to retain Belgrave Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The library is ideally located alongside multiple council services including a refurbished gym, refurbished swimming pool, children's centre and Cossington Park. The library serves an area of high density (private) housing and has high ethnic diversity. The library has a wide catchment with 21% of Rushey Mead Library users also visiting Belgrave Library during 2023-24. The building is well maintained and has low running costs. Overall the need for the statutory service is assessed as very high, with over 145,000 visits in 2023-24 – the busiest community library during this year. The ward is ranked 10 out of 21 wards in the indices of multiple deprivation. It is proposed to implement a library self-access system to provide early morning and late evening access to library services outside of regular staffed hours.

### **Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* The building is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due to its high usage and good income base of £50,000 a year from community room hire. The building currently houses a busy police beat office, a pre-school, a daily lunch club and Gujarati Language classes through an external provider, all of which provide income opportunities for a potential community organisation. There are a number of other council services located in close proximity, including a library, children's centre, park, swimming pool and gym meaning the local community is very well served. The building is well located and has excellent public transport provision. In 2023 – 24 there were 2,275 room hires. Whilst there would be an opportunity for a community organisation to take on the running of the centre, hiring community groups would be consulted on potential alternative options for their activities should they need to relocate. There are a number of alternative providers of community space in the area, including the Peepul Centre and local temples. The current cost to the council of

running the building (excluding staffing) is £44,000. Average maintenance costs are £39,000. The average total annual council expenditure excluding staff is £83,000.

### **Braunstone Frith Recreation Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Braunstone Frith Recreation Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* The building is not suitable to be retained as a multi-service centre due to its small size and location. The nearest multi-service centre and library is New Parks Centre Library. There is a community run community centre, Allextion Youth & Community Centre 0.4km away. The building is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due to its low running costs, small size and opportunity to provide a good local offer to the residents of Braunstone Frith.

### **BRITE Centre**

*It is proposed to retain the BRITE Centre as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The BRITE Centre is an existing multi-service centre housing a library, community centre, adult learning classrooms and community café, and is ideal for further co-location of services. The BRITE Centre was built in 2005, is in good condition with low running costs and is ideally configured to serve the needs of Braunstone residents and the surrounding areas. Need in the local area is assessed as high with Braunstone & Rowley Fields ranked as 3<sup>rd</sup> most deprived out of 21 wards in Leicester. Access to the centre is good with local bus services running past the facility. It is proposed to implement a library self-access system to provide early morning and late evening access to library services outside of regular staffed hours.

### **Coleman Neighbourhood Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Coleman Neighbourhood Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* The building is not suitable to be retained as a multi-service centre due to its poor location and low usage. The nearest multi-service centre is St Barnabas Library which also accommodates the housing office. The building is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due to its low running costs, small size and opportunity to provide a good local offer for local residents. Existing centre users include a pre-school and local madrasah would be supported to explore options to collaborate with interested community organisations or to find alternative premises.

### **Evington Library**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Evington Library and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running of the facility.* The Council would support local residents to explore options to take on the facility as a Community Managed Library. The library is small and well located for residents of Evington village, however it is not suitable for a wider catchment area or for the co-location of services. The library is not assessed as serving an area of high deprivation within the city with the ward ranked 17th of 21 most deprived. The building running costs (excluding staffing costs) are low and considered suitable for community organisations to take on.

### **Eyres Monsell Community Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Eyres Monsell Community Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* The nearest multi-service centre is Pork Pie

Library and Community Centre which serves Saffron and Eyres Monsell wards. Although Eyres Monsell Community Centre has relatively low usage due to its' small catchment area (20,000 visits per year) the building is well located within the estate and has good engagement from local residents. The facility is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due to its low running costs, high need and opportunity to provide a good offer for local residents.

### **Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and Library**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and Library due to the low usage and poor suitability of the facility and to explore a range of disposal options for the building.* Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and Library is one of the lowest use centres with just over 16,000 visits in 2023 - 24. Due to the size and age of the building running costs are very high. A recent building condition survey estimates work totalling £2.6 million is required over the next ten years to maintain the building. Due to the high running costs and complexity of the building it is not considered viable for a community organisation to take on the running. Fosse ward has areas of higher deprivation and is ranked as 7<sup>th</sup> most deprived of 21 wards. However there are three alternative libraries within the catchment area, Westcotes Library, New Parks Centre Library and the BRITE Centre library and community rooms. A food bank operates from the rear annex of Fosse Centre and it is proposed to explore alternative location options through the consultation process. Community room hire is low, however there are several regular groups meeting at the Neighbourhood Centre. It is proposed to work with the groups to find alternative spaces for them to hire. Nearby venues include Active Arts Newfoundland, Woodgate Resource Centre, New Parks Centre Library, New Parks Community Centre (Team Hub), the BRITE Centre.

### **Gilmorton Community Rooms**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Gilmorton Community Rooms and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* Gilmorton Community Rooms is a small unit with the lowest usage of all 25 sites in 2023-34. The running costs are modest at £16,500 per year and has low usage of under 1,000 visits per. A food bank operates from the facility on a weekly basis. Due to its small size, peripheral location and very local catchment area the centre is not considered suitable for use as a multi-service centre. The facility is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due to its low running costs and opportunity to provide a good offer for local residents.

### **Hamilton Library & Community Centre**

*It is proposed to retain the Hamilton Library & Community Centre as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The Library Centre is an existing multi-service centre housing a library and community centre and is ideal for further co-location of services. Hamilton Centre was built in 2006, is in very good condition with low running costs and is ideally configured to serve the needs of Hamilton, Netherhall and Humberstone residents and the surrounding areas. The library is well located on the Tesco retail site next to a health centre. The centre serves a broad catchment in the north east of the city with areas of high need in the local area including the Netherhall estate. Access to the centre is good with local bus services running to the busy shopping facility on the outer ring road. It is proposed to implement a library self-access system to provide early morning and late evening access to library services outside of regular staffed hours.

### **Highfields Library**

*It is proposed to retain Highfields Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The library is ideally located within the Highfields Estate, next to local retail units in the heart of the highly diverse local community and high density terraced housing and social housing tower blocks. The library has been recently refurbished in 2020 and serves a wide catchment area. The building is well maintained and has low running costs. Overall need for the statutory service is assessed as very high, with over 118,000 visits in 2023-24 – the second busiest community library during this year. The ward is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of 21 wards in the multiple indices of deprivation.

### **Knighton Library**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Knighton Library and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running of the facility.* The Council would support local residents to explore options to take on the facility as a Community Managed Library. The library is not suitable for use as a multi-service centre due to its small size but is very well located for residents of Knighton and the surrounding area located alongside existing retail. The library is not assessed as serving an area of high deprivation within the city with the ward ranked lowest of all city wards in the indices of multiple deprivation. The usage is good for a small stand-alone library. This combined with lower building running costs (excluding staffing) and recent refurbishment in 2021 means the facility is considered suitable for community organisations to take on with support from the council.

### **Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* The centre is poorly located in an open space within the Netherhall estate making it vulnerable to anti-social behaviour. The facility has low use with 11,000 visits in 2023-24, mainly from a daily pre-school, and a dance and prayer club. It is proposed to work with these groups to find alternative locations should there be no interest in Community Asset Transfer of the building. Although the facility is not well located to serve a wide catchment, there is need in the immediate local area. Nearby alternatives for community space are provided by the Hamilton Library and Community Centre and by Thurnby Lodge Community Centre. The facility is too small to accommodate additional services but would provide an ideal opportunity for a local group to take on the running of the community centre for the benefit of local people.

### **New Parks Centre Library**

*It is proposed to retain the New Parks Centre Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The Library Centre is an existing multi-service centre housing a library, community centre, adult learning classrooms and access to housing appointments, and is ideal for further co-location of services. New Parks Centre Library was built in 2010 and is ideally located within the local retail parade and overlooking New College secondary school. The building is in excellent condition with low running costs and is ideally configured to serve the needs of New Parks residents and the surrounding areas. Need in the local area is assessed as high with Western ward ranked as 4<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of 21 wards in Leicester. The library received 46,000 visitors in 2023 – 24 and hosts a range of community groups and activities in its purpose built community rooms and learning suites. Access to the centre is good with local bus services stopping directly outside the facility and cycle and walking paths

extending across the ward. It is proposed to implement a library self-access system to provide early morning and late evening access to library services outside of regular staffed hours.

### **Pork Pie Library and Community Centre**

*It is proposed to retain the Pork Pie Library & Community Centre as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The Library Centre is an existing multi-service centre housing a library, community centre, adult learning classrooms and a weekly DWP Job Shop, and is ideal for further co-location of services. The Pork Pie Library was refurbished in 2015, is ideally configured for co-location of services as one of the first multi-service centres to be developed in the city. Whilst the building is well presented with average running costs, its ongoing maintenance costs tend to be higher due to the age and listed status of the building. The iconic building is highly visible on the busy Pork Pie roundabout and outer ring road and is well located to serve both Saffron and Eyres Monsell wards. Public transport links are good. Need in the local area is considered high as Eyres Monsell ward and Saffron wards are the 2 most deprived wards as assessed by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. It is proposed to implement a library self-access system to provide early morning and late evening access to library services outside of regular staffed hours.

### **Rushey Mead Recreation Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Rushey Mead Recreation Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* Although the building is small and not suitable for use as a multi-service centre, the hall enjoys good usage by local people with 27,000 visits in 2023-24. The building has relatively low running costs and has received some investment in 2019. The facility is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due to its low running costs, high usage and opportunity to provide a good offer for local residents.

### **Rushey Mead Library**

*It is proposed to withdraw from Rushey Mead Library and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running of the facility.* The Council would support local residents to explore options to take on the facility as a Community Managed Library. The library is small and well located for local residents of Rushey Mead, however it is not suitable for a wider catchment area or for the co-location of services. The library is not assessed as serving an area of high deprivation within the city with the ward ranked 18th of 21 most deprived. The area falls within the catchment of Belgrave Library with 21% of Rushey Mead Library users also visiting Belgrave Library at least once during the same year. The overall usage of Rushey Mead Library is very low at under 15,000 visits per year. The building running costs (excluding staffing costs) are low and considered suitable for community organisations to take on.

### **St Barnabas Library**

*It is proposed to retain St Barnabas Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The library is a busy multi-service centre offering a digital and performance suite, adult learning classes, housing enquiries, and a weekly DWP Job Shop. The building is well located off the main Uppingham Road with excellent public transport links and serving a broad catchment area. The library has received Arts Council Funding for investment in one wing to create a space for performance, cultural and community activities. The building is well used with 50,000 visits per year.

Running costs are in line with the age of building, and investment is required to ensure the building remains fit for delivery if services in the future. Overall need for the statutory service is assessed as high, with the service covering a wide catchment in a more disadvantaged area of the city including the North Evington ward. North Evington is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of 21 wards in the multiple indices of deprivation. It is proposed to implement a library self-access system to provide early morning and late evening access to library services outside of regular staffed hours.

### **St Matthews Centre and Library**

*It is proposed to relocate the library elsewhere on the estate as part of the statutory service and to withdraw from St Matthews Centre which does not form part of the statutory service.* Due to the size, condition and cost of running the centre the building is not considered viable for community management. The centre has good usage with 110,000 visits in 2023 – 24. Due to the size and condition and long opening hours of the building the budgeted net running cost is the highest in the service for a neighbourhood facility, at £315,000 in 2023 - 24. Due the poor condition and ongoing running and maintenance costs of the building it is not considered suitable for future service delivery. The area served is assessed as high need with Wycliffe ward the 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the city, and the St Matthews estate experiencing particularly high levels of disadvantage. The ward community is one of the most diverse in the city. St Matthews Centre currently offers a range of services including a well-used housing enquiry desk, library, adult learning classrooms and community rooms. The large sports hall has been closed due to the presence of RAAC in the roof which would be costly to replace. There is also a private pre-school located in the centre. Ideally the statutory library service would be co-located with other services on the estate.

### **Thurnby Lodge Community Centre**

*It is proposed to retain Thurnby Lodge Community Centre with a library provision as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The community centre is ideally placed for co-location of library and community services to serve a wide catchment across Thurncourt ward and surrounding areas. The centre is well located next to a parade of retail units and well served by public transport. The centre is well used and has a low net running cost of £120,000 per year. The centre shares a car park with the neighbouring Peace Centre Madrasah and food bank, making this an ideal location for the introduction of the library. Need within the area is considered high, Thurncourt ward is the 11<sup>th</sup> most deprived of 21 wards in the city

### **Tudor Centre**

*It is proposed to withdraw from the Tudor Centre and to offer community organisations the opportunity to take on the running as the facility does not form part of the statutory library service.* The nearest multi-service centre is Beaumont Leys Library which serves the northwest of the city, Beaumont Leys and Abbey wards. Although the Tudor Centre has relatively low usage due to its' small catchment area (16,000 visits | 2023 – 24) the building is well located within the local estate with retail units and has good engagement from local residents. The facility is considered suitable for lease under the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy due it's low running costs, high need and opportunity to provide a good offer for local residents.

### **Westcotes Library**

*It is proposed to retain the Westcotes Library as part of the statutory library service delivered by the council.* The Library is very well located in an area of high density terraced housing with extensive retail on the main Narborough road, once described as

“the most diverse road in Britain.” The library received investment in 2015 to create a flexible community space and to expand the IT provision which is especially well used. Westcotes Library is highly accessible with excellent public transport links on one of the main transport routes into the city. The library is well used for services such as computers, Wi-Fi and the printing, with over 8,000 hours of public computer in the last year. Due to the smaller size of the building the running costs are low and the library is ideally configured to serve the needs of Westcotes residents and the surrounding areas. Need in the local area is assessed as higher with Westcotes ward ranked as 13th most deprived out of 21 wards in Leicester.