

# Library Services Peer Challenge Warrington Borough Council

5 – 6 February 2020

Final Report

## 1. Executive Summary

This report describes the feedback given at the end of the Warrington Library Service (WLS) Peer Challenge at Warrington Borough Council (WBC) and sets out the recommendations of the peer team.

The WLS were awarded a peer challenge through the Arts Council England (ACE) and Local Government Association (LGA) partnership. Seven library peer reviews are funded by the Arts Council this year in addition to three culture peer challenges. The scope and focus for this library challenge is set out in section three of this report.

In May 2012 leisure, libraries and lifestyles services transferred from WBC and merged into a Community Interest Company (CIC), called LiveWire. As a CIC, any profit generated by LiveWire is reinvested back into developing and improving its facilities and services for the community to utilise. LiveWire strives to promote a healthy lifestyle, increased participation in activities whilst encouraging reading and learning through the use of free access to books, IT suites and the internet.

In 2016 LiveWire, on behalf of WBC consulted on how to modernise the library service. In response, many people stressed how important the service is to them, and the good it does for communities and cultural life. This strength of feeling led to the set-up of a Libraries Working Group (LWG) to consider residents' feedback, review the needs of local people, and liaise with community groups. The group's recommendation to keep all libraries open for the foreseeable future, was approved by the Council's Executive Board in Dec 2017. After this, the Warrington Libraries Partnership Board (WLPB) was set up to deliver a new library strategy, review performance measures and continue a dialogue with the public about library provision in Warrington.

The peer team met staff (LiveWire and WBC) who are ambitious for both their service and the Council. They feel supported by the chief executive (currently the Chair of the national Libraries Taskforce), leader and portfolio holder who have publicly announced their support for the service and current commitment to maintaining the library estate.

There has been a marked improvement in community engagement, as a consequence of WBC and LiveWire's willingness to continue to have a positive dialogue with residents. A good example of this is through the WLPB, where friends groups and other residents are encouraged to participate to seek their views about further library service improvement.

LiveWire is aware that it needs to refocus on marketing and to promote awareness of the library offer. Library membership level is low in comparison to similar authorities at around 12% of the population, other libraries are reporting 20 - 25% take up of library membership. The reasons for this are unclear and it would be useful to undertake some research into non – users to identify barriers to library use whilst also engaging with existing users about the perceived lack of take up of library usage at some of the stand alone library sites compared to that within the community hub libraries. Each stand alone library has been tasked with developing a business case to set out proposals for future use and financial sustainability. This reflects the need to improve utilisation of the library estate and to reconsider the location and future use of the existing library buildings.

The staff are committed and willing but identified further developmental needs. One example was support in delivering social prescription. In particular for staff to know what issues they could deal with directly themselves and where they may need to refer users to either other LiveWire colleagues or to other agencies. These development needs should be addressed to ensure that staff feel comfortable in performing in new roles and to help direct the public to the most appropriate service.

Some staff feel that there could be improved communication and asked for more face to face meetings with colleagues across the LiveWire operation. Staff feel that there could be improved line management communication on day to day operational activities and corporate objectives.

The peer team saw evidence of good and innovative practice e.g. the award winning dementia friendly library at Great Sankey. However, this work is not referenced in the corporate plans of WBC. The recently adopted Warrington library strategy will help the library service reposition and demonstrate its contribution to the delivery of WBC's corporate agenda, as well as the achievement of the LiveWire business plan.

The service should think about its fitness to compete for recommissioning. In particular the service will need to demonstrate its social impact, consider how it will continue to improve its income performance and reduce subsidy, maintain the bookfund, refurbish its building stock while maintaining the core service, increasing membership and responding to local, regional and national initiatives. The peer team suggest that the two key priorities are to demonstrate the social impact of the service and to ensure its future financial sustainability.

## **2. Key recommendations**

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some 'quick wins' and practical actions, in addition to the conversations onsite, which provided ideas and examples of practice from other organisations. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

**Recommendation 1: Develop and implement the Library Delivery Plan.** Following extensive consultation the Council has agreed and published its new "Transforming Warrington's Public Libraries 2019 – 2022 (TWPL)" strategy. The aims of the strategy will be achieved through the development and implementation of the library delivery plan. The Warrington Public Libraries Partnership Board (WPLPB) will provide an overview of this and work will need to be carried out, at pace, to ensure that the plan is ready to be launched in autumn 2020.

**Recommendation 2: Establish new commissioning principles, informed by Library Strategy.** The current contract with Live Wire (a Community Interest Company CIC) to provide the library service ends in 2022. The Council is currently undertaking an options appraisal to examine how the service may be delivered in the future. The Council should consider the principles it will use to commission the library service post 2022. This activity will be informed through the adoption of the new library strategy and its alignment with the corporate aims of the Council and other strategic partners, particularly public health and education. In particular it will be important to demonstrate the difference that the library

service is making to the residents of Warrington. Therefore a new set of performance criteria will need to be developed to demonstrate the outcomes that will be expected of the library service post 2022.

**Recommendation 3: Confirm the medium term financial strategy including capital investment.** The Council has agreed the management fee for LiveWire 2020/2021 and provided one off allocations for the bookfund and capital for library building improvements. The current financial strategy is dependent on improving income within libraries and some good work has been done in working with users in developing business cases for each of the standalone libraries. However, this is a work in progress and the risk of under achievement of income should be factored into the financial profiling over the medium term. The service has benefited from a cash injection by WBC to improve the buildings and to maintain the book fund. However it is likely that Live Wire or any successor organisation will need to demonstrate its ability to continue to invest in the libraries infrastructure on a reducing management fee. The Council, informed by its Building Conditions Surveys, should also outline its repairs and maintenance schedules, to ensure that capital investment is appropriately placed for the ongoing viability of the current libraries estate. It is crucial for its own viability that the library service is able to perform against financial targets.

**Recommendation 4: Undertake resident engagement to understand reasons for non-usage.** Much useful consultation has been undertaken to inform the development of the library strategy and to engage friends' groups in considering the future of the library service. However comparative membership remains low and book issues are still in decline along with visitor figures. The Council is keen to address this and to seek ways of improving usage of the library service. The peer team recommend a further round of resident engagement in order to understand better the barriers and to look to exemplar Councils to see if there are interventions, such as a Onecard approach, for use at all Council/leisure/library services that could be used to improve usage and to gather improved customer intelligence as to what people's future service requirements will be. The WPLPB could play a key role in progressing this work, as it represents a good collaborative model for WBC and LiveWire to work with other interested groups. The WPLPB is empowered to make recommendations, about further library service, to WBC Executive Board, Policy Committees and the LiveWire Board.

**Recommendation 5: Develop marketing plans to better communicate the library offer.** There is an opportunity to develop a library marketing plan to underpin the roll out of the library strategy and to publicise the library delivery plan as it launches in autumn 2020. The marketing plan will reconfirm the library offer and could be used to promote the experience of users and attract current non-users to the library service. This is particularly pertinent at the stand alone libraries where usage is low in comparison to other services on site. Although the peer team viewed good quality publicity, it tended to be about events rather than signposting people to the current offer as set out in the library strategy. LiveWire will need to identify marketing expertise to ensure that this opportunity is not missed.

**Recommendation 6: Complete customer surveys, as per contract requirements.** The contract for the service requires that LiveWire undertake an annual customer survey and this has not happened since 2015. This omission should be rectified, not only because it is a contractual condition but importantly it will provide a better understanding of motivations for library use and potentially a way of asking people about their views on future library provision.

**Recommendation 7: Working collaboratively with the voluntary sector, launch a new volunteering strategy to maximise community involvement.** We were impressed by the commitment of volunteers that we met, including those in friends' groups. We think that a refocus on the role of the volunteer will pay dividends in increasing capacity for the library service. Volunteers, although very willing and capable, expressed some frustration at the limited roles they are "allowed" to undertake. Some reported that they found it difficult to find out how to volunteer and to identify who they should talk to in the library/Council in order to make this happen. This is an area where LiveWire can link to WBC corporate volunteering initiatives and continue their partnerships with Warrington Voluntary Action to maximise the potential of volunteering across the libraries and other LiveWire services.

**Recommendation 8: Review the terms of reference for the Warrington Public Library Partnership Board.** The board has carried out valuable work in developing the library strategy and is now focused on its implementation. Consideration should be given to its future role as the delivery plan work will be completed in autumn 2020. We learned that there have been instances when the board has strayed outside its remit into areas such as contract monitoring. This is not within the board's terms of reference and a re-emphasis of its important strategic role, providing oversight, will help its focus. It may also be useful to review the roles and responsibilities of board members.

**Recommendation 9: Align the Library Strategy to the emerging Corporate Plan.** Because of the timing of the development of the library strategy it is not referenced in the Council's suite of corporate documentation. This is understandable but means it is difficult to demonstrate the library service contribution to the key agendas of the Council, such as health and wellbeing. The Council is currently undertaking a visioning exercise and reviewing its corporate strategy. This affords the opportunity to identify and articulate the linkages for the library service and the contribution the service makes to the key WBC outcomes.

**Recommendation 10: Ensure that staff have the right skills and support in order to fulfil the ambition of the Library Strategy.** The library staff have been through considerable change in the recent past. They feel well supported by their library managers but expressed some confusion about their relationship with other LiveWire staff. In some areas they do not feel fully equipped to carry out their new roles. They also expressed a view that communication could be improved generally. It is important for the LiveWire management team to consider and address these staff concerns and devise training plans to help develop staff further.

### **3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach**

#### **The peer team**

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Warrington were:

- **Lead Peer: Anthony Hopkins BEM**, Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Service, Merton Council
- **Councillor Peer: Guy Nicholson**, Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy
- **Arts Council England: James Urquhart**, Senior Manager, Libraries and Literature

- **Peer Challenge Manager: Mark Harrison, LGA Associate**

## **Scope and focus**

The peer team looked at one core question used in all library/cultural service peer reviews namely:

- How effective is the service's contribution to cross cutting agendas of other services and the wider council objectives?

The Council also asked the peer team to focus on the following areas:

- How does the service demonstrate the difference it is making to communities by achieving outcomes and meeting the requirements of the performance framework?
- Are the future plans sustainable? Does the new integrated model work effectively for longer term financial sustainability?
- What opportunities are there with partners and internally to support the wider agendas, in particular adult education and lifelong learning?

## **Context**

### **The peer challenge process**

It is important to stress that the peer challenge was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent two days onsite at Warrington Borough Council, during which they:

- Spoke to 35 people including a range of Council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 15 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 100 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending nearly three weeks in Warrington.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit on 5 – 6 February 2020. In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer

challenge is a snapshot in time. The peer team appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

## **4. Feedback**

### **4.1 How effective is the service's contribution to cross cutting agendas of other services and the wider council objectives?**

The Council has a community hub model that integrates a number of services together to reflect local need. The hub offer includes co-located or integrated libraries that offer the full library service alongside other wellbeing services, such as leisure, health or culture. The Council evidences a good grasp of the potential to further develop the hubs to better meet the needs of local residents.

The recently adopted Transforming Warrington's Public Libraries (TWPL) strategy, aligns with national guidance. It has been widely publicised and gathered good community input in its development. The strategy is a dynamic document and as opportunities arise the strategy will evolve further. The priorities in the strategy will be delivered by action plans led by key partners such as LiveWire, Friends Groups, Libraries Partnership Board and influenced by national agencies such as the National Libraries Task Force.

The library service has well developed wellbeing programs that are delivered with other LiveWire services and other health/learning partners. Recent examples of targeted work include:

- Fit, Feed and Read – reading related school activities to promote better health outcomes
- Rugby Reading Champions – targeting year 7 students to help improve their reading skills
- Perinatal Party in the Park – helping perinatal women with mental issues by providing rhyme time sessions to encourage better mental well being
- Read2Relax – work with adults with mental health issues through reading and discussion.

The service has well developed ideas around future collaboration including the potential of further work with Public Health in social prescribing.

The adoption of the TWPL strategy affords the opportunity to link with the Corporate Plan and other strategies. The current suite of council plans are being reviewed, including the Corporate Plan. Senior officers and councillors are currently engaged in a visioning exercise that will refresh the vision, priorities and working principles of the Council. Aligning the TWPL strategy to this document will enable the service to contribute more directly and broadly to the key priorities of the Council.

The service collects much quantitative data about users. However, it is recommended that there could be better use of customer intelligence to understand what people are using and what impact services are having on people's lives. This approach will help evidence the social impact that the service has upon people. Much of the current collected data is numerical and tends to give a one dimensional view of the service, and therefore does not tell the whole story about the benefits of using Warrington's libraries

The peer team identified some confusion, amongst residents, about the current library offer and the delivery model. One example being that potential new library members are encouraged to join LiveWire health and gym activities as part of joining the library. It should be made clear that residents can join the library without having to take up other LiveWire services.

We encourage the establishment of new commissioning principles for the award of the new contract to manage the library service in 2022. The principles need to reflect the new corporate plan of WBC and set out the requirements for the library service provider to contribute to the key agendas, such as health and wellbeing, lifelong learning and digital inclusion. These principles will be informed through the future visioning of the council, implementation of the TWPL strategy, other related strategies and the regional and national library agendas.

#### **4.2 How does the service demonstrate the difference it is making to communities by achieving outcomes and meeting the requirements of the performance framework?**

There appears to be a good overview of performance at a strategic level. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are collected and reported to the WLPB and the LiveWire management team on a quarterly basis. This performance report provides data and commentary on participation/usage rates, book issues, activities, organisational overview and customer feedback. Response to customer complaints is identified and remedial action taken is reported.

The service has a good collection of case studies and data on a range of metrics. The service actively encourages feedback from users and collects feedback forms for events. Library staff are encouraged to ask users to feedback on their experience and to record this in a variety of ways, with a particular focus on capturing data from new users. Case studies of individual users to get a qualitative understanding of the benefit of libraries are developed and shared.

More effective use of the data collected and its impact should be considered to further improve business intelligence and achieve better understanding of the impact that the service is making to residents lives. In particular a renewed focus on sharing data about the social outcomes of the library service should be collected and used to promote further service improvement. We recommend that the service considers a one card / Customer Relationship Management (CRM) approach to provide a better picture of customer needs. There are examples of councils elsewhere that are exemplars in the use of performance information and have advanced CRM systems – such as Medway and Slough. Learning from examples like these may be of benefit. Both are considering how to use data differently to demonstrate the value of libraries and the contribution it makes to the wider corporate aims of their respective councils. (See Note 1 Section 5 of this report)

The peer team saw much input/output data and understand that the service is working hard to increase its outcome focus in the data it collects and uses. The WLPB will assist in developing new performance measures that better fit the six strategic aims set out in the TWPL strategy. In general, the service should ask whether the right data is being collected as currently there is a limited understanding of the reasons residents have for not using their



library service. The development of business cases for each library will include an assessment of the potential for new users. The Council has local data profiles that will help further inform this work. This includes a series of [ward profiles](#) for each of the 22 wards in Warrington. The profiles contain a variety of information including key statistics about population, ethnicity, qualifications, crime and lots more. A [Warrington Borough Profile](#) is also available which summarises information at a borough level.

The peer team recognise that WLPB has undertaken excellent work in developing the TWPL strategy and provides oversight of other related activity including modernisation, consultation and engagement, identification of library best practice and identification of external funding opportunities. The terms of reference for the group may need revision as the final piece of current work programme, the development and implementation of the library development plan will conclude in autumn 2020.

The Leader and Lead member demonstrate strong and supportive leadership for the library service and its long term future in the borough. It would be timely to widen the engagement with back bench Councillors to ensure that they understand the importance of the library service and the administration's commitment to invest into the service and to sustain its long term future. The wellbeing objectives that the service is embracing and placing alongside the library service are compelling reasons to promote engagement and encourage ward member champions for local community libraries to come forward. The member, service and friends relationship established in Stockton Heath Community Library demonstrated an established working relationship that presented an example of a member championing their local library.

Good use is made of customer surveys and feedback. More could be done to use this material to promote the library service more widely with LiveWire users, across the Council and with residents. The current library membership is around 12% of the population which is low when considered against comparator authorities, who report 20 – 25 % library membership. This statistic is even more intriguing given the high profile that libraries have had in local media and press following the threat of potential closures in 2016, the subsequent campaign and the relatively high number of library building (per head of population). Book issues have followed the national trend in declining, although this has slowed during 2019.

#### **4.3 Are the future plans sustainable? Does the new integrated model work effectively for longer term financial sustainability?**

Each stand alone library is developing a business case to set out proposals for future development and sustainability. Once completed these plans will allow the community libraries access to the Council development fund for capital improvement. Business plans will include proposals for improved income generation. To date Stockton Heath in south Warrington has benefited from this approach. This library recently received a gold award from Stirling University for its approach to dementia following a £0.195m redesign in the summer of 2019. Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub, Warrington, is believed to be the first fully integrated, dementia friendly wellbeing building and public library in the UK.

The peer team were pleased to hear, during focus groups with friends and volunteers, about the positive conversations with the community around the future usage of libraries. In 2016

the Council established a new Libraries Modernisation Working Group (LMWG) chaired by the Council's chief executive. The group was charged with developing a set of proposals to protect and improve the library service. This group developed proposals around investment in the library book fund and buildings, modernisation of the library offer and improved income generation/subsidy reduction. The proposals were agreed by the council. £1.15million of capital funding was identified by the Council to improve buildings and £0.150m ring-fenced funding was made available for the book fund. LiveWire undertook to maintain the libraries budget over a three year period. To develop these proposals the WLBP took over from the LMWG. At all stages local people have been involved in these processes.

The Council has adopted an innovative approach to building integration. In the three hub libraries the service is co-located or integrated with the other LiveWire wellbeing services, such as health, leisure and culture. In the stand alone community libraries much thought has been given to providing a library core offer alongside other local services that vary from library to library and reflect local need. The central library in Warrington town centre provides the core offer plus reference resource, archives, museum and community space. In the summer of 2019 the venue underwent a revamp in a bid to re-energise the building and transform it into a creative hub - with increased links between the museum and library services. The project was a joint venture between Culture Warrington and LiveWire, and has seen a number of cosmetic changes to the building, in addition to a more integrated approach to activities and opening hours – including Sunday opening for the first time. The building is now closed to the general public on Mondays and Tuesdays, when it is used by school groups.

The Council's commitment to investing in buildings and stock is evident. However, the future funding of this modernisation will need to factor into the development of new commissioning principles for the library service contract renewal in 2022. There is an expectation from the Council that this model needs to move toward becoming financially self-sufficient and that the management fee will reduce accordingly.

The empowerment of communities to make better use of the available spaces in Libraries has been a positive and productive experience for all. With the public contributing as volunteers and through friends' groups to enhance the service and to help develop thinking and present ideas about the continuing modernisation process.

Community stakeholders expressed some confusion about the business case processes that are required to be developed by the stand alone libraries. In particular they were unclear as to how and when decisions would be made about approval and funding. Much praise was directed to LiveWire and Council staff about the support given to friends' groups. Some concern was expressed around the continuing productive relationships if any of these individuals moved on, or if another provider is appointed post 2022.

The current library modernisation programme appears to be stand alone. It would be useful to align the library estate with corporate asset planning and regeneration activities including the projected housing/population growth in the south of the borough.

An opportunity exists to better define and communicate the library service offer within the LiveWire model. LiveWire requires new library users to join LiveWire on a Starter membership, which can be done online or in the local LiveWire facility. The Starter

membership gives access to LiveWire libraries and leisure facilities, as well as additional benefits. While we understand the cross marketing nature of this offer, we were also told that this is a disincentive for some potential users and an administrative burden for library staff. The [LiveWire](#) website describes this approach, but does not credit the Council as the commissioner and main funder of the service.

The future balance between income generation and subsidy of the library service is unknown. In the financial year 2018 – 2019 there was an overachievement of the income targets across the majority of library sites and overall. Indicating that the focus on income generation is showing dividends. It may be useful to report income achievement in the quarterly performance framework. The overall deficit for the provision of the library service in 2018 - 2019 was - £1.58million before the management fee was applied. It will be important to work up a medium term financial model and future income and reducing subsidy plan beyond 2022. This will be important given the funding pressures on the Council overall.

Thought needs to be given to the level of continuing investment which will be required in core areas such as the stock fund and for digital services). The current funding position has stabilised because of a cash injection from the Council. However there is no plan for further investment once this funding is used. This is an area the partnership board could consider and help plan for.

#### **4.4 What opportunities are there with partners and internally to support the wider agendas in particular adult education and lifelong learning?**

There is evidence of good understanding and collaboration regarding the health and wellbeing agenda. The co-location of libraries with health and wellbeing services clearly helps working together on joint initiatives. Much evidence was provided where libraries are delivering on the health agenda, for example on helping people with dementia. Further consideration could be given to aligning better strategically with other health providers and the raising of the library services profile.

The establishment of LiveWire demonstrates an entrepreneurial approach by the Council. This ability to innovate and look for new solutions means services are able to adapt to new agendas. The range of services suggests a pragmatic approach has been taken to ensure that individual libraries best fit local need and are modernised to achieve local objectives whilst retaining the library core offer, as set out in the library strategy.

Following the public campaign in 2016 the Council has actively encouraged local partnership working around libraries. The Council genuinely engages with residents to seek their views and to actively involve them in developing modernisation proposals for their local library. Improved community engagement has been achieved through the support of friends' groups who have helped the strategic thinking around collaboration opportunities.

There is an opportunity to further build capacity through a better alignment of volunteering opportunities and friends' groups. Some of the friend's groups, notably South Warrington (Stockton Heath) are proactive in encouraging volunteering through its dedicated website <http://www.libraryfriendsswish.org.uk/who-we-are/>. During the peer visit it appeared to the peer team that there is an untapped resource of volunteers who would provide additional

capacity to libraries if there was better promotion of the volunteer potential through LiveWire and the Council.

We recommend that the library service instigates further collaboration work with local schools to ensure all pupils have access to their libraries. Much good work is being carried out in some libraries, in particular we noted the dedicated use of the central library and museum for school groups.

There is a potential opportunity to raise the profile of the service through better promoting the good work already delivered. Examples of this include the 'dementia friendly libraries' which have national recognition and are seen as best practice exemplars. Another exciting development is support for business start-ups which are being provided through the creation of the new Sanctuary Hub at Lymm Library, that is home to a charity set up to oversee the delivery of community and business services to local residents. Part of the project is the Lymm Business Centre, whose profits go to the Hub charity to fund its community work and pay rent to the library run by LiveWire, to help keep the building open.

The recently adopted TWLP library strategy could be used to develop a library awareness campaign. This is an area where the WLPB and friends' groups can provide additional support and capacity.

In thinking through the requirements of the future contract specification for library services the alignment of commissioning principles should set out the potential linkages between libraries, adult learning and Culture Warrington.

Finally the peer team evidenced much good practice internally, it is important to find a better way of sharing this across the service and Council. Just some examples of this include:

- the award winning work on creating dementia friendly in libraries
- headlines about good library project outcomes e.g. Fit, Fed and Read project
- case study material demonstrating the social impact of the service
- creation of the new Sanctuary Hub at Lymm Library,
- the innovative approach taken in redeveloping libraries that better reflect local need e.g. Great Sankey and South Warrington.

It would be useful to share this good practice, and help promote the library service by including this information as an appendix to this report when it is reviewed by the Council's Cabinet in March 2020.

## **5. Next steps**

### **Immediate next steps**

The peer team appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this (there would be a charge to this). The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and

we would be happy to discuss this. Claire Hogan, Principal Adviser is the main contact between your authority and the LGA. Claire can be contacted by email at [Claire.hogan@lga.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.hogan@lga.gov.uk) or on her mobile on 07766 250347.

The following resources may be of assistance as you continue to modernise the library service:

- Library Taskforce publications/Blog. The Taskforce was set up to enable libraries in England to exploit their potential and be recognised as a vital resource for all. On this **blog**, members of the Taskforce talk about their work. <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/>
- Arts Council is the development agency for libraries in England. The focus is on public libraries, which operate within a wider framework of library provision and local and national government services. They have taken on the work of the Libraries Task force until 2020 and committed to the continued development and investment in libraries in their new ten year strategy, Lets Create! <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-libraries/>  
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>
- ACE/LGA online culture hub <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/good-practice-culture>
- Two case studies from Peterborough Libraries currently on the culture hub, both for their content on the use of technology and as examples of published case studies.
  - <https://www.local.gov.uk/new-delivery-model-peterborough-city-councils-library-service>
  - <https://www.local.gov.uk/peterboroughs-open>
- Libraries Connected. The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) has become Libraries Connected as part of its new role as a Sector Support Organisation with Arts Council England (ACE) funding. The new role will see Libraries Connected support and advocate for public libraries, building on successes such as the Universal Offers. The name change is part of a broad rebranding that has seen SCL adopt charity status, as part of the ACE funding deal worth £500,000 a year. <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/LibrariesConnected1>
- The Reading Agency is a charity that works throughout the United Kingdom to harness the proven power of reading to tackle life's big challenges like literacy, health and wellbeing and isolation and loneliness. Its vision is for a world where everyone is reading their way to a better life. It works closely with [partners](#) including public libraries, colleges and prisons to promote the benefits of reading among children and adults. <https://readingagency.org.uk/>
- CIPFA Nearest Neighbours. Allows councils to download reports comparing each English library authority that returned data (134 of the 150 councils in England have been published: reports updated March 2017) with their family group, as defined by the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Mode. Warrington has a near neighbour comparator

in Medway. We understand that Medway is considering how to use data differently to demonstrate the value of libraries. It is at the forefront of introducing Power BI to the council. Power BI is a business analytics service developed by Microsoft. It aims to provide interactive visualisations and business intelligence capabilities with an interface simple enough for end users to create their own reports and dashboards. Slough library service is also adopting this technology to help the service better express the impact it makes on citizens.

- It may be worth progressing a conversation between the two library authorities. Slough had a library peer challenge in July 2019 and are willing to share knowledge. The peer team can facilitate this introduction.
- JISC library support services, the learning champions advocate the use of digital technologies in UK education and research. It provides a range of online services and training to education, learning and research communities in the UK. Providing shared services, infrastructure and advice to help you manage your library resources, research publication lifecycle and research outputs. <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/>
- LGA is a founder member of the Libraries Taskforce and has oversight of cultural activities through its Culture, Tourism and Sport Board. It provides guidance and case study material as well as blogs, leadership conferences and peer challenges and a [libraries handbook](https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport-libraries-handbook). <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport-libraries-handbook>.
- CILIP is the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. It is a professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers in the United Kingdom. <https://www.google.com/search?q=CILIP&oq=CILIP&aqs=chrome..69i57j35i39j0l4.2367j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>
- LOCALITY (funding and income) is the national network supporting community organisations to be strong and successful. <https://locality.org.uk/>
- Peers on this team offered the ongoing support as individuals and on behalf of their respective organisations, Merton Council, Hackney Council and Arts Council England.

Note 1: Note: (Slough Library Service is at the forefront of introducing Power BI to Slough Council. Power BI is a business analytics service developed by Microsoft. It aims to provide interactive visualisations and business intelligence capabilities with an interface simple enough for end users to create their own reports and dashboards. The adoption of this should help the service better express the impact it makes on Slough's citizens. Medway Council is developing Power BI for a new approach to the use of data to measure library service impacts.)