

# 2025 Library Service Community Consultation Plan - Proposal

## Introduction

It is proposed that during 2025 the Library Service consult on the development of a new Libraries Strategic Action Plan for 2026 to 2029. The purpose of the strategy is to provide the framework for service delivery and development over the next four years, to support the service to become more sustainable, and to ensure that individuals and communities are provided with the resources and opportunities they need to learn and to thrive.

## Why should elected members be considering this consultation?

Across the country, local authorities are taking bold steps to transform services, collaborating with others to find new and effective delivery models. Similarly, there is a need to consider new ways of funding frontline library services and offsetting the investment in buildings and staff through greater partnership working. Economies and efficiencies cannot come from simply trimming the libraries budget or making transactional savings. A wider transformation programme is required – one that is rooted in the positive and essential contribution that effective libraries can make.

Estimates suggest that [every £1 invested in libraries returns between £5 and £7 \(this link will open in a new window\)](#) – a staggering return of between £5bn and £6bn a year for the UK economy, but financial and demographic pressures on Local Authorities are increasing. To best protect frontline services, libraries should be seen as an asset not a cost and viewed as integral to the delivery of CnES broader corporate strategies – libraries can add real value. Thinking ‘Libraries First’ when planning all Comhairle services will help to identify opportunities and synergies for aligning libraries to the broadest range of public, voluntary and commercial services locally

## Proposed process of consultation

The consultation process consists of four stages:

### 1) Staff consultation

March 2025: Library training day

June – July: Staff survey and feedback meetings

### 2) Pre-consultation engagement: June – July 2025

Prior to formal consultation on a draft Libraries Strategy, pre-consultation informal engagement will take place in all branches and mobiles with citizens and stakeholders. The purpose of this is to ensure the service fully understands the requirements of existing and future service users to inform the development of the draft strategy before

formal consultation. The results of this consultation will form a Future Libraries engagement report which will be publicly available and provide contextual information in respect of the design of the draft strategy and options for future service change.

**Collegial meetings:** with Shetland and Orkney library services for shared strategic planning and feedback.

**Partner focus groups** (e.g. An Lanntair, Employability, Adult Learning)

**Pre-consultation with MOWG**

## **2) Formal consultation – July - October**

The formal consultation will be open to all and include additional measures to assist participation. This included creating easy read and hard copy versions of the online questionnaire, bespoke questionnaires designed for young people and children, holding group-based discussions within libraries and entry and exit surveys as well as targeted engagement via the Mobile Library services (pop-ups at Gala days etc). Whilst seeking views and preferences on key aspects of future service delivery, the consultation is an opportunity to understand people's views on a draft strategy and options for service change.

The timing is scheduled to take advantage of community events over the summer where the Mobile Library will attend, as well as HebCelt and EDF festivals.

## **3) Back to Committee – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

## **4) Publish – December**