
Future provision of libraries and community centres

Name of body/Committee/Commission

Decision to be taken by:

Cllr Vi Dempster, Assistant Mayor for Health, Culture,
Libraries and Community Centres

Decision to be taken on: 11 March 2026

Lead director/officer: Sean Atterbury, Director of
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Lee Warner
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- Report version number: 2

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of progress to date of the Community Services and Libraries Needs Assessment Programme
- Present a summary of the results of engagement work and consultation carried out across Leicester city
- Present a model for the future delivery of council run libraries and community centres in the city for approval to proceed into delivery phase

2. Recommended actions/decision

The Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhoods is asked to:

2.1 To note the activity that has taken place to date

2.2 To agree the model as presented in the report to move into implementation as stated in the recommendations 4.13 to 4.36.

2.3 To recognise that this level of library provision is considered to fulfil the City Council's statutory obligations.

2.4 To note the extent to which the proposals will support the delivery of the Council's savings requirements as set out in the revenue budget for 2025/26.

2.5 To approve the release of the £1m Library Investment policy provision to be added to the capital programme as an immediate start for building alterations and improvements, and to note the availability of a further £1m within the current capital programme to support this work and £473k to support the implementation of library self-access systems.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1 Details of stakeholder engagement and public consultation are provided in section 4. A full public engagement exercise was undertaken between Monday 3rd July and Sunday 24th September 2023.

3.2 A 12-week public consultation exercise was undertaken between 2nd April and 29th June 2025.

3.3 The findings of the public engagement exercise were presented to Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee on 27th February 2025.

3.4 The recommendations following consultation were presented to Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee on 27th November 2025.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1 Background and purpose

The Community Services & Library Needs Assessment (CSLNA) programme was launched in 2023 to assess the needs of Leicester residents, to develop options for services which will be fit for the future and to implement decisions flowing from this work. The purpose of the programme is to transform library and community services to ensure our communities have the right type of service offering for the future, based on robust evidence gathering and delivered within the constraints of a significantly reduced divisional budget.

4.2 Statutory duty

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. Although the Council is not legally obligated to provide neighbourhood and community centres the consultation responses demonstrate the important contribution these services make towards health and wellbeing and community cohesion within the city.

4.3 Service context

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.

4.4 Scope

All 25 Neighbourhood Services facilities are included in the scope of the Community Services & Library Needs Assessment programme. This includes the current network of 16 statutory library service points.

In addition, Neighbourhood Services also delivers the following in scope services (The Ward and Community Engagement Team is not within the scope of the CSLNA programme.):

- Children’s Bookbus providing regular library services to children and young families in disadvantaged areas of the city
- 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
- Online library including e-books, e-audio, e-magazines and e-newspapers for loan
- Reader development, cultural and creative programmes for children, young people and adults

4.5 Development of the recommended model

In order to develop the recommended model the following activities have been undertaken:

- A twelve-week public engagement exercise was undertaken between July and October 2023 to inform the Needs Assessment. The engagement activity was independently run by Activist Group commissioned by Neighbourhood Services to assess need, and to collect suggestions and comments from service users, non-users and residents. The report was published in November 2024.
- Secondary research was undertaken in 2024 to assess need within the city, gather service performance data, financial information, local service provision, access and transport information and building condition data. The report was published in November 2024.
- Analysis of the data collected and the responses received through the engagement exercise was used to develop proposals for consultation.
- A draft equality impact assessment (EIA) was developed to support the proposals and has been updated following consultation and the development of recommendations.
- Consultation on the draft proposals was undertaken from 2nd April to 29th June 2025, involving 12 open meetings with resident groups, stakeholder and community groups, 15 officer led drop-in sessions and the availability of a questionnaire to provide feedback, comments and suggestions on the draft proposals.
- Analysis of the consultation feedback to inform the development of the recommended model proposed in this report. The Findings Report and the Assessment & Recommendations report were published in November 2025 and updated versions are appended to this report.

4.6 Pride in Place Programme (PiPP)

PiPP is a new 10-year government initiative providing long-term, community-led investment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which was announced after the completion of the Proposals for Libraries and Community Centres consultation. Three Leicester neighbourhoods, Eyres Monsell, Braunstone Park West and Thurnby Lodge, have been selected at Medium Super Output Area (MSOA) level using national deprivation and needs data, without Council involvement in their designation. While these areas are not Leicester City wards, the programme is directly relevant to Libraries and Community Centres located within the affected MSOAs. Each area will receive up to £20 million over ten years, including initial capacity funding ahead of April 2026, with the Council acting as Accountable Body and local priorities set through resident-led Neighbourhood Boards.

4.7 Equality considerations

The council has been mindful of equality considerations in the development of the original proposals and ongoing following a full public consultation exercise. A draft Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was developed with the publication of the original proposals and the findings of public consultation have been used update the EIA and to make changes to the proposals. The current equality assessment is published as appendix 4 of this document and includes a draft action plan to monitor and mitigate potential impacts.

4.8 Stakeholder engagement activity

A public engagement exercise was carried out between July - September 2023. The engagement activity was independently run by Activist Group commissioned by Neighbourhood Services. The written report identified the key areas of need as follows:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Children's provision: 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.

The public engagement 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. This feedback was used to inform the proposals which were developed for consultation.

4.9 Consultation activity

A public consultation took place between 2nd April and 29th June 2025. A wide range of information was published including building condition and running costs, service usage metrics and alternative service provision options considered by the council. As part of the consultation respondents were asked to provide their own alternative ideas for the service. Overall, there was a very high level of engagement in the consultation with 6,355 people completing a survey and over 1,000 people attending open meetings in person to give their views. The level of engagement compares very well with similar consultation exercises held in local authorities of a comparable size and demographic. A wide range of stakeholders developed during the engagement phase were contacted to promote the consultation and to gain views on the proposals. A number of meetings were held with stakeholder groups, community groups and residents. Twelve open meetings chaired by the Asst Mayor for Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres were held throughout the consultation period attended by 1,053 people as follows:

Meeting	Venue	Date/Time	Attendance
Open Meeting	Eyres Monsell Community Centre	Tuesday 15 th April 15 00 – 16 30	46

Open Meeting	Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre	Wednesday 23 rd April 18 00 – 19 30	400
Open Meeting	Tudor Centre	Tuesday 13 th May 14 30 - 16 00	46
Open Meeting	Soar Valley College	Wednesday 14 th May 18 00 – 19 30	240
Open Meeting	Fosse Neighbourhood Centre	Tuesday 20 th May 18 00 – 19 30	24
Open Meeting	Avenue Primary School (near Knighton Library)	Wednesday 21 st May 18 00 – 19 30	122
Open Meeting	St Matthews Centre	Thursday 29 th May 18 00 – 19 30	57
Open Meeting	Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre	Wednesday 4 th June 18 00 – 19 30	18
Open Meeting	Evington Library	Tuesday 10 th June 14 30 – 16 00	39
Open Meeting	Coleman Neighbourhood Centre	Tuesday 17 th June 18 00 – 19 30	26
Open Meeting	Gilmorton Community Rooms	Thursday 19 th June 18 00 – 19 00	21
Open Meeting	Braunstone Recreation Centre	Tuesday 24 th June 14 00 – 15 00	14

Table 1: Open meeting held during the public consultation

A public survey was available online and on paper and translated into the most spoken community languages in Leicester. A children's version was available. In total 6,355 completed surveys were received. Engagement meetings were held for all Ward Councillors in small ward groups. 15 officer led-drop-in sessions were held across the city with approximately 120 attendees. 41 stakeholder meetings were held upon request. Young people's drop-in sessions were held at Belgrave and Knighton Libraries along with a session at City Hall for the Young Peoples Council. 6 petitions signed by over 9,000 people were received and included in the consultation.

A findings report is available (appendix 3) detailing the responses and feedback to all consultation activities including the open meetings, the drop-in sessions and the main and young people's surveys. The following summarises the feedback received.

4.10 Proposals consulted on

In overview the following proposals were consulted on in April 2025:

- Council delivered services would be from 13 facilities: the Central Library and 12 multi-service centres. This included the relocation of St Matthews Library nearby on the estate.
- 11 buildings including 3 libraries would be offered for community running
- The council would withdraw from Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and St Matthews Centre, supporting groups to relocate
- The book fund would be reduced by £115,000
- Staffed opening hours would be reduced. Self-access systems would be introduced at 6 libraries.
- There would be capital investment at retained sites

4.11 Consultation Outcomes and Alterations to the Proposals

In total, at the closure of the consultation on the 29th June a total of 6,355 completed response forms were received, and 1,059 people had attended the open meetings. There was a very high level of participation in the consultation indicating a high level of awareness and interest within the community. The following points provide a summary of the outcomes of the consultation:

- There was a very high level of support for the services and activities offered by both libraries and community centres.
- Feedback received demonstrated significant concern around the proposals to offer three libraries for community management. Key concerns were around the feasibility of community groups taking on the libraries at this time and the longer-term sustainability of the community managed library model with a preference for the council to continue to run these services in a more sustainable way.
- Therefore the proposals have been amended to state the council will continue running Evington, Knighton and Rushey Mead libraries with reduced opening hours, and to continue with self-access hours at Knighton and Evington Libraries.
- A very large number of users of Rushey Mead Recreation Centre and Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre had significant concerns that Community Asset Transfer could lead to some community groups being marginalised, and the centres being less accessible. There were concerns that, as both centres are already very well used, a successful CAT organisation would need to displace current activities in order to support their own direct provision as there was not sufficient capacity to accommodate new service offers. Many respondents indicated they would prefer the council to explore ideas for income generation in order to support continued Council management of the two centres.
- Therefore the proposals have been amended to state the Council continues to run Rushey Mead Recreation Centre and Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre and to increase the income target at both sites by 100%.
- There was a broader range of responses to proposals for the Community Asset Transfer of the six other community centres. Early interest was received for all of the centres and discussed at the open meetings. The key considerations were around continued availability of preferred times and rooms, limiting any increase in room hire charges, sustainability of the community offer and ongoing accountability to the council as landlord to ensure the delivery of contracted outcomes. Reassurance was also sought around the formal process through which community organisations would be assessed and recommendations made. With regard to Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre, there was good support for an alternative suggestion to offer the nearby Armadale Centre for CAT instead.
- Therefore the proposals have been amended to state that the Armadale Centre is made available for Community Asset Transfer and that Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre be demolished.
- There were alternative suggestions made with regard to the proposed opening hours at most of the 12 multi-service centres.
- It is therefore recommended that updated opening hours be implemented as outlined in Appendix 1 of this report.

- With regard to the proposed closure of Fosse Neighbourhood Centre, a key concern raised was a location for the busy Alice Hawkins Community Projects which is currently based in the neighbourhood centre annex.
- Therefore the proposals have been amended to state that the council support Alice Hawkins Community Projects to relocate within the area.
- With regard to the proposed withdrawal from St Matthews Centre there was a strong consensus the relocation of the library and services should be on the estate.
- Therefore the proposals have been amended to state that the library be relocated to St Matthews Children, Young People and Family Centre on the estate.
- A detailed consultation findings report is published as Appendix 2.

4.12 Principles

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

- 4.12.1 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.
- 4.12.2 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.
- 4.12.3 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.
- 4.12.4 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.
- 4.12.5 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

Recommendations

- 4.13 Following the consultation an assessment and recommendations report was produced in November 2025. This was the output from the consultation analysis and was presented to Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee for consideration. An updated version of the report is included as appendix 3.

4.14 Recommended model

Following consultation significant changes have been made to the original proposals. In overview it is recommended the council continue to run 18 facilities including 15 statutory library service points. The following section outlines the recommended model for delivery of the statutory library service and community centres in Leicester.

4.15 Leicester Central Library service will continue to deliver a broader offer, serving residents living in all areas of the city. A wide range of reading and cultural programmes will be further developed to support the promotion of reading for pleasure, to bring communities together and to support informal learning and improve life chances. The city centre offer is supplemented by a recent partnership with the two city universities and Loughborough University providing access to study space, Wi-Fi and specialist book stock for members of the public with extensive opening hours. There will be a small reduction in the opening hours for the Central Library from 52.5 to 45 staffed hours per week.

4.16 Twelve multi-service centres will operate as hubs to support wellbeing by integrating a range of services provided by the council and its partners. Multi-service centres will provide a range of services under one roof to improve access to council and partner services for local residents. Services will include Customer Service and Housing pop up offices, Leicester Adult Learning and DWP Work Coach sessions and Family Hubs signposting and services. The centres will provide library and community services to a wide catchment area with accessible transport routes. The multi-service centres will include Thurnby Lodge Community Centre with a small non-statutory library provision installed, and St Matthews Library which would be relocated as below.

4.17 St Matthews Library and some services will be relocated to St Matthews Children's, Young People and Family Centre as one of the twelve multi-service centres. The recommended relocation reflects consultation feedback that the library should remain on the estate. St Matthews Centre is not sustainable in the medium to longer term future due to the poor condition of the building including the large sports hall area which is closed for safety reasons due to the presence of RAAC concrete in the roof. Options will be explored for the future of the St Matthews Centre site once the services have relocated. This work does not form part of the Neighbourhood Services programme and will instead be led by the Housing and Estates and Building Services divisions. Neighbourhood Services will work in partnership with community groups to explore options for them to relocate.

4.18 Three further stand-alone libraries will be retained. Following feedback from the recent consultation exercise the council will continue to run **Evington, Knighton and Rushey Mead Libraries**. The staffed opening hours will be reduced. Customer self-access hours will be retained at Evington and Knighton Libraries outside of staffed times.

4.19 Two stand-alone community centres, **Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre and Rushey Mead Recreation Centre**, will continue to be run by council. Income targets for both centres will be increased by 100% and the council will work with the local community to improve the usage and financial sustainability of the centres.

- 4.20 Staffed opening hours will be standardised** across the estate. A reduction in staffed opening hours at retained sites will enable the widest network of facilities to be sustained. The Central Library will be staffed for 45 hours per week. The five busiest multi-service centres will be open and staffed for 40 hours per week, with the seven less busy multi-service centres open and staffed for 30 hours per week. Standalone libraries will be staffed for 25 hours per week (Knighton and Evington Libraries) and 20 hours per week (Rushey Mead Library). Additional unstaffed opening hours will be available at suitable sites. The proposed patterns of opening hours have been amended to reflect the consultation feedback for each building. Full details of recommended opening hours are included as Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.21 Library self-access systems** are already in place at Knighton and Evington Libraries. On the basis that these installations have been well received and operated successfully for two years the system will be implemented at a further 6 library centres to extend the overall opening hours. The technology will provide self-access for inducted customers via their library card with live CCTV monitoring in place. 8am to 8pm weekday opening would be supported by the introduction of library self-access systems extending availability for customers over 16yrs and accompanied children beyond the staffed opening hours
- 4.22 Four community centres** will be made available for lease under the council's Community Asset Transfer policy. The council will no longer run Braunstone Frith Recreation Centre, Coleman Neighbourhood Centre, Gilmorton Community Rooms and Tudor Centre. There has been positive engagement at all four centres and early interest is evident for each of these. A formal opportunity will be published with support for community organisations to develop a business case to take on the running of the four centres. It is anticipated that the Community Asset Transfer process will take between 12 to 18 months to complete. Third party support will be provided for community organisations to develop their business plans. The council will continue to run the centres until they are handed over.
- 4.23 Eyres Monsell Community Centre** is located in an MSOA that is a beneficiary of the Pride in Place programme. It is therefore first intended to engage the local neighbourhood board once it is formed to inform the local approach before offering for Community Asset Transfer alongside those stated in 4.22.
- 4.24 Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre** will close and be demolished. The **Armada Centre** is the preferred community building following consultation, which is situated on the opposite side of the same road. The Armada Centre is located in the vicinity of an MSOA that is a beneficiary of the Pride in Place programme. It is therefore first intended to engage the local neighbourhood board once it is formed to inform the local approach before offering for Community Asset Transfer alongside those stated in 4.22.
- 4.25** It should be noted that **Thurnby Lodge Community Centre** is also located in the Thurnby Lodge MSOA and therefore could also benefit from investment should the local neighbourhood board determine to do so.
- 4.26 Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and Library** will close due to the low usage of the facility and the poor condition of the building. There are several libraries nearby

which are considered accessible for local residents with 100% of residences falling within a 1.25 mile radius of alternative library provision:

- Westcotes library is 0.8 miles (19 minutes' walk as plotted on Google Maps) from the Fosse Neighbourhood centre.
- New Parks Library is 1.4 miles from Fosse Neighbourhood Centre directly accessible by the number 14 bus.
- The BRITE centre is 1.5 miles from Fosse Neighbourhood Centre.
- The Central library is 1.2 miles away from Fosse Neighbourhood Centre with regular buses to the city centre.

There are two regular permanent community activities based at the centre, a weekly bowling group and Alice Hawkins Community Projects. It is recommended to work in partnership with Alice Hawkins Community Projects which operates from the annex of the building and would be supported to relocate elsewhere within Fosse ward recognising the significant benefits delivered to local people.

It is recommended the council makes best endeavours to secure suitable alternative accommodation for the bowling group.

The council will support customers to use alternative library provision as above and also explore locations for a book drop-off and pick up point in the local area.

The council's estates and buildings team has undertaken a review of building options for the Fosse Neighbourhood Centre. In view of the condition of the building it cannot be offered for CAT. Therefore the estates and buildings team will commence a marketing process following a decision. The Council will continue to maintain the Neighbourhood Centre up to the point of disposal.

4.27 Staffing and operating costs will be reduced with a revised staffing model reflecting the changes in service delivery and opening hours. Core skills will be retained within the service to ensure quality services continue to be developed in the transformed service.

4.28 The Book Fund budget will be reduced by £30,000 from £415,000 to £385,000 recognising the reduction of the library network and changes in book borrowing patterns.

4.29 Community room hire charges will be increased by 20 per cent, phased over 2 years, to support the operation and financial viability of the remaining council run community centres. This reflects a large variety of suggestions during the consultation relating to improved income generation.

4.30 Capital investment of £2 million will be made to adapt and further develop retained buildings as multi-service centres. The multi-service centre model is already in operation and feedback indicates further development of this model is well supported to ensure buildings are used to their full potential, well-presented and signed, and in good condition to serve communities. Investment will further enable services to be delivered together from local neighbourhood facilities, to include future library and community services, adult learning facilities, customer services and early years provision as appropriate. Separate capital investment of

£473,000 is approved in the capital programme for the implementation of library self-access systems at 6 sites.

- 4.31 Enhanced activity programmes** will be provided around our “Universal Offers” in multi-service centres, focused on health and wellbeing, information and signposting needs, and more cultural and creative activities to bring people together. The libraries reading programme and children’s engagement activities will be prioritised to encourage reading for pleasure and to improve life chances from early years onwards.
- 4.32 Online services and resources** including the e-library would continue to receive investment recognising the growth in this area and the convenience of 24/7 digital services for city residents for their reading and information needs
- 4.33 Volunteer opportunities** will be developed to enhance and add value to the services we offer and to provide a range of benefits to participants. This proposal is supported by consultation feedback and submissions from library and community centre users to work with the council to enhance the offer at retained sites
- 4.34 The Home Library Service** is delivered in partnership with Ride Leicester to support housebound residents with door-to-door book deliveries wherever they live in the city. Linked to our volunteer offer it will be expanded to support housebound residents with door-to-door book deliveries where residents are unable to leave their homes to access reading.
- 4.35 The Children’s BookBus** service will be reviewed following the implementation of changes outlined above to support children and young families living in disadvantaged communities and to provide access to books and reading programmes in these areas
- 4.36** The recommended library provision will be at 15 statutory sites with a small non-statutory offer at Thurnby lodge Community Centre. This would increase the current coverage to 99.5% of all residential properties within Leicester City to be within 1.25 miles of a library in the statutory provision.

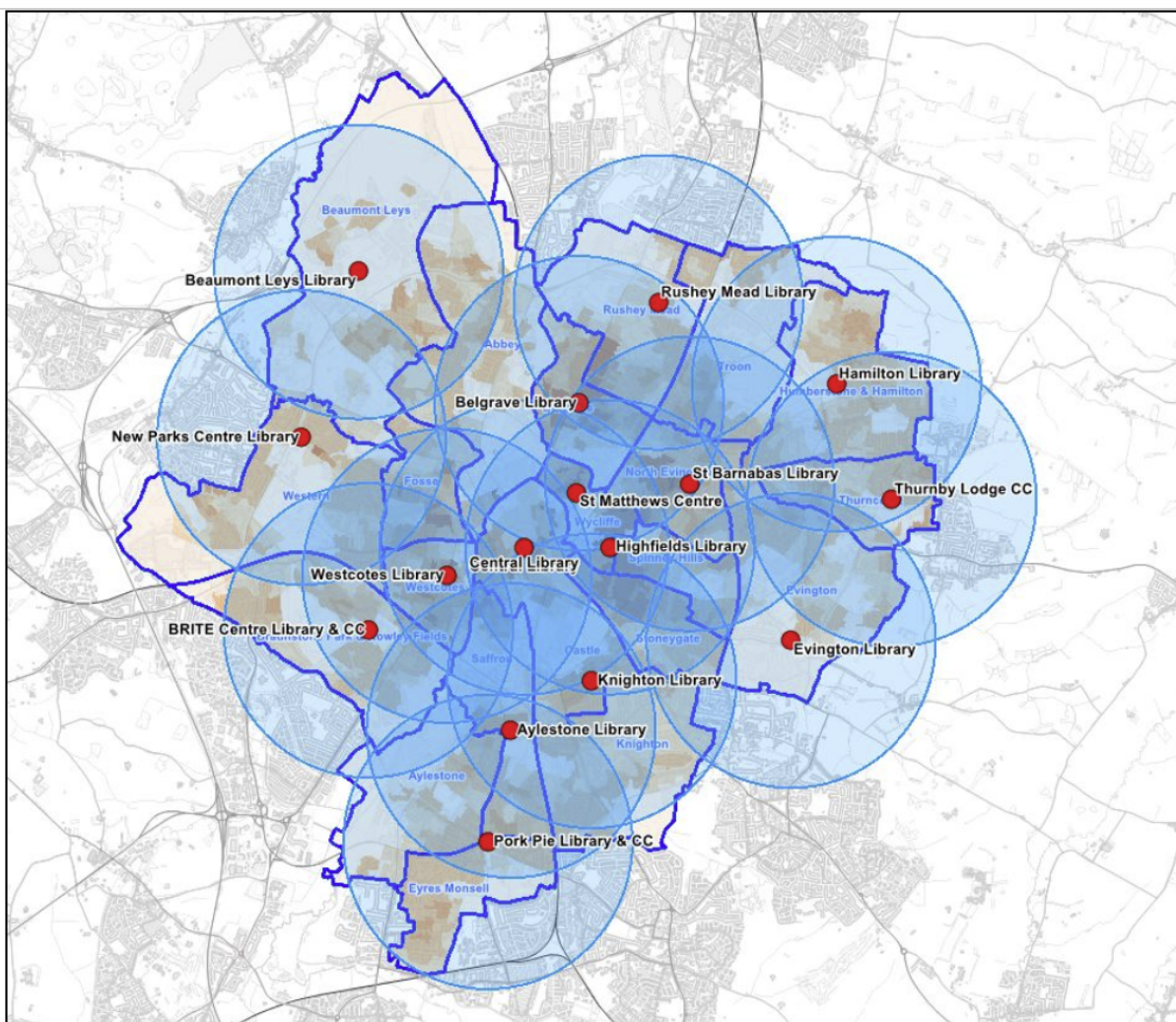


Figure 1: Recommended library provision with 1.25-mile catchment areas. The map shows 99.5% of all residential properties in Leicester city are within 1.25 miles of a council run library.

4.37 Summary of retained facilities

The following table provides a summary of the facilities recommendation to be run by the council including the staffed opening hours available and proposals for self-access outside of staffed hours:

Centre	Staffed Hours Per Week	Self-Access Hours
Central Library	45	
Aylestone Library (Leisure Centre MSC)	30	Yes
Beaumont Leys Library MSC	40	
Belgrave Library MSC	40	Yes
BRITE Centre MSC	40	Yes
Hamilton Library MSC	30	Yes
Highfields Library MSC	40	
New Parks Centre MSC	30	Yes

Pork Pie Library MSC	30	Yes
St Barnabas Library MSC	40	Yes
St Matthews Library (relocated to CYPF MSC)	30	
Thurnby Lodge Centre MSC (with small library)	30	Yes
Westcotes Library MSC	30	
Evington Library	25	Yes
Knighton Library	25	Yes
Rushey Mead Library	20	
Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre	As required	
Rushey Mead Recreation Centre	Self-access	Yes

Table 2: Recommended Leicester City Council run sites and opening hour allocations

4.38 Alternative models considered

A range of alternative models have been considered for the delivery of library and community centres as follows.

4.39 Option 1: Maintain Current Library and Community Centres Provision

Benefits – no implementation costs

Disadvantages – does not respond to changing need; unable to deliver model within reduced budget; service not sustainable for the future; no investment to ensure buildings fit for future needs

4.40 Option 2: Proposals Consulted Upon including 3 Community Managed Libraries

Benefits: responds to future needs; can be delivered within reduced budget; investment in buildings for future; more facilities directly run by local people

Disadvantages – lack of capacity in community to run libraries; local groups may be displaced by the CAT of busiest community centres due to capacity issues

4.41 Option 3: Proposals Recommended in this Report (recommended option)

Benefits: responds to future needs; can be delivered within reduced budget; investment in buildings for future; 6 community centre facilities directly run by local people; wider statutory library provision; security for community groups including those based at the busiest centres

Disadvantages – reduced saving made; reduced opportunity for local people to run services;

4.42 Option 4: Further Reduced Network of Libraries and Community Centres

Benefits: responds to future needs; can be delivered within a further reduced budget; investment in buildings for future; more facilities directly run by local people; additional saving made to protect council services

Disadvantages – reduced statutory library provision; reduced geographical spread and availability of council run services

4.43 Option 5: Outsource to External Provider

Benefits: Some reduction in cost through management efficiencies over wider network and updated terms and conditions for new employees

Disadvantages: Outsourcing 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 by several years.

4.44 Capital investment

In order to support the recommendations capital investment is required for building enabling works. The work is required to ensure retained buildings are fit for the future, to modernise buildings for multi-services and to ensure buildings transferred to the community are in a suitable condition.

A total of £2 million capital funding is required to undertake works to Neighbourhood Services buildings. The funding includes £1m already approved within the current capital programme to support this work. The release of an additional £1m capital Library Investment policy provision for building alterations and improvements is recommended to be approved as part of this decision.

4.45 Revenue costs and benefits

The current Neighbourhood Services budget for scoped services for 2025-26 is £6.18 million.

The full year revenue saving achieved through the recommendations for libraries and community centres will be **£1.57 million**.

The proposed profile for savings over a two-year financial period is as follows. The savings profile takes into account the timescale for a range of projects required to implement the recommendations:

Financial Year	Cumulative revenue saving
2026 – 27	£500,000
2027 – 28	£1,570,000
Full year saving (future years)	£1,570,000

Table 4: Cumulative revenue savings achieved from recommendations

4.46 Statutory Duty

The recommended model is considered to fulfil the council's statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons wishing to make use of it. The model has considered: (a) geographical coverage; (b) the range and quality of services offered (including reading, study support, digital access, assisted help); (c) the reasonable needs of different users and protected groups; (d) available resources and efficiency.

- Coverage. The recommended network provides access to 15 statutory library service points (plus a small non-statutory offer at Thurnby Lodge), with catchment modelling indicating 99.5% of residential properties are within 1.25 miles of a statutory site. Whilst distance alone is not conclusive the model has considered transport, safety, and ability to travel for children and disabled users in the equality analysis and mitigations below.
- Quality and modes of access. While staffed hours are reduced at some sites, overall access is maintained and in places extended through self-access technology (with live CCTV, induction and safeguarding controls). Assisted sessions and staffed periods are scheduled to ensure face-to-face

help remains reliably available in evenings and at weekends across the network.

- Resources and efficiency. The model allows the service to live within its budget envelope while maintaining a city-wide statutory offer, targeted investment in buildings, and protection of core programmes (reading, children's activities, study support, digital inclusion and the four Universal Offers).

4.47 Public Sector Equality Duty (s.149 Equality Act 2010) – due regard and mitigations

The model is mindful of the requirement to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. Noting the considerations within the EIA and the consultation feedback the following mitigations and monitoring are adopted:

Issue / cohort	Mitigation / adjustment	Monitoring / trigger
Disabled users requiring assistance	Staffed sessions each week at all statutory sites; Accessibility tools available for all PCs; induction support for self-access; reasonable adjustments policy highlighted on-site and online.	Annual % usage by disabled users and assistance requests; if decline >10% review local staffed hours pattern.
Children and young people	Maintain Saturday opening and minimum one weekday evening at all statutory multi-service centres; safeguarding rules for self-access (under-16s accompanied); study support sessions continue to be offered at identified sites.	Term-time study-support session take-up; feedback from schools; if unmet demand evidenced, reallocate sessions.
Older people/digitally excluded	Targeted digital help drop-ins; promote Home Library Service; telephone support for reservations/renewals; Explore book drop-off/pick-up point in Fosse.	Track take-up of HLS and drop-ins; if demand outstrips capacity, increase volunteer support.

4.48 Accessibility and transport (practical access beyond distance)

For areas affected by closure (e.g., Fosse), the model has considered not only proximity of nearby alternatively libraries but also bus routes/frequency and walking times. The service will signpost affordable travel options and create a local book drop/pick-up point. Staff will support affected users to transition to nearby libraries or to the Home Library Service where appropriate. The Children's BookBus service

will be reconfigured to include regular weekly stops in the Fosse area for young families and children aged 0 – 11yrs.

4.49 Risks and issues

The following risks and issues are currently identified

Risk or Issue	Proposed mitigation
Statutory Duty Risk of challenge based on the authority's statutory duty under the Museums & Libraries Act 1964	The proposals have been developed based on extensive evidence gathering and early engagement of residents and users. A full and meaningful consultation process has been undertaken with evidence of changes made to recommendations based on feedback received.
Community Asset Transfer Risk there is no viable interest in one or more community centres proposed for Community Asset Transfer	Early expressions of interest were received for all 6 community centres during the consultation period. The council has developed a robust policy and process to support community asset transfer. Third party infrastructure support would be provided to help community organisations to develop a viable business plan.
Community Asset Transfer Risk that community benefits would not be delivered or that existing community groups might be unable to continue	A robust business plan would be required to outline the community benefits and approach to supporting existing centre users. The plan would be included in the legal contract and would be monitored by the council to ensure the agreed outcomes are delivered.
Community Asset Transfer Issue: TUPE Transfer of staff may apply to one or more Community Asset Transfer scenarios	Any potential implications for Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) for staff will be clearly stated in the council's published CAT opportunities. The council's legal team will assess and advise as to whether TUPE would apply or not for each scenario.
Reduced opening hours There is a risk reduced opening hours may impact in accessibility of services.	The recommended opening hours have been revised following consultation to respond to the feedback received. All statutory multi-service centre libraries will have weekend opening on Saturdays, and at least one weekday evening beyond 5pm to ensure people working during weekdays can access services. Self-Access will be available for inducted customers at 8 library sites, extending current availability.
Recruitment of volunteers There is a risk the service will not be able to recruit volunteers to deliver added services and engage local residents	The service has a robust volunteer policy in place and uses a corporate system and procedures to recruit. The service has a strong record of volunteer recruitment and a good base of already active volunteers. Indications from the

	consultation are that communities want to volunteer to support services.
Future use of vacated buildings There is a risk that Fosse Neighbourhood Centre and St Matthews Centre may remain empty attracting Anti-Social Behaviour and with missed opportunities for the neighbourhood	Asset Development Reviews have been undertaken for the two buildings proposed for withdrawal, which are not considered suitable for community running. The Council's Housing and Estates divisions are engaged in planning for the future use of these sites. It is proposed to maintain Fosse Neighbourhood Centre until the building is disposed.
Project delivery There is a risk that transformation projects may not be delivered on time, delaying budgetary savings and/or resulting in gaps in service	It is recommended that revenue savings are profiled to ensure services will continue to be delivered by council until community asset transfer processes have concluded. Neighbourhood Services would continue to run St Matthews Centre until reconfiguration works at the Children's Centre are complete.
Community groups and events There is a risk some community groups and events could be displaced by the recommended changes.	Self-access systems will be in place at many centres to support community groups to meet at times suitable for them. Neighbourhood Services officers will work with community groups to explore alternative locations where groups are displaced.
Communication of changes There is a risk that that local residents and service users are not aware of the changes to the service resulting in reduced usage and uncertainty of service availability.	A full communications programme will be put in place for each stage of the transformation to include all partners and stakeholders. Contacts collected through the consultation will be used to provide updates and communication the decision.

Table 5: analysis of risks and issues with proposed mitigations

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The budget for 2025/26 set a savings target of £7.2m for the Neighbourhood and Environmental Services division, to be achieved by 2027/28. The proposals which were consulted upon would have delivered £2.1m towards this target. The revised proposals, amended following consultation, will deliver a full year saving of £1.57m in 2027/28 (with part-year savings of £0.5m in 2026/27). The financial impact of the changes to the proposals is therefore a reduction in full-year savings of £0.53m. This will be considered as part of the revenue budget report for 2026/27.

The report outlines the capital investment required to deliver the proposals, at a cost of £2m. There is £1m already included within the general fund capital programme for this

purpose. A further £1m is held within the Library Investment policy provision, and this report seeks approval for its release into the programme. In addition, there is a capital budget in the programme of £473k for the roll out of library self-access, which will be used to undertake the work at the 6 libraries referenced in this report.

The closure of Fosse Neighbourhood Centre will result in a vacant building. The financial implications of this will depend on its future use or disposal.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 16th February 2026

5.2 Legal implications

The recommendations set out in this report have potential staffing implications.

In respect of any Community Asset Transfer there is the potential for the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (“TUPE”) to apply. If TUPE applies, then employees assigned to the relevant provision will transfer to the new provider with their existing terms and conditions protected. It may also be necessary for the new provider to offer the transferring employees continued access to the Local Government Pension Scheme. It is therefore recommended that ongoing advice is sought from legal services and HR to determine whether TUPE would apply to any proposed transfer.

The recommendations which involve either reduced staffed opening hours at retained sites, the closure of sites or the relocation of sites, represent a reorganisation of the current structure. The Council’s organisational review policy would need to be followed should a decision be made to proceed with these recommendations. There is the potential for this to include redundancies and if this is the case the Council’s redundancy policy should be followed to minimise the risk of employment related claims against the Council.

In all of these circumstances management would need to ensure that due process is followed, and meaningful consultation is undertaken with affected staff.

Julia Slipper, Principal Lawyer (Education & Employment) 16th February 2026

It is anticipated that the proposed changes will require additional goods and services to be purchased which will need to be undertaken in line with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and procurement legislation. Any modifications to existing contracts due to changes in scope of library management services should be managed in accordance with contractual provisions and, where relevant, internal approvals sought as necessary. Legal Service should be engaged to provide guidance and support throughout this process.

Any external funding that the Council receives as accountable body in relation to the Pride in Place Funding must be subject to relevant and appropriate due diligence and comply with the requirements of the funding allocation, including any necessary documentation. Legal advice should be sought regarding any documentation including any Memorandum of Understanding which should be reviewed by legal colleagues prior to signing.

Mannah Begum, Principal Lawyer (Commercial Legal) 13th February 2026

When property is to be disposed of, the Council has a legal obligation to dispose of land at the best consideration reasonably obtainable in accordance with s.123 of the Local

Government Act 1972 (as amended). Open marketing is acknowledged to achieve best consideration. A disposal includes either a freehold sale or lease for a term of more than 7 years. However, the Council also has the power to dispose of land and property at less than best consideration in accordance with the 2003 General Disposal Consent. In order to utilise the Consent, the Council must be satisfied that the proposed disposal will contribute to the social, economic or environmental well-being of the area in which the property is situated. The limit of the undervalue in respect of each individual site must not exceed £2m. If any proposed undervalue will exceed £2m then Secretary of State consent would be required for any disposal to proceed.

Following the Localism Act 2011, the Council adopted its Community Asset Transfer Policy to provide community groups the opportunity to have a greater control in their community governance. The procedure for CAT transfers is contained within the Policy.

Therefore when considering options for disposal, the Council should have regard to its adopted Framework for Property Disposals and the Community Asset Transfer Policy. Legal Services will continue to advise should subsequent disposals be realised.

Zoe Iliffe, Principal Lawyer (Property Highways & Planning) 16th February 2026

Throughout the programme the Neighbourhood and Environmental Services Division have sought, and taken, advice regarding robust governance of the transformation journey by appointing a legal advisor to the Programme Board. This has spanned the design, engagement, consultation and decision-making phases. The aim of this advice has been to enable a fair and transparent decision to be made which minimises the risk of a successful public law (J.R.) challenge

Signed: Kamal Adatia, City Barrister

Dated: 16th February 2026

5.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in making decisions and carrying out their activities, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Leicester's multi-service centres, community centres and libraries play an important role in local neighbourhoods, promoting health and wellbeing, bringing communities together and providing places for people to meet. An updated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the future recommended delivery model for Libraries and Community Centres is attached at Appendix 4. This assessment incorporates the detailed findings of the public consultation (Appendix 2) and has informed the final recommendations in this report, including amendments to the model following the designation of Pride in Place Programme (PiPP) areas and the decision to align community asset transfer opportunities with resident led

Neighbourhood Boards in Eyres Monsell and Thurnby Lodge MSOAs. As these areas were selected based on national deprivation and needs data, they contain high proportions of residents with protected characteristics who may be disproportionately affected by changes to local services.

The recommended delivery model has been revised following the consultation and EIA findings to include specific mitigating actions, such as retaining a wider statutory library network than originally proposed; maintaining council management at Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre and Rushey Mead Recreation Centre; and using PiPP investment routes at Eyres Monsell Community Centre and the Armadale Centre before considering standard Community Asset Transfer. These changes are intended to help mitigate potential disproportionate impacts on groups with protected characteristics who are more likely to rely on local, accessible, low cost or free facilities in these neighbourhoods.

The EIA is an iterative process and should be revisited as part of the decision making process if further changes arise from PiPP planning, Neighbourhood Board decisions or implementation timetables. The implementation of the recommendations will be monitored for equality impacts, including in PiPP neighbourhoods, as part of the formal review process, and any emerging adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics will be addressed through updated actions in the EIA and ongoing engagement with affected communities.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh,

Dated: 16th February 2026

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

If a property is transferred out of the Operational Estate under CAT, the carbon emissions arising from its heating and other energy use will no longer be included in reporting of the council's own carbon footprint. However, it will continue to be part of the city's footprint.

For properties that are retained within the council's portfolio, reduced operating hours may have a positive impact on overall energy use, ultimately reducing the associated emissions.

Transfer of a property has an opportunity cost to it in carbon terms, in the sense that it removes the ability for the council to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy and decarbonisation improvements to the building while it remains transferred. However, it does create a possibility for the community group and the community it serves to explore opportunities to make those investments themselves and secure the benefits for the duration of the lease. This is more likely to have a viable business case if the group has a long lease on the building and should therefore be considered, where applicable. The conditions of lease and availability of support after the transfer may have a positive impact on the community groups' ability to invest in energy efficiency and decarbonisation improvements.

Providing there are no significant building closures, the impact on service users' methods of travel should be minimal and therefore have a negligible effect on associated carbon emissions.

There is a risk of an increase in energy use where self-access services are provided, however the installation and use of automatic lighting and automated powering down of equipment should mitigate the risk down to a minor impact.

On balance, there is likely to be a reduction in the council's own emissions associated with reducing the number of buildings within the operational estate, however the city as a whole may see little change in its annual emissions with a minor risk of these increasing over time if opportunities to carry out energy efficiency, renewable energy and decarbonisation improvements are not realised for buildings that have been transferred out of the operational estate.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 13th February 2026

5.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6. Background information and other papers:

- Public Engagement Report (Nov 2024)
- Secondary Research Report Nov 2024)

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1: Recommended opening hours

Appendix 2: Findings report from the April-June 2025 consultation

Appendix 3: Assessment and Recommendations Report

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

Yes. The recommendations impact neighbourhood services in all wards of the city.

Appendix 1: Recommended Opening Hours

Centre		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total Staffed Hours
Aylestone Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	1pm-5pm	10am-5pm	2pm-6pm	10am-5pm	1pm-5pm	10am-2pm	N/A	30
	Self-Access Hours	8am-7pm	8am-7pm	8am-7pm	8am-7pm	8am-7pm	8am-1pm	8am-1pm	
Beaumont Leys Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-6pm	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-3pm	9.30am-1pm	Closed	40
Belgrave Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-6.30pm	10am-6.30pm	2pm-6.30pm	10am-6.30pm	10am-5pm	10am-1pm	Closed	40
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
BRITE Centre	Recommended Staffed Hours	9.30am-5pm	10am-5pm	9.30am-5pm	10am-6pm	9am-4pm	10am-1pm	Closed	40
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
Central Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-6pm	10am-7pm	10am-6pm	10am-6pm	10am-5pm	11am-4pm	Closed	45
Evington Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-2pm	10am-6pm	2pm-5pm	10pm-5pm	Closed	1pm-4pm	Closed	25
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
Hamilton Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-2pm	Closed	10am-5pm	10am-6pm	10am-5pm	10am-2pm	Closed	30
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
Highfields Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	9am-6pm	9am-6pm	9am-1pm	9am-6pm	12 noon-5pm	10am-2pm	Closed	40
Knighton Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	1pm-5pm	10am-6pm	10am-3pm	Closed	1pm-5pm	12pm-4pm	Closed	25
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
New Parks Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-3pm	10am-5pm	10am-6pm	10am-5pm	Closed	10am-1pm	Closed	30
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
Pork Pie Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	9.30am-5pm	10am-1pm	9.30am-7pm	10am-5pm	Closed	10am-1pm	Closed	30
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
Rushey Mead Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-3pm	Closed	1pm-6pm	Closed	10am-5pm	10am-1pm	Closed	20
St Barnabas Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-5pm	2pm-6pm	10am-6pm	10am-6pm	10am-5pm	10am-4pm	Closed	40
	Self-Access Hours	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	8am-8pm	N/A	Closed	
St Matthews Library (within the Childrens Centre)	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-5pm	1pm-5pm	Closed	10am-6pm	10am-5pm	10am-2pm	Closed	30
Thurnby Lodge Community Centre	Recommended Staffed Hours	Closed	11am-9.30pm	3pm-7pm	9am-7pm	11.30am-5pm	Closed	Closed	30
Westcotes Library	Recommended Staffed Hours	10am-6pm	10am-5pm	10am-5pm	1pm-5pm	Closed	10am-2pm	Closed	30