

Making life better



Suffolk Libraries

Changing people's perceptions of Suffolk's libraries

Our vision for 2019-2022

Hello and welcome.

Summary

This document details the work we do to make people's lives better and strengthen communities.

Building on our success it sets out the key areas we will focus on to create a brighter future, making us even more innovative, resilient and relevant.

Background

We are a successful charity. All 44 of Suffolk's libraries have remained open since we took over their running in 2012. A key to this success has been local engagement driven by our staff and community groups. We offer a greater range of services, activities and events than ever. On top of this, our contract with Suffolk County Council gives us some financial stability until 2022.

We have a great platform to make the Suffolk Libraries story even more inspiring and exciting.



The launch of the BLOC (Building Libraries on Creativity) Arts Council Funded Programme.

The Suffolk Libraries model

- **Community engagement:**

We work with our library community groups and local people to understand the needs of Suffolk communities.

- **Services for everyone:**

We offer a unique blend of services, experiences and content that provide choice, meet people's needs and ultimately make their life better.

Our Challenges

- We want to change perceptions, appeal to more customers and ensure that everyone understands the services we offer.

- While we have guaranteed funding until 2022, we need to raise more of our own income to become more sustainable. We need everyone to realise Suffolk Libraries is a charity which merits their support.

- We need to ensure partner organisations understand our social impact and the benefits of working with us.

How we will deliver our vision

Suffolk Libraries aims to provide safe, fun and inspiring spaces that:

EXPAND KNOWLEDGE

CONNECT PEOPLE

STIMULATE CREATIVITY

FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Our vision is to enrich everyone's quality of life by...

1

Delivering the core offer to everyone

2

Developing new partnerships and personalised services to attract new customers and increase income

3

Inspiring existing stakeholders and promoting our brand and services to more people

4

Establishing, measuring and monitoring our social impact



The community's department store

Changing perceptions and the way people think about libraries is a vital part of the strategy.

The role of libraries in 'Making life better' and improving the wellbeing of people of all ages will become a common theme.

Well recognised brands appeal to their customers' emotional and material needs. Similarly, libraries meet many fundamental human needs and are well trusted in the same way as big brands like John Lewis and Selfridges.

However, libraries have not traditionally seen themselves as 'brands' in a competitive market. They tend not to package and market their services, or adapt quickly enough to attract new customers.

We can learn from the way retailers provide services and make an emotional connection with customers. Our libraries can play the role of successful 'department stores' for the community.



Libraries

Enabling social support and self-help

Somewhere everyone can belong, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or social status

Instigators of self fulfilment and enhanced wellbeing

Authentic experiences that engage and inspire communities

Facilitating creativity and self-expression

Spaces where the virtual meets the real

Gateways to the power of knowledge

Creating free access to a universe of entertainment



Delivering the core offer to everyone

Our core offer is based on the library service Suffolk County Council funds us to provide. We need to offer services in a way that engages a broader range of customers and keeps them coming back for more.

Suffolk Libraries will:

- **Redefine the way people see their libraries by consistently and clearly communicating the different services available both in libraries and online.**
- **Establish a ‘community department store’ approach to communicating services to customers with clear and engaging sub-brands. For example, we already have New Chapters – our unique Mental Health and Wellbeing service, and BLOC – our Arts Council funded programme for young people. We’ll also be developing clear brands for older people and early years.**

“I really enjoy the children’s library with its groups and massive range of books. The staff are so friendly and welcoming. The library as a whole offers so many services and such a wide range of activities.”

- A quote from a library customer

2

Developing new partnerships and personalised services to attract new customers and increase income.

There are likely to be further financial challenges in the years to come, so we need to generate more of our own income and create more value-adding partnerships. This will make us more self-sufficient and free up funds to invest in growth and development, which will benefit customers and the local community.

Modern libraries now offer such a vast range of content, activities and experiences, aside from books, that establishing what each customer wants is challenging. In a generation dominated by companies like Amazon, customers are used to being signposted to what they like, want or need.

Raising awareness of what libraries offer, and then prompting people to take up the offer is a fundamental challenge with such a diverse and dispersed customer base.



We recently welcomed the Coffee House to Bury St Edmunds Library, providing additional income to Suffolk Libraries and more customers to the library.

Suffolk Libraries will:

- Develop a portfolio of new and diverse income streams. These will include developing commercial partnerships and creating revenue generating services.
- Engage and retain future customers by providing a more personalised customer experience.

Personalisation will bring a range of benefits:

Rich customer data

Better trend analysis

Better measurement

Cost effective marketing and communications

Better service development

3

Inspiring existing stakeholders and promoting Suffolk Libraries to more people

The customer's library experience needs to match the expectation we create. This will be affected by the look and feel of the library and the customer service we provide, on and offline.

Improving the look and feel of physical spaces is clearly a challenge with limited funding, but we will work with Suffolk County Council and community groups to harness all available planner development funding to improve buildings.



The new Eye Library which opened in January 2019.

We will:

- Deliver exceptional customer experience and develop customer service standards that set us apart. We will also provide a great place to work where people are confident and empowered.
- Work with Suffolk County Council, community groups and other partners to refurbish and improve library buildings to create modern spaces that are inspiring and uplifting.
- Learn from the retail sector to design physical spaces that appeal to the needs of a wider audience and have a greater impact on customers.

4

Establishing, measuring and monitoring our social impact

Libraries can improve people's wellbeing and happiness and connect them with something or someone that can make a real difference to their life. This could be a great read, a new friendship, access to a new service or even improved self-confidence.

We add enormous social value that often goes unrecognised by local and national agencies, funders and the community. We need partners to understand the social value of libraries by capturing, monitoring and measuring our impact more effectively.



Doing this well will provide several benefits:

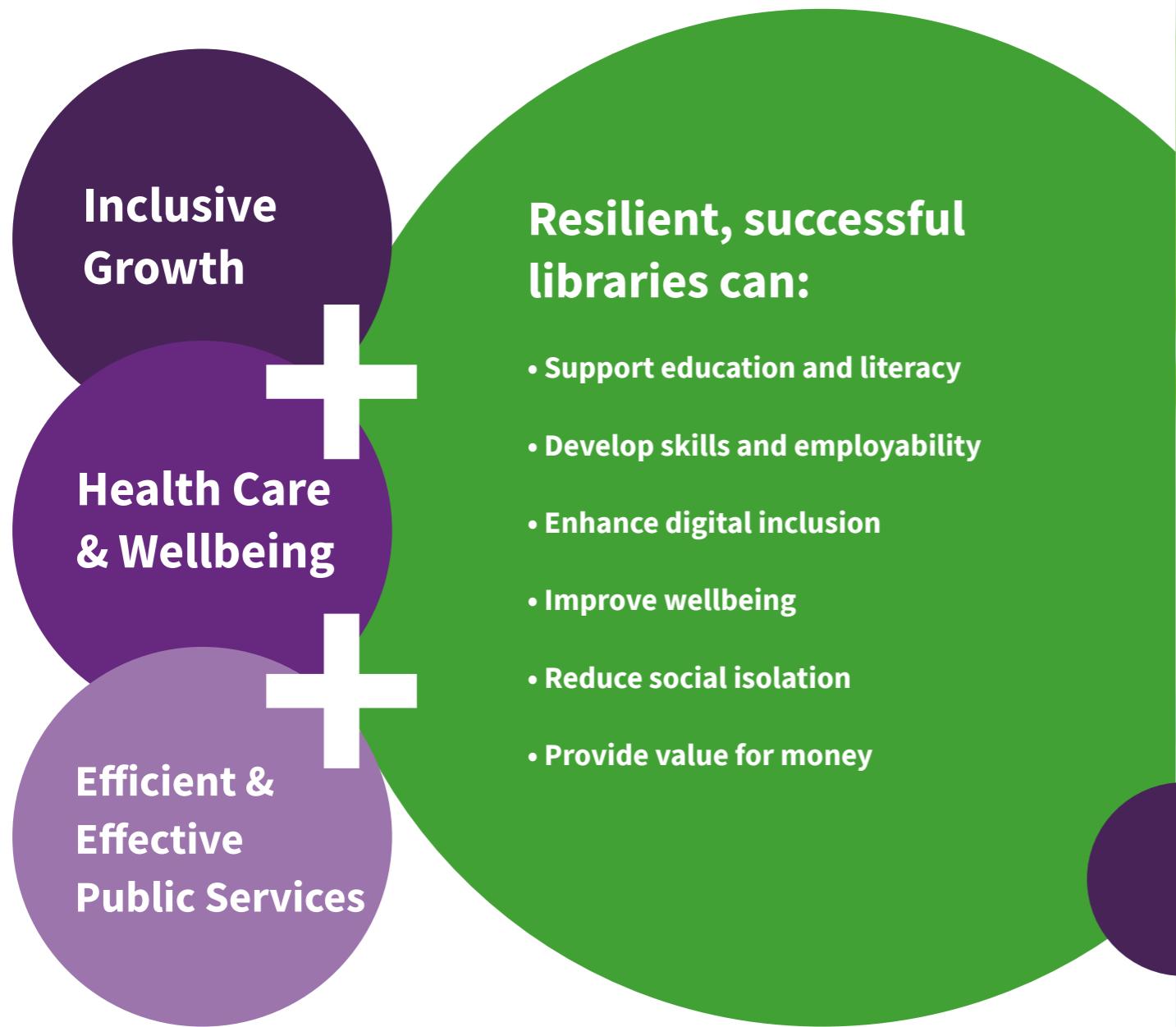
- An understanding of the 'real' impact we make on people's lives.
- Evidence we can show decision makers who are funding or supporting new projects.
- Case studies to develop people's understanding of and support for the library service.
- The ability to understand other areas where we can meet social need.

We will develop an effective way of measuring the social impact of Suffolk Libraries.

Working with Suffolk County Council

Our strategy also supports the strategic aims of key partners locally and nationally.

Our most important partner and funder is Suffolk County Council and many of Suffolk Libraries' aims and outcomes also help to deliver the council's strategic priorities:



“Libraries are vital because they are a social hub for the extremely rural, isolated and often lonely population in Suffolk. Libraries can offer socially inclusive activities like volunteering opportunities, talks, special interest clubs etc. in a neutral, welcoming way.”

- A quote from a library customer





**Contact us for more information
about Suffolk Libraries and our
vision for the future.**

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