



A Strategy for Buckinghamshire Libraries



*Welcoming and safe spaces for everyone
to access reading, culture and the
information and services they need to
learn, discover, imagine, and thrive*



Our Service

Buckinghamshire Libraries are multi-functional and serve as central hubs offering a wide variety of local activities, services and facilities that support local communities. Our libraries are trusted places which connect people to their communities and council services.

Our people

- 140 staff members
- 600+ volunteers
- 120+ partner organisations



Our Customers

- 191,000+ customers
- 24% age 15 and under
- 61% aged 16-64
- 15% aged 65 and over



Our Libraries

- 29 libraries in total
- 9 County libraries
- 8 Community-supported libraries
- 12 self-managed libraries



Services (2021/22)

- E-resource downloads: 670,443
- Council Access Point Enquiries: 15,816
- Loans: 1,050,604
- 271 customers signed up for the home library service



Physical visits (2021/22)

- 652,334



Our Offers

- 11 Libraries are Council Access Points
- Free public Wi-Fi
- Public Computers and tablets (1 hour free per day)
- Free printing for CVs and job applications
- Low cost printing and scanning
- Access to over 7,000 online resources
- Health and wellbeing activities
- Cultural activities
- Digital inclusion support



Our 29 Libraries

9 County libraries are managed and delivered by Buckinghamshire Council

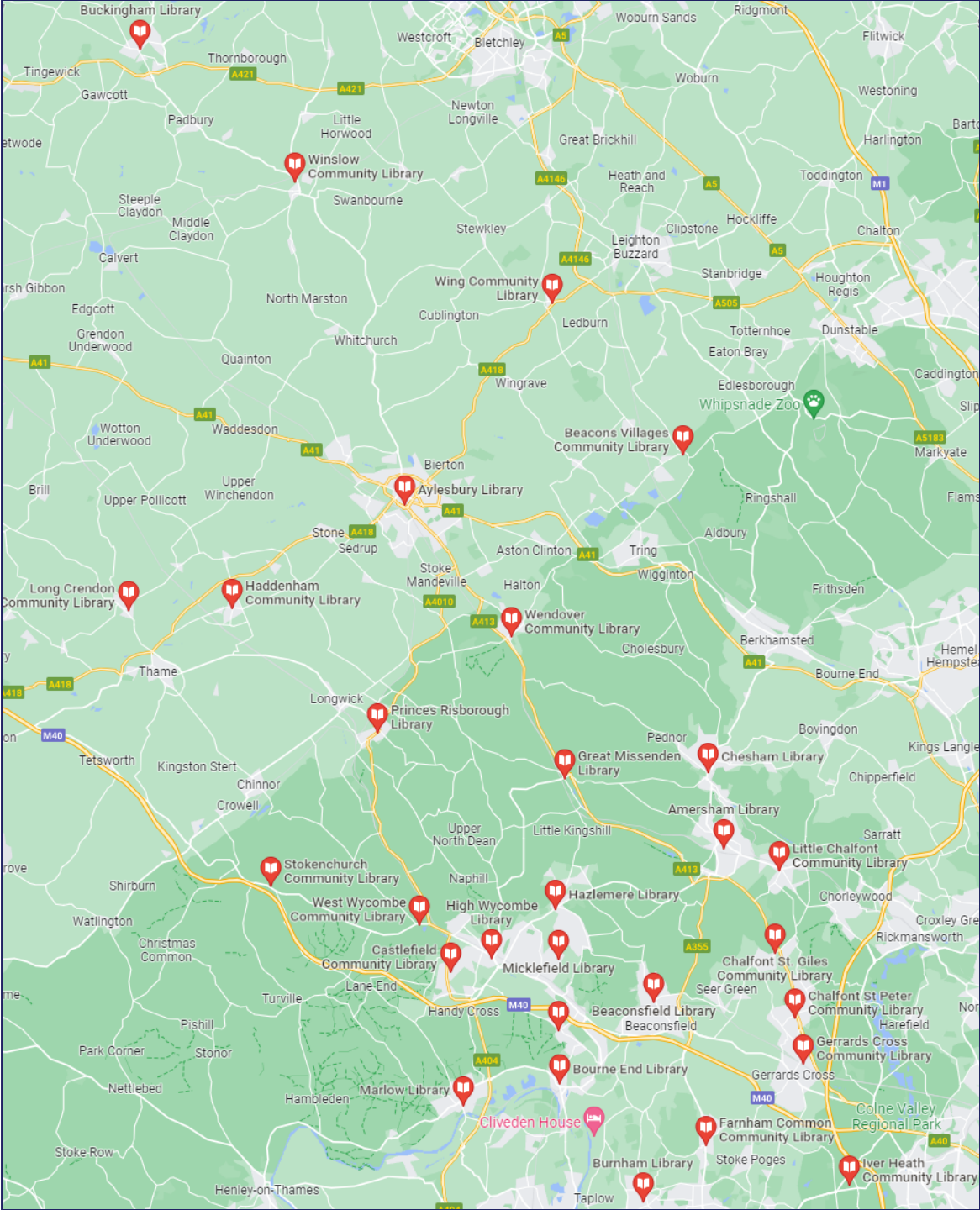
Amersham, Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Chesham, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, Marlow, Princes Risborough:

8 Community Supported libraries are managed by Buckinghamshire Council and services are delivered with the support of volunteers:

Bourne End, Burnham Gerrards Cross, Great Missenden, Iver Heath, Micklefield, Wendover, Winslow

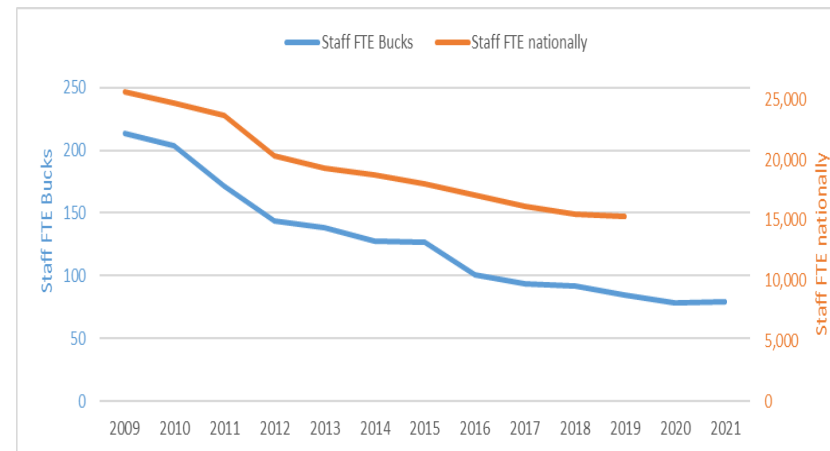
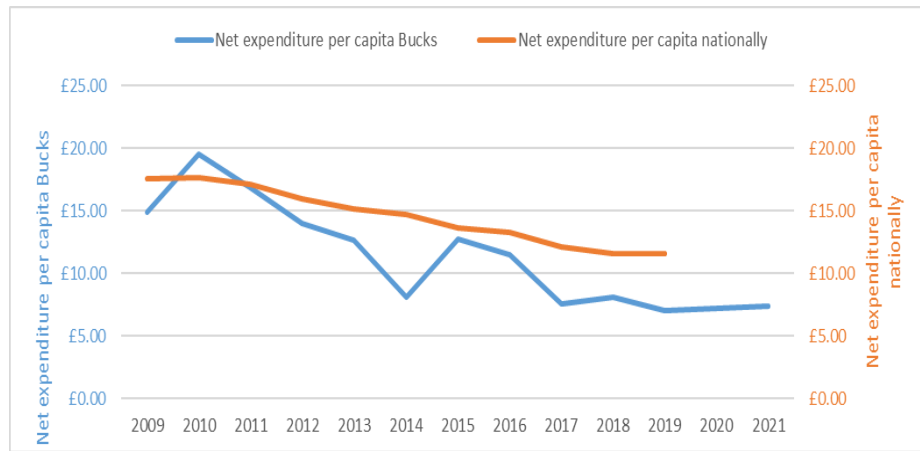
12 Self-managed community libraries are managed and delivered by local community organisations and volunteers with the support of Buckinghamshire Council:

Beacon Villages, Castlefield, Chalfont St Giles, Chalfont St Peter, Farnham Common, Flackwell Heath, Haddenham, Little Chalfont, Long Crendon, Stokenchurch, West Wycombe, Wing



Financial context

The library service has been successful in driving efficiencies and reducing costs through introduction of new self-service technologies and enabling of co-production delivery models (Community Libraries along with lean management structures). The net cost of the service has reduced from £5.8m in 2011 to £3.7m in 2022/23. Buckinghamshire libraries compare well against the national average in terms of cost. In 2019 the net expenditure per capita was £7.04 in Bucks compared to £11.54 nationally and staff in post per 1000 population was 0.14 in Bucks, compared to 0.23 nationally:



There are no specific financial implications arising from adoption of this new strategy and the strategy proposed will be implemented within the approved MTFP. The net revenue budget for the library service is £3.7m in 2022/23 and existing MTFP targets are set out in the table below; these are being achieved through a combination of service efficiencies and increased income.

YEAR	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Savings (£000)	180	85	265

Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose

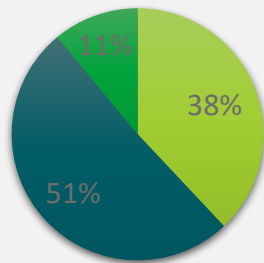
We asked our staff and volunteers what they liked

Purpose:

A purpose is why the library service exists, it's an unchanged description of the things that you do as a service. It's not deep, but it's encompassing.

Options provided:

1. Our purpose is to enable access to inclusive spaces, services, tools, culture and support to promote learning, imagination, fairness and participation.
2. **Our purpose is to provide free and accessible resources to connect communities and support learning, culture and wellbeing in an inclusive and welcoming environment**
3. Our purpose is to inclusively support, inform and connect our communities to promote learning, imagination, fairness and participation for everyone.



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3

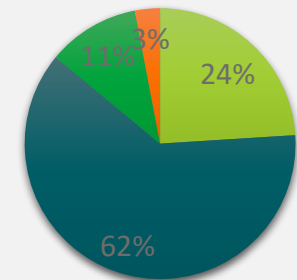


Vision:

A vision is aspirational, and something we are going to aim for. It is somewhere we want to be and provides us with a guiding light when we are delivering a future service and projects into the future.

Options provided:

1. Our vision is to be a trusted guide at the heart of the community, providing free services and resources that meet modern needs and are inclusive of all the communities we serve.
2. **Our vision is for all libraries to be welcoming and safe spaces for everyone in our communities to access services, information and tools they need to learn, imagine, discover and thrive.**
3. Our vision is to provide welcoming, safe, inclusive and cultural spaces and services that are flexible to meet the needs of our communities and spark imagination.
4. Our vision is to be a trusted guide at the heart of the community and inspire and empower people to live happy and healthy lives.



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4

Aligning to the corporate plan, working as one

We recognise the need to align services across the Council. Libraries will work towards the below corporate aims, actively collaborating to ensure we offer a joined up experience for our residents across our services.

- Provide an informal and accessible 'face' for Buckinghamshire Council and enable access to other information and services
- Support people through all stages of their life
- Connect people to other sources of support and council services which contribute to resident wellbeing
- Inspire interest in culture and enable access to cultural activities
- Support people with developing their digital skills and capabilities
- Meet the diverse needs of our communities
- Connect people to new ideas and experiences
- Provide free, accessible access to information
- Support and inspire learning, including intergenerational learning
- Build a sense of community with libraries at the heart
- Encourage residents to get involved in shaping the service
- Be customer focused, and maximise accessibility of services through Council Access Points.



- Deliver a service that helps the council achieve its net zero carbon emissions target by 2050
- Sustainable ways of working
- Reduce, reuse, recycle where possible
- Promote / raise awareness of green agenda

- Enhance the health and wellbeing of our communities
- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Provide an inclusive and safe space for all to visit
- Support those living with health conditions (e.g. dementia and chronic illness), and those in difficult life situations (e.g. refugees, homeless, lower income families, bereavement)
- Support those that are homebound through the home library service

- Connect people to resources (e.g. courses, grants) that will support career development, jobs, training and business start-ups
- Support children with their development
- Support people who want to learn English and improve their literacy skills
- Provide space and technology for people to conduct work

Identifying Strategic Priorities

We recognise the need to align our services across the Council. Libraries will support a range of council priorities, collaborating widely to offer a joined up experience for our residents.

- Strengthening our Communities
- Improving our Environment
- Protecting the Vulnerable
- Increasing Prosperity

Community Boards bring the council, groups, organisations and local people together to look at local issues and find ways of improving them together. Libraries will continue to work in partnership with Community Boards to ensure we listen and respond to local needs.

- Environment and Climate Change
- Covid 19 Economic Recovery and Regeneration
- Health and Wellbeing
- Transport and Travel
- Enhancing The Lives of the Elderly, Vulnerable and Young
- Community Safety
- Road Safety, Highways & Infrastructure
- Community Cohesion

The Customer First vision is that a 'customer first' culture is prioritised through the entire organisation and every employee values, owns and exemplifies this. The Customer First programme sets out three promises to our council customers:

- Easy for you to get in touch with us, easy to get what you need
- Helpful – we aim to get things right first time
- Fair and honest in our approach so that we're clear about what we can and can't offer, and the reasons why

National / universal libraries offers which aim to enrich the lives of individuals and communities by improving wellbeing and promoting equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity; fulfilling our statutory duty 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'

- Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and Creativity
- Information and digital inclusion
- Reading

Developing a stronger partnership approach to culture will result in greater impact and open up access to a wider range of funding opportunities.

- A thriving economy and transformed places
- Equality of access to cultural activities and opportunities
- Improved health and wellbeing of the population
- An energised creative and cultural sector

Building on the 'Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All' framework to reduce inequality within communities, whilst improving outcomes for all residents.

- Education and Skills
- Jobs and Career Opportunities
- Quality of Public Realm
- Standard of Living
- Health and Wellbeing



Buckinghamshire Libraries Strategic Priorities



Encouraging Culture, Reading and Learning

- The libraries culture and learning offer celebrates diversity, promotes inclusivity, values identity and contributes to an active local cultural economy.
- We will encourage literacy and the enjoyment of reading with an extensive range of reading materials, early year activities, reading schemes and support children in schools.
- We will provide arts and cultural experiences in our libraries.
- We will provide support for study, skills and employment by providing learning materials, study spaces, access to ICT, jobs clubs and information to support businesses.



Building Stronger Communities

- Buckinghamshire libraries are neutral, safe, welcoming spaces in the community, making them excellent venues for local activities which build cohesion, resilience, civic activity, and community safety.
- Two thirds of our libraries are already delivered in partnership with volunteers and third sector organisations.
- We will position libraries as local community hubs, build stronger links with and through local community boards and organisations.



Promoting Health and Wellbeing

- Our libraries can make an important contribution to supporting the health and wellbeing of residents.
- We work in partnership with health organisations to provide services such as health checks and stop smoking sessions, and have extensive resources to support good health.
- Libraries work with health and wellbeing partners to provide services and events to reduce health, social and economic inequalities.
- Libraries are safe meeting places that provide social contact and emotional support to combat isolation and loneliness.



Enabling Access, Information and Inclusion

- We will enable local access to council information and services by developing libraries as Council Access Points (CAPs) and supporting our customers by signposting to organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau.
- We will increase digital access, with an extensive range of online resources and IT skills sessions to promote digital inclusion.
- We will continue working in partnership with organisation such as BucksVision, Age UK, Dementia Friends, Autism UK and Bucks Disability Service and by identifying and addressing the different language needs of our communities.

Developing Libraries as
Community Hubs

Staff Empowerment

Building Partnerships

Continuous improvement

Our Guiding Principles

How we engaged with our communities



Communities and Localism Select Committee

A report on the emerging vision and priorities was provided to members of the Communities and Localism Select Committee and discussed at the Committee's meeting on 5 October 2022.

Survey

802 responses

The Help shape the Buckinghamshire Libraries' vision and strategy for 2023 to 2028 survey was open for 8 weeks between 18th November 2022 and 15th January 2023.

Web and Social Media Campaign

Newsletter: delivered to 5000+ people, over 70% opens.
Webpages: 64 clicks
Social Media: 7256 impressions

We used social media (Facebook, twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) to drive engagement. We also promoted the engagement exercise on the library webpages, newsletters, press conference and the library public catalogue.

Staff, Volunteer and Community workshops

284 staff and volunteers engaged across 29 libraries

Workshops were held with staff and volunteers at local level. Community libraries were also engaged with at the Community Library Forum. Engagement was also carried out via the staff and volunteer newsletter.

Stakeholder Meetings

58 Attendees

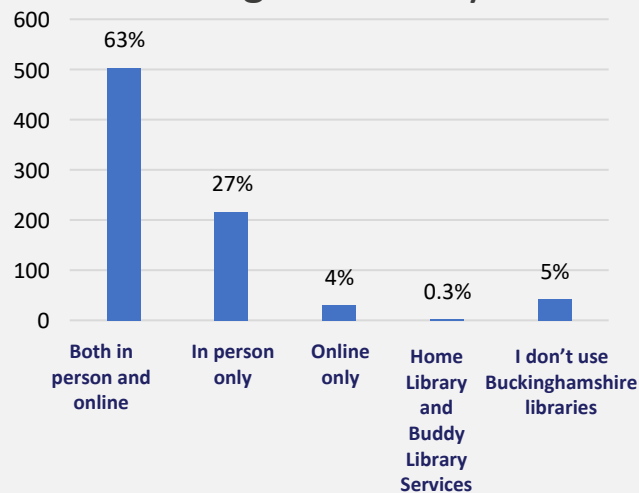
Online workshops were held with internal and external stakeholder groups to gather feedback and identify opportunities.

What has community engagement told us?

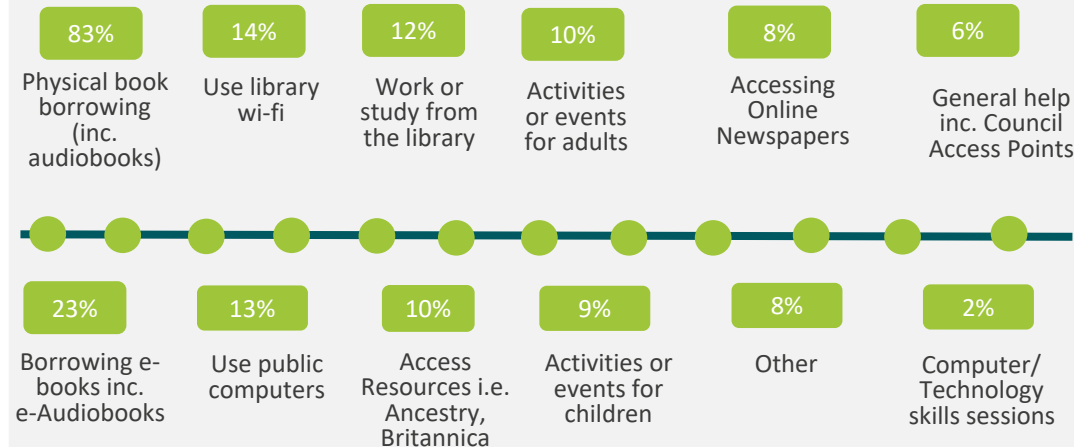
Vision, Purpose and Priorities

- 90%** Strongly agree or agree with the vision and purpose.
- 92%** Strongly agree or agree with Culture and Learning as a priority.
- 91%** Strongly agree or agree with Access, Information and Inclusion as a priority.
- 87%** Strongly agree or agree with Stronger Communities as a priority.
- 84%** Strongly agree or agree with Health and Wellbeing as a priority.

Accessing the Library



Library Services Used



- 83%** of respondents are over 45 years old
- 71%** of survey respondents are female.
- 89%** of respondents use the library once a year or more

- 94%** of survey respondents are White ethnic group
- 99%** of respondents have English as their main language
- 74%** of respondents use the library once a month or more

97% of respondents live in Buckinghamshire



24% work in Buckinghamshire

What would make you use your library more?

Longer opening hours

- Open into the evening during the week
- Open outside school hours / normal work hours
- Open Saturday / all day Saturday

Use for more after hours events

- Local music / history / arts
- Events for children & young people
- Events linked to literacy and theatre
- Crafting
- Adult education classes

Improved stock of books

- More choice of non-fiction
- More classics / high end fiction
- Copies of recently reviewed books / high profile books



Buckinghamshire Libraries

Our short to mid-term objectives



Encouraging Culture, Reading and Learning

We will work towards gaining National Portfolio of Organisations (NPO) status with Arts Council England (ACE) by:

- developing a robust framework around evaluation and project and event management
- supporting staff in building their experience and confidence around cultural delivery
- delivering events to build a solid track record of bringing accessible cultural activities into our libraries.

We will grow our Culture Programme by:

- developing strong partnerships with the arts sector to expand our offer of inclusive cultural and creative activities
- installation of artwork at Wendover Library designed and shaped by local people
- delivery of ACE funded three year 'Rekindle' project – five events per year at five Buckinghamshire libraries in year 1 (2023/24). This will include theatre performances, creative writing groups, poetry workshops, author talks etc.

We will promote learning, literacy and the joys and benefits of reading through expanding our offer of diverse and inclusive resources for all ages by:

- expanding the Summer Reading Challenge
- implementing Reading Sparks - bringing together science, technology, engineering, and math's (STEM) themes with creative arts and reading
- developing new School Library Service resources – with local studies, artefacts and a digital offering.
- expanding the free 'Learn My Way', computer classes including projects that engage partially sighted residents and increasing the availability of loanable tablets (Hublets) in our libraries.



Promoting Health and Wellbeing

We will deliver a Healthy Libraries programme in partnership with Public Health to:

- provide a wide variety of new activities including a men's mental health project, parent advice and support sessions and intergenerational projects to reduce social isolation and loneliness
- make our libraries more neurodiversity- and dementia-friendly and work with partners to deliver early intervention and wellbeing initiatives.

We will work towards greener libraries and supporting initiatives to tackle environmental issues by:

- installing a Living Wall in Aylesbury Library to improve air quality, provide thermal benefits for the building, reduce noise and improve wellbeing.
- work in partnership to help people reuse and recycle or to improve their local environment (examples: loan out litter picks tools; supply food waste caddies).
- seeking opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint and improve the energy efficiency of our library buildings (examples: installation of solar panels in Chesham and Hazlemere libraries and a ground air source heat pump at Aylesbury library).





Proposed redevelopment plans for Wendover Community Library

Building Stronger Communities

- We will transform libraries into community hubs making them inclusive and multi-use, providing a single point of contact for local services and a range of social, educational, health and cultural activities i.e. Wendover Library. Looking ahead, we will build stronger links with community boards, further develop libraries as local hubs at the heart of the community and align with the *Opportunity Bucks - Succeeding for All* programme in discussion with ward partnerships.
- We will increase recruitment and training of volunteers across all our sites and services, ensuring an enriching and rewarding experience for all.
- We will support local young people through structured volunteering opportunities and work with local organisations and schools to offer work experience opportunities for students with additional needs
- We will ensure that all our teams have up to date information to signpost residents to financial and practical support and develop new partnerships to offer expert advice on areas such as credit, energy efficiency; working with partners such as Citizens Advice Bucks



Buckinghamshire Libraries Calendar 2023

MONTH	MAJOR EVENTS		OTHER DATES
January	27	Holocaust Memorial Day International day to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, other people killed under Nazi persecution and in genocides that followed. This year's theme is Ordinary People.	30 to 5 National Storytelling Week
February	February is LGBTQ+ History Month		4 World Cancer day 7 Safer Internet Day
	6 to 12	Children's Mental Health Week A spotlight on the importance of children and young people's mental health.	
	27 to 3	Early Year's Communication Week A weeklong campaign in Buckinghamshire to highlight the importance of speech, language and communication on the development of children in their youngest years.	
March	March is Women's History Month		2 World Book Day 8 to 9 Bucks Skills Show 10 to 19 British Science Week 20 to 26 Shakespeare Week 27 to 2 World Autism Acceptance Week
	8	International Women's Day Global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.	
April	April is Bucks Crime Reading Month (name to TBD)		2 International Children's Book Day 23 World Book Night
	22	Stephen Lawrence Day Opportunity for children and young people to have their voices heard and create a society that treats everyone with fairness and respect.	
May	May is Local and Community History Month		2 to 8 Deaf Awareness Week 6 Coronation of King Charles III 27 Elmer's Day
	15 to 21	Dementia Action Week An awareness raising campaign encouraging people to 'act on dementia'.	
	15 to 21	Mental Health Awareness Week Mental Health Awareness Week is all about starting conversations about mental health and the things in our daily lives that can affect it.	
June	June is Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month		5 World Environment Day 1 to 14 High VIS Fortnight 12 to 16 Loneliness Awareness Week 22 Windrush Day
	1 to 7	National Volunteer Week An annual celebration of the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering	
	8	Empathy Day Empathy Day aims to help everyone understand and experience the transformational power of empathy through stories.	
July	July is Disability Pride Month		3 to 9 Health Information Week
	1 to 15	WhizzFizzFest WhizzFizzFest is a Buckinghamshire celebration of all creative arts with children's literature and imaginations at the heart of it all.	
	8	Summer Reading Challenge launch Aimed at children aged 4 to 11 years to encourage reading	
August	2	National Playday Playday is the national day for play in the UK, a day of activities for children and young people.	1 to 7 World Breastfeeding Week
September	8	International Literacy Day A celebration to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights.	16 Summer Reading Challenge ends 8 to 17 Heritage Open Days 19 to 25 National Coding Week
	13	Roald Dahl Story Day An annual celebration of Roald Dahl's marvellous stories from Matilda to Charlie and The Chocolate Factory	
October	October is Black History Month		5 National Poetry Day 10 World Mental Health Day 18 Anti-Slavery Day 16 to 22 Get Online Week
	2 to 8	Libraries Week An annual showcase and celebration of the best that libraries have to offer.	
	6 to 8	Fun Palaces weekend 'Fun Palaces' are events made by local people for their own communities, bringing together activities in the arts and sciences, crafts, tech and digital.	
November	November is Buckinghamshire History Festival and Movember		National Novel Writing Month 6 to 10 Talk Money Week
	13 to 17	World Nursery Rhyme Week Celebrating the importance of nursery rhymes in early childhood development.	
December	1	Winter Mini Challenge launches Encourages children to keep up their reading habits over the winter holidays.	1 World AIDS Day

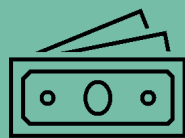
Enabling Access, Information and Inclusion

- We will ensure local access to information and services by piloting the co-location of the High Wycombe Council Access Point+ service (face to face service for vulnerable residents and support for complex cases) in High Wycombe library, and increase the number of libraries operating as Council Access Points to provide local access and support to information and services.
- We will develop and train library staff as champions to promote Domestic Abuse services, the Hate Crime phonenumber and child safeguarding, and hosting partners such as Aylesbury Homeless Action Group (AHAG) and P3 housing support to provide advice and information around financial insecurity, housing and homelessness.
- We will expand our Prison Library Programme at both HMP Grendon Underwood and Springhill by delivering a two-year funded project, 'New Chapters' with the National Literacy Trust to raise aspirations of prisoners, helping them to find their voices and tell their stories through the power of creative writing.
- We will celebrate the diversity of Buckinghamshire by offering an inclusive and accessible calendar of activities highlighting local, national, and international campaigns across the year e.g. Black History Month, Dementia Action Week, International Women's Day, and Mental Health Awareness Week.
- We will increase access to library services by implementing Library Extra in Amersham and expanding across three additional sites (Library Extra is non-staff assisted technology which allows members to access the library premises outside of the usual opening times using their library card).



Engaging and empowering staff and volunteers

Our libraries staff and volunteers are the greatest assets of the service. They are motivated, skilled and have strong personal values around caring and support for Buckinghamshire communities. Our priority will be to harness the creative energies of staff and cultivate an empowered and dynamic workforce leading change and improvement at all levels. This will mean improving internal communications, increasing staff input in local planning, enabling local budget management, developing new and clearer performance targets and the development of strong staff development plans.



Developing income generating opportunities

Buckinghamshire Libraries will launch a new online room system during 2023/24. The new system will enable our customers to manage bookings at 11 libraries online and make payments online. Customers will have increased access and visibility of our facilities as they will be able to make bookings 24 hours a day, 7 days a week due to the real time availability calendar on the sites. The system improves customer experience and increases digital access to Buckinghamshire libraries facilities. The rigorous reporting provided by the new system will enable us to continuously improve our services by reviewing trends and proactively react to customer behaviours.



Developing an improved performance culture

Buckinghamshire Libraries will develop a new and improved reporting and monitoring framework with clear performance measures and objectives for the service which will be used to monitor staff performance, local branch performance, and the overall performance of the library service. The service has acquired a new business intelligence tool (Speedups BI) which enables us to pull rigorous reporting from our Library Management system. This will enable us to evaluate usage of our services by generating management information on footfall, use of IT services, events, and other added value services we offer.



Increasing self service

Buckinghamshire Libraries will introduce a remote printing service to enable customers to send documents for printing to a library near them and collect within a 24-hour period. Documents can be sent from a personal device (phone, tablet, laptop) or through a library device.



Communications and Marketing Strategy

Buckinghamshire Libraries have a wide service offering for residents, businesses, and partners. There is a need to better promote the full breadth of our service offer and to target groups who do not currently use our services.

Specific marketing priorities will be to:

- evaluate recent survey data on the relationship between marketing channels, service take up and customer profiles to develop effective marketing campaigns

- conduct more research and surveying on the current opening hours and opportunities to increase hours with Library Extra technology.



How we will measure success

- Increased number of visits, activities and groups
- Increased use of services by under-represented users
- Increased use of IT and percentage of IT usage
- Increased grant funding for projects that align with our priorities
- Return on investment from our marketing activities
- Increased self-service take up such as online renewals and printing
- Number of new partnerships created
- Increased number of arts and cultural activities
- Maintain customer satisfaction



What's Next

1

Organise focus groups and surveys to generate insight on groups who were under-represented in the recent survey response (non-users, under 45s and non-white residents).

2

Work with staff and partners to develop an action plan which sets out clear milestones to help us achieve the vision and strategy. The action plan will be reviewed annually, with particular attention given to ensuring alignment with the *Opportunity Bucks -Succeeding for All* programme.

3

Organise a campaign to launch the Vision and Strategy.