

Minutes

English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPLG)

Date	Wednesday 9 th June 2020
Time	14:00 – 16:00
Location	Virtual Meeting

Present:	Sue Williamson	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
	Jenna Birley	Governance and Business Support Officer, Libraries, ACE (Minutes)
	Isobel Hunter	Chief Executive, Libraries Connected
	Sophie Lancaster	Senior Manager, Libraries, ACE
	Nick Poole	Chief Executive, CILIP, The UK library and information association
	Lauren Lucas	Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
	Liz White	Head of Public Libraries and Engagement, British Library (BL)
Presenters:	None	

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
- 1.1 Sue Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Steven Broomhead and Liz White.
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 2.1 There were no interests to declare.
- 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**
- 3.1 Members noted the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2020 which were held as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- Matters Arising
- 3.2 Progress on actions detailed was noted.
- 3.3 Nick Poole agreed to progress the action noted in paragraph 8.3, to assist James Urquhart with further discussions with the Book Industry Communication (BIC).
- 4. WORKSHOP ASSUMPTIONS PAPER**
- 4.1 Sue Williamson introduced this item which asked EPLG to discuss and provide feedback on the assumptions paper provided.
- 4.2 The assumptions presented in the paper were as follows:
- a) That EPLG should aim to address the image of library services across England, ensuring an enduring positive image amongst the public and decision makers
 - b) That EPLG should look at the fragmentation of library service providers and discuss practical cohesion solutions
 - c) That library services are financially vulnerable so methods to create a greater financial resilience in the sector should be explored.
- 4.3 Members discussed the assumptions and stressed the need for the group to work proactively to explore these issues.
- 4.4 It was noted that the impact of the corona virus on library services made the need to address financial sustainability even more pressing, and that

Action

Nick Poole

services will not be able to return to previous ways of operating for the foreseeable future.

- 4.5 Members felt it would be beneficial to library services if they could coordinate greater engagement with the Libraries Connected's regional support networks. It was noted that these networks would require additional resource to be more effective and it was suggested that a 'troubleshooting' service might be more realistic in the short term.
- 4.6 Members noted the increased presence library services had had nationally in cross-cutting council agendas and highlighted the importance of continuing this direction of travel.
- 4.7 Sue asked EPLG to feedback any further comments to her outside of the meeting, and in the meantime members AGREED:
- a) That the ACE libraries team would highlight particular conversations for members to have with appropriate organisations and stakeholders
 - b) That the ACE libraries team would develop a schedule of matters and reporting commitments for agreement and action by EPLG members, and that these actions should be both proactive and realistic.

**Sue
Williamson**

**Sophie
Lancaster**

5. HEADS OF SERVICE SOUNDING BOARD UPDATE

- 5.1 Sophie Lancaster introduced this item which aimed to update members on the agreed action to include a Head of Library Services (HoS) in the EPLG.
- 5.2 Members noted there had been a good response to the request to volunteer for this role from the HoS networks.
- 5.3 Members felt it would be advantageous to utilise this interest and form an HoS Sounding Board sub-group which would discuss the outcomes and direction of the EPLG and elect a representative to attend each EPLG meeting to feed into developing discussions directly.
- 5.4 Members were interested to see the final list of volunteers. Sophie Lancaster agreed to circulate this via email.
- 5.5 Members AGREED with the proposal to form an HoS sub-group to feed into the EPLG, and this would be actioned by the Arts Council.

**Sophie
Lancaster**

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Lancaster**

6. SINGLE DIGITAL PRESENCE (SDP) UPDATE

- 6.1 Sue Williamson introduced this item which provided members with an update on the SDP project, which was led by the BL.

- 6.2 Sue reported she had attended one of the 'show and tell' update sessions.
- 6.3 Members were interested to know when these updates would be presented to the library sector. Sue agreed to ask Liz White for an update on this outside of the meeting.

**Sue
Williamson**

7. RECOVERY UPDATE

- 7.1 Isobel Hunter provided an update on the recovery plans for library services.
- 7.2 Members noted the draft toolkit for recovery and phased reopening, was due to be published shortly. Feedback from HoS on the toolkit had been generally positive so far.
- 7.3 Members noted that library services and staff will be required to make significant changes to their previous operating models and services in light of the corona virus pandemic.
- 7.4 Members NOTED the update.

8. COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES (CMLs) SURVEY RESULTS

- 8.1 Sue Williamson introduced this item which provided EPLG with an update on the recent survey to CMLs issued by ACE.
- 8.2 CMLs had reported they were concerned about their ability to reopen sites when government guidance allowed as many of them operate using vulnerable volunteers.
- 8.3 It was noted that very few CMLs had taken the opportunity to respond to the survey and apply for relief funding which may be an indication of the need to improve communication channels between them and ACE (and other appropriate bodies).
- 8.4 Sue asked EPLG to provide a one-pager on their organisations' approach to CMLs for discussion at the next meeting.

All

9. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- 9.1 Sophie Lancaster provided a verbal update on communications.
- 9.2 Sophie asked members to note that all communications strategy items would complement activity and decisions made by the EPLG.

- 9.3 Sophie informed members that she would be formulating some comms actions with the Communications Manager, Libraries at ACE, and would present these proposals back to the EPLG for approval.
- 9.4 Members wished to note the importance of having a clear stakeholder engagement programme was a key part of the communications strategy. This was to include individuals and organisations outside of the public library sector.
- 9.5 Members also wanted to have some communications produced as soon as practicable to assist library services as they begin a phased return to business as usual.
- 9.6 The EPLG discussed the corona virus pandemic and several potential pieces of research that would examine the impact library services had had on their users and how they had diversified to assist with government guidance and priorities. Members wanted to ensure these pieces of work did not overlap in their objectives.
- 9.7 Members thanked Sophie for the update and AGREED the following actions:
 - a) that Sophie would formulate some comms lines and actions for approval by the EPLG
 - b) that any potential research undertaken regarding libraries and their impact during the pandemic should not overlap. Further conversations on these research proposals needed to be undertaken with the following organisations; Libraries Connected, the LGA, CILIP and Carnegie-UK Trust.

**Sophie
Lancaster**

All

10. DATA AND EVIDENCE

- 10.1 Sophie Lancaster provided an update on the work she was undertaking with CIPFA on library services' data.
- 10.2 Sophie informed members that CIPFA were looking at several data projects being undertaken by other organisations with a view to amalgamating it all into one system. It is hoped that, by doing so, library services will be able to access data based on what is directly relevant to what they need.
- 10.3 Members discussed the appetite amongst library services to move towards a more data focussed method of operation.
- 10.4 Nick Poole highlighted a recent study undertaken by the Head of Assessment at the Bodleian Library, Dr Frankie Wilson, regarding changing the culture of library services to one where data collection and evidence is routinely collected and is more robust in the context of academic libraries. Members felt it would be useful to discuss this study further.

10.5 Members thanked Sophie for the update and AGREED to invite Dr Wilson to discuss his research with the group.

Nick Poole

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Sue Williamson invited members to make suggestions for future agenda items.

11.2 Members discussed the proposal that financial resilience form part of the next meeting agenda. Nick Poole agreed to circulate some information he had compiled regarding commissioning models for library services.

Nick Poole

11.3 Members AGREED the next meeting should have an item on financial resilience.

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 4th August 2020, 14:00 – 16:00, Virtual Meeting