



Minutes

English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 19 th April 2021
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
	Lauren Lucas	Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
	Nick Poole	Chief Executive, CILIP, The UK library and information association
	Liz White	Head of Public Libraries and Engagement, British Library (BL)
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
Guests:	Natalie Jones	Head of Programmes, CILIP

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS	Action
1.1 Sue Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
2.1 There were no interests to declare.	
3. FINANCIAL RESILIENCE UPDATE	
3.1 Nick Poole provided an update on CILIP's financial resilience project.	
3.2 Nick informed members that the delay in recruiting a Chair for the project panel had been due to interested parties being committed to other projects. It was hoped that now some of these projects would be under way, these individuals could be approached again and asked to Chair.	
3.3 The first core group meeting had met on 5 March and had agreed to split the project into two phases; a discovery phase and an independent review phase.	
3.4 The tender for the first phase's desk research element had gone out and was due to close shortly with the tender to be awarded in May 2021. Members noted that the tender required EPL and other relevant sector bodies to be consulted as part of this work. Nick agreed to share the tender document with EPL for their information.	Nick Poole
3.5 The tender document for phase two of the project had been drafted. Nick agreed to share this with EPL for their information.	Nick Poole
3.6 Members asked Nick to confirm the scope of the project. He confirmed the scope included only statutory English public libraries.	
3.7 Members noted it may be useful for those awarded the tender to look at work already undertaken in the initial phases of the Single Digital Presence project, and the budget surveys conducted by Libraries Connected. Liz White and Isobel Hunter agreed to share this information.	Liz White / Isobel Hunter
3.8 It was also noted that non-financial support ought to be considered as part of the overall picture of library sector financial sustainability. Isobel Hunter suggested contacting the Libraries Connected membership through Basecamp to seek examples of this and Nick agreed to follow up with her on this outside of the meeting.	Isobel Hunter / Nick Poole
3.9 Additionally, Nick suggested some of the previous work conducted regarding libraries and the Civil Infrastructure Levy may be useful. Sophie Lancaster informed the group that she was in the initial stages of	Sophie Lancaster / Nick Poole

refreshing the work done on standard charges and agreed to discuss this further with Nick outside of the meeting.

3.10 Members queried whether there was to be any political engagement in the project. Lauren Lucas agreed to signpost any LGA contacts that may be able to offer insight to Nick.

**Lauren
Lucas**

3.11 Isobel Hunter suggested that Iain Moore from the Libraries Connected team may be a useful colleague to include in the development of this work. Nick Poole agreed and the team at Arts Council would consider how to engage him in future conversations.

**Sue
Williamson**

4. LIBRARIES WEEK 2021

(Natalie Jones joined the meeting)

4.1 Natalie Jones introduced this item and provided an overview of the plans for Libraries Week 2021 which would take place between 4th and 10th October.

4.2 Members were informed that the theme for this year would be 'Taking Action and Changing Lives' and CILIP were hoping to have assets created and ready for library services to use in May.

4.3 Natalie agreed to share her Libraries Week presentation with EPL, though it was noted that several members would not be able to undertake any promotional activity until after the elections on 6th May 2021.

**Natalie
Jones**

4.4 Lauren Lucas offered to liaise with her LGA colleagues regarding promoting Libraries Week in their monthly members' bulletin and First Magazine. Natalie agreed to liaise with her about this outside of the meeting.

**Lauren
Lucas**

5. ASSESMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

5.1 Sophie Lancaster provided an update on the development of the library assessment strategy.

5.2 Sophie informed EPL that The National Archives had expressed an interest in partnering with Arts Council on this work and asked whether there were any objections to this.

5.3 Members were happy for The National Archives to be involved as long as their involvement did not skew the original intent and scope of the project.

5.4 Members were interested as to how The National Archives intends to work in partnership with Arts Council England. Sophie Lancaster agreed to share a draft set of partnership principles with EPL for their information.

5.5 Members thanked Sophie for the update and Sue Williamson reminded those who had additional comments to provide them to Sophie via email.

All

6. ASSUMPTIONS DOCUMENT UPDATE

6.1 Sue Williamson introduced this item and provided an update to EPL on the Assumptions Paper which she had updated based on the membership's feedback.

6.2 Members stated it would be useful to include plans for the medium term and to think about how the library sector will work over the next few years, particularly considering the impact the 2020-21 pandemic has had. Nick Poole agreed to share some slides he had developed on the topic with Sue.

Nick Poole

6.3 Sue agreed to recirculate to EPL for further feedback and would draft a set of actions for the next meeting.

**Sue
Williamson**

7. HIGH LEVEL STRATEGY DISCUSSION

7.1 Sue Williamson introduced this item and asked EPL to reflect on the recent strategy workshop that was held with the devolved authorities.

7.2 Sue informed members that a meeting was being planned for May where DCMS could attend and discuss strategy ideas with them. She added it would be useful for EPL to consider what specific questions or ideas they would like to discuss with DCMS.

7.3 Members agreed it would be useful to discuss motivations for developing a library strategy with DCMS.

7.4 Members also felt that the sector should re-engage with the Libraries Minister through DCMS.

7.5 It was noted that EPL wanted to focus the discussion on potential policy development.

7.6 It was also noted that MHCLG were a key stakeholder that ought to be included in future discussions on library strategy.

7.7 Sue thanked members for their comments and asked them to provide any further thoughts to her by email in advance of the proposed meeting with DCMS.

All

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Libraries Development Team Update

8.1 Sue Williamson provided an update on the Libraries Development Team at Arts Council.

8.2 Members noted that Sophie Lancaster and Jenna Birley would continue in permanent roles within the team to support Sue in her role. The team would also retain Leah Mason on a policy apprenticeship.

8.3 Members also noted that Fiona Davidson would return to her previous role in the North Communications team and that Sean Kelly would be moving to a new role in the Cultural Recovery Fund team.

8.4 Members were pleased to hear Sue was able to retain the permanent roles and wished to note their thanks for all the work Fiona and Sean had done during their time with the Libraries team.

UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26)

8.5 Nick Poole and CILIP wished to highlight the scheduled COP 26 as a moment for the sector to celebrate what libraries do around climate change. He asked EPL whether there was any ongoing work they knew of that would highlight libraries' green agenda and it was noted CILIP were working with IFLA on this to pull together a green libraries hub.

8.6 It was noted that this information would complement the Arts Council's new strategy goal around environmental sustainability and some planned work the British Library hoped to progress on climate change.

8.7 Members agreed to highlight any relevant work to Nick via email.

All

New Libraries Connected Award Scheme

8.8 Isobel Hunter informed EPL that Libraries Connected were in the process of developing a new award scheme for library staff. She agreed to share further information on this as soon as she was able.

**Isobel
Hunter**

Responses to Protect Duties

8.9 Lauren Lucas asked EPL members whether they were planning to engage in the consultation on Protect Duties. The LGA were in the process of collating their views and hoped to submit them by the middle of May.

8.10 Members were keen to discuss shared priorities on this further and agreed to do so via email.

All

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 29th June 2021, 14:00 – 16:00, Virtual Meeting