



Minutes

English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 29 th June
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)
	Susan Wills	Acting Assistant Director Culture, Libraries & Registration, Surrey County Council (Representing the Heads of Service Sounding Board)
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
Guests:	Blerina Hashani	Public Policy and Campaigns Manager, British Library
	Lydia Hiraide	PhD Placement Student, Public Policy, British Library

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 1.1 Sue Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Sue Wills was present to represent the Heads of Service Sounding Board and guests Blerina Hashani and Lydia Hiraide were joining from the British Library to present on their work on climate change.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no interests to declare.

3. BRITISH LIBRARY'S WORK ON ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS / CLIMATE CHANGE

- 3.1 Blerina Hashani introduced this item and provided context to the presentation to follow. She informed EPL that, with the publication of the British Library's strategy in October and a number of projects being funded to decarbonise its estates, action on climate change had taken on a more prominent role in library's strategic planning.
- 3.2 The British Library had established links with the organisers of COP26 to collaborate on climate month in September 2021.
- 3.3 Lydia presented headline information on her PhD work to date and pointed out the link between this and the British Library's sustainable development goals. She also discussed work already undertaken on climate change in the public library sector, such as educating children on the topic.
- 3.4 Lydia was particularly keen to hear from the group on what the key challenges to involving public libraries in this work, how to collaborate and generate conversation in local communities and how the commitment to children and young people will shape libraries' responses to climate change.
- 3.5 EPL were interested in developing work around climate change further as a national framework. It was suggested that the group could liaise with colleagues across the UK to develop this.
- 3.6 Members noted, as Lydia had mentioned, that public libraries do work on climate change already. Increasing the scale and visibility of this through initiatives like the internet of things could be useful. Peoples' increased desire to remain hyper-local during the pandemic could be an opportunity to engage them with these programmes.
- 3.7 It was noted that climate change is a prominent topic at the LGA, particularly as many councils have declared a climate emergency.

Action

<p>Lauren Lucas agreed to provide relevant contact details to Blerina and Lydia to continue their conversation with the LGA offline.</p>	<p>Lauren Lucas</p>
<p>3.8 Lauren informed the group that the LGA have guidance for reaching net-zero emissions for councillors and mechanisms for them to link with higher education institutions. Lauren agreed to share the link to this with EPL.</p>	<p>Lauren Lucas</p>
<p>3.9 EPL agreed to investigate the possibility of highlighting the issues around climate change and the work of public libraries through their communications channels.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>3.10 Sue Williamson offered to collate a response from the group based on their organisations' work on climate change and asked members to send her relevant information to do so.</p>	<p>Sue Williamson</p>
<p>3.11 EPL thanked Lydia and Blerina for their presentation and discussion and asked if they would be willing to share their presentation slides. Lydia agreed to send the slides to Jenna/Sophie.</p>	<p>Lydia Hiraide</p>
<p><i>(Blerina and Lydia left the meeting)</i></p>	
<p>4. FINANCIAL RESILIENCE UPDATE</p>	
<p>4.1 Nick Poole provided an update on CILIP's financial resilience project. He informed EPL that the project still needed someone with a background in formal education for the project board and asked members to let him know if they had anyone they could recommend.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>4.2 Nick informed EPL that Shared Intelligence had successfully bid for the tender to carry out the work and that it was due for completion in October 2021.</p>	
<p>4.3 EPL discussed the issues around budgetary planning which was already happening in local authorities and whether an October delivery on recommendations would be too late to feed into these.</p>	
<p>4.4 Lauren discussed a survey the LGA planned to launch to Heads of Service for Culture and Leisure and offered to share any intelligence coming out of this with Nick. Sue Wills offered to look at the survey questions to make sure they capture some of the current concerns of those working in local authorities.</p>	<p>Sue Wills</p>
<p>4.5 Nick asked EPL whether there was anything the group could do now to help Heads of Service navigate the budgetary conversations with their local authorities. It was noted that a key pressure point was the number of relatively new staff members with limited experience of going through these processes, coupled with the retirement of staff who had this knowledge but were now leaving the workforce.</p>	

4.6 Isobel informed EPL that Libraries Connected were working to develop a buddying/mentoring scheme to attempt to address this issue, though this was still in the initial conversation stages. It was also suggested that CILIP and Libraries Connected could run some joint masterclasses on the budgeting process.

5. EVERYLIBRARY UPDATE

5.1 Nick Poole introduced this item which asked EPL to discuss the options for the EveryLibrary platform. It was noted that the platform was paid for until July 2022 and the accompanying paper Nick had provided set out several options to consider for its future.

5.2 Members discussed the options presented but felt a fuller discussion was needed. They agreed to have this as an agenda item at the next EPL meeting.

**Jenna
Birley**

6. WORKING INTERNATIONALLY UPDATE

6.1 Due to time constraints, Nick Poole directed EPL to the update paper he had provided for this item.

7. DATA UPDATE

7.1 Sophie Lancaster provided an update on the library assessment strategy. Tenders had been received for the project and Arts Council colleagues would be deciding who to offer the project to by the end of the following week.

7.2 Sophie informed EPL that conversations were ongoing regarding the basic data set and asked for their feedback on the collection itself and the regularity of collection. She also asked EPL to consider the potential issues around publication of the data when it had been collected.

7.3 EPL felt that the collection of the basic data set was useful and felt that annual collections would be appropriate. It was noted that local authorities had data officers who may be able to assist in with this, thereby alleviating the burden on Heads of Service to complete returns.

7.4 It was noted that there needed to be a mechanism in place whereby the service providing the data could see how it was being used in order to encourage them to participate in the collection.

7.5 It was noted that this data collection was not intended to replace the data collected by CIPFA at this stage.

8. STRATEGY UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

- 8.1 Sue Williamson provided an update on the strategy paper she had compiled with input from the group and asked EPL for a steer as to how to proceed.
- 8.2 It was noted that the devolved nations are working on national strategies, so this was a timely project.
- 8.3 Members felt that having the support of DCMS for the strategy would be important and assist the work of the libraries team there. They also felt DCMS support would be helpful in engaging local authorities.
- 8.4 EPL agreed they should continue to work on a national strategy for English Public Libraries and would ensure DCMS were kept up to date on its development.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 Nick Poole informed EPL that CILIP (working with Libraries Connected) had passed the crowd-funding threshold for their Workforce Mapping project. He would provide more information on this when the project was live.
- 9.2 Members wished to record their thanks to Arts Council colleagues for their assistance with EPL, Sean Kelly and Fiona Davidson, who had now left the Libraries Development Team to pursue other roles at the organisation.

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