



Minutes

English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 30 th August
Time	15:00 – 16:00
Location	Virtual Meeting

Present:	Sue Williamson	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
	Leah Mason	Policy Officer Apprentice, Libraries, ACE (Minutes)
	Alison Hoolihan	Officer, Libraries Development Team, ACE
	Isobel Hunter	Chief Executive, Libraries Connected (LC)
	Sophie Lancaster	Senior Manager, Libraries, ACE
	Iain Leete	Senior Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
	Neil MacInnes	Head of Libraries, Galleries & Culture, Manchester City Council
	Emma Noyce	Assistant Director: Culture and Information Services, Hampshire County Council
	David Smith	Community Managed Libraries Peer Network (CMLPN)
Guests:	Tiina Hill	Head of Delivery, Single Digital Presence
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
	Lauren Lucas	Senior 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)

Iain Moore

Commercial Director, Libraries Connected

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Action

- 1.1 Sue Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Steven Broomhead, Lauren Lucas, Nick Poole, Liz White, and Iain Moore.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no interests to declare.

3. FINANCIAL RESILIENCE UPDATE

- 3.1 It was noted this item be carried over to the next meeting.

Leah
Mason

4. DATA STRATEGY UPDATE

- 4.1 Sophie Lancaster provided an update on the current progress of the data assessment strategy. Members were informed that a core stakeholder group regularly meet to progress the strategy along with an implementation working group.
- 4.2 It was noted a full report on the data strategy be carried over as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Leah
Mason

5. COST OF LIVING CRISIS

- 5.1 Sue Williamson introduced this as an AOB item.
- 5.2 Isobel Hunter informed the group that LC are conducting a budget forward survey and are building in questions around the current rate of inflation. Isobel noted that library budgets are coming down, inflation is going up, and service demand is going up with added pressures on libraries.
- 5.3 David Smith noted that community managed libraries should not be seen as the last resort in these difficult times. Neill MacInnes suggested that the crisis is affecting the local authority sector as a whole, and that

libraries should not be looked at in isolation. Ian Leete agreed that all areas of local government are affected.

- 5.4 Ian Leete informed members that LGA is working with Libraries Connected to highlight how libraries are responding to the cost of living crisis through initiatives such as warm banks. Ian also noted that the crisis is affecting the entrepreneurial role of some libraries due to the public having less money to spend. Ian highlighted that DCMS and DLUHC are currently in conversation before the projected budget on 21st September. Ian advised that libraries need to be clear of what their ask is to government in this matter. Ian also alerted the group to the LGA [Cost of Living Hub](#).
- 5.5 Isobel Hunter informed members that LC is costing a proposal to government for targeted funding to deliver warm banks in libraries. LC is also creating a briefing sheet for HoS to advocate on the range of things libraries can offer during the cost-of-living crisis, including warm banks.
- 5.6 Sue asked members about how EPLSWG can respond to the cost of living crisis and the specific measures the group could take to deliver key messages in a joined up approach.
- 5.7 Members of the group in agreement for Sue to draft a collective letter on behalf of EPLSWG to DCMS outlining key messages of libraries' response to the cost of living crisis. Isobel was asked to share the LC briefing sheet when ready. **Sue Williamson /Isobel Hunter**
- 5.8 Isobel highlighted the '[Libraries and the cost of living crisis](#)' report that Libraries Connected published in June and noted that it had been well received.
- 5.9 Ian Leete suggested it would be useful to know how many libraries had applied to the Decarbonisation Fund. Sue informed the group that 24 libraries had been mentioned in applications for the fund. Neil MacInnes highlighted that the positioning of libraries within these applications is dependent on internal advocacy. Sue noted that EPL and LC can help libraries to get this message across.
- 5.10 Emma Noyce alerted the group to National Registrars Day, a day to highlight the registrar profession. Emma suggested a similar day for libraries, to build morale, and to recognise the library and information profession. Sue to speak with Nick Poole to potentially tie in with future National Libraries Week. **Sue Williamson**
- 5.11 Neil commented that library workers being recognised as key workers during the pandemic was a powerful advocacy tool. Sue noted she would raise this with DCMS. **Sue Williamson**
- 5.12 Sue agreed to circulate to members of the group the draft cost of living letter to DCMS for feedback and comments. **Sue Williamson**

6. MEMBER UPDATES

6.1 Arts Council England

Sue Williamson informed members that Luke Burton, the new Director, Libraries at ACE, will be in position from 31st October and will be based in the Newcastle office. Members also informed that Luke will be invited to the next EPL meeting to observe.

Sue gave an update on the current NPO round of funding, and on the progress of the Libraries Accreditation Scheme, informing the group that she is in conversations with ACE senior leaders to move this forward.

6.2 British Library

Tiina Hill updated members on the Single Digital Presence. Branding and naming of the project is nearing conclusion with the final brand to be announced soon. The building of technical prototypes for the platform is currently underway. Tiina also highlighted that the framework of grants for libraries to apply for to support online presence was also currently being developed.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 David Smith informed members that Chris Neath had been recruited into the role of Network Manager for CMLPN. David agreed to circulate Chris contact details to the group.

7.2 E-Books, addressing the fragmented service and advocacy were suggested to be a future item for next EPLSWG meeting.

**David
Smith**

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 11th October, 15:00 – 16:00, Virtual Meeting