Minutes
English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 4th April 2023	
Time	15:00 – 17:00	
Location	Virtual Meeting	

Present:	Luke Burton	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
	Alison Hoolihan	Officer, Libraries Development Team, ACE
	Isobel Hunter	Chief Executive, Libraries Connected
	Lauren Lucas	Senior Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
	Iain Moore	Commercial Director, Libraries Connected
	Nick Poole	Chief Executive, CILIP, The UK library and information association
	Kelly Saini Badwal	Head of Cultural Services, London Borough of Sutton
	David Smith	Community Managed Libraries Peer Network (CMLPN)
	Simon Smith	Libraries and Museums Manager, Reading Libraries
	Sue Wills	Assistant Director Arts, Culture & Libraries Surrey County Council
Guest:	Annette French	Project Manager, Libraries Accreditation Scheme (ACE)
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
	Sophie Lancaster	Senior Manager, Libraries, ACE

Neil MacInnes	Head of Libraries, Galleries & Culture, Manchester City Council
Sue Wells	CEO, Lincs Inspire
Liz White	Head of Public Libraries and Engagement, British Library (BL)

		Action
1.	**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**	

1.1 Luke Burton welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no interests to declare.

3. THEORY OF CHANGE

3.1 Luke shared the redrafted Theory of Change from Katie Pekacar with the group, with notes from previous sessions incorporated and a skeleton workplan for the coming year. Luke asked how will the group work with this model, how will it be used as a tool, and for any comments.

3.2 Sue commented that the model doesn't quite answer the 'so what?' question, which is critical when working with senior stakeholders in local authorities.

3.3 Lauren noted that it had been a useful exercise and had helped to unpack what is happening within the group, but perhaps with a focus on activities. The core role of EPL is advocacy and communication so should this be central to the model.

3.4 Kelly suggested more emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion within the model. This should be specific activity, highlighting allyship and inclusive language, rather than a general outcome around 'representing our communities'.

3.5 Isobel commented that there is a lot of detail which loses the focus of the model, and she asked for clarity around who the audience of the document is, and stated that the model will be good to focus the work of EPL. Lauren noted that the focus of the model needs to return to it being a strategy for EPL. Luke agreed that the model is intended as a strategy for EPL.

3.6 Iain suggested adding a column onto the workplan headed 'What does this mean for the local authority?', as this may address the 'so what?' question. Sue added that the 'so what?' question should demonstrate the monetary value/social value of the activity, as this is what is important for Heads of Service.

3.7 Luke stated that the model isn't an external tool but it could sit behind an external tool that demonstrates social value. Isobel informed the group that Libraries Connected are working on an infographic to demonstrate the social structure of libraries, and that it would be possible to add the social value of libraries into this.

3.8 David noted that there is no mention of CMLs in the section on volunteer-run libraries nor on the workplan. The CML network wants volunteers to be as trained as possible and working on this and so this should be included in the workplan.

3.9 **ACTION: Alison to update Katie Pekacar on group comments.** | **ALISON HOOLIHAN**

4. DATA AND EVIDENCE

4.1 Luke updated the group on the progress of the data and evidence project. He said the project will focus on the manual collection of data and a platform to hold the data, along with developing skills within the sector to analyse and use the data. The next phase of the project will then move to an automated collection of data. There will be a short-term pilot that will inform a more sustainable platform. ACE are able to provide resource to project manage and to drive the project forward.

4.2 Sue commented that there is a lot of pressure on Heads of Service from senior stakeholders within councils for comparative data, especially data that draws comparisons to 'nearest neighbour'. Currently, there is a vacuum because of the absence of CIPFA data. Luke acknowledged the frustration of Heads of Service and informed the group that ACE had drafted a statement to update the sector on the current situation around data and the intended work to take place.

4.3 Iain stated that the Libraries Connected activity data could be used as a comparable tool for those services that contribute to it.

4.4 **ACTION: Alison to share draft statement with the group once it has been cleared for release by ACE.** | **ALISON HOOLIHAN**

5 ACCREDITATION

5.1 Annette updated the group on the progress of the Accreditation project, including the conversations she's had with stakeholders, the internal

working group to discuss ACE administration, and timeframes working towards the submission of a final proposals paper in July and a potential launch of the scheme in April 2025.

6 SECTOR UPDATES

6.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
- Progressing with the LGA/ACE improvement programme.
- Holding Commission on Culture and Local Government roadshows. There has been a high level cultural round table in Northumberland, and there will be another in Wigan with Curious Minds. There will be LCEP involvement so it would be good to have involvement from Libraries – group to contact Lauren to be involved.

6.2 COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES NETWORK
- The network has a written a statement on its current and what CMLs have to offer. This will be released soon.
- The new chairman will be announced soon.
- David thanked the group for allowing him to be part of the libraries' conversation.
- Luke and the group thanked David for his contribution and wished him a happy retirement.

6.3 LIBRARIES CONNECTED
- New IPSO funding has just started.
- Know Your Neighbourhood funding in 26 areas to tackle loneliness and volunteering.
- Future Funding – 3 new cohorts are now underway and a funding toolkit about to be released
- An apprenticeship network for skills sharing is about to be launched
- The 6-month peer mentor programme has now come to an end and looking at ways to continue those relationships
- School readiness campaign about to be launched
- Innovators gathering took place in March, celebrating the 'extraordinary ordinary'
- The ULO seminar took place in March
- The regional development programme is starting, looking at building capacity in regional networks
- Good Things Foundation project has come to an end. This looked at how libraries deliver digital inclusion, and their role as connectors and collaborators.
- The East of England impact report is about to be published. This has had input from the DCMS Economists.
- Looking into twinning opportunities between English and Ukrainian libraries.

6.4 **CILIP**
- CILIP has now moved into its new headquarters at the British Library
- Green Libraries Conference took place on 24th March, which was very successful. Want to continue progress and so Libraries Week will be 'Green Libraries Week' this year to demonstrate how libraries contribute to the green agenda.
- Workforce mapping – the data will be published shortly, with promotional work in May focussing on EDI, and on how employers can utilise the skills of the workforce.
- Controversial materials publication about to be released – draft version to be circulated at the end of April.
- The CILIP conference in July is in Birmingham and registration is now open.
- 2024 general election – beginning work on key messaging and how to get simple, achievable objectives into party manifestos. The input of the group would be appreciated.

6.5 **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**
- Attendance at Green Libraries Conference and chair of a panel discussion
- The LibraryOn grants programme has now closed
- Currently planning a libraries welcome event for new NPOs/IPSOs
- LIF round 3 EOIs open in April
- Looking forward to progressing the data work, along with the e-licensing and Future Libraries work.

7. **A.O.B**

7.1 Luke informed the group that ASCEL's new CEO had started in post and suggested inviting him to a future EPL meeting.

ACTION: Invite Adam Tulloch and Annabel Gittens to a future EPL meeting.

ALISON HOOLIHAN

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 9th May 2023, 15:00 – 17:00 Virtual Meeting.