Equalities Impact and Needs Assessment
Options for Libraries and Customers Services

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1.   Introduction and Methodology

There were 652,530 visits to libraries in 2012/13, with 31.36% of the Herefordshire population classed as active borrowers; this is along with 120,300 queries to customer services between January 2012 and May 2013. Any change to these services needs to be considered next to the impact they will have on the people who use them. This does not stop local authorities making difficult decisions but those decisions need to be made in the context of the needs and rights of different members of the community.

An impact assessment is one tool that may assist decision makers comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty relates to different groups who share any of the "protective characteristic" of age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

The Equality Act outlines that due regard involves:
• Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
• Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
• Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Geography in terms of access to services is not a protective characteristic, but is considered in this report due to the rural nature of the county and the sparseness of the population. Poverty is also not listed as a protective characteristic but treated as one in this report due to Herefordshire's low wage economy and the multiplier effect poverty has on disadvantage.

The services of libraries and customers services are co-dependent and integrated – the centres are staffed by the same teams from the same budget from customer services. This budget largely consists of staffing, so any reduction in expenditure means people who operate the libraries also operate customer service functions. There is a central library service which has the role of ensuring the libraries can function across the county in supporting the delivered services to the housebound,

schools library service, the management and purchase of stock, cost of public access PCs and reading groups.

The assessment needs to be mindful of wider pressures on public service pressure to meet core and priority services and the 1964 Libraries Act in that local authorities are required to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" service.

1.1 Methodology

For the impact assessment it is important to know who uses the service, what for and what would be the impact of possible changes on customers.

Customer service and libraries are "universal" services – that means they are open to anyone to use. Therefore this impact assessment includes a review of general demographics in the county.

These demographics are reviewed next to understanding the customer base for services, or where there are specific functions that impact on a specific group. There is also consideration of electronic delivery of service for two reasons – firstly there is the provision of public access PC's at facilities; and secondly current and future opportunity of accessing services via the internet.

To support this equalities impact and needs assessment an impact survey ran from 4th July to 8th August 2013 to specifically understand real and current usage of centres over a sample five week period (across school and non-school holiday time); and know from customers how possible change would affect them.

2. Protected Characteristics and Service Users

2.1 Age

The table below illustrates the age profile of the county.

Table 1: Age profile of Herefordshire

	Male		Female		Total	
Age Group	number	%	number	%	number	%
0-15	16,200	17.8%	15,400	16.4%	31,500	17.0%
16-24	9,200	10.1%	8,600	9.2%	17,800	9.6%
25-44	21,200	23.3%	20,800	22.2%	42,100	22.8%
45-64	25,900	28.4%	26,800	28.5%	52,700	28.5%
65-74	10,600	11.6%	11,200	11.9%	21,800	11.8%
75+	8,000	8.8%	11,100	11.8%	19,000	10.3%
All ages	91,100	100.0%	93,900	100.0%	184,900	100.0%

Source: Office for National Statistics 2012 mid-year estimates

As well as current population numbers it is worth considering long term age profile when planning service change. Table 2 shows how numbers of people in three broad age groups are expected to change in nine and 19 years time, compared to changes observed since 2001.
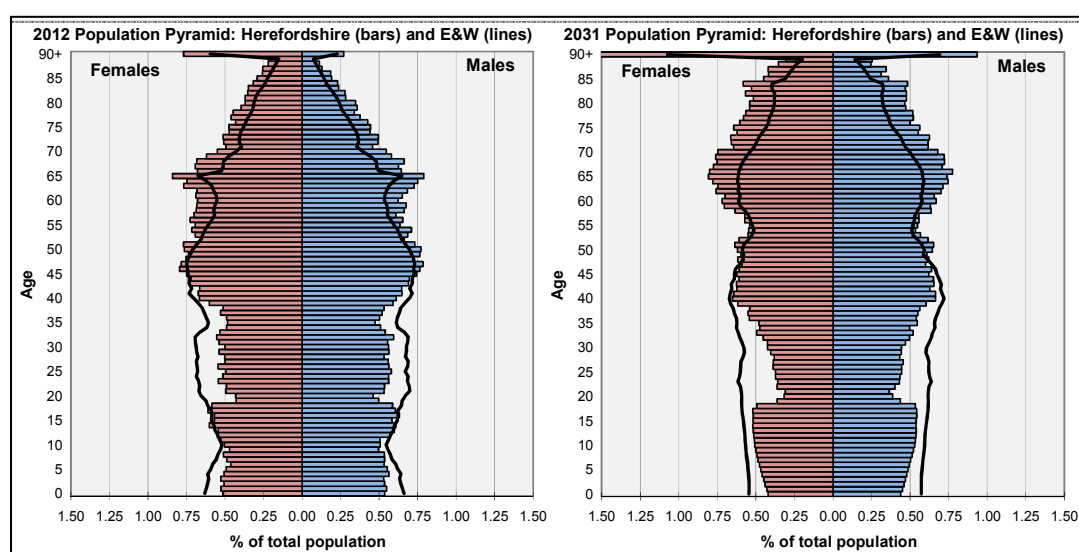
Table 2: Mid-year estimates and 2011-based forecasts

	Mid-year estimates			2011-based forecasts	
	2001	**2011**	**2012**	**2021**	**2031**
Under 16	34,000	31,400	31,500	32,400	32,300
16 to 64	107,200	112,900	112,600	110,600	110,300
65 and over	33,700	39,400	40,800	50,700	62,600
Total population	175,800	183,600	184,900	193,700	205,300

Source: Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates; 2011-based forecasts, GL Hearn Property Consultants

The population pyramids in chart 1 below show a more detailed age structure of Herefordshire and how it compares with England and Wales, compared with how it is forecast to look in 2031.

Chart 1: Change in age profile

Source: Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates; 2011-based forecasts, GL Hearn Property Consultants

2.1.1   Children

High birth rates occurred in the early to mid-1990s that peaked in 1994. This was followed by a steady fall. However, Herefordshire birth rates have been higher since 2007, driven by women of child-bearing age migrating to the county; eight per cent of births in 2011 were to mothers born in countries that joined the EU during the last decade (one per cent prior to their joining). Levels over the last four years (2009 - 2012) have been between 1,800 and 1,900 births per year.

The latest forecasts suggest that this will lead to a slight increase in the number of **under 16s** between 2016 and 2026, peaking at 32,800 before starting to fall again. This peak is four per cent higher than currently (31,500) but still lower than in any year prior to 2005.

The number of **under-5s** in Herefordshire is forecast to remain between 9,800 and 9,900 up until 2023 prior to falling to 9,300 in 2031. The number of **5 to 15-year olds** is forecast to increase by around seven per cent (from 21,700 to 23,200) between 2012 and 2026 prior to levelling off.

2.1.2   Young adults

In 2012 there were 17,800 16-24 year olds in Herefordshire, which was 10 per cent of the total population. Young adults, particularly those aged 18 and 19, are a relatively mobile group; this may be explained by Herefordshire not having a major centre of higher education, coupled with the fact that young people leaving home to start university are counted at their term-time address. On average around 500 more 16-24 year-olds leave the county each year than move into it (to/from other parts of the UK). However, it is worth noting that although there is an average annual net loss of around 400 16-24 year-olds, this only represents around 3 per cent of the county's population of these ages.

The number of 16-24 year olds had been increasing prior to 2009; levels are however forecast to fall between 2012 and 2023 by 21 per cent reaching a minimum of 14,100 people. Levels are then forecast to rise steadily up to 15,800 people in 2031 (12 per cent fewer than in 2012).

2.1.3   25 to 64 year olds

In 2012 there were 42,100 25-44 year olds and 52,700 45-64 year olds in Herefordshire, representing 23 per cent and 28 per cent of the total population. It can be seen from chart 1 that Herefordshire has a higher proportion than nationally of residents of all ages from about 50.

The proportion of the population in the older age-group (45-64) has increased by 12% over the last 11 years, whilst the proportions of the younger age-group (25-44) decreased by 8%. Both of these age groups are not forecast to change by more than 2% by 2031. The number of 25-44 year olds is forecast to increase slightly, peaking at 43,800 in 2023 before starting to fall again; whereas the number of 45-64 year olds is forecast to remain relatively stable.

2.1.4   Over 65 age group

Herefordshire has an older age profile than both the region and England and Wales, with a noticeably higher proportion of its population in the older age groups. Just over a fifth of Herefordshire's population is aged 65 and over (22 per cent), compared 16 per cent nationally[1]. The numbers of older people have grown more rapidly locally than nationally, a trend which is expected to continue as the post-war 'baby-boom' generation moves into old age. The number of people aged 65+ forecasted to be living in Herefordshire by 2031 will be 62,600. In particular, the number of people aged 85+ is expected to more than double, from 5,500 in 2012 to 12,200 in 2031.

Enabling older people to stay in their homes rather than residential care can enable people to have more control over their lives and is more cost effective than residential care (for the public sector or individual). However, isolation can be a key factor - 3.1m people in the UK over 65 years of age don't see family, friend or neighbour even once a week[2] and 51 per cent over 75 years live alone, with just over 1 million (11 per cent) aged 65+ say they always or often feel lonely[3].

So the population of Herefordshire is likely to grow, but the age profile will change dramatically. Chart 1 shows predicted changes in the percentage of each age group between 2012 and 2031.

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[1] Understanding Herefordshire, 2013
[2] Participle.net
[3] Agenda for Later Life, Age UK

2.2   Service Users by Age

The "active borrowers" data gives a good indication of the age group who use the library service. This data is based on the type and avenue the stock was accessed over the last two years.

Table 3: Active borrowers (borrowers with active status who have loaned items or used public computers in the last 2 years)

Borrower type	Number of borrowers
Access Adult	1,271
Access Junior	61
Access Teenage	46
Access Teenplus	59
Access Under Five	12
Adult	41,301
After Schools Club - Primary	17
After Schools Club - Secondary	3
Childminder	63
Community Libraries	11
Foster Carer	32
High School	16
Home Delivery	362
Institution	92
Inter Library Loan	66
Junior	6,433
Library Staff	12
Playgroup	63
Primary Project	440
Primary Van	578
Reader Group	106
Teenage	2,378
TeenPlus	1,602
Under Five	2559
Active borrowers total	57,583

Population of Herefordshire	183,600
Borrowers as percentage	31.36

Source: Herefordshire Council

Another form of understanding age profile of users, the below chart outlines the profile of new users from April 2012 to March 2013 (excluding home delivery service).

Chart 2: New library user age profile
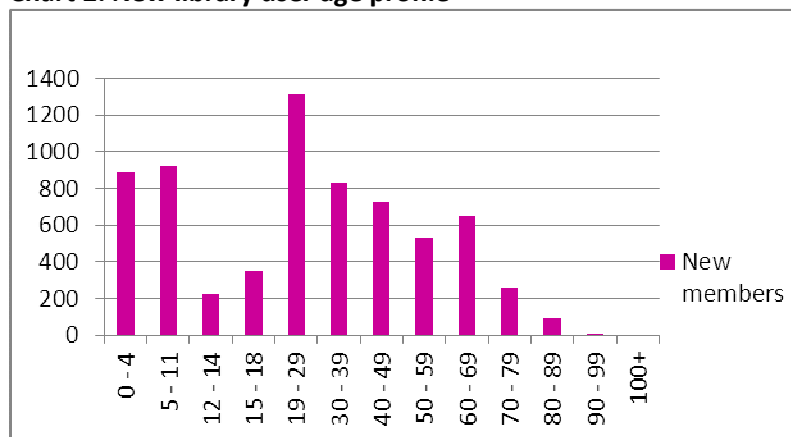
Source: Herefordshire Council

The impact survey showed an age profile of respondents skewed towards the older ages: 48% were aged 65+ compared to 22% of the population.

Table 4: Impact survey age profile

	Number of respondents	Per cent of respondents	Per cent of population
0-15 years	91	3%	17%
16-24 years	116	3%	10%
25-44 years	526	16%	23%
45-64 years	1,021	31%	29%
65-74 years	935	28%	12%
75+ years	657	20%	10%
All ages	3,346	100%	100%

Source: Herefordshire Council

Age was by far the most common characteristic mentioned in the responses to the impact survey. Over a third (35%) of answers to the question of which groups would be particularly affected by the proposals mentioned the elderly or older people. However, 21% mentioned children (and their families) and 7% young people / students. (NB. One response could have mentioned all three so percentages aren't additive).

2.3   Sex

Herefordshire has a similar percentage split between men and women to England and Wales as a whole, with women outnumbering men in all age groups but only noticeable in older age (75+) reflecting the fact that women tend to live longer.

Table 5: Population split between male and female

Residential population	Numbers	Percentage
Male	91,100	49%
Female	93,900	51%

Source: ONS 2012 mid-year estimate population Crown Copyright

2.4   Service Use by Sex

The majority (67%) of responses to the impact survey were from females, and this was the case across all age groups. The distinction was most stark in the 25-44 year-old age group, where 78% of responses were from women. This may be related to the use of libraries by parents (mothers) with young children.

Table 6: Impact survey gender profile

Age	Female	Male
0-15 years	69%	31%
16-24 years	66%	34%
25-44 years	78%	22%
45-64 years	71%	29%
65-74 years	62%	38%
75+ years	61%	39%
All ages	67%	33%

Source: Herefordshire Council

2.5   Pregnancy and Maternity

The protected characteristic definition is based on pregnant women or women who are in the first 26 weeks after giving birth.

Every year there are 1,800-1,900 live births to mothers living in Herefordshire, and relevant to age characteristic as the vast majority of births are to women aged 15-44. There is also some relation to race in that increasing number of births in Herefordshire are to women born overseas – 8% of births in 2011 were to mothers born in countries that joined the EU during the last decade with two thirds of these women either Polish or Lithuanian.

2.6   Service by Pregnancy and Maternity

Pregnancy and maternity wasn't specifically referred to by many respondents to the impact survey (2% of comments analysed), although a couple of comments mentioned libraries being a safe place for breast-feeding. However, many comments (9% of comments about impact and 20% of comments about particular groups affected) referred to the importance of libraries for children and families, including children's development and the social aspect for new parents.

2.7   Disability

This characteristic is based on a person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

In the 2011 Census 18.7% of people said they had some form of limiting long term health problem or disability. This is similar to the national percentage and to the 2001 Census - this can include problems related to old age.

The 2012 Herefordshire Quality of Life survey asked the 22% of adults (aged 18+) respondents who said they had a limiting long-term illness what was the nature.

Table 7: Limiting long term illness

Nature of limiting long term illness	% of adults respondents who had an LLTI
Deaf / hard of hearing / acute hearing	12%
Blind / partially sighted / sensitive to light	4%
Learning disability or difficulty	4%
Mental health	10%
Progressive / chronic illness (e.g. MS, cancer)	16%
Mobility difficulties	41%
Other	42%

Source: 2012 Herefordshire Quality of Life Survey (people can have more than one disability)

2.8   Service Use by Disability

It can be assumed that audio books will be accessed by blind and partially sighted people. The table below shows 1,648 adult talking books issued – lower than the average compared to other similar authorities.

Table 8: Talking books use with average compared to nearest like neighbouring county:

	Number	/1000 pop	Average
Sound recordings	4,048	22.0	31.6
Music	13,991	76.2	108.5
Adult Talking Books	1,648	9.0	25.1
Children's Talking Books	17,224	93.8	108.9
Video & DVDs	550	3.0	2.1
Multimedia & Open Learning CD-ROMs & Software	1,399	7.6	5.3
Electronic Products	0	0	4.9
eBooks	0	0	10.4
eAudio eAudiovisuals	0	0	0
Total Audio Visual Issues	38,860	211.7	297.0

Source: CIPFA, 2012

Over the course of 2012 3,233 blue badges were issued – this includes an assessment of how far someone can walk (50 yards) along with consideration of other mobility issues.

Responses to the impact survey were broadly representative of the population, with 19% of respondents saying they had a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits their daily activities or the work they can do.

Disability was one of the most common characteristics mentioned in the responses to the question about whether the proposals would particularly affect any group of people - 25% of comments analysed. Comments ranged from people with mental disabilities needing face-to-face help, to the social aspect of talking to people (staff and others). From the transport difficulties that having to travel further would pose for those with mobility problems, to the positive effects of the library service on the mental well-being of housebound people.

2.9   Race

The protected characteristic of race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

The information below taken from the 2011 Census shows that 93.7% of the population is white English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British. However, the county's make up has changed significantly as a result of the expansion of the European Union in 2004. Of the 12,250 residents who were born outside the UK, 53% arrived after the expansion of the EU. Nationally this figure was 40% which highlights how much more of an impact recent migration has had locally.

Table 9: Ethnic group of Herefordshire residents

Ethnic Groups	Number	%
White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British	171,922	93.7
Black, Asian and minority ethnic (i.e. not 'White British, etc')	11,555	6.4
- White: Irish	709	0.4
- White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	363	0.2
- White: Other White	7,175	3.9
Non-white	3,308	1.8
- Mixed/multiple ethnic group	1,270	0.7
- Asian/Asian British (inc. Chinese)	1,439	0.8
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	331	0.2
- Other ethnic group	268	0.1
All residents	183,477	100.0%

Source: 2011 Census

2.10   Service Use by Race

As a public access service it is likely that the same profile will access libraries and customer services.

96% of responses to the impact survey were from people who said they were White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British, slightly higher than the proportion of the resident population (93%).

The impact survey found that non 'white British' respondents were more likely to have visited a centre on the day they completed the survey to use the public access computers (33% compared to 12% of 'white British'), which correlates with anecdotal evidence from staff that the public access PCs are an important form of communication for people to family and friends out of the UK. It should be noted however that the most common reasons for visiting were to borrow, return or renew a book, regardless of ethnicity.

Table 10: Reason for visit by ethnic group

Reason for visiting library / customer service centre	White British /English/Welsh/Scottish/ Northern Irish	Other ethnic group
Pay a bill or pay for a council service (e.g. query on Council Tax, bus pass, blue badge, etc)	9%	10%

Use the public access computers	12%	33%
Borrow a book or another item	69%	67%
Renew or return a book, or another item	56%	46%
Order a book	13%	11%
Research	15%	17%
Obtain information	6%	10%
Speak to a customer adviser	6%	10%
Other	11%	17%

Source: Herefordshire Council

Race was only mentioned in 1.4% of the comments about whether any groups would be particularly affected by the proposals. Most of these were in relation to migrant workers who use the computers, although others mentioned services for residents who don't speak English very well.

2.11   Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships', and they must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. The equality duty only covers marriage and civil partnership in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination.

According to the 2011 Census over half (52%) of the population were married or in a civil partnership – this consists of 0.2% were registered same-sex civil partnerships and 51.8% married. The overall percentage is slightly higher than the national figure (England and Wales: 47%).

The impact survey did not highlight any particular issues of marriage and civil partnership.

2.12   Gender Reassignment

This characteristic relates to transsexual people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. There is no official estimate of the number of transsexual people either nationally or locally.

The impact survey did not highlight any particular issues of gender reassignment.

2.13   Religion or Belief

Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

The 2011 Census asked people "what is your religion" and the results for Herefordshire (as below) shows that Christianity remains the largest religion. This is reflective of the national picture – although numbers fell from 79% of the population in 2001 to 68% to 2011 nationally. The proportion reporting they have no religion increased from 13% to 23%, just slightly lower than the proportion nationally (25%).

Table 11: Religion of Herefordshire residents

Religion of Herefordshire residents	number	%
Christian	124,403	67.8%
Buddhist	562	0.3%
Hindu	228	0.1%
Jewish	131	0.1%
Muslim	364	0.2%
Sikh	80	0.0%
Other religion	893	0.5%
Mixed Religion	276	0.2%
Pagan	235	0.1%
Spiritualist	101	0.1%
Other	281	0.2%
No religion	41,766	22.8%
Religion not stated	15,050	8.2%
All residents	183,477	100.0%

Source: 2011 Census

No respondents to the impact survey mentioned that the proposals would have any impact on people of different religions.

2.14   Sexual Orientation

This characteristic is based on whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

The estimate of lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) in the UK, range from 0.3% to 10%, depending on the measure and source. Work conducted by the Department of Trade in 2005 attempted to bring together different data sources which estimated that 5-7% of the population aged 16+ were considered LGB – this would equate to between 7,700 and 10,700 people in Herefordshire.

The largest scale survey in the last 3 years (ONS' Integrated Household Survey, 2011-12) found that 1.5% of adults living in UK households identified themselves as LGB. Taking account of different age, this could equate to 2,100 people in Herefordshire. In the 2008 Herefordshire Quality of Life Survey, 1.1% of respondents identified as LGB.

As a minimum indication, about 300 people in the county were in a registered same sex civil partnership in 2011.

The impact survey did not highlight any particular issues of marriage and civil partnership.

2.15   Poverty and Low Income

Poverty is a lack of income (or material possessions) to such a level that it is not considered acceptable by society. Officially a household is considered to be in poverty if its income (after taxes and housing costs) is less than 60% of the average (median) income nationally. In 2007-08 (the latest date for which local authority estimates are available) this was equal to £199 per week for a

couple with no children. In the same year an estimated 19% of households (14,500 households) in Herefordshire had income below this level[4].

Nationally, of those people classed as living in poverty:
o   22% are married families
o   22% are working age adults (16-59 years)
o   46% are lone parent households
o   29% are under 16 years old
o   16% are older people

Poverty can be a symptom of several circumstances – low wages (Herefordshire weekly wage is £384 compared to £512 nationally); unemployment which has increased as a result of the recession; under employment with the proportion of people working part-time. In Herefordshire 15% work part-time compared to 14% nationally[5].

Also, there are links between poverty and health risks, poverty and education attainment for the most deprived neighbourhoods in Herefordshire[6].

Whilst the greatest numbers of households in poverty live in urban areas, some households in rural areas also live in poverty. There are also other financial pressures associated with living in rural areas that, whilst not relevant to the official definition of poverty, do make it harder for residents of rural areas. Additional costs associated with transport and domestic heating mean some rural households have to spend more to achieve the same standards of living as equivalent households living in urban areas[7].

2.16   Service Use by Low Income

The concept of a library service was based on ensuring books were available to the masses to support education – it is part of the 1964 Act that books cannot be charged for at libraries. The education system has altered dramatically over the last 150 years and ability of reading material is much more readily available.

However, the stakeholder focus groups made the point that people on low incomes will go to the library for the latest releases (which tend not to be discounted), specialist books that may be out of print, and audio books that tend to be much more expensive.

This was also one of the most common themes in the responses to the impact survey: 13.6% of comments to the question about whether anyone would be particularly mentioned people with low incomes, dependent on benefits or unemployed. Comments ranged from not being able to afford to buy books to using the computers to help find a job.

There are a number of services that tend to be accessed by people who are on low income. These include:
•   Homepoint services of people in need of affordable housing

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[4] Poverty in Herefordshire (2012): http://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/1975.aspx
[5] 2011 Census, Annual Population Survey, Annual Business Inquiry, Herefordshire Employers' Survey 2010 and the UK competitiveness index
[6] Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2010
[7] A Minimum Income Standard for Rural Households, Rowntree Foundations, 2010

- Monthly Council tax payment not exclusively people on low income but will assess people who need to spread payments and are keen to know their status with payments
- Ability to pay by cash – in some instances people on low income may not have a bank account
- The administration of welfare payments will increasingly be done online e.g. Universal Credit, as will mandatory job searches.

2.17   Geography and Travel

54% of Herefordshire's population live in rural areas, of which 44% live in the most rural locations. Providing services to a scattered population across a large geographic area is a challenge and often additional resources are required to service a spread and sparse population. Access to services particularly some health services such as the dentist, GP and hospital were felt to be difficult to access by Herefordshire residents, along with other services such as post office and public transport [8].

Bus Routes are obviously based on servicing the highest areas of population with private sector operators able to generate an income to cover their expenditure. Therefore the number of bus journeys between market towns and within the city and its boundaries are more frequent than in rural areas. Government grant/Herefordshire Council enable free travel for people of pension age (based on women's retirement age).

2.18   Service Use by Geography

49% of responses to the impact survey drove to a centre (41% "drove myself", and 8% via a lift). 44% people walked to a site showing that there was very local use (though a high number of responses came from the use of Hereford facilities reflecting the higher population use). Public transport was relatively low use at 10% of respondees.

However, transport accessibility issues were a common theme in the comments made in response to the questions about the impact of closing services or reducing hours (10% of responses analysed) and about whether any groups would be particularly affected (11%).

3. Customer Use

3.1   Customer Service Use by Functions

When a person accesses a customer service centre or library their protective characteristics are not asked for – that would be intrusive and un-necessary in dealing with their query quickly. Also, the services are universal therefore not restricted or targeted at a certain group of people. The table below gives an overview of customer service queries via email, phone and in person.

Table 12: Customer service use by function

Service	calls	%	In person	%	email	%
Amey	14,948	9%	1,459	1%	2,436	30%
Housing	2,9062	17%	22,744	24%	54	1%

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[8] Understanding Herefordshire, 2013

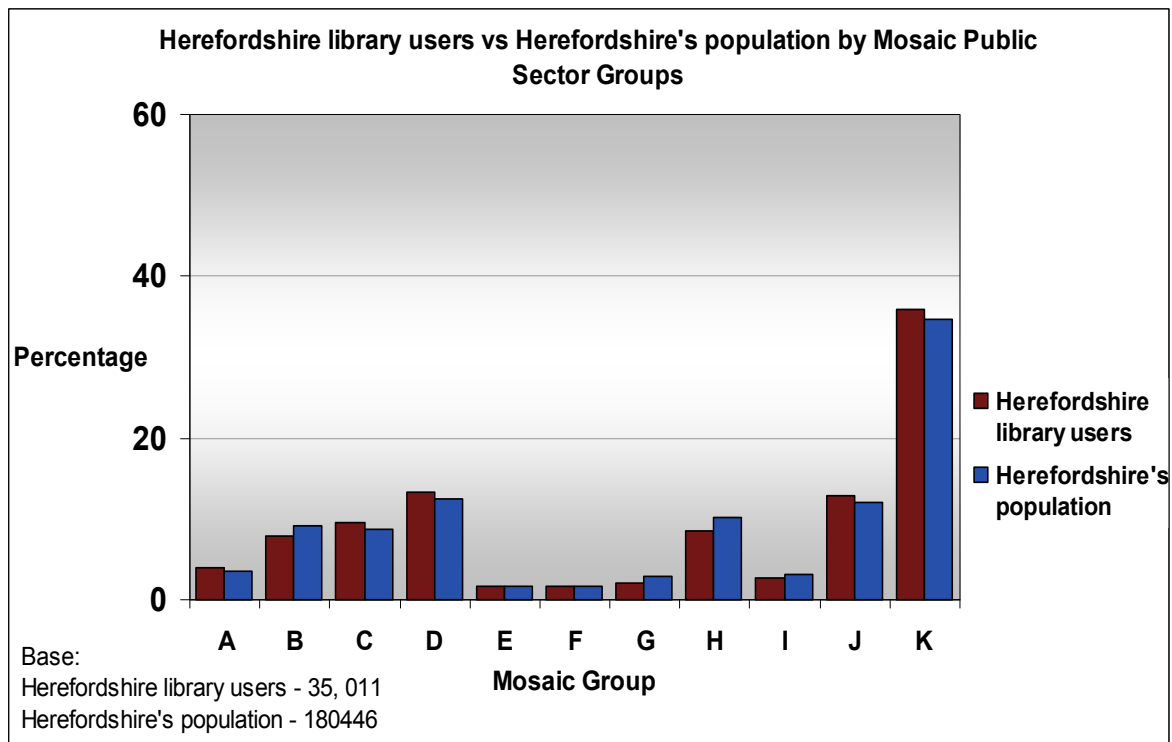| Benefits						
Blue badges	5,844	3%	3,609	4%	20	0%
Council tax	46,499	26%	7,321	8%	131	2%
EHTS	13,856	8%	2,698	3%	835	11%
General	22,425	13%	49,737	51%	3,337	42%
Homepoint/ Housing Solutions	10,006	6%	5,066	5%	25	0%
Planning	16,173	9%	2,341	2%	524	7%
Waste	15,233	9%	1,719	2%	520	7%
Special projects	439	0%	54	0%	14	0%
Total	174,485	100%	96,748	100%	7,896	100%

It should also be noted that some customer services will be accessed by people with very specific requirements or people in crisis.

From QMATIC data held by Herefordshire Council there were 4,414 face to face Homepoint queries and 3,744 Housing Solutions queries between August 2012 and July 2013; along with 4,527 Homepoint calls between February 2013 and July 2013 and 877 quick queries handled at reception desk for homepoint / homeless between the same period.

3.2   Mosaic Data

Mosaic Data is a useful tool in understanding likely customer types. It pulls together a range of information to profile people who access services. In 2009 analysis using this tool was used to profile library users.

Chart 3: The Mosaic analysis groups library users into nationally defined social groups

Herefordshire library users vs Herefordshire's population by Mosaic Public Sector Groups

Base:
Herefordshire library users - 35, 011
Herefordshire's population - 180446

Herefordshire's library users have a similar Mosaic profile to Herefordshire's population as a whole. Not surprisingly, the biggest libraries have the largest range of users. The most prevalent groups are, in order:

K	People living in rural areas far from urbanisation

By far the biggest group overall: over 30% of both library users and the population of Herefordshire as a whole are grouped into category K.

Over 80% of the active users of Leintwardine fall into this group and group K also dominates the library user profiles of Bromyard and Kington.

It is also the largest group of library users, although to a lesser extent, in Leominster, Ross, Hereford and Ledbury.

The next two most prevalent groups are D and J. Both make up just over 10% of the population.

D	Close-knit, inner city and manufacturing town communities

The only two libraries with significant numbers of group D are Hereford and Leominster, although there are also small groups in Ross, Belmont, Ledbury and Bromyard.

J	Independent older people with relatively active lifestyles

Group J is more widely represented. Over 50% of the active adult users at Weobley fall into this group. They are also well represented in Hereford, Colwall and Kington and to a lesser extent Ledbury, Leominster, Ross and Bromyard.

At the other end of the extreme, the number of library users from group J in Belmont is noticeably small.

The other significant groups are:

B	Younger families living in newer homes
C	Older families living in suburbia
H	Upwardly mobile families living in homes bought from social landlords

Group B is the dominant group in Belmont, followed by Group H.
Group B is also well represented in Ledbury.
Group H is also found in Bromyard, Kington and Weobley.
Group C is significant in Colwall and Ross.
All three groups are present at Hereford.

The following groups are least well represented overall, but there are some individual pockets:

A	Career professionals living in sought after locations

Group A has a significant presence in Colwall. Here groups A, J and K make up three-quarters of the adult active users.

There are also small numbers from group A in Ledbury, Ross and Hereford.

E	Educated young single people living in areas of transient populations
F	People living in social housing with uncertain employment in deprived areas
G	Low income families living in estate based social housing
I	Older people living in social housing with high care needs

For E, F, G and I none of these is statistically significant in the library user profile as a whole, although there are above average numbers of users from group G in Weobley and of group I in Colwall.

3.3 CIPFA Stats Comparative Profile for Public Library Services (CIPFA), 2012

CIPFA is the comparison of performance of libraries compared to each other. The data used below is from 2012, with 2013 estimates. Comparisons are made to the similar neighbours (called nearest neighbours) when looking at demographics and population[9].

The report tells us user numbers rather than the make up of people and the type of stock accessed. Therefore it is primarily a tool for managing stock but also provides an understanding of how well the library service is doing compared to others. The report illustrates:

- Herefordshire has one of the lowest number of libraries but also one of the lowest populations
- Herefordshire is in the top quartile of use next to population
- The total number of static points in Herefordshire are 5.5 for 100,000 population compared to 7.1 for the nearest neighbours
- Herefordshire comes out as being at the middle of the comparison on total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population, which suggests that its costs are similar to the group as a whole – though this expenditure has decreased more dramatically than the average
- Active borrowers (issues within the last 2 years) where high compared to the nearest neighbour authorities, 55,401 which is 302 per 100,000 population compared to the average of 194.
- Housebound readers of 342 which was 1.9 per 100,000 populations compared to 1.3 averages.
- Physical visits to the libraries have reduced over four years with all libraries though more significantly for Herefordshire

Table 13: Physical visits over time and compared to average of nearest neighbour

Physical Visits	Number	per 1,000 population	Average
2007-08	770,248	4,318	4,695
2008-09	763,743	4,260	2,487
2009-10	736,655	4,113	4,694
2010-11	696,886	3,887	4,509
2011-12	674,895	3,676	4,392

Source: CIPFA

- Net expenditure just below average £12,045 spent on 100,000 of the population with an average of £13,039.
- Herefordshire is about average of cost of acquisitions (books) at £7.37 compared to the average of £7.45.

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[9] Nearest neighbours are Shropshire, Wiltshire, Rutland, East Riding of Yorkshire, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Cornwall, Bath & North East, Somerset, Northumberland, North Somerset, Isle of Wight, Solihull, North Lincolnshire, Central Bedfordshire, York.

- The cost per visit is just higher than the average at £3.45 with an average of £3.20.

Table 14: Stock issues by per 1,000 population and compared to average of nearest neighbour

Physical Visits	Number	per 1,000 population	Average
Adult Fiction	404,720	2,204	2,379
Adult non-fiction	164,804	898	1,019
Children's fiction	174,706	952	1,442
Children's non fiction	25,006	136	214
Total books issued	769,236	4,190	5,053

Source: CIPFA

Table 15: Public library users survey (over 16) compared to nearest neighbour

Public Library Users Survey (over 16) 2009-10	Authority	Average
Proportion who view their library opening hours as 'very good' or 'good'	89%	86%
Proportion who find the library easily accessible	96%	97%
Proportion who find the choice of books as 'very good' or 'good'	70%	76%
Proportion who view their library as 'very good' or 'good'	87%	91%

Source: CIPFA

Table 16: Public library users survey (under 16) compared to nearest neighbour

Public Library Users Survey (under 16) 2009-10	Authority	Average
Proportion who view their library opening hours as 'very good' or 'good'	90%	85%
Proportion who find the library easily accessible	95%	95%
Proportion who find the choice of books as 'very good' or 'good'	82%	82%
Proportion who view their library as 'very good' or 'good'	86%	87%

Source: CIPFA

Table 17: Portion who view their library to have helped them (public library user survey – under 16) compared to nearest neighbour

	Authority	Average
Read better	55%	58%
Do better at school	32%	35%
Use computers better	12%	12%
Make friends	22%	18%
Join in and try new things	35%	30%
Learn and find things out	53%	57%

Source: CIPFA

4.   Electronic Delivery of Service

The delivery of services through digital channels provides an opportunity for people to access services quickly and at a time to suit them. Not all transactions can be delivered electronically, though money saved on digital delivery can be spent elsewhere on highest areas of need.

Table 18: Percentage of internet users and non-users, by low level geographical location, UK (Persons aged 16 years and over)

	Ever used %		Never used%	
	2012 Q2	**2013 Q2**	**2012 Q2**	**2013 Q2**
UK	84.3	85.9	15.5	13.9
West Midlands	81.8	84.1	18.0	15.7
County of Herefordshire	**85.0**	**87.6**	**15.0**	**11.7**
Worcestershire	80.3	89.3	19.7	10.7
Warwickshire	81.1	83.9	18.8	15.8
Telford and Wrekin	78.8	79.5	20.3	20.5
Shropshire CC	86.3	87.5	13.7	12.0
Stoke-on-Trent	84.5	79.5	15.2	20.5

Source: Office of National Statistics

Internet use has increased significantly over time, more frequently and through a range of devices which make connection much more flexible and available. For example in 2013, 36 million adults (73%) in Great Britain accessed the Internet every day, 20 million more than in 2006; using a mobile phone to access the internet has more than doubled between 2010 and 2013, from 24% to 53%[10].

By using the English Local Authority Digital and Social Exclusions Statistics Dashboard it is estimated that 21% of the adult population in Herefordshire have never accessed the internet[11]. Information from the Office for National Statistics also shows that certain protected characteristics are less likely to use the internet[12]:

- Almost all adults aged 16 to 24 years (99%) had ever used the Internet (7.1 million people). In contrast, only 33% of adults aged 75 years and over had ever used the Internet.
- Individuals with a disability are approximately four times more likely to have never used the Internet than individuals without a disability.
- At Q2 2013, there were 3.8 million disabled adults, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), who had never used the Internet. This represents 33% of those who were disabled and over half (54%) of the 7.1 million adults who had never used the Internet. Of those adults who reported no disability or a work limiting disability, 9% had never used the Internet.
- Non-use was relatively similar for males and females aged 16 to 64 years, however, internet non-use differed for adults aged 65 years and over. Where 28% of males aged 65 to 74 years had never used the Internet, the corresponding total for females was 36%. This difference grows to 14 percentage points for males and females aged 75 years and over.
- Of those adults in employment whose gross weekly pay was less than £200 per week, 6% (315,000) had never used the Internet. Internet use has almost reached full coverage for those earning in excess of £500 a week, with Internet use at 99% or above for all adults with weekly pay rates above this level.
- Internet use has, however, increased over time for those individuals earning less than £200 per week. At Q2 2011 approximately 9% (511,000) had never used the Internet, this compares with 6% (315,000) at Q2 2013.
- In terms of frequently adults aged over 75 years were the most likely to have last used the Internet more than 3 months ago. While 14% of Internet users aged over 75 years last used the Internet more than three months ago, in contrast, less than 1% of Internet users aged 16 to 24 years had last used it more than three months ago.

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[10] Statistic Bulletin: internet access, households and individuals, 8 August 2013
[11] Information produced using the City of London Digital Inclusion Dashboard Tool, 2011
[12] Office for National Statistics Quarterly Update on Internet Access, August 2013

A sizable increase in daily computer use, by age, in the past seven years has been for adults aged 65 and over. In 2006, just 9% reported that they used a computer every day, this compares to 37% in 2013[13]. Also 18% of pensioners are now signed up to one social networking site[14] and 2% of UK Facebook visitors were over the age of 65[15].

Of the 4 million households without Internet access, the majority (59%) said that they didn't have a connection because they 'did not need it'. Approximately (20%) indicated that they did not have the Internet in their household due to a lack of computer skills, with equipment costs (13%) and access costs (12%) being barriers to use[16].

These findings reflect research regarding Herefordshire residents' internet use through a survey that ran from September 2011 to February 2012 and generated 5,057 responses from the county. 157 responses were from residents without the Internet. The main features of non-use are highlighted below - respondents were able to tick all reasons for not having broadband that applied, so the percentages do not accumulate to 100%, but costs and lack of knowledge are raised more often than being unable to connect.

Table 19: Reasons for no broadband use
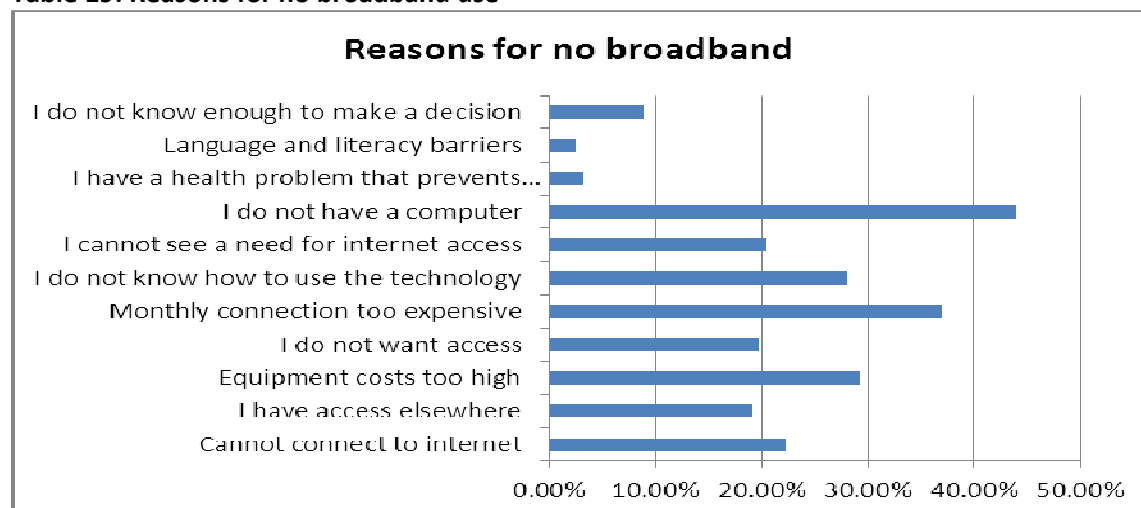
Source: Borders Broadband Equalities Impact and Needs Assessment for Herefordshire, 2012

This work was conducted for the Fastershire project (formerly Borders Broadband) that combines local authority, national government and private sector funds to invest in rural broadband infrastructure. Through a partnership with Gloucestershire County Council, funding from national government and a contract with BT the provider predicts 90% of premises in Herefordshire will have access to fibre broadband and 100% of premises in the project area to access 2Mbps by 2016 – with an overall ambition of 100% NGA for everyone who needs it by 2018.[17]

Herefordshire Council is committed to providing services digitally which means an intensive programme of services on-line (ref: Herefordshire Council Digital Communication Strategy – Cabinet,

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[13] Statistic Bulletin: internet access, households and individuals, 8 August 2013
[14] WeLoveLocalGov Blog, What Can Change in Five Years, 2011, From Housing and Litter to Facebook and Twitter Updating your Status, BDO Local Government, March 2012
[15] From Housing and Litter to Facebook and Twitter Updating your Status, BDO Local Government, March 2012
[16] Internet Access - Households and Individuals, 2013, 8 August 2013
[17] ref: www.fastershire.com

18 April 2013). This follows the trend that more than 80% of public services in the EU are now available online[18] with 41% of the EU population using government services electronically.[19]

CIPFA recorded the number of web visits to the Herefordshire library website that can be used to search reserve and renew stock. As the table shows there has been a significant increase in the last year reflecting increased internet use generally but also improve website.

Table 20: Web visits for Herefordshire library site

Web Visits	Number	per 1,000 population	Average compared*
2007-08	60,788	341	1,512
2008-09	52,651	294	1,256
2009-10	41,098	229	2,094
2010-11	63,514	354	1,254
2011-12	132,438	721	889

Source: CIPFA, 2012

CIPFA also showed that Herefordshire has below average for number of electronic terminals per 100k population, however slightly above average for hours available (bottom quartile for wifi access).

The table below shows the number of sessions at each of the sites. The usage varies and has reduced in some instances which are against the trend of increased IT use generally. This could be due to more people purchasing their own equipment to access the internet (including mobile devices).

Table 21: Number of public access PC use per sites

Library sites	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Hereford P.C. Sessions	39,304	47,660	38,166	37,355	35,868
Leominster P.C. Sessions	17,513	22,203	17,957	17,455	16,604
Ross P.C. Sessions	15,266	21,885	14,655	12,334	18,888
Ledbury P.C. Sessions	8,201	9,435	8,014	6,415	7,313
Bromyard P.C. Sessions	4,618	4,580	11,076	12,201	11,333
Kington P.C. Sessions	3,064	4,747	5,381	5,619	5,472
Belmont P.C. Sessions	761	1,468	1,133	1,084	1,027
Colwall P.C. Sessions	4,419	5,906	3,824	3,526	3,362
Weobley P.C. Sessions	425	404	223	128	113
Leintwardine P.C. Sessions	131	114	52	81	101

Source: Herefordshire Council, 2013

A Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries[20] illustrates that access to public access PCs are important as a first step into internet use and important for certain groups. Findings included:

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[18] Eurostat, 2010. Referenced: Cross European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013

[19] Eurostat, 2010. Referenced: Cross European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013

[20] Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries, March 2013, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

- Around 1% of all adults had first used a computer to access the internet in a public library (44% at home; 9% at friend's / family's house; 8% at work; 7% school or university).
- The primary motivations for public access computer (PAC) users are the free nature of the service together with no other option to access the internet. Those who tend to have no other options include Roma, people with disabilities, older people aged 55 and over, those not employed and people completing full time education at a relatively early age.
- 92% of PAC users believe the library's computer and internet connection services as valuable (for the UK medium use, medium / high value compared to other countries).
- 83% of PAC users indicated that their PAC use had delivered at least one impact – the most common impact was saving time and money, but also impact around education, access to government services and access to resources and skills necessary to find work.
- 20% of PAC users made use of PACs at least once a week and 27% once to three times a month – this implies the majority of use is for adhoc requirements.

6.   Compounded Factors

The protected characteristics and aspects of rural isolation and poverty also need be considered as combined factors – a person might face several characteristics that will have an impact on ability to access services. Also, characteristics will change during people's life time, for example poverty may be a temporary factor when employment is found. Considering the options for customer services and libraries the impact will focus on the following profiles mindful of the combined factors.

6.1   Age – Children
- The evidence suggests that young children benefit from a library service in terms of their reading and education attainment.
- Families in crisis affecting children's prospects and development.

6.2   Age – Older
- Impact study found high use of service by 65+
- Less likely to use the internet to access service.
- At risk of isolation.

6.3   Disability
- Less likely to use the internet.
- Isolation and mobility challenges.
- Use of services such as talking books.
- Multiple disabilities need to be considered.

6.4   Poverty
- Less likely to afford computer and access to the internet.
- Higher use of public access PCs.
- Less funds available to spend on travel.
- Combined factor of being in crisis.

6.5   Rural
- Access to services locally.
- Reduced options for public transport.
- Combined factor with poverty, disability and age to create isolation.

7.   Service Change

Herefordshire has introduced new ways of reaching customers and has implemented change in the library service based on recommendations of the Future Library Programme report (2011).

Local authorities have to face considerable pressure to meet local priorities of social care needs for adults and vulnerable children, along with reduction in national government spending. This means examining spend on services including customer and library services to ensure resources are meeting the needs of people within the community.

Additional future year savings made through customer services and libraries will support the reallocation of services to direct care.

CIPFA findings show that there has been a decline in the use of libraries in Herefordshire and elsewhere. Whilst attendees at Stakeholder Focus Group[21] pointed out this could be down to the quality of the libraries and the quality of the stock, it will also be down to alternative ways of accessing books and services.

Chief Executive Arts Council England Alan Davey states "Public libraries are at a pivotal point. They are much loved and expected to continue offering the same services as they have for many years, but they are also expected to respond to big changes in how people live their lives"[22]. Mr Davey continues "We expect to see a shift from a service provided to a community, to one in which local people are more active and involved in its design and delivery. People will be creating new content, having conversations and using new technology for their own benefit, for their community or their business".

Mr Davey's comments are in response to a report produced by Ipsos MORI and Shared Intelligence, 2012[23] points out "number of major changes in society over the next 10 years are likely to impact on libraries. The UK's population is growing, ageing and becoming increasingly diverse. The outlook for the economy is uncertain and there are serious concerns about poverty and inequality. The reductions in public expenditure look set to continue and public sector reform is likely to accelerate with a conscious drive towards localism, co-production, and the development of new and diverging forms of service delivery".

When putting data together more people who use libraries value their contribution to meeting community needs. Whilst 31.36% of the Herefordshire population are active borrowers (which is slightly above the national average) 48% of people in the UK felt libraries of very effective or effective in meeting community needs[24]. An EU survey found 74% of public felt that public libraries merited more financial support or funding should continue at present – 5% felt that libraries should receive less funding[25].

Considering changing trends, the development of technology, the public interest in services and budget pressures any new approach to customer services and libraries should include an

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[21] Sessions held with representatives of user groups and local councils to express views on options.
[22] A response to Envisioning the library of the future by Arts Council England Chief Executive Alan Davey
[23] Envisioning the library of the future Phases 1 and 2: full report, Research by Ipsos MORI and Shared Intelligence, this document is an independent report, part of Envisioning the library of the future, commissioned by Arts Council England.
[24] Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries, March 2013, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
[25] Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries, March 2013, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

examination of core purpose. For the core purpose to focus on creating shared and safe spaces with community involvement in their operation; to provide services that do not duplicate what is already provided, and uses public sector resources on intervention that addresses key needs, whilst enabling people to manage how they access services through a self-serve route.

8.   Options and Impact

8.1   Option 1 - Status Quo

8.1.1   Characteristic of the option

- Retain current opening hours with no more than a reduction of 10% opening over time.
- Additional opportune savings over time through back office practices and processes.
- Central library function to remain in place.
- Review in 18 months as will not meet the wider budget pressures.

8.1.2   Impact on protective characteristics

Age: this will not allow for the release of resources to direct care needs of older people or children. It also does not see change that would provide more targeted services to support people who would benefit most from the services. It does retain a universal approach that will enable every age to benefit and considering age is transient it means people will be familiar with customer services and libraries and use the services at different times in their life.

Disability: as the services will not change significantly there is no negative or additional positive effects on people with disabilities. The sites will continue to offer some specific services (e.g. Blue Badges and Talking Books). The central library function will support reading groups, some of which are to specific groups with a disability.

Poverty: it is likely there will need to be some increases in charging for services to balance increased expenditure (though books are not charged for). However, as the service will be largely unchanged there will be limited negative or positive effect on people on a low income. People who work but on a low income, the library service is important to upgrade skills and use the public access PC.

Rural: the central library function will remain in place which will enable the continued support of community libraries and more localised drop-off points. The customer services function will continue to operate in the market towns, though this obviously does not have deep rural reach and customers will still need to travel to market towns, use the phone, email or web.

8.1.3   Summary and recommendations

This option will have the minimum impact on current users. However, it does not give chance to recognise the bigger demands to deliver services where they are needed most. Generally the service will remain static and misses an opportunity for more targeted provision.

Recommendations:
- Customer services develop additional point of contact for adult social care clients.
- Redesign libraries to target needs of children, disabled people and older people including the type of stock purchased.
- Continue to support community libraries to enable greater access in rural areas.

8.2   Option 2 – Core Service with Top Up

8.2.1   Characteristic of the option

- Reduce the hours of library opening to create realigned expenditure.
- Refocus the service on core activity and target groups whilst still creating a universal approach.
- Introduce self-service route via the web, phone or email, or library stock check in and check out.
- Work with other groups and organisations to boost hours of opening providing additional functions, services and opportunities.
- Small libraries become community libraries.
- Retain central library function.

8.2.2   Impact on protected characteristics

Age – this option suggests a refocus of services which could potentially mean catering for age groups that need the service most. The reduction in hours means that some people will need to change their patterns of behaviour.

Disability – research has shown that the internet is less used by people with disabilities (though that is a very generalised statement and the web will be a life-line for many people with disabilities). Getting to a customer service centre or library open at reduced times would curtail the freedom of some disabled people. However, the option does mean that centres will still be open and used as "safe" place to visit, with the potential of additional functions that could present a wider benefit.

Poverty – This should not have a negative impact on people in poverty (in work or unemployed). Again there could be a need to change behaviour if opening times change, which should consider opening times that capture people not at work to use recourse on site to improve their employment prospects. Some services from customer services are essential for people in poverty and reduction in their availability will have an impact.

Rural – this option could have an impact on people in rural areas who travel to their market town customer service centre or library when they use public transport. This option retains support for community libraries and the potential to create more drop-off and collection points as part of rural services.

8.2.3   Summary and recommendation

This option seems to follow the wider shift to greater community involvement and recognising libraries as places for a wide range of activity and function. It also creates some savings, but to work does require investment to web development, self-service systems, redesign of spaces to cater for other functions.

Recommendations:
- Explore a partnership with agencies and services to gain or improve learning and employment opportunities through the use of centres; use customer services as the adult social care "front door"; and integrate other functions that provide an early intervention approach that supports the protective characteristics.
- Improve and extend the public access PCs for children to complete homework, communication opportunities and employment prospects.
- Instigate a programme of internet awareness along with improved web services.

- Investment in self-service systems which will free up support for people whose only option is face to face interaction.
- Retain services that are targeted at protective characteristics or look at alternative service providers, especially in the market towns where face to face services will be less available.
- Any redesign of services to involve the protective characteristics, and also work closely with user groups / representatives to shape services.
- The establishment of community libraries supported by central library provision including training for volunteers (incorporating diversity training).
- To design times that are reflective of the use by the protective characteristic, which might mean an increase in hours, in some instances, where justifiable and evidenced.
- Bus routes to be considered along with unique local circumstances when setting opening times for market town sites.
- Explore the option of an appointments based service in the market towns.

8.3   Option 3 – Centralised Provision

8.3.1   Characteristic of the option

- Retain the library and customer service centre in Hereford, with a one day a week service in the market towns.
- To target resources at people who need them most.
- To reinvest savings in priority areas of adult well being and child protection.
- To have a strong web presence to enable self service.
- Support the awareness of current providers of services and develop new markets where people can access services.
- That the change takes place over 18 months starting from the withdrawal from the lowest use centres.
- Withdrawal of a central library function that includes book stock, delivered services to the housebound and book clubs.

8.3.2   Impact on the protective characteristics

Age – Hereford will retain its provision, though in terms of current service this has a significant impact on age where services in the market towns will be down to one day a week. However, the reinvestment in priority services will have a positive impact in meeting people's direct care needs – this will mean very targeted use of resources to people who have been assessed as in most need. However, this option does impact on delivered services of books to housebound, and emphasis on internet access could affect older people.

Disability – Hereford will retain a customer service and library presence, though the nature of the one day provision in market towns will need to be different from the current "universal" provision, specially the library function.

Poverty – services will still be available in Herefordshire for people in crisis, along with phone and web channels. However, if the one day service in market towns is not suitable for people there may be a need to travel into Hereford which has a cost. The reliance on web due to cost of equipment, subscription and the limited availability of public access PCs could have an impact on people on low incomes.

Rural – out of all the options this will have the greatest impact on rural areas due to reduction of services in the market towns and withdrawal of the smaller libraries in the larger villages / wards.

The reduction of central library functions that supports community libraries will also be withdrawn with the provision of book stock and advice. Increased web provision will provide an opportunity to actually improve access to services for people who live in rural areas.

8.3.3 Summary and recommendations

This option will direct change in behaviour rather than a gentler enabling approach with people who can access services themselves having to do so, whilst targeting resource in catering for people who face to face is essential. The concept on a countywide library service will be redefined to a retained Hereford service.

- That additional assessment takes place to understand and address the impact on customers of significant change.
- The awareness, training and potentially financial support for the protective characteristics to access the internet, complimented by public sector web programmes.
- Improvements made to the Hereford sites to meet increased demands, with possible additional hours and additional public access PCs.
- Introduction of appointment based systems in the market towns to ensure customers of greatest need receive the services they need.
- Overhaul of back-office functions for customer contact to be operated by services.

8.4 Option 4 – Outsource and Partnerships

8.4.1 Characteristics of the options

- Outsource services to the private or voluntary sector.
- Consider local partnerships or cross county arrangements to deliver services.
- Potential split between libraries and customer services.
- The option tested through procurement and dialogue over an 18 month period.
- Potential for additional services to be delivered alongside other functions.

8.4.2 Impact on the protected characteristics

Age – the specifications to tender services could take account of customer requirements linked to age (along with disability). Also the potential to link to other outsourced services as part of multi-service function.

Disability – as above, consideration would be needed to be given to impact on people with disabilities.

Poverty – for services to be sustained in the voluntary or private sector there could be some additional charging, including access to PC use which supports people finding employment.

Rural – this option could sustain services at their current level which would reduce the impact on people in rural areas to be able to access customer services and libraries.

8.4.3 Summary and recommendations

This is the least developed option with uncertainty as to what the services would look like if tendered. Further assessment would be needed on separate options for outsourcing.

Recommendations:

- Additional assessment of customer requirements related to the protected characteristics for priorities of services to meet priority needs.
- For any tender specification to consider needs of people of different ages, disability, in poverty or isolated due to rurality.
- Impact assessment completed on tender submissions.

Stakeholder Focus Group - Common comments

Representatives of user groups and local councils

General Comments

- There has been continued under investment in the library stock which has had an effect on people using the services. Also, from the data the "better" libraries have had consistent numbers of visitors whilst reduction in numbers considering the poor quality of the building.

- Do not understand the value of merging customer services and libraries – as two different services with different requirements.

- There does not seem to be any professional / trained librarians operating at the centres and this has had an effect on the quality of the library service.

- Communities and local councils could be more involved but need to be careful in the use of volunteers in replacing professional staff.

- Herefordshire libraries need to catch up with other areas that operate self-service system.

- The proposals do not mention enough the benefits of libraries or a focus on "reading".

- There should be an emphasis on children and young people in helping their learning and experience contributing to the education and employment prospects (and support Herefordshire's economy in the long run).

- The proposals do not give any financial details of savings, so hard to compare, and does not give the long term prospects of services based on each option.

- There is an emphasis on digital but not an option of many people because of speed of broadband, the website not user friendly and older people not wanting to use it.

- Important to retain a universal service so people will be familiar with the services throughout their lives and know to come back to it when really need it – "whole life service".

- Libraries are lifeline for many isolated people, therefore providing a prevention service.

- The reduction of libraries in communities is seen as undermining local services in market towns and smaller communities.

- Libraries are used as safe spaces especially in market towns where there is little other community venues with open access.

- Herefordshire Council needs to cut their management and overhead costs before services that are valued by many people.

- An increased cross county working could create efficiencies or even amalgamation of services to create economies of scale.

- More opportunity to find sponsorship and commercial activity to let buildings.

- Libraries should have a strong link to the creation of a University of Herefordshire.

- Need to understand the core purpose of the service before making changes.

Option One – Status Quo with reductions over time

- The approach is already happening with reduced opening hours this year.
- This is closure by stealth – there needs to be a cap on how much reduced.
- Need opening hours that accommodate people who work (what about Sunday opening?)

Strengths	Weaknesses
Has the least impact on service change.	Not realistic – there is going to need to be some change to meet budget pressures.
Retains focus on services for everyone.	There is concern over increased number of lone workers.
Gradual change enabling staff and customers to adapt.	Likely to have less professional library staff as people leave.
	Drip, drip effect means constant tinkering.

Option two – Core Service

- Question over this is it contravenes the 1964 Act by the level of reductions.
- Would need investment in the web and self-service to work.
- Change in hours needs to take into consideration working people's access to services.
- What is meant by "core" service – bit confusing with central services.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Retains a presence in the market towns.	Reduces the opportunity for people in the market towns to access services creating rural isolation.
Is a half-way house for cuts.	There would be pressure on Hereford which would need investment.
	Creating a "post code lottery" for accessing customer service and libraries.

Option three – Top-Up

- Very similar to the option above (should they be considered as one?).
- Recognises libraries as part of the wider community and community benefit.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Positive collaborative approach.	Emphasis on others to "prop up" the service and which might not be there.
Could use volunteers more (for certain things).	Reduces the book stock space.
Would enable the service to be redeveloped over time.	Looks like replacing professional staff with volunteers and a number of risks around that (eg skills and reliability).
In-line with much of the national thinking of libraries as safe / community spaces.	
Opportunity to let premises to raise income.	
Variety and diversity would reinforce the service.	
Gives option for town councils to pay and	

become involved in services.	

Option four – Centralised Provision

• Would be subject to judicial review.
• Looks like a plan to sell off the buildings to raise income.
• Emphasis on electronic delivery of service but failings in the internet and web presence, with many people not having the money or skills to use the web.
• This would stop a lot of people using the service as would not be able to travel.
• Another example of eroding services in the market towns and rural areas.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Nets savings that can be used within care pressures in the local authority.	Too much strain on Hereford at the library and Franklin House – both of which would need work on them to cope with the change.
Opportunity to merge Hereford sites in a bigger and better location.	The assets would not be used for the purpose they were intended.
	There would be no library presence in the market towns (a mobile service would not be able to carry the book stock).
	High reliance on web / internet which is not available.
	There would be limited access for public access PCs which are a life line for people.

Option Five – Outsourcing

• It has happened elsewhere – but not seen how this has worked well.
• There are number things that could go wrong creating high risk and uncertainty.
• This should include merging with other counties.
• Too vague and not sure anyone would take up the service.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Link libraries and heritage through a trust (mirror the Arts Council set up).	Would not meet many savings because still have to pay a private company/trust.
Potential to separate libraries and customer services.	Would take time to implement through a tender or discussion process.
Can apply for other sources of funding not open to the local authority.	Question over security and sustainability of an outsourced arrangement (especially if council decides to withdraw its funding).
Can link to existing trusts.	

Staff Focus Group - common comments

Library, customer services, customer contact and union representatives

General Comments

- Concerns over increased lone working and how it will affect customers.

- The demands on the service seem to be increasing rather than decreasing, and struggling to cope in some instances.

- Digital services not the answer for everything – some people need very intensive support and need to come into the office.

- It would reduce time and money if there were better systems in place – letters regarding council tax confuse people so they come in or phone up regarding queries that could have been clearer in the first place.

- Other parts of the organisation are "making business" for the front of house service – litter fines have to be paid in person at a customer service centre.

- Considerations given to staff that have a disability such as sight impairment as system introduced actually hinders not helps.

- Staff to be more involved in shaping services.

- Rather than cutting services, could there be more opportunity for charging.

- We need a co-ordinated countywide customer service and library with a clear strategic vision, service targets etc. to maximise efficiencies and ensure equality of service.

- Need to support people who can't read and write.

- Why not stop out of hours service to reduce costs.

Option One – Status Quo with reductions over time

- This will end up in a lack of cohesive strategy and co-ordinated countywide service.

- Increased and increasing pressure on staff to deliver the same service with less resource.

- Seems like "death by a thousand cuts" which has been going on for years.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Less immediate impact on staff and customers.	Does not recognise need for change.
Would not need a restructure which would tie up people's time to get the real work done.	Does not create the savings which are required.
	Reduced and reducing capacity for delivering service.
	Loss of expertise, across the board, as people get fed up and leave.
	Will continue to create uncertainty because the reductions will still be required.
	Stress placed upon staff.
	Responsive rather than proactive approach.
	Likely to be asked for more savings in years to come, so short term.

Option Two – Core Service

- Seems to go against council priorities - reducing library opening hours when children's issues and demand from elderly and vulnerable is increasing; reducing access to public computers at the same time as promoting digital channels.
- Running community libraries takes a lot of resources.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Retains a co-ordinated county-wide customer service and library function.	50% reduction in main library opening hours could breach statutory requirement for "comprehensive and efficient" library service.
Retains a market towns presence.	Decreased provision for in-depth customer service enquiries locally means increased pressure on call centre / Franklin House.
Services could grow again when demand and resources increase.	
Impact on customers less negative than option 4.	Loss of local expertise in staffing.
	Leaves community libraries vulnerable to failure.
	Inefficient use of buildings whilst still retaining most of their cost.
	No investment in development or income generation – need to reinvest to get web and email right.
	Danger of fragmented service.

Option Three – Top Up

- Sites developed to accommodate additional services from private and third sector, e.g. educational courses, job clubs, literacy projects, coffee shops, friends groups, outreach work with local schools.
- Some sites will need investment to redesign counter areas. Could mean further investment in development of buildings and services, e.g. e-books, self-service, coffee shop, meeting rooms for hire.
- Partners using sites would need to fit with strategic plan for services.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Co-ordinated county-wide customer service and library function.	Still negative impact on customers, particularly outside Hereford.
Retains market towns presence and Services could grow again when demand and resources increase. Improved use of buildings.	Reducing hours when they are needed more due to recession.
Improved access to local services through partnership.	Reduced opening hour's means less access to public computers at the same time as promoting digital channels.
Builds locality role for sites as community hubs.	Decreased provision for in-depth enquiries locally means increased pressure on call centre / Franklin House.
Transformation project enables reduction in face-to-face provision by growing infrastructure and digital access.	Gradual loss of local expertise and flexibility with staffing.
Delivers immediate savings, with further savings over time.	Less immediate savings, although possibly more over time.
Increased capacity for future development and income generation.	Need to invest in sites.

Option four – Centralised Provision

- Too much pressure on Hereford venues – would need to extend the opening hours.
- Can see considerable impact on the reputation of the council – which will be felt by the front line staff.
- If withdraw from the market towns customer service provision in one quick hit the current back office and digital solutions simply will not cope. They need a proper transformation programme and a phased withdrawal.
- Seems to go against current council's policies – these services provide a preventative service for people getting into crisis; addresses isolation for older people; against sustaining rural areas.
- Not sure this option would meet the council's equality duty as specifically discriminates against older people in rural areas who do not have access to their own transport.
- Would work in a less sparse county with good public transport networks, but not Herefordshire.
- Customer Service Centres/libraries the only front facing service provided by the local authority in market towns.
- Centres really important to people – especially vulnerable people who need face to face services.
- Contradicts the public commitment from former Leader that the market town libraries will not close.
- Raises questions over the continuation of Masters House project relating to external funding.
- Feels like throwing out the "baby with the bath rather".

Strengths	Weaknesses
Drives change in behaviour of customers.	Mass redundancies with loss of expertise.
	Back office functions and digital channels couldn't cope with increased demand.
	Rural population disenfranchised - highly negative impact on market towns.
	Impacts most on vulnerable customers and those with poor mobility.
	One day in market town insufficient to cope with local demand.
	No time or resources to develop alternative provision.
	Concern whether achievable – also politically high risk with elections in May 2015 (would not be supported by MPs).
	Closing market town libraries would breach statutory requirement to provide "comprehensive and efficient library service for local people".
	What about impact on people who rely on bus services?

Option Five – Outsourcing

- The private sector will make the saving by stripping out process that the local authority could do if it had a collaborative approach across the whole organisation.
- It could enable the School Library service to reduce red tape and operate out-of-county.
- Part of the service could be outsourced linked to relevant services, e.g. it was suggested that the Blue Badge service could potentially be separated and outsourced independently, or that it could merge with Shopmobility onto one site.
- An outsourced provider would not have the same level of sensitivity to the situation, as keeping costs down in order to make a profit would be the priority.
- Risk of data protection being compromised if customer services outsourced.
- TUPE requirement.
- If outsourced, HC would need to improve contract management practices to ensure that standard and quality of service were maintained, and to embed better communication.
- Could create fractured services and seen by the customer as such.
- Not clear where the savings are.
- Questions of sustainability. What happens if it fails?

Strengths	Weaknesses
With a trust opportunity to access different sorts of funding.	A private company will be in the business to make money and strip the assets.
With a charity there would be the same staff ethos of "doing something for the community".	Outsourcing would result in fractured /insufficient communication between organisations.
	Likely to see rural / market town sites closed.
	The full life procurement costs are likely to be high.
	No obvious savings for some time.
	Few libraries have gone down this route with no track record of working.

Stakeholder Consultation on the future of Libraries and Customer Service Centres

Introduction

This document outlines some first thoughts on the options for libraries and customer service centres operated across Herefordshire. This document complements an impact survey available for people who use libraries and customer service centres to comment on how changes to the facilities could affect them.

A combination of information will be used to create a set of options for operating facilities in the future, which would include existing data regarding usage and range of services accessed, results from the impact survey, previous consultation and comments made regarding the outline options. Also to be taken into account will be the county's demographics and geography.

There is no doubt that Herefordshire Council's budget is under pressure and all services require a degree of scrutiny to create a sound financial footing for the future. However, also driving change are the trends regarding the use of libraries and customer services which have shifted over the years, with declining in person visits next to different opportunities to access services especially via the internet and growing trend for self-serve increasingly being operated by the private and public sectors.

Additionally, the availability of books at no or low cost has broken down many of the old barriers to enabling a range of reading choices and growth of community lead schemes such as community libraries. The growth "self-serve/community delivery" is reflective of the changing nature of local government where services are more relevantly delivered at a very local level with less centralised control. Across the country local authorities are tackling the balance of covering the cost of operating libraries and customer service centres whilst meeting local expectations and needs.

Within this document a range of options that need to be explored and exposed, enabling cabinet members to make an informed decision at committee in September 2013.

Option 1 - Status Quo with reductions over time

To retain the current arrangements regarding services on offer and opening times based on a "universal service" approach. To reduce cost, by non-recruitment of staff when people leave, increasing lone working and changing opening hours over time. Additional savings are to be implemented on processes and practices again over time. This will not create significant change and/or release funds to be deployed elsewhere or investment in other delivery mechanisms such as digital or targeted services for older people and the most vulnerable.

Option 2 - Core Service

To refocus the service on core activity, still creating a universal approach but with reduced hours (eg up to 50% reduced and withdrawal from smaller libraries). Customers will be re-directed to other ways of accessing the services, eg payment at different facilities, better digital access, email and phone. The provision of the centres will be for customers who genuinely need face-to-face services, with all other customers encouraged to operate a self-service route learning from how this has worked well in the private sector and local authority services. There may need some capital investment and a campaign to raise awareness with customers of the different options. This also means there needs to be effective digital access.

Option 3 - Top Up

This is based on the local authority providing a core service but "topped up" by a range of opportunities by the community, private sector, partnerships with education, merger with other services, etc. The "top up" would cover the cost of additional services or opening hours and can be very flexible in its nature. This may involve some capital improvements to sites where services are co-located or where the community wish to use the space. This could also mean a reduction in space for library stock, though compensated by more options for reviewing library stock digitally (on and off site) or using volunteer "book advisors" who can help people find the right book for them.

The small libraries to possibly become community run with back-up from local authority services – this would mean bodies like local councils and user group resourcing the facilities and taking local control. The delivered service to the housebound to remain in place, though schools library/book clubs be self-financing.

Option 4 – Centralised Provision
To retain a central service for libraries and customer service centres in Hereford, with a one day presence in each of the market towns. This change to take place over an 18 month period whilst the digital services and self-service opportunities become available and a campaign of awareness with customers takes place on how to access services locally (eg existing pay points). The service in Hereford will mainly be appointment based and available to the most needed. This will net the largest savings and the opportunity to release some of the sites for sale or community transfer.

Local areas would have the option of running their own libraries or book exchange projects; and there could be local drop / off and collection points for library stock.

Options 5 – Outsourcing
For the services to be delivered by a third party of either a social enterprise/charitable trust, other public body, private sector or at an individual locality level by the community. It would be likely that different elements will appeal to different bodies with the libraries potentially joining a heritage trust, existing trust or individual arrangement in each locality which enables local control. This would potentially mean split of the service functions, though could bring new approaches and collaborations which enables the services to be sustainable.

Savings on non domestic rates (NNDR) can be made by a charity (50% savings on rates). The functions do have high expenditure with little opportunity of income which might have an influence on likely bodies interested in operating the services and have continuing need for subsidy by the local authority. This option would need time to develop and tested through procurement and dialogue over an 18 month period.

Customer Contact Centre and the Web
The customer contact centre deals with email and phone queries and will remain in place though some savings may be gained through re-arranging back office operations – for example more opportunity to make payments through the phone.

There will also be a more interactive web-presence which will help customers' access services at a time suitable to them using personal accounts. However, it is understood that training might be needed to support customers to use the web – though recognising that for some people it may never be an option.

Understanding these are early thoughts on the options, what are your views on the strengths and weaknesses of each option, and how do you think this could affect people who need these services

most? Email comments to (in the Subject box please use "library and customer services options":
measuringtheimpact@herefordshire.gov.uk.