

Suffolk Libraries

Annual Review 2017-18



Thank you to the following organisations for their support:



Chairman's introduction



“Our ambition is to enrich the lives of everyone in Suffolk.”

I hope you enjoy reading this annual review which once again demonstrates a year of hard work and positive progress for Suffolk Libraries. Once again, we have increased the number of activities, and the number of active participants across the county, while many other library services across the country are, regrettably, in a state of managed decline.

We are all excited about Suffolk Libraries' prestigious new status as a National Portfolio Organisation, awarded by Arts Council England, which will ensure we are able to enhance our role in promoting creativity, particularly among young people in our communities.

We also reached an agreement with Suffolk County Council to a fixed contract sum to cover the five-year period from 2017 to 2022. While we have plenty of challenges ahead, this settlement at least means we have some certainty and stability in our funding for the next few years.

I paid tribute to our former CEO Alison Wheeler in last year's report. To no-one's surprise she continued to display her passion, commitment and resourcefulness up to – and beyond – the day she retired in February 2018.

I'm delighted to introduce Suffolk Libraries new Chief Executive Bruce Leeke in this review (more from him on page 11!) We interviewed a strong field of candidates but I was delighted that Bruce agreed to become our new CEO after greatly impressing a demanding interview panel, which included Ciara Eastell, a recent President of the Society of Chief Librarians.

In a few short months he has brought a different kind of energy and insight to our affairs which has generated confidence and admiration within Suffolk Libraries, and among our partners, volunteers and customers. He has a clear, inspiring vision for the future which I believe will ensure we build on our leadership role in the library sector in the coming years.

I would like to end by giving thanks to the great motivation and creativity of our staff, volunteers, and professional partners who, in challenging times, are still delivering an ever-improving service to our customers.

Tony Brown, Chair of Suffolk Libraries Board.

Suffolk Libraries Board Members 2017-18

Tony Brown – Chair

Sylvia Knights – Vice Chair

Maureen Garratt Simpson – Honorary Secretary

Sue Buck

Jonathan Ogden – Retired in May 2018

Colin Rockall

Sarah Wilson

Alison Wheeler (Chief Executive and ex officio board member) – Retired in February 2018

Bruce Leeke (Chief Executive and ex officio board member) – From February 2018.

Innovation and Development

Suffolk Libraries Local

Suffolk Libraries continued to trial its new 'Pop-up' library experience – Suffolk Libraries Local – which aims to deliver a weekly slice of library life to local communities. Three pilot sites were trialled during the year and the most successful – in Shotley Village Hall – has continued into 2018-19. Thanks to locality funding from the county council and support from Ipswich Borough Council, a new session was also launched at Ransomes Pavilion on the outskirts of Ipswich.



The launch of the Rushmere Suffolk Libraries Local session.

In August 2018 Babergh District Council also launched its own pop-up pilot offering its customers access to council information and services alongside the Shotley library sessions. The Suffolk Libraries Local equipment is also ideally suited for external events such as the Ipswich Town Open Day where it was used in July 2018.

eLibrary growth

Several libraries (including Sudbury, Stoke and Long Melford) ran Get Connected events to promote online library services and give customers advice.

Suffolk Libraries' eLibrary services have been growing rapidly over the past few years with half a million items borrowed. In 2017-18 nearly 107,000 eBooks were borrowed and 29,000 eAudio books.

Several libraries now offer eReader devices or iPads to borrow, so that customers can try them out before buying one and discover the range of online library services. In August 2018 Suffolk Libraries also launched a new service called PressReader which gives free access to thousands of online newspapers and magazines.

Micro:bits

Another new device which can now be borrowed from all Suffolk libraries is the Micro:bit. Micro:bits can be used to code all sorts of creations, from music to robots to your own Hogwarts Sorting Hat.

The device has many features, including 25 red LEDs that can flash messages and two programmable buttons that can be used to control games and motion and direction detectors.

Optimo

In early 2017, with support from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, Suffolk Libraries worked with the other three mutual library services to co-found a new consortium called 'Optimo' to provide practical support for other councils considering similar 'mutual' models. Optimo is helping to enhance the reputation of Suffolk Libraries nationally as well as providing an additional source of income.

Arts and performances

One of the most exciting and important developments over the past year has been the development and launch of the new Suffolk Libraries Arts Programme.

Suffolk Libraries now officially has National Portfolio Status, which was awarded to six library services by Arts Council England in 2017. National Portfolio Status means the Arts Council considers an organisation is doing work of national significance and Suffolk Libraries was awarded over £700,000 to carry out this work with young people over four years.

The new programme has been named BLOC – ‘Building Libraries on Creativity’ - with the different themes of Arts and Create, Film and Digital, Literature, Music and Dance and Wellbeing and Inclusion. It was launched in August 2018 following a week-long artists residency at Ipswich County Library. During this residency, ten artists from different art forms and practices explored the theme of Arts in the Community. BLOC will continue to develop in 2018-19 with pilot activity being delivered and more libraries welcomed into the programme.

On top of being an exciting project and one which will help to promote libraries as places where everyone can access culture and the arts, it's vital for Suffolk Libraries to be reaching out to younger people who are under-represented as library users.



Suffolk Libraries arts programmes coordinator Melissa Matthews said:

“We believe that being creative can be used as a catalyst for bringing communities together and to support wellbeing in young people.”

Alongside BLOC there have been plenty of other performances and activities to bring the community together:

The Suffolk Libraries Presents Programme is still continuing with some libraries screening arts performances and films. Felixstowe Library screened ‘Our Coastal Life on Film’, a collection of archive films from Suffolk and Norfolk and Debenham Library screened the local documentary ‘Life on the Deben’. Southwold Library hosts regular screenings of family films with related children’s craft activities.

Throughout the year libraries have also hosted amazing high-quality performances including a tour by Librarian Theatre, Human Story Theatre, Once Upon A Festival and Suffolk-based theatre company Wonderful Beast.

Several libraries marked National Libraries Week by turning their libraries into ‘Fun Palaces’ in October 2017 with a range of surprising and engaging activities.

Libraries continued to host live music performances with Honey and the Bear and Steve Tiltson both performing at Beccles Library during the year.



Wonderful Beast performing at Ipswich County Library.

Suffolk Libraries

The highlights of 2017-2018

April 2017

- **Framlingham Town Council** moved its office to the library, helping to create a one-stop shop in the town and bringing in more customers and some additional income.
- Time-travelling Victorian duo Morgan & West performed their amazing children’s magic show at two events organised by **Mildenhall** and **Glemsford libraries**.
- **Clare Library** hosted an archaeology afternoon for families with Stour Valley Archaeology and Travels in Time with a presentation and a practical hands-on dig outside.

June 2017

- **Southwold Library** hosted the fifth Slaughter in Southwold crime writers’ festival.
- The Cake and Revolution Women’s Institute group hosted a Mad Hatter’s Tea Party at **Ipswich County Library** to raise money for the library and the WI.

July 2017

■ **Rosehill Library** in Ipswich reopened following significant work to improve the 113 year old library (see right) and its facilities.



August 2017

- **The Friends of Broomhill Library** and **Suffolk Libraries** worked with SaveMoneyCutCarbon to install new higher quality, long-life, low-energy LED lights which have cut down on energy costs.
- An event was held to mark the 25th anniversary of the current **Bungay Library** and also the fifth anniversary of the Friends of Bungay Community Library. August was also the fifth anniversary of the launch of Suffolk Libraries as an independent organisation.

September 2017



■ **Ipswich County Library’s** Chat n Chill project (see picture above) was one of four UK library projects to be shortlisted for the prestigious Libraries Change Lives Award. **Chat n’ Chill** offers women from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to gather on a regular basis to help them integrate into the Suffolk community, improve their English and make friends. It was also a finalist in the East Anglian Daily Times 2017 Business Awards.

October 2017

■ Four libraries hosted displays from the **British Library's 'Harry Potter: A History of Magic'** exhibition which celebrated the historical, folkloric and mythological origins of magic that J. K. Rowling drew on in the creation of the Harry Potter stories. The exhibition started at **Ipswich County Library** and then moved on to **Haverhill, Felixstowe** and **Newmarket libraries**. (See pictures below).



November 2017

■ Having signed an automatic **five-year extension** to the contract with **Suffolk County Council** to run the library service until 2022, **Suffolk Libraries** also welcomed the agreement of a budget for the service which involved an initial one-off reduction of £50,000 for 2018-19 and then no further funding cuts for the lifetime of the current contract.

■ **Sudbury Library** held a special presentation event to announce the winners of a children's writing competition and to launch a book publishing the entries which featured a forward written by best-selling author Anthony Horowitz OBE.

December 2017

■ **Glemsford Library** held a 'Riot Night' with live music, local ales, good food and dancing to commemorate the memorable polling riots of 1885, when around 400 men from Glemsford descended on Long Melford to demand their own polling station and started a riot that caused such havoc that the military had to be called in from Bury St Edmunds to restore order.

■ **Elmswell Library** offered festive cheer to any local people living on their own or who felt lonely or isolated in the run up to Christmas by offering free tea, coffee, biscuits or mince pies throughout December and a chance to chat to staff and other customers.

■ In the run up to Christmas, several libraries, including **Elmswell**, also acted as foodbank collection points.

■ The **Friends of Thurston Library** again teamed up with the nearby St Peter's Church to jointly host a Christmas Tree Festival.

February 2018

■ **Halesworth Library** hosted a '**Bannocks and Blood**' murder mystery afternoon based on a story specially written for libraries by bestselling Shetland and Vera author Ann Cleeves.

■ Several libraries again celebrated **Harry Potter Book Night** (see picture right) with a series of magical events with a 'Fantastic Beasts' theme.



■ **Bury St Edmunds Library** took part in the first ever Suffolk Science Festival with a host of activities.

■ **Newmarket Library** was highly commended in the Newmarket Service Excellence Awards for its customer service.

.....
March 2018

■ Several libraries launched **Sporting Memories Groups**. These groups help to tackle dementia, depression and loneliness by bringing people together to talk about their memories of sport.

■ Ipswich Town and England legend **Terry Butcher** came back to his home town to take part in the Sporting Memories launch at **Lowestoft Library** and talk about his career.

■ **Kesgrave Library** unveiled a new and improved 'comfy corner' at a special Paddington themed event. The new furniture was bought with funding from Anglia Research.

.....
Other highlights



The design for the new Eye Library. Image courtesy of Concertus.

■ The opening hours also changed at **Eye Library** following consultation with customers and the county council announced that Eye Library would be moving to a new building in 2019.

■ During the year **Haverhill, Needham and Clare libraries** all successfully consulted with their customers over changes to opening hours which would take effect in 2018-19.

■ During the year there were refurbishment and improvement projects at the following libraries: **Broomhill, Halesworth, Ixworth, Long Melford, Rosehill, Sudbury and Kesgrave.**

■ **Suffolk Libraries** again had a presence at the Latitude festival (see below), providing storytelling and craft sessions.



■ Towards the end of 2017-18 the newly formed **Friends of Felixstowe Library** (see above) were gearing up for their official launch with help from BBC Radio Suffolk presenter Lesley Dolphin, and the Mayor of Felixstowe Nick Barber.



Reading and literacy

Young readers

In 2017 the number of children taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge rose again to over 8,300. This was the fifth consecutive year this number increased and children taking part also read over 85,000 books and nearly 2,300 registered for their first library card, showing how this national campaign helps to introduce young children to the library service.

Libraries also again ran the ImagiNation programme for young people alongside the Summer Reading Challenge.

Suffolk Libraries supported a campaign by the charity BookTrust which aims to help children (and parents!) get a good night's sleep. The Bath, Book, Bed campaign provides parents of young children with a new free booklet which puts stories firmly at the centre of a good night's sleep and offers a range of useful tips for getting children to sleep at night.

Literary festivals

April 2018 saw the first ever 'Skulduggery in Stowmarket' crime writers' festival. Inspired by the success of Slaughter in Southwold, it involved four days of talks by top crime writers with plenty of crime-related activities including a quiz, a murder mystery event, workshops and a day of activities for younger readers.

Slaughter in Southwold continues to go from strength to strength and the 2017 event was the fifth, with 160 people enjoying talks by authors such as Elly Griffiths and M.J. Arlidge and Isabelle Grey who both also worked as screenwriters on TV crime dramas.

Lowestoft Literary Festival returned in October 2017. This event is organised by the Friends of Lowestoft Library and the programme included biologist and primatologist Ben Garrod and presenter, author and journalist Libby Purves.



Staff and pupils at The Oaks Primary School with their reading pledge.

Let's Talk Reading

Suffolk Libraries has continued to host and support the Let's Talk Reading project which works to improve literacy amongst children and adults in Ipswich. This included helping to launch a Read Easy Ipswich group, supporting the children's literacy charity Beanstalk to become established in Suffolk and encouraging schools in Ipswich to sign up to a reading pledge.

Freddy's Fund

Another exciting new development in early 2018 was the launch of Freddy's Fund. Thanks to the generous donation of £5,000 from library customer Frederika Phillips, this new fund was launched to support library-based literacy projects across the county. Around £1,000 has already been allocated to projects including Storywalk events at Stoke Library, writing workshops at Halesworth and Bungay libraries, Chatterbooks reading groups at Felixstowe, literacy games at Gainsborough Library and a script reading group at Kedington Library.



Children were given a special book to keep after the Storywalk event at Stoke Library.



NewChapters

Mental Health & Wellbeing Information Service

This unique service continues to develop and grow both in its work with partnership organisations and the difference it's making to people's lives.

After jointly securing funding for three years, New Chapters has worked with Suffolk Mind and Suffolk Family Carers to develop the new SAGES information, advice and emotional guidance service which will launch formally later in 2018.



Suffolk Libraries has seen an increase in wellbeing enquiries during the year with over 9,100 during 2017-18; an increase of around 1,500 since 2016-17.

One of the key roles of the New Chapters service has been to support staff by organising training to enable them to deal with the wellbeing needs of customers.

Open Space sessions launched in Ipswich County Library in 2016. The aim was to provide those affected with mental health issues with a relaxed and open environment to discuss the issues that affect their lives and a chance to meet new people. These weekly sessions continue to be very popular with

increasing numbers of people joining in. Open Space groups now run in Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Newmarket and Sudbury with plans to launch them in other libraries.

Suffolk Libraries is also carrying out a detailed evaluation of the Open Space model to provide evidence of the way the project and the library environment is supporting people's wellbeing.



An Open Space session.

Move It!

The New Chapters service also funded a range of sport and fitness equipment which can now be borrowed from Stowmarket, Haverhill, Gainsborough, Saxmundham, Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket libraries. The 'Move It' project aims to support the 'Most Active County' partnership by encouraging library customers to try something different.

New Chapters has also worked to improve the availability of resources, such as Books on Prescription and is building other unique reading lists suggested by people with lived experience; such as those affected by addiction or bereavement by suicide.



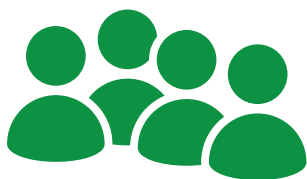
The Launch of the Move It equipment at Gainsborough Library.

The Suffolk Libraries Extra Scheme was officially launched in June 2017 and has now raised over £8,000. The scheme is helping to support new and innovative projects across libraries including a Dementia Café at Stradbroke Library, CoderDojo events at Stoke and Ipswich Libraries, IT courses at Newmarket, memory kits at Aldeburgh Library and an outreach project with schools at Bungay Library.

There are three annual membership levels – Silver (£20), Gold (£50) and Platinum (£150). The scheme has over 130 members, many of which have already renewed for a second year. We're very grateful to all of them and would particularly like to acknowledge the support of our Platinum Members:

- Sheila Ash
- David Wild
- Guenever Pachent
- Gale Pryor
- Patricia Heathcote
- Paul Garcia
- M John Clayton
- Heather Smith
- Peter McElduff
- Alison Wheeler

FACTS & FIGURES 17-18



182,298
attendances at



12,659
activities
and events

3.033
million
visits to
libraries.



2.84million
books borrowed –
an increase from
previous years. This
included nearly
107,000 eBook loans.



Our three mobile libraries visit over 550 locations every month and in 2017-18 issued nearly 98,000 books and were visited 26,418 times.



99%

of the **3,400** people who responded to the 2017 customer survey said they **felt their library was important.**



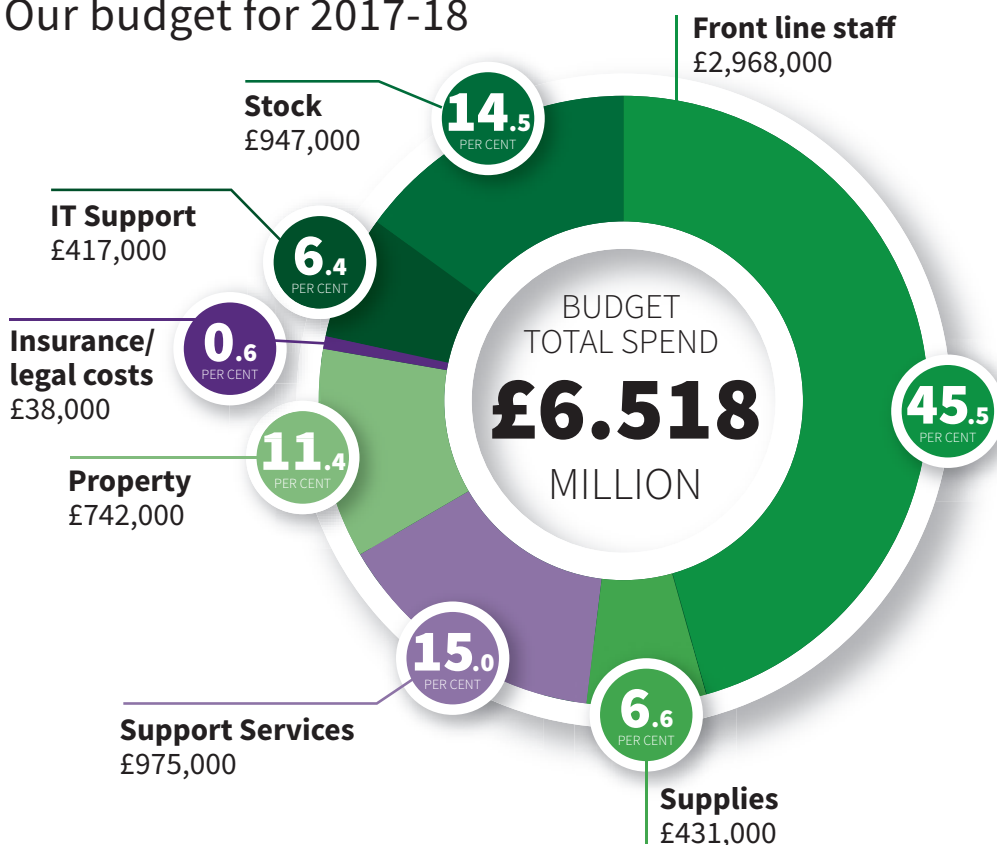
and **2,200** attendances at the **Open Space sessions** run in libraries for people to talk about their health and wellbeing.

500,000+

items have now been borrowed from Suffolk Libraries' eLibrary service (eBooks, eAudio books and eMagazines).



Our budget for 2017-18



Chief Executive's Message

I was delighted to become the Chief Executive of Suffolk Libraries this year.

Whichever way you look at it Suffolk Libraries is an inspiring story. Born out of a necessity to save money, whilst still keeping libraries open, the organisation embraced the challenges it faced and has excelled ever since.

This past year has provided concrete evidence of that success with borrowing increasing for the first time in over five years with well over three million individual transactions. The number of events, and activities continues to skyrocket and has increased from 9,534 to 11,120 to 12,659 over the past three years. The number of attendances at these has also increased from 155,876 to 175,561 to 182,298. The numbers speak for themselves.

But what's the reality behind these numbers? In simple terms there has never been a greater need for the services that Suffolk Libraries delivers to its customers every day. Being at the heart of the local community means that it's our responsibility to provide relevant, exciting and engaging services, experiences and content.

The strong platform that has been built means the future is about redefining the way that the people of Suffolk see their libraries. To survive and excel it is imperative that Suffolk Libraries understands its customers. To be truly successful for the next five years I believe we have to ensure we continue to resonate with existing customers and become relevant to new ones.

Our libraries can offer so much to people and I want to make sure an even broader section of the community is aware of this. That is why it is so important to focus on the experience that libraries can deliver and how it can be tailored to the needs of each individual.

I firmly believe we have something to offer everyone and as Tony mentions in his introduction, it is our aim to enrich the quality of everyone's life in Suffolk. To do this successfully we want to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of our customers and how we can fulfil them.

I'm very excited about what can be achieved with the support of our brilliant staff, the Suffolk Libraries Board and the tremendous backing we get from community groups and volunteers. I'm confident that by working together we can go on to achieve even greater things and I'm looking forward to the challenge!

Bruce Leeke, Chief Executive of Suffolk Libraries



Bruce Leeke, Chief Executive of Suffolk Libraries. Image courtesy of the East Anglian Daily Times/Sarah Lucy Brown.

“ *The number of events, activities and experiences and those attending them continues to skyrocket.* ”

Suffolk Libraries

Customer comments:

"I find our library service is outstanding in a number of ways: promptly finding requested book titles, purchasing for stock as required, answering email queries without delay and in a nice personal way, and providing not only a mobile library service but an on line borrowing provision too."

"Amazing service! Stock team are so helpful with queries. Suffolk Libraries provides a wonderful service."

"The library staff in Woodbridge are always very helpful and courteous. Whenever I have any problems there is always someone prepared to assist me."

Suffolk Libraries

Ipswich County Library,
Northgate Street,
Ipswich, IP1 3DE

Tel: 01473 351249

Web: www.suffolklibraries.co.uk

 @SuffolkLibrary

 www.facebook.com/SuffolkLibraries



Sales of a book of rare postcards raised £1,200 for Elmswell Library.



Summer Reading Challenge Presentation at Newmarket Library.



The Friday afternoon tea club at Wickham Market Library.



Bookstart bear meeting children at Chantry Library.

Supported by

