

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 7 December 2023

## Future Libraries

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### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1. It is recommended that Committee:
  - 1.1.1. Notes this update on Edinburgh's Library Service and the plans for future development;
  - 1.1.2. Agrees the proposal to develop a new strategy and vision for Edinburgh City Libraries Service which will provide the framework for service delivery and development over the next five years;
  - 1.1.3. Agrees to commence an engagement and formal consultation process to be undertaken with residents, service users, elected members, key stakeholders and library staff to gather views and feedback on current and future libraries service provision in order to help shape a new libraries strategy and vision and to inform future proposals for change;
  - 1.1.4. Agrees to receive a future report following completion of the engagement and consultation processes, which will include any specific proposals for change and the new libraries strategy for approval;
  - 1.1.5. Agrees to establish a time limited All Party Oversight Group (APOG) to oversee the development of the libraries strategy and vision; and
  - 1.1.6. If Committee agrees recommendation 1.1.5, agree the membership of the APOG as proposed at paragraph 4.5 and note that the APOG will be convened at key stages of the service review.

#### Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Evelyn Kilmurry, Head of Libraries, Sport and Wellbeing

E-mail: [evelyn.kilmurry@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:evelyn.kilmurry@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 7894

## Future Libraries

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1. This report provides an overview of the proposal to develop a new strategy and vision for the library service and seeks approval to undertake engagement and consultation processes to gather views and suggestions in relation to the development work.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1. Over 10 years have passed since the publication of the Edinburgh City Libraries Strategy, (“Next Generation Library and Information Services Strategy 2012-2015”) with unprecedented change and challenge facing the service throughout that time (including the impact of the Covid pandemic, continuous innovation in technological developments, and a changed financial landscape). Although Edinburgh’s libraries have continued to evolve and remain connected to their local communities, delivering vital services that make a positive difference in people’s lives, there is a recognition that change is needed to do things differently, more sustainably and more efficiently for the future.

#### **Key Drivers for Change**

- 3.2. There are a number of key drivers contributing to the ambition to develop a new vision and strategy for the libraries service to:
  - 3.2.1. Modernise the service in order to improve performance, shape the service into one that’s fit for the future and build on libraries post covid recovery;
  - 3.2.2. Better align with the priorities set out in the Council’s Business Plan;
  - 3.2.3. Be able to respond positively to changing customer need and expectations in a transforming digital world;
  - 3.2.4. Identify any potential efficiencies to make the service financially sustainable; and
  - 3.2.5. Maximise the use of the physical estate.

## **Evidence Based Approach to Change**

- 3.3. Officers have undertaken an initial analysis of relevant data, statistics and trend information (Appendix 1) to better understand current use and demand for service. Some initial findings from this include:
- 3.3.1. An upward trajectory in service use and book loans post Covid as people start to return to libraries, accompanied by the sustained high use of digital services following a rapid rise in downloads during the pandemic;
  - 3.3.2. Significance of the positive impact of the programmes of events and activities delivered by libraries in encouraging the active use of the service;
  - 3.3.3. The value of partnership approaches to meeting need, as demonstrated by the success of libraries involvement in the Council's Warm and Welcoming initiative;
  - 3.3.4. The importance of the library service for children and young people with high numbers registered as active library members;
  - 3.3.5. The importance of computer and WiFi access to library customers, especially for those from areas of higher deprivation;
  - 3.3.6. The high use of self-service kiosks for transactional service use (when Edinburgh Libraries offered this service);
  - 3.3.7. The success of some libraries in areas of higher deprivation and those serving more rural communities and the wider reach and success of libraries located in hub buildings;
  - 3.3.8. The value, flexibility and success of the mobile vehicle services in reaching the most vulnerable community members; and
  - 3.3.9. The key importance of library staff especially in delivering targeted interventions.

## **4. Main report**

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### **Strategic Context**

- 4.1. Libraries make a significant contribution across all three strategic priorities in the Council's Business Plan. The Plan prioritises developing a library service for the future which enables people to access public services locally and digitally in ways that meet their needs and expectations and contributes to a greener net zero city. To do this successfully, the Libraries Service needs to develop a new vision, strategy and proposed approach to provide a modern, sustainable library service which is fit for the future.
- 4.2. The development of the new strategy will be aligned with a number of key Council, city and national strategies including:
- 4.2.1. Citywide Cultural Strategy 2023-2030;

- 4.2.2. 20 Minute Neighbourhood Strategy;
- 4.2.3. Corporate Property Strategy;
- 4.2.4. Emerging Community Centre Strategy;
- 4.2.5. Forward: Scotland's Public Library Strategy; and
- 4.2.6. Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools: A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland 2018-2023.

### **Engagement and Consultation**

- 4.3. In order to best shape the future libraries strategy and vision, it is proposed to undertake an extensive programme of engagement and consultation with residents, service users, elected members, key stakeholders and library staff to gather views and feedback on the current and future libraries service provision. It is anticipated that the initial engagement process is undertaken between December 2023 and spring 2024, to be followed up by a formal consultation process undertaken during early summer. The feedback from both processes will be reviewed and will inform the development of the new libraries' strategy.
- 4.4. A staff organisational review process (following the Council's Managing Change Policy) will follow the delivery of the proposed wider public engagement and consultation programme on the libraries' strategy and vision. It is recognised that library staff have been in a position of uncertainty for a long time awaiting the delivery of an organisational review. It is proposed that staff are actively engaged in the engagement and consultation process and that their views are taken into consideration. Approval of the approach will provide the staff group with a clear timeline for delivery of the organisational change process.

### **Governance**

- 4.5. It is proposed that a time limited All Party Oversight Group (APOG) is set up to ensure Elected Members are kept informed at key stages in the development of the strategy. Committee is asked to agree to the creation of this APOG and to agree the proposed membership of the group to include Group Leaders and Culture and Communities spokespeople.

### **Range of Opportunities for Potential Change**

- 4.6. The new strategy needs to recognise and successfully respond to the changing needs of the city's population and the ways that people choose to access library services, prioritising resources to enable community and school library services to reach more people and help them achieve improved outcomes in life.
- 4.7. A service review will be undertaken alongside the development of the new strategy in order to identify proposals for change to improve provision, performance and to deliver efficiency savings to mitigate against current budget pressures and to explore opportunities for future investment in the service.
- 4.8. A wide range of opportunities for potential change and areas for focus will be explored including:

4.8.1. The type of services that libraries deliver;

4.8.2. How services are delivered; and

4.8.3. Where and when services are delivered.

### **Dependencies**

4.9. There are a number of key dependencies with the plans as described which include:

4.9.1. The need to invest in technology to allow the service to modernise the offer and better meet current and future customer need;

4.9.2. Any future potential changes to how libraries use the property estate to be strategically aligned with the 20 Minute Neighbourhood and Corporate Property Strategies in taking a place-based and multi-service approach which fully involves local communities in the decision-making process;

4.9.3. Development of a closer strengthened relationship between school and community libraries to best support young people to reach their full potential;

4.9.4. Modernisation of the mobile library service to enable the service to continue to reach the most vulnerable community members.

## **5. Next Steps**

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5.1. Officers will continue to gather and analyse data and performance information to inform the development of the new strategy and vision.

5.2. If Committee agree the report recommendations, public engagement and consultation processes will be undertaken. It is anticipated that the initial engagement process will take place from the end of December 2023 through to spring 2024. The findings will be analysed, and a further consultation process will be undertaken early summer 2024, informed by the findings from the engagement process.

5.3. The new libraries strategy will be developed and reported back to Committee for approval, alongside any proposals for change in service provision.

## **6. Financial impact**

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6.1. The libraries service currently has budget pressures of £0.935m. The pressures are due to:

6.1.1. Previously approved employee budget savings of £0.350m not being achieved to date and a £0.085m reduction in external funding;

6.1.2. Additional security costs of £0.140m;

6.1.3. Additional refuse and cleaning costs of £0.050m; and

6.1.4. A forecast reduction in income of £0.310m from overdue charges, photocopying, room rentals and audio/visual rentals.

- 6.1.5. There are also estimated budget pressures of £0.045m for support costs for the People's Network service which fluctuate on an annual basis; and
- 6.1.6. In addition to the pressures highlighted above, the service is required to take necessary action to operate within the budgeted level of funding per post to manage the impact of pay increments.
- 6.2. There is limited scope to invest in future IT improvements and additional capital and revenue funding would need to be identified to support IT development.
- 6.3. As part of the work to develop the future libraries strategy, a number of proposals for change will be explored which will enable the delivery of efficiency savings to close the existing budget gap and identify opportunities for future IT investment. As this will be informed by engagement and consultation processes and by the development of the future libraries' strategy, it is anticipated that contribution to the budget pressure will be delivered in 2025/26. However, the service will continue to proactively explore all measures to mitigate the existing budget pressures during 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 6.4. The previously approved employee budget savings will be delivered through an organisational review process and will form part of the implementation plan for the new strategy and vision.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1. Officers have started to develop an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which will consider equality, human rights and socio-economic disadvantage implications. Work on developing the IIA will continue throughout the development of the new libraries strategy and vision.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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- 8.1. There are no positive or negative environmental impacts arising at this stage. Officers will continue to assess this as the work to develop the new libraries strategy and vision moves forward, noting that a key driver for change is to enable the service to better align with the priorities in the Council's Business Plan, including the Council's net zero ambitions.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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- 9.1. The proposals in this report recognise the need to undertake appropriate public and key stakeholder engagement and consultation processes to ensure that views are taken into consideration when developing the future libraries strategy. This consultation will be carried out in line with the Council's Engagement and Consultation Policy.

- 9.2. A Communications Plan will be developed to support the delivery of the engagement and consultation processes with a wide range of communication channels and approaches used to ensure that the process is robust and reaches a many people as possible with specific targeted communication to ensure those from protected characteristic groups are engaged.
- 9.3. Any emerging risks will be subject to ongoing tracking, mitigation and management through the appropriate risk register.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1. There are no background papers or external references associated with this report.

## **11. Appendices**

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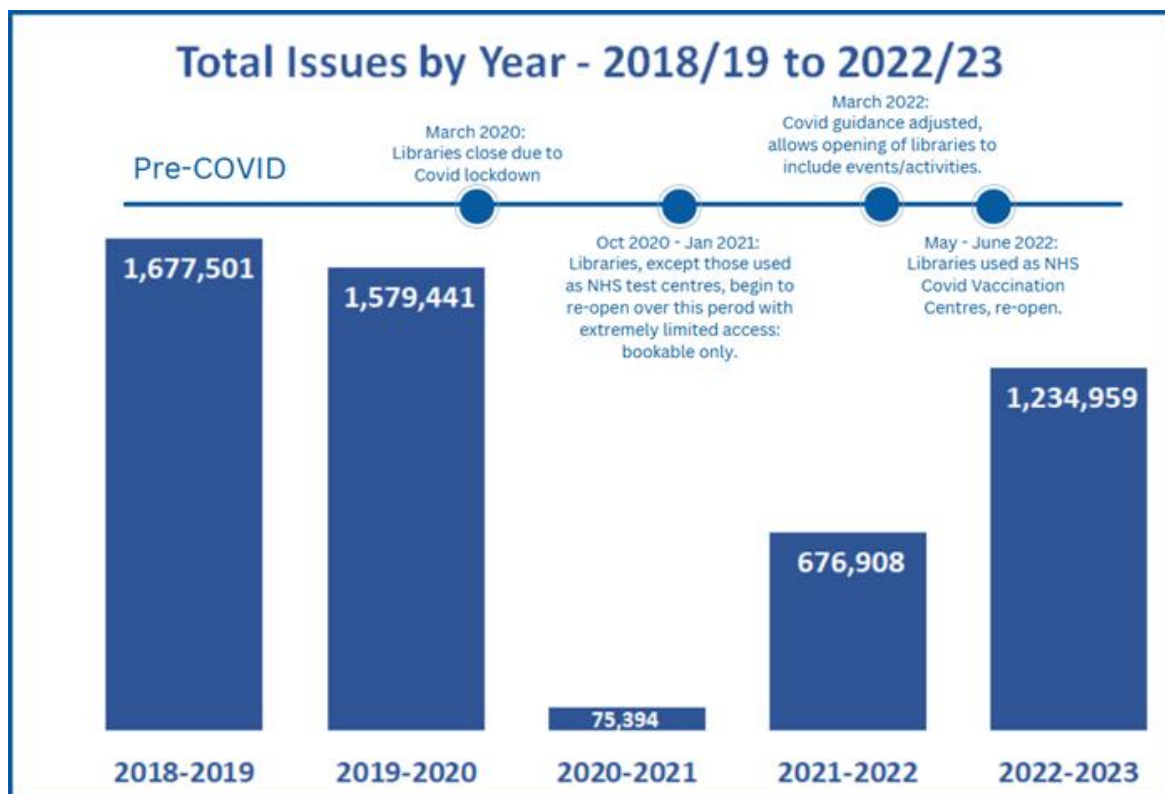
- 11.1. Appendix 1 – Edinburgh City Libraries Key Service Use Data.

## Appendix 1

## Edinburgh City Libraries Key Service Use Data

## 1. Items Issued

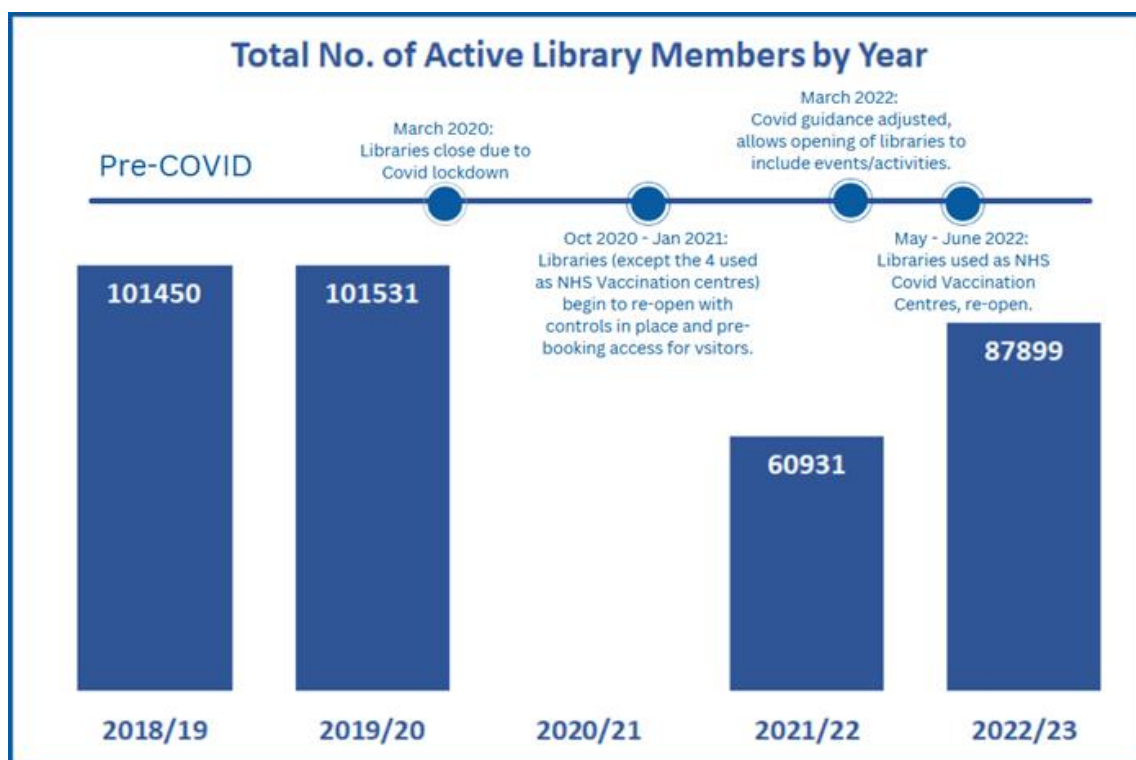
In 2022/23 the total number of items issued was **1,234,959**, a 22% drop in total issues from 2019/20. However, this represents an 82% increase in book loans and a 44% increase in library card use compared to 2021/22 when there were no events/ activities held due to COVID restrictions. 84% of all items were issued between 10am and 5pm. Higher use on Saturdays was noted.





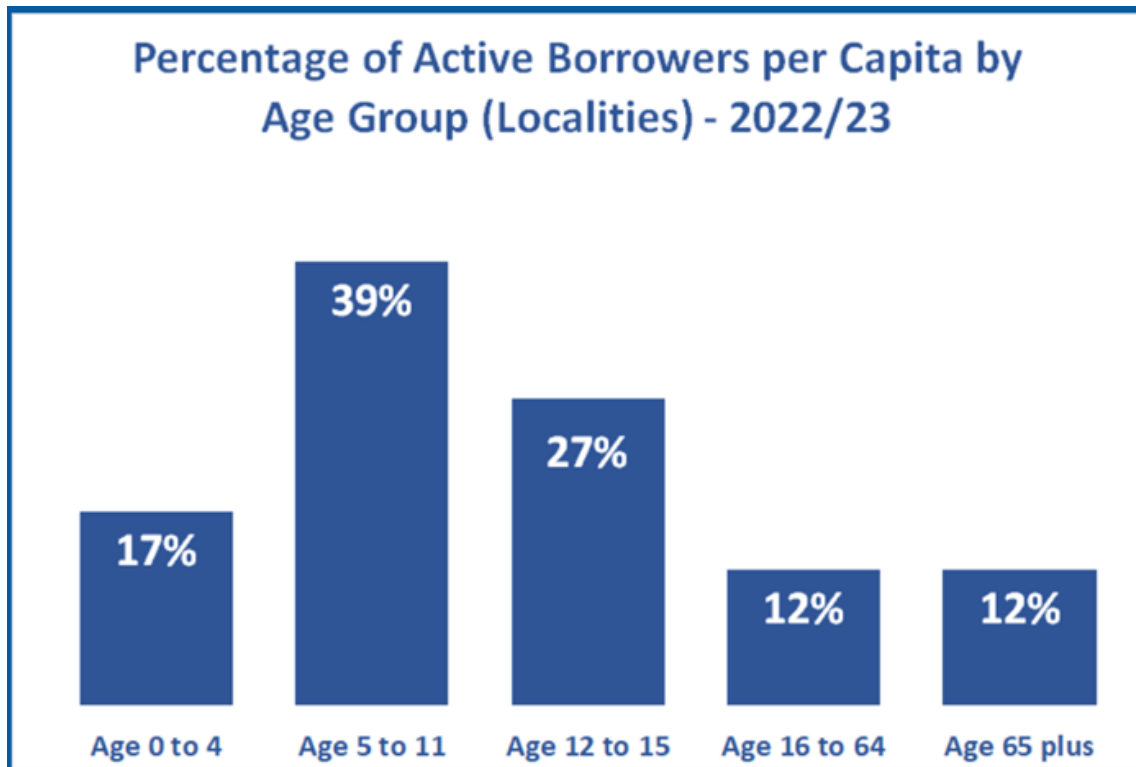
## 2. Active Borrowers (Library members who have used their card at least once in a 12 month period)

Approximately **1 in 6** local residents (87,899 people) have used their library card to access a library service at least once from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Similar to the number of books loaned, the library membership numbers are showing strong signs of recovery, especially for young people where levels of use are now exceeding pre Covid figures.



### 3. Active Borrowers by Age Group

Whilst almost 60% of active borrowers are aged between 16 and 64, the per-capita age profile of use below provides a clearer picture of library use by age, illustrating that nearly 40% of children aged 5-11 have used their library card at least once in the last year, and 27% of teens.

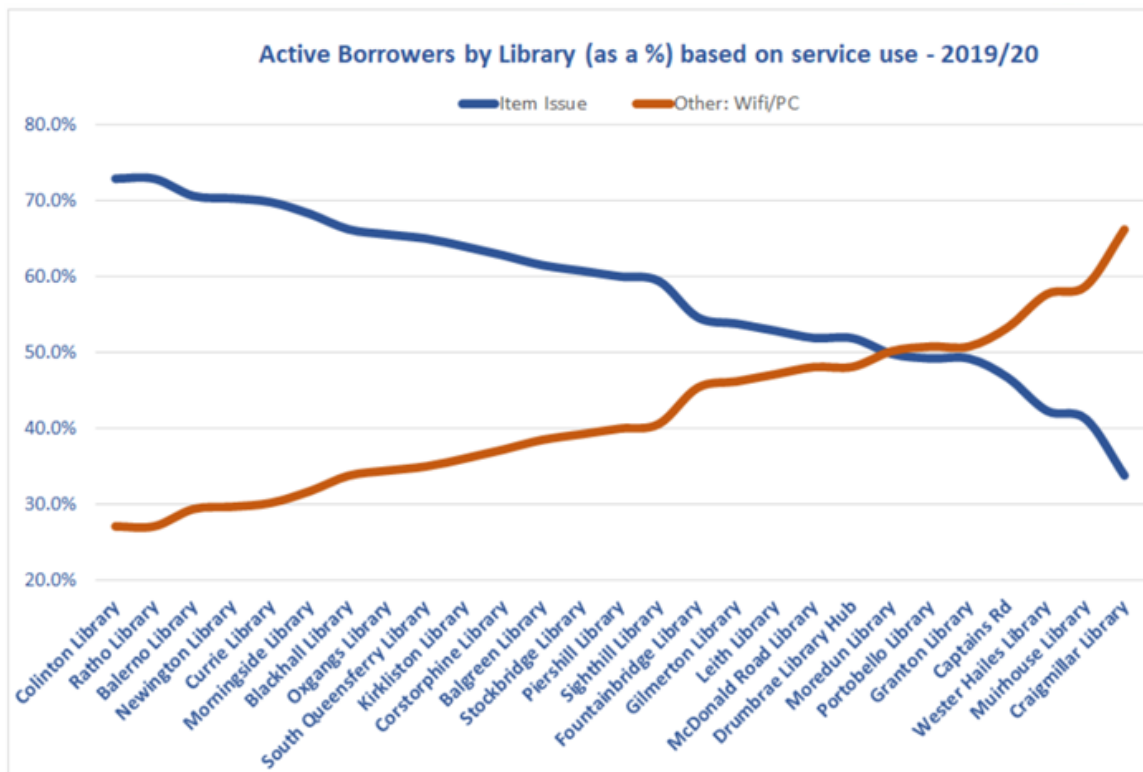


#### 4. Active Borrowers by Library

Whilst citywide book borrowing was the primary service for card use, this varied significantly by library with libraries in lower SIMD areas such as Wester Hailes, Muirhouse & Craigmillar showing higher use for people accessing PC's and the internet.

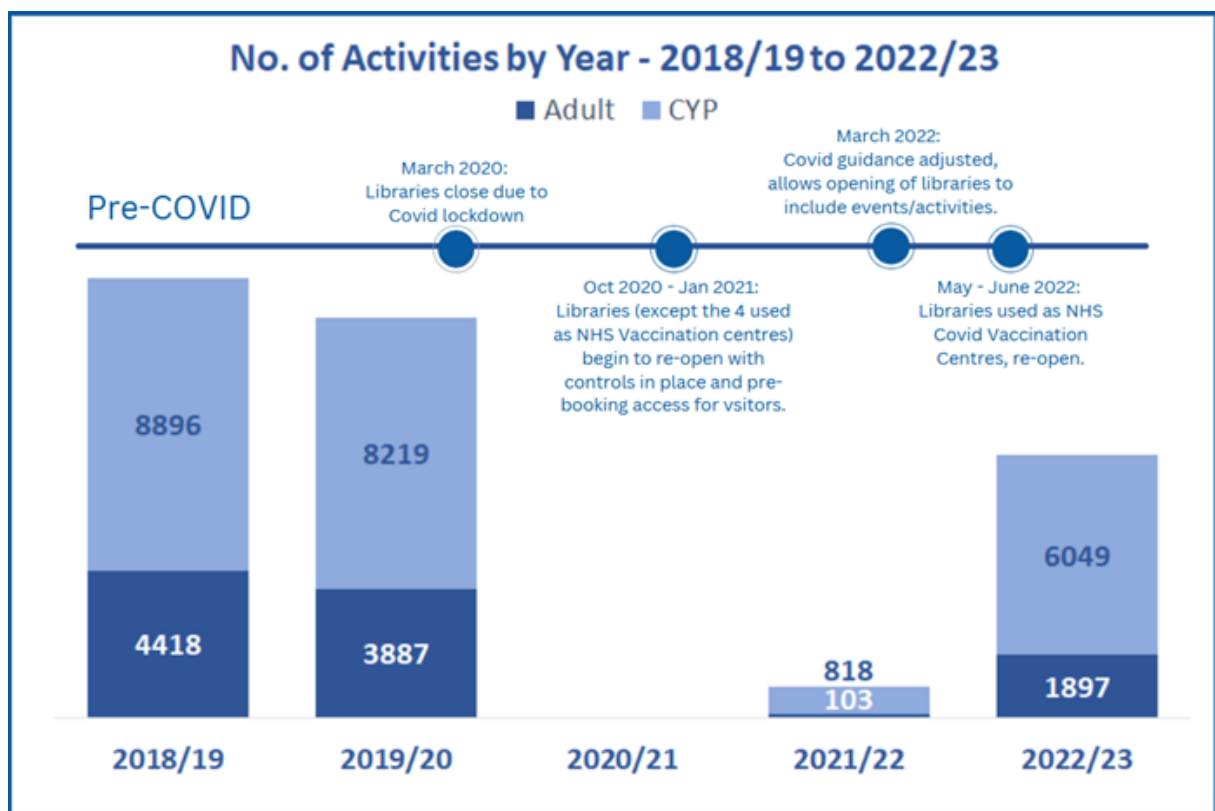
The below table provides an illustration of active library members use based on:

- a. Library card used to borrow an item (blue line)
- b. Library card used for other service (Wi-Fi/PC) but not to borrow (orange line)



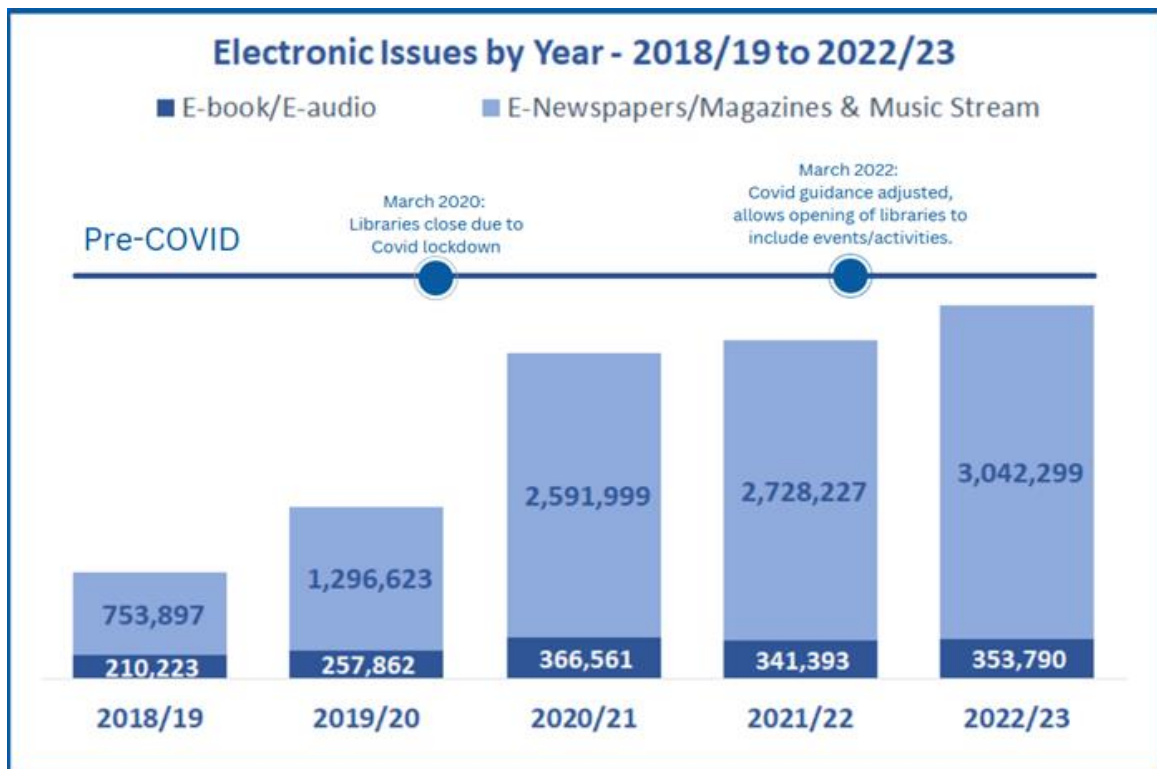
## 5. Activities and Events

Last year libraries delivered a total of 7,946 free activities (6,049 CYP and 1,897 Adult) with a total attendance of **127, 630**. Activities were gradually re-introduced from April 2022 after Covid restrictions were relaxed, resulting in a significant increase in borrowing figures and library use. Many of these activities were held in partnership with a wide range of third sector, voluntary and community organisations.



## 6. Digital Service

The total electronic issues in 2022/23 was 3,396,089. Downloads of Newspapers and Magazines accounted for 90% of all electronic issues. E-books and e-audio books accounted for 29% of all book issues in 2022/23 representing a 10% increase from 2019/20. The table below illustrates a sustained increase in electronic issues from 2020/21 when libraries were closed, with only e-book issues dropping by an average of 5.5% post Covid as some people turned back to print.

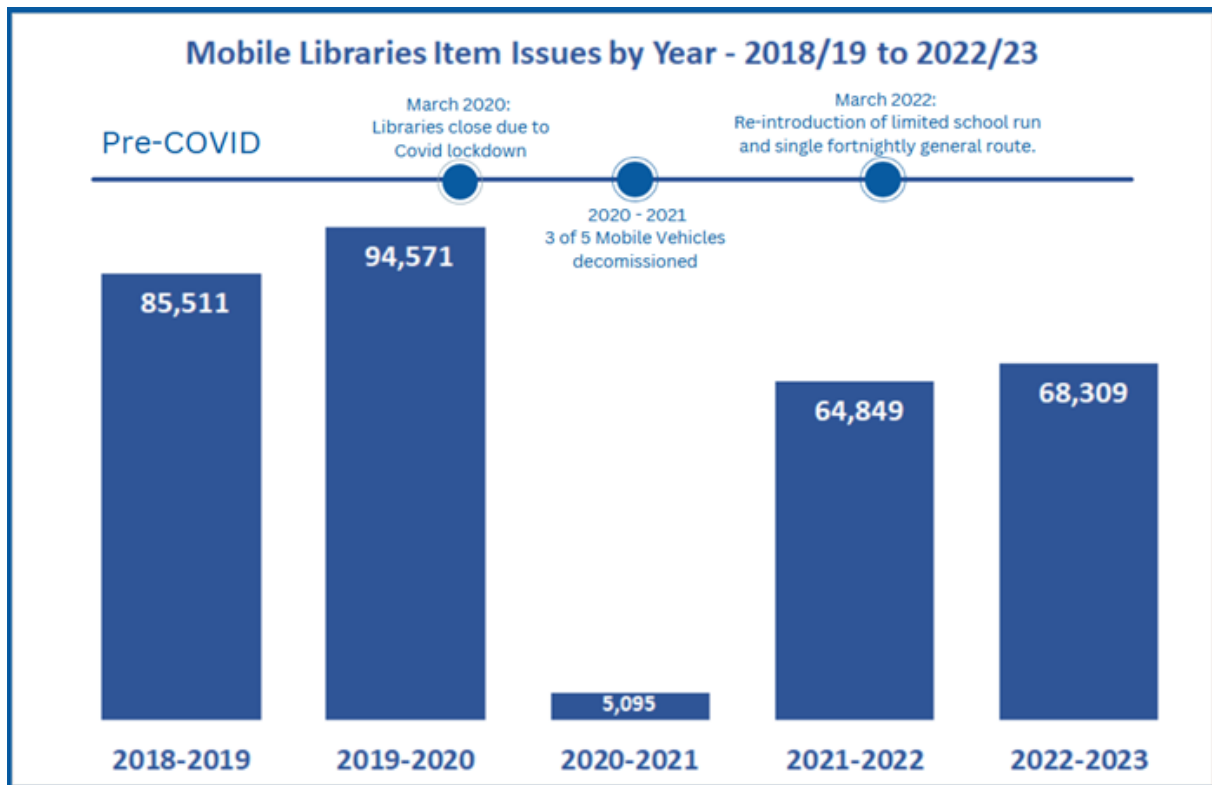


## 7. Self Service Offer

In 2019, 15 libraries had self-service kiosks which were used by customers and accounted for 48% of total issues in libraries with kiosks (32% of overall citywide issues). Currently libraries have no self-service kiosks as they were decommissioned in 2019 due to an identified security risk.

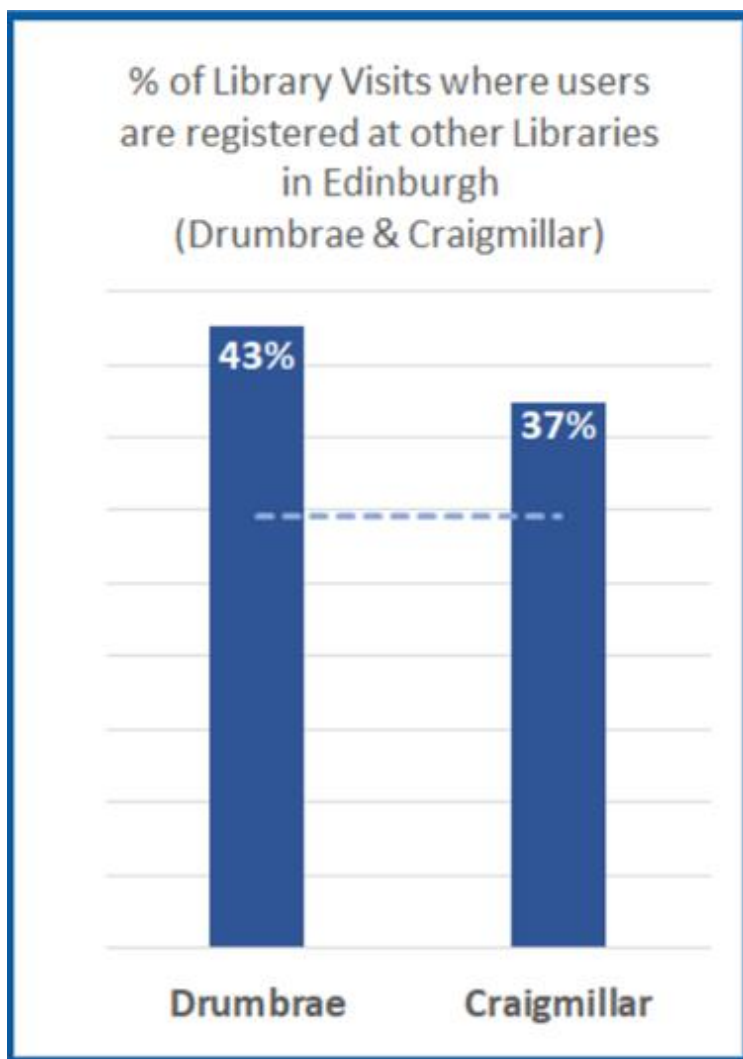
## 8. Mobile Library Service

Our mobile service reaches the most isolated in our communities and has the third highest number of book loans. In 2022/23, the mobile service loaned 68,309 books (the citywide average number of loans per library is 36,920). Last year our 'Bookbus' service accounted for **38%** of all class visits delivered by libraries and maintained a book trolley service to over **90** care homes and sheltered housing complexes. This was achieved with 2 mobile library vehicles.



## 9. Hub Libraries

Our 2 hub libraries, Drumbrae and Craigmillar have a higher than average number of people use their services who registered their membership at other libraries.



Our libraries in areas of higher deprivation, in hubs and those serving more rural communities consistently feature in our top 10 highest performing libraries based on community reach/ active users per capita.