

Equality Impact Assessment

Rochdale Borough Libraries Strategy 2026-2031

Please see the accompanying guidance document which provides information to help you fill out this Equality Impact Assessment.

Section One: Information about the proposal

Officer completing the EIA: Penny Butterworth

Department and service: Rochdale Borough Libraries, Townships & Libraries

Date of assessment: 23.02.2026

Overview:

The new Rochdale Library Strategy is being developed to set out an updated vision for how library services will be delivered across the borough in the coming years. The previous Library Service Strategy demonstrated that libraries play a central role in providing accessible spaces for learning, culture, digital inclusion and community wellbeing, operating across 16 branches and supporting a wide range of local needs.

The development of a new strategy is therefore required to ensure the service continues to adapt to changing community needs, financial pressures, digital transformation, and the requirement for library buildings to remain accessible and fit for purpose. The previous strategy emphasised the importance of aligning the service with wider council priorities such as prosperous people and places, digital inclusion, health and wellbeing, and culture, a direction which the new strategy continues.

By establishing a clear strategic framework for the future of the service, the new Library Strategy provides the necessary context for this Equality Impact Assessment, ensuring that changes to the service are delivered in a fair, inclusive and accessible way for all residents.

Decision required:

The Equality Impact Assessment relates to the following decision:

The new Rochdale Library Strategy is formally approved, setting the future vision and framework for the delivery of library services across the borough. This decision reflects the established role of libraries in providing accessible community spaces for learning, culture, digital inclusion and wellbeing, as evidenced in previous strategic documentation

Section Two: Equality Impact Assessment Screening

1.	Are there any aspects / activities of the proposal, policy, plan or project that are particularly relevant to equality, socio-economic disadvantage, or human rights? At this stage, you do not have to list possible impacts, just identify the areas.
	Yes. Several elements of the new Library Strategy are directly relevant to equality, socio-economic disadvantage and human rights. Libraries in Rochdale already play a recognised role in providing inclusive, accessible services, particularly for residents who experience social or economic disadvantage, as demonstrated in the previous Library Service Strategy. The strategy highlights that libraries provide safe, welcoming spaces open to all, and offer access to information, digital resources and community services, which is essential for equality of opportunities. Rochdale also experiences significant socio-economic disadvantage, and the library service has previously delivered programmes that specifically address these inequalities, such as digital skills support, free access to PCs and Wi-Fi, and initiatives aimed at supporting families facing holiday poverty (e.g., <i>Fit, Feed and Read</i>). These activities show that the service already targets barriers linked to income, digital exclusion and access to services. In developing the new strategy, it is therefore essential to consider how proposed changes may affect protected groups, people who rely heavily on library services because of disability, age, poverty or lack of digital access, and residents who may face increased barriers if services or buildings are altered. The strategy must remain mindful of ensuring equal access to learning, culture, digital inclusion and community support.
2	What existing sources of information will you use to help you identify the likely impact on different groups of people? (For example, statistics, JSNA's, stakeholder evidence, survey results, complaints analysis, consultation documents, customer feedback, existing briefings, comparative data from local or national external sources).
	To assess the likely impact of the new Library Strategy on different groups of people, the following existing sources of information will be used: • Local Needs Assessments, including socio-economic and demographic data relevant to Rochdale communities. • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), providing evidence on health inequalities, socio-economic disadvantage and population needs across the borough. • Consultation findings from previous strategy engagement, including public feedback showing high satisfaction (96%) and the community's use of library services. • Online survey results and public engagement exercises, such as those conducted during the Library Strategy consultations (including children and young people's feedback). • Greater Manchester (GM) regional statistics, supporting comparison of digital inclusion, deprivation, and cultural engagement across the GM area. • Library Management System (Spydus) data, including borrowing trends, demographic usage patterns, digital usage and service demand.

- Existing council evidence, including previous library service performance data and partnership information from the existing Library Service Strategy.

3	Are there gaps in information that make it difficult or impossible to form an opinion on how your proposals might affect different groups of people? If so, what are the gaps, and how and when do you plan to collect additional information to address this? (This information will help you to identify potential equality stakeholders and specific issues that affect them - essential information if you are planning to consult as you can raise specific issues with particular groups as part of the consultation process. EIAs often pause at this stage while additional information is obtained)
	Yes, there are some gaps in information which limit the ability to fully assess how the proposals might affect different groups of people. At present, the library service is aware—through consultation feedback and community engagement—that there are specific challenges for certain groups, including members of the deaf community and the traveller community, who may experience barriers in accessing services. However, more detailed and consistent data is required to fully understand the scale and nature of these issues. There are also gaps in demographic data, as the library service does not routinely collect information on disability, ethnicity, or other protected characteristics during face-to-face library membership registration. While the online registration system allows users to skip demographic questions, this results in incomplete or inconsistent datasets. This limits the ability to analyse usage trends by protected group and to identify whether any changes proposed in the strategy might disproportionately affect specific communities. Additional gaps exist in relation to digital participation and attendance at cultural events, where demographic data is not currently collected in a structured or consistent way. This makes it difficult to understand who benefits from these programmes and whether any groups are under-represented. To address these gaps, the council plans to: - Review and improve demographic data collection methods for both in-person and online registrations. - Explore ethical and GDPR-compliant approaches to gathering voluntary demographic data for digital activities and cultural events. - Use future consultation exercises, surveys and targeted engagement with specific communities (e.g., deaf community, traveller community) to build a clearer understanding of barriers and service needs. - Analyse updated data annually to assess whether impacts differ across protected groups and whether early adjustments to the strategy are required. These steps will ensure the service has the necessary information to identify equality issues and address them proactively.

4	How will consultation and/or engagement inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on protected groups of residents, service users and/or staff? Detail how your approach will facilitate the inclusion of protected groups likely to be impacted by the decision.
Consultation and engagement will play a central role in informing the assessment of how the Library Strategy may affect protected groups. A wide-ranging public engagement process has been carried out, involving groups and stakeholders that are representative of a broad range of protected characteristics and socio-economic backgrounds. Evidence from these discussions shows some engagement from diverse user groups and highlights how libraries need to meet the needs of these groups better as they still seem to be experiencing disadvantage by not using their local libraries for many reasons. The information gathered through these engagement activities helps identify which groups experience disadvantage, where barriers exist (including digital, cultural and physical access), and what adjustments may be needed to ensure the strategy supports equality of opportunity. This inclusive approach ensures that the final Library Strategy is informed by the lived experiences of residents, service users and staff, helping the service to understand and address inequalities. The findings will guide decisions on service design, building accessibility, digital access, programming and outreach to ensure that the library service can best meet the needs of Rochdale's diverse communities.	

5	Potential external impacts: Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact service users, communities or residents with protected characteristics?
No	

6	Potential internal impacts: Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact Rochdale Council employees?
No	

7	Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required?
Yes	

8	If you do not agree that a full equality impact assessment is required, please set out your justification for why not.
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	A full EIA will need to be done in the vast majority of cases. Where evidence demonstrates there are no impacts at all, officers will not need to fill one out. This will be in a very small minority of cases.
N/A	

Lead officer approving the EIA screening (this must be an Assistant Director or Director): Rafael Martinez

Date of approval: 14th October 2026

Section Three: Full Equality Impact Assessment

Drawing on a five-year dataset covering 2020–2025

***Residents can choose to add to the fields: Age/ Disability / Race / Religion or Belief / Sex / Sexual Orientation / Armed forces – not mandatory fields when registering face to face or online.**

***What digital exclusion means in Rochdale** - Digital exclusion in Rochdale refers to people who can't get online or don't have the skills, confidence, or equipment to use digital services. A significant proportion of residents lack internet access or digital skills, with 17.4% of adults never having been online and 26% lacking basic digital skills.

***How this links to deprivation** - Rochdale is ranked the 15th most deprived borough in England, and its most deprived areas experience the highest digital exclusion. In some neighbourhoods, residents face barriers like Inability to afford internet / Limited access to devices / Low digital skills.

This lack of digital access makes it harder for people to apply for jobs, access health services, manage benefits, or get cheaper online deals—worsening existing inequalities.

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
Age	Using data from the LMS 2020-2025 of registered borrowers : Age 0-11 33%, Age 12-17 13%, 18-24 4%, 25-34 6 % , 35-44 11%, 45-54 7%, 55-64 6% and Over 65 – 19%. A total of 21,664 people provided their date of birth when registering for a library membership. The largest group of active library borrowers is children aged 0–11, who account for 33% of all users. Teenagers aged 12–17 and adults aged 65 and over also make up a significant share of active borrowers, indicating that both younger and older residents commonly use library services. In contrast, the working-age population is under-represented in the library user base when compared with the age profile of the general	Overall positive impact for children and older people due to strong existing offer. Risk of negative or unequal impact if the service does not expand its offer for working-age adults or digitally excluded older residents. Young adults (18–25) may feel the current offer is limited or not tailored to their needs. Older people may be facing social isolation and feel digitally excluded with a lack of confidence to complete digital forms or processes.	Develop more targeted services for working-age adults, including employability support, study spaces, flexible opening hours, and digital upskilling. Enhance programmes for older people, especially those at risk of social isolation or digital exclusion. Create dedicated young adult spaces (study, quiet, creative/relaxation spaces).	Strategy term (5 years), with annual review cycles. Libraries & Customer Services in partnership with Adult Skills, Public Health, and Youth Services.

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	population reported in the latest ONS statistics. The 18–24 age group is the most noticeably under-represented, highlighting a gap between this age group’s presence in the population and their engagement with library services. (These figures are specific to Rochdale and are not national figures).			
Disability	Disability information is voluntarily provided and not mandatory during registration. 8,202 registered borrowers disclosed a disability, representing 5%, although the estimated population figure is closer to 20%, suggesting significant under-reporting. Breakdown : 169 Physical Impairment, 82 Multi Disabled, 63 Hearing Impairment, 48 Visual Impairment, 44 Learning Impairment and 2 Autism. Anecdotal feedback from engagement activities indicates that some disabled residents — including autistic adults and older people who are deaf from birth — do not currently use libraries because they feel the service does not fully meet their needs (e.g.,	There is a risk of negative impact for disabled people due to: Under-representation in membership and low levels of disability disclosure. Perceived or actual barriers to access (sensory overload, communication difficulties, unmet accessibility needs). Some disabled residents may feel libraries are “not for them” if services, environments or staff support are not tailored appropriately. Without targeted improvements, disabled users may continue to be excluded from the full benefits of library services. Fewer people using libraries with disabilities or they are not declaring	Improve the service offer for people with disabilities, ensuring needs are considered across all library environments. Introduce quiet time sessions and sensory-friendly programming for autistic residents and others who benefit from low-stimulus spaces. Develop differentiated accessibility offers across the borough (e.g., sensory-friendly provision at Wardle, and similar models at other branches). Train existing staff in British Sign Language (BSL) and explore options to recruit BSL-proficient staff to better support Deaf residents. Conduct accessibility audits for buildings, signage, and digital platforms. Improve and promote voluntary disability data collection, ensuring it remains	Phased implementation across the 5-year strategy period, with annual monitoring. Lead: Libraries & Customer Services. Support from: EDI Team, HR (training), and Estates (accessibility improvements).

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	sensory environment, communication barriers).	this on registration -they may feel libraries are not for them and do not offer what they need.	optional, sensitive, and compliant with data protection requirements.	
Gender reassignment	The library service does not currently collect specific data on gender reassignment during registration. For the first time gender reassignment was captured by the census in 2021 for residents aged 16 and over. This was a voluntary question and 9,607 residents chose not to answer. In Rochdale, 94% (164,383) of usual residents aged 16 and over reported their gender identity the same as their sex registered at birth. Within the 6% reporting a different gender identity; 492 have a gender identity different from sex registered at birth (with no detail given), 180 identify as a Trans woman, 196 identify as a Trans man, 46 are non-binary and 45 are classified as "all other gender identities	No particular impact is anticipated for this group as a result of this strategy.		
Marriage and civil partnership	The library service does not currently collect specific data on marital status/civil partnership during registration.	No particular impact is anticipated for this group as a result of this strategy.		

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	The 2021 the census reported 74,914, (42.8%) of residents as being married to the opposite sex and 376, (0.2%) married to the same sex within Rochdale borough. There are 92 (0.1%) opposite sex and 138 (0.1%) same sex residents registered civil partnerships.			
Pregnancy and maternity	In 2021 (the year of the most recent census) 2,746 babies were born to local residents (from 2,737 the previous year). Birth rates are higher among our local ethnic minority groups and in areas of deprivation. Source Rochdale Borough Locality Plan EIA + 2015 MYE (Components of population change)	No particular impact is anticipated for this group as a result of this strategy.		
Race	8,356 residents provided their ethnicity when registering for a library card. These were grouped into the standard five ethnicity categories: 82% White British, 13% Asian 5% combined across Black, Mixed and Other categories. The proportion of White British library users (82%) is significantly higher	Risk of negative impact if the service does not address cultural, linguistic and engagement barriers for minority ethnic groups. Under-representation suggests that some communities: May feel the offer does not reflect their needs, May lack awareness of what libraries offer beyond books (e.g., digital	Increase awareness of library services through targeted outreach, including community radio (e.g., Crescent Radio) and other culturally relevant communication channels. Expand the book stock in community languages, and introduce literature, media and resources that reflect the borough's diverse cultures.	Rollout across the 5-year strategy period, with annual ethnic-usage monitoring. Lead: Libraries & Customer Services. Support from: EDI Team,

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	than the borough's demographic profile, where the Census reports approximately 74% White residents. Conversely, Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups are under-represented, making up only 18% of total library users. Engagement suggests some residents from minority ethnic groups do not see the library offer as relevant to them — for example, limited book stock in community languages and limited culturally relevant events or services. Public engagement and online survey show libraries provide community spaces offering culture, learning and digital access, but that usage patterns differ significantly among communities.	access, safe spaces, community groups), May experience digital exclusion or lack confidence in accessing library services. <i>Without intervention, inequality of access may deepen over time.</i>	Develop culturally relevant events and activities co-designed with local communities. Promote the library offer as more than books—highlight digital access, support groups, study spaces, safe places for young people, and creative activities. Work with GMCA and community organisations to address digital exclusion and build digital confidence across under-represented groups. Strengthen voluntary ethnicity data collection to improve understanding of usage patterns and service gaps.	Communications Team, Community Partnerships, and GMCA Digital Inclusion Leads.
Religion or belief	The library service does not currently collect specific data on sexual orientation during registration.	No particular impact is anticipated for this group as a result of this strategy.		

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	The 2021 census informs that over the past 10 years the proportion of the borough with a religion decreased by 8.7%. In 2021, 66.6% (149,057) residents have a religion. Christians form the main religious group with 104,841 residents, but this fell by 13.7% between 2011 and 2021. The next largest religious group is Muslim, with 42,121 residents in 2021, and this group experienced an increase of 12,695 since 2011. In 2021 Muslims equated to 18.8% of borough residents.			
Sex	There are 19,330 active library borrowers in Rochdale. 64% are female, which is significantly higher than the ONS borough population figure of 51% female. This indicates that men are under-represented within the library service. Reading trends generally show that women read more fiction, while men read more factual material, which is reflected in usage patterns. Consultation and usage data from earlier strategy documents	Reading frequency – women read more fiction and men read more factual books. Potential negative or unequal impact for men due to under-engagement and lower visibility of services targeted to their interests. Without targeted action, men may continue to see libraries as less relevant to their needs, reducing their participation in reading, learning, digital inclusion and wellbeing activities. The existing offer may unintentionally align more closely with interests and	Develop and publicise male-focused programmes, such as men’s reading groups, men’s wellbeing sessions, or social groups that encourage library use beyond books. Introduce Author of the Month promotions with a balanced male/female representation and inclusion of genres favoured by men. Deliver male-friendly author events, talks and activity sessions that reflect diverse interests (e.g., sport, local history, practical skills, tech). Promote the library as a multi-purpose space—not only for reading, but for digital access, learning, hobbies,	Implementation across the 5-year strategy period, monitored annually to identify changes in male membership and participation. Lead: Libraries & Customer Services. Support from: Communications

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	demonstrate strong participation in reading-related activities but lower male engagement in cultural and community programmes.	habits of female users, reinforcing current patterns.	study, social connection and events EG Man's Club and Repair Café held at Wardle Library. Provide tailored digital confidence sessions aimed at both men and women, ensuring equal access to digital skills support.	Team, Community Partnerships, and GMCA Digital Inclusion Leads.
Sexual orientation	The library service does not currently collect specific data on sexual orientation during registration. This creates a gap in understanding how many members of this community use library services and what their needs may be. However, for the first time sexual orientation was captured by the census in 2021 for residents aged 16 and over. This was a voluntary question and 11,711 residents chose not to answer. Gay or lesbian residents make up 1.2% (2,040) of the population, which is amongst the lowest in Greater Manchester. Other sexualities represented in the borough include: 1,515 bisexual, 297 pansexual, 67 asexual, 28 residents reporting other sexual orientations. Source: 2021 Census.	No particular impact is anticipated for this group as a result of this strategy.	The service could look at exploring the option of adding this field to the registration process (still voluntary), which would improve visibility of this group in future monitoring.	

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
Armed services and ex-armed services/ Veterans	The library service does not currently collect specific data on armed forces personnel, veterans or their families during registration. This creates a gap in understanding how many members of this community use library services and what their needs may be. The service is exploring the option of adding this field to the registration process (still voluntary), which would improve visibility of this group in future monitoring. National and local evidence (including from Armed Forces Covenant partners) indicates that veterans may experience higher risks of social isolation, mental health challenges, and may be unaware of community support services available to them. Libraries already offer safe, inclusive spaces and community support activities, but awareness of the full library offer among veterans may be low. Background context supported by library strategy priorities on inclusion,	Potential negative impact due to lack of targeted support, limited visibility of this group within library data, and low awareness of services beyond book lending. Veterans may be at greater risk of social isolation, so insufficient engagement would mean missed opportunities to connect them with community spaces, wellbeing activities, or digital support. Without improved data collection, the library service cannot fully assess or respond to the needs of this group, increasing the risk of continued under-representation.	Add an Armed Forces/Veteran status field to the registration process (both online and face-to-face) to build a clearer picture of usage and needs. Work with Armed Forces Covenant partners, local veteran groups and community organisations to understand needs and co-design appropriate activities. Promote awareness of the full library offer (digital access, groups, wellbeing activities, community support information, quiet spaces) through targeted outreach. Consider veteran-friendly programming, such as social groups, wellbeing sessions, or information events delivered in partnership with veteran support services. We offer Armed Forces Coffee morning Fridays at Alkrington Library, Get Together After Service hub at Rochdale Central Library with a food donation point and British Legion / Veterans drop in every Thursday at Rochdale Central Library (after the Veterans breakfast at The Flying Horse). Ensure staff are aware of referral pathways for veterans who may benefit from support beyond what the library provides. We work closely with the Armed Forces Worker to	Data field introduction within Year 1 of the strategy, with annual review of uptake and impact. Ongoing partnership development and programme adjustments throughout the 5-year strategy period. Lead: Libraries & Customer Services. Support from: Armed Forces Covenant Team, Communications Team, and Community Partnerships.

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	accessibility and partnership work with community organisations.		update us of any concerns we may be able to assist with / signposting.	
Care experience / Care Leaver	The library service does not currently collect specific data on Care experience / Care leavers during registration. This creates a gap in understanding how many members of this community use library services and what their needs may be.		The service could look at exploring the option of adding this field to the registration process (still voluntary), which would improve visibility of this group in future monitoring. The service also intends to undertake engagement work to ascertain how we can better serve this group	
Carers	The library service does not currently collect specific data on Care experience / Care leavers during registration. This creates a gap in understanding how many members of this community use library services and what their needs may be.		The service could look at exploring the option of adding this field to the registration process (still voluntary), which would improve visibility of this group in future monitoring.	
Socio-economic	Certain areas of the borough—particularly Central Rochdale, Milkstone and Deeplish—experience higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage, including overcrowded housing and digital exclusion (as	Without targeted action, there is a risk of negative or unequal impact on residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, as these groups rely heavily on libraries for:	Maintain and, where possible, enhance digital access in branches serving high-deprivation areas (PCs, Wi-Fi, printing, device-borrowing schemes).	Mitigation actions implemented across the 5-year strategy period,

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	reflected in local needs data and Housing & Wellbeing indicators). Residents in socio-economically deprived areas are more likely to rely on library facilities for study space, public computers (PCs), Wi-Fi access and safe community environments. Previous library strategy evidence shows strong usage of public ICT (97,940 hours of PC use in 2018/19), confirming that residents depend on free digital access and support. Consultation and community engagement have also shown that residents experiencing financial hardship are more likely to access libraries for essential support, digital access, and learning opportunities. A Mosaic tool grouped households by demographic, lifestyle, and behavioural characteristics to help local authorities better understand and target services to their communities. The active borrowers over the 5-year period have been assigned a MOSAIC type according to their postcode, and the variation of types is shown below. This can be broken down by library to better understand individual library use.	Study and safe spaces, Access to PCs and the internet and WIFI, Digital support, Community connection and essential information. Any reduction in space, opening hours, digital availability or outreach could disproportionately affect deprived communities who have fewer alternatives. It must be noted that there is significant intersection with socio economic disadvantage, age and race increasing inequalities across these protected groups.	Ensure libraries in priority wards try to offer dedicated study spaces, quiet zones, and access to relevant learning resources. Strengthen partnerships with GMCA Digital Inclusion, community groups and voluntary organisations to support digital confidence and reduce access barriers. Ensure targeted communications to deprived communities about available services, programmes and support. Use improved demographic and usage data (including socio-economic indicators) to monitor whether disadvantaged residents are being disproportionately affected.	reviewed annually. Lead: Libraries & Customer Services. Support from: Public Health, Community Partnerships, GMCA Digital Inclusion, and Housing & Wellbeing Teams.

Protected characteristics	Evidence and information	Impact	Mitigation activities and actions	Timescale and responsible department
	18% : Families with young or adult children, who have low budgets and typically rent from social landlords 17% : Households with limited disposable income, who own or rent old-style, high-density terraces from private landlords 13% : Young couples and families with pre-school or school-age children, looking for affordability in small homes 8% : Double-income families raising their children in average-value suburban homes with mortgages			

Summary of the impact and effects

1	Please describe the overall impacts your proposal will have on protected groups (where applicable)
	Should be beneficial impact – but need to ensure that mitigating actions are taken or could have negative impact and the offer doesn't change. The overall impact of the new Library Strategy on protected groups is expected to be beneficial, as libraries in Rochdale already provide inclusive, accessible spaces and services that support people who may experience barriers due to disability, age, socio-economic disadvantage or digital exclusion. The previous Library Service Strategy emphasises that libraries are safe, welcoming and open to all, offering digital access, learning opportunities and support programmes that particularly benefit vulnerable or disadvantaged residents. However, it is essential that appropriate mitigating actions are taken throughout implementation, as any changes to buildings, service delivery models or resource allocation could unintentionally create negative impacts if not carefully managed. Earlier strategic documents highlight the importance of ensuring buildings remain accessible and located appropriately to meet community needs. As long as the strategy continues to prioritise equity, accessibility and inclusive service design, the overall effect on protected groups should remain positive ensuring that the library offer does not diminish and that no group is disproportionately disadvantaged.
2	In some cases, there may potentially discriminatory effects to a protected group, but your proposal is still deemed necessary for another reason. If this is the situation with your proposal, please explain the rationale (for example, due to budget constraints, the council cannot deliver existing service standards for non-statutory provision, therefore reductions are being made)
	While the development of a new Library Strategy may result in changes that could potentially affect certain protected groups, the proposal is necessary to ensure that library services remain fit for purpose and accessible to all. Previous strategy documents emphasise the importance of providing inclusive, welcoming spaces and services that meet the needs of diverse communities across Rochdale. Any potential impacts arising from changes to buildings, service models or resource allocation must therefore be viewed within the context of delivering a library service that is sustainable, modern, and capable of meeting the needs of all protected characteristics. The strategy review is essential to address changing patterns of use, digital demands, financial pressures and the need to ensure services remain equitable and relevant. The overarching rationale, therefore, is that refreshing the strategy is necessary to protect the long-term accessibility, inclusivity and quality of the service, ensuring it continues to support residents—particularly those who may already face disadvantage.

Alternative options considered

1	Please explain the alternatives you have considered to the proposal that has been outlined There are no viable alternatives to developing a new Library Strategy. The current strategy has reached the end of its lifecycle, and continuing without an updated strategic framework would leave the service without clear direction or alignment with changing community needs. Previous strategy documents highlight that library services must adapt to evolving demands, financial pressures and modern service expectations to remain effective and accessible. A renewed strategy is therefore essential to ensure that libraries continue to serve Rochdale's diverse and changing communities, addressing socio-economic disadvantage, digital inclusion, literacy, health and wellbeing, and the wider role of libraries as accessible community hubs. The review provides an opportunity to modernise the service, respond to local priorities, and ensure equality considerations are embedded throughout future delivery.
2	Outline why the alternative options have been discounted
N/A	

Human Rights Implications

1	Are the human rights of individuals in Rochdale Borough potentially affected by this proposal? This includes all residents, as well as those with any protected characteristics. (Considerations about human rights are likely to be more relevant to some services and proposals than others).
NO	

2	If the human rights of any individuals, including those with protected characteristics, are restricted or limited, is your proposal still considered to be proportionate? [Human rights can be legitimately restricted in some circumstances if there is justification for doing so. This could be because the council has legitimate reasons]
NO	

Monitoring

1	Who will be responsible for the monitoring?
Penny Butterworth	

2	What type of data is needed is and how often it will be analysed?
To effectively monitor the impact of the Library Strategy, the following data will be required and routinely analysed: • Library Management System (Spydus) usage data, including borrowing trends, user demographics, and service demand. This will be reviewed annually to identify gaps or changes in usage patterns. • Public computer (PC) usage data, analysed by ward and by demographic groups, to monitor digital inclusion and understand which communities rely most on library ICT access. • Footfall and membership data, to assess changes in service reach and engagement. • Customer feedback and survey results, reviewed regularly to identify barriers to access for specific groups.	

- Local demographic and socio-economic data, including updates from the JSNA and wider council needs assessments, reviewed annually or when significant changes occur.

3	When the policy will be reviewed and what evidence could trigger an early revision?
The Library Strategy will be reviewed at the end of its strategic term as part of the council's normal service planning cycle. Evidence from the previous strategy demonstrates that reviews are aligned with service performance, community need and council priorities, to ensure libraries continue to deliver accessible and effective services. An early revision may be triggered if any of the following occur: • Significant changes in user needs or usage patterns, evidenced through consultation findings or library usage data (e.g., public PC use, digital engagement, or patterns identified through the Library Management System). • Substantial financial pressures or required budget savings that materially affect service delivery or building operations. • Major changes in national, regional or local policy, including GM-wide initiatives or statutory requirements that impact library functions. • Operational changes, such as significant building issues, estate rationalisation or changes linked to accessibility and service location.	

SECTION FOUR: Approval of the full Equality Impact Assessment

Lead officer approving the full EIA assessment (this must be an Assistant Director or Director): **Rafael Martinez**

Date of approval: **[insert]**