



# Running public service mutuals in real life



# **Living life as a mutual**

Alison Wheeler

CEO

# Suffolk Libraries

## A story about people

- A story which began in 2011...about the people who work for Suffolk Libraries, who campaigned for their local library, who support and volunteer, and the people who lead our mutual
- Lets start with people in **Stradbroke**



# A campaigner's story



# Suffolk Libraries

**A well used community facility**





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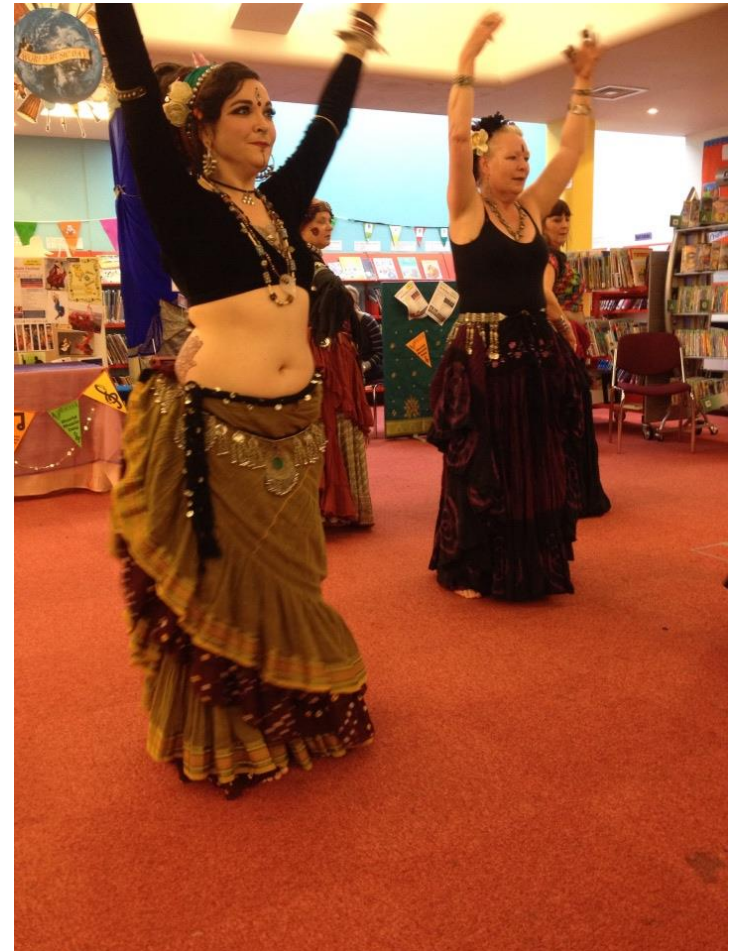
## People who lead transformation from the front



# Suffolk Libraries

## What do the staff say?

- “We’re not lucky we’ve worked hard for it!”
- I am proud to work for Suffolk Libraries
- Opportunities and freedom to try new things. Including staff in decision making and asking for their opinions and views.
- I feel confident in the way Suffolk Libraries is working hard to remain relevant. It feels like we've had a lot more activities and events to plan and run since we became IPS. Commitment to the living wage is also excellent.





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**We are hugely supported by our  
community group supporters**





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## Some of the highlights of our story.. from the last five years

### **We've earned and won**

- Freedom, independence, and flexibility
- New expertise in business skills and a reinvigorated workforce
- A swifter pace and a commitment to progress
- We have developed our staff and communities together to be more confident, ambitious and willing to experiment or take risks
- We understand and are working towards a confident direction

### **We learned**

- That inaction is the enemy of progress but self-belief breeds success
- To let go of old assumptions and take down artificial barriers
- What's really important to us, our staff, our communities and our customers

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## Areas of continuous challenge

- Money
- Culture change with staff
- Traditional to modern library transitions
- Politics
- Perceptions



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## My Story



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**But now**





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## And what's the best advice we'd give to anyone starting out?

- It's a marathon not a sprint
- Be prepared for a very intense first few years- as you are doing everything for the first time



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**“Moving into the IPS was the best thing  
that ever happened to us”**

Charlotte Clark, Library manager at Southwold