

# Library Service Consultation

## Culture and Communities Select Committee Executive Member Recreation and Heritage Report – Headline Summary

28<sup>th</sup> July 2020



# Consultation context

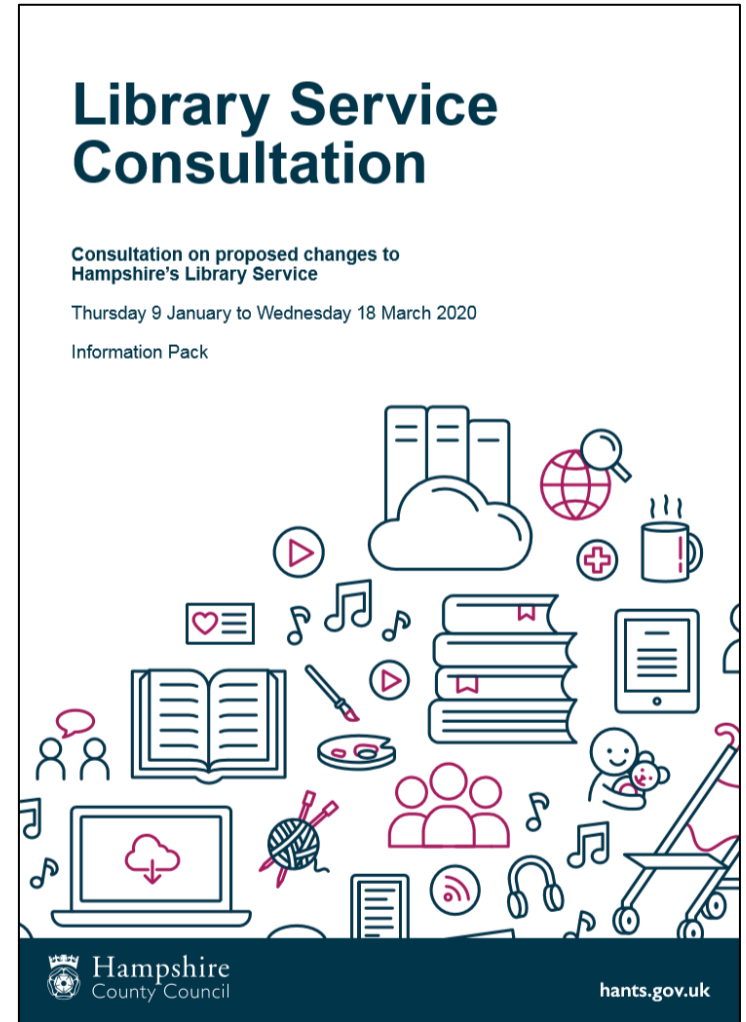
From **9 January – 18 March 2020** Hampshire County Council conducted an open consultation, seeking the views of people who live, work and/or study in Hampshire, and those of wider stakeholders, on proposed changes to Hampshire's Library Service.

The consultation sought to understand views on:

- the emerging vision for Hampshire's Libraries to 2025;
- the level of need for library services in specific local communities;
- proposed changes to the Library Service and the potential impacts; and
- any alternatives respondents may wish to propose.

The proposed changes to the Library Service were to:

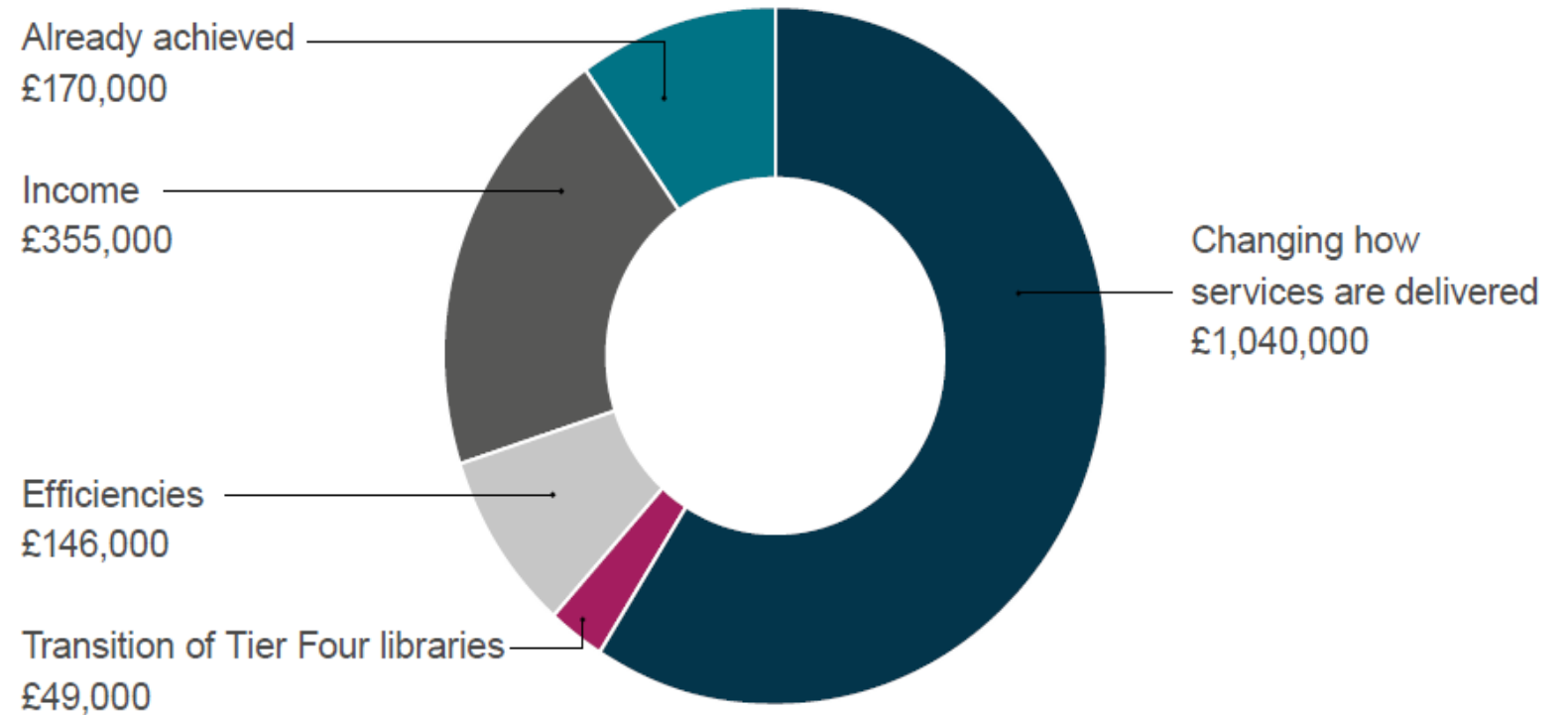
- **change how council-run library services are delivered, including:**
  - closing up to 10 libraries; and/ or
  - reducing and standardising staffed opening hours;
- **deliver library services differently within local communities, through:**
  - transitioning Tier Four council-supported, community-managed libraries into independent community-managed libraries;
  - exploring different ways of delivering library services in deprived communities;
- **make further efficiencies;** and
- **generate additional income.**



# Financial Proposals (as published in consultation)

The annual revenue budget for the Library Service in 2019/20 was **£11m** and the Service generated a further **£2.8m** of income.

Proposed Tt2021 Savings reduction: **£1.76 million.**



# Consultation response

The consultation was widely promoted through a range of communication channels including direct mail to library members and stakeholders, messaging in both local and social media, and posters and leaflets in libraries and other public buildings around the county. A series of drop-in events were also held, enabling people to talk directly to senior members of the Library Service about the proposals.

Information Packs and Response Forms were made available both digitally and in hard copy in standard, audio and Easy Read formats, with other formats available on request. Unstructured responses could be submitted via email, letter or as comments on social media.

In total, the consultation received **21,200 responses**.

**20,838** of these were submitted via the consultation **Response Form**. Of those who specified:



20,397 were individual respondents



161 represented groups, organisations or businesses



56 were Democratically Elected Representatives

In addition, **362 unstructured responses** were received. 196 of these were submitted by email or letter and 166 through comments on Hampshire County Council or Hampshire Library Service social media channels.

A further **5,400** people signed petitions and **1,400** attended public meetings and drop-ins to discuss the consultation.

## Proposals with high levels of support – all recommended for approval

The future **vision** for libraries

The **need to adapt** to respond to changing demands

- Most respondents (70%) agreed that the Library Service needs to adapt to meet the changing demands placed on it - although they continued to place value on the universal service offered by local libraries and their role in developing children's literacy.

**Delivery efficiencies** (withdraw, relocate or reduce poorly used resources; make it easier for people to manage their library accounts online and to pay fees and charges promptly; reduce transportation and other postage costs)

- On average, around two-thirds of respondents (67%) agreed with the efficiency savings proposed by the Service.

**Generating additional income** (increase income generated through room hire and leases; review current fees and charges; encourage fundraising, sponsorships and donations)

- Over eight out of ten (83%) felt that options to generate income should be explored in order to contribute to the running of the service.

**Exploring different ways** to deliver library services for Hampshire's most deprived communities

- Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) agreed that the Library Service should explore different ways to deliver library services in deprived communities.

## Covid-19 Impact

- Libraries closed on 20<sup>th</sup> March according to Government instruction.
- All fees and charges relating to lending and reserving books were suspended, and sources of income such as room hire immediately stopped.
- In the first quarter of 2020/2021 income was down by an average of **£95k** per month.
- Whilst income is predicted to slowly recover from August 2020 onwards, as Libraries reopen and some customers return, many income generating activities (such as events, activities and room hire) have not yet been able to resume.
- Forecasts indicate that full-year income will be down by approximately **£570,000** against last year's total, and that it will take some time before income recovers to levels seen in previous years.
- Recovery of the pre-Covid-19 Library Service income levels will not be possible, at least in the short term. Therefore it is evident that the Income Generation target proposed in the consultation is no longer achievable.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy Update report sets formal savings targets for Departments based on a Transformation to 2023 Programme of £80m and, for the Culture, Communities and Business Services Department; this represents a further savings target of £3.253m. Given the spend profile for the Department, the Library Service will again need make a proportionate contribution to this future spending reduction. This means that savings beyond those identified for April 2021 will be required.

## Programme Impact

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The worsening financial position has two key impacts on the proposals under consideration:

1. The Income Generation target included in the consultation (£355,000) will not be met within the required timeframe and, therefore, other planned activities will need to deliver more to make up for this loss (specifically through increasing operational savings)
2. Even with further government support, a significant savings programme beyond 2021 will be required if the County Council is to remain financially viable due, in part, to the lasting economic impact of Covid-19.

**It is essential that any decisions made at this point put the Library Service in the best possible position to face these future financial challenges and are made bearing in mind the need to retain flexibility to accommodate future financial challenges to the Service.**

## Revised plan

**To deliver the original Tt2021 £1.76m target** but to adjust the individual activity targets by increasing the Operations target from £1.040m to £1.115m to address the Income Generation target shortfall.

The consultation presented two options for achieving the operations target of £1.04m:

- a combination of up to ten library closures and reducing opening hours by around 15% at all other council-run libraries; or
- keeping all council-run libraries open and reducing opening hours by around 25% across all libraries.

The consultation explained that the first option was preferred by the County Council due, in part, to the longer term savings which could be made if this course of action were pursued.

### **Other options considered and discounted:**

- 1) To **under-achieve** against the original Tt2021 £1.76m target (only achieving £1.685m)
- 2) To **over-achieve** against the original Tt2021 £1.76m target (achieving £2 million)



## Closure proposals - context

**It was considered that the Library Service could continue to offer a comprehensive and efficient service with fewer libraries, particularly taking into account the following factors:**

- library catchments overlap and services are duplicated across relatively small geographical areas – many library customers access more than one building
- fewer people are visiting library buildings and more people are accessing digital services; and
- having fewer library buildings would enable savings on utilities, stock, deliveries, property maintenance and management time, in addition to reducing staffing costs.

These reasons remain relevant

**Since the publication of the consultation, the Covid-19 crisis has caused the Library Service to think radically differently about the way it delivers library services to the residents of Hampshire. In particular, three areas stand out:**

- Hampshire's Digital Library has significantly increased subscribers, with additional investment having been made in e-books and e-audiobooks.
- A wide range of digital content has been made available through Hampshire Libraries' social media accounts and YouTube channel. This includes Rhymetime, Storytime, book reviews, learning, groups, clubs and other activities. This content reaches thousands of people a day. Whilst this content does not fully replace the benefits of face-to-face activities taking place in libraries, it offers an alternative way for people to access and participate in library services.
- Contactless services have been expanded and broadened. The existing Home Library Service and Good Neighbour schemes are expected to expand to accommodate an increased number of people either unable or unwilling to leave their home, whilst the newly introduced 'Ready Reads' service offers a way of obtaining physical books through a contactless collection offer.

## Closure of some council-run libraries - responses

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The consultation explained that the first option was preferred by the County Council due, in part, to the longer term savings which could be made if this course of action were pursued.

21% of respondents preferred this option, whilst 58% of respondents preferred that savings be made through a reduction in opening hours alone.

This expression of preference (including the supporting comments providing feedback around equalities and use of data) has caused a shift in what it proposed from what had previously been the preferred position. It is therefore now proposed that the number of libraries identified for closure be reduced from ten to eight, with a reduction in opening hours averaging 20% in all remaining libraries.

This proposal recognises the public preference for fewer closures and takes account of key impacts raised, but still positions the County Council well to make further savings beyond April 2021. This balance would deliver the required savings, providing an efficient service which meets local need.

Mitigation and changes to proposals have been made in acknowledgement of impacts highlighted through the consultation process.

## Closure recommendations

- In response to consultation feedback, a revised methodology has been used – the effect of which is that Chineham and Emsworth are now ranked above all other libraries proposed for closure.
- The number of people adversely impacted by the closure of Chineham is significantly more than all other libraries proposed for closure.
- Emsworth residents have put forward an alternative proposal for the relocation of Emsworth Library at significantly reduced cost.
- The impacts of closing the remaining 8 libraries have all been carefully assessed and can be mitigated to a reasonable extent.
- These 8 libraries together account for less than 5% of issues and 5% of visits to all libraries in Hampshire.
- It is therefore recommended that the remaining 8 libraries are closed.
- The County Council welcomes approaches from community groups or organisations who wished to take over the running of these buildings or services.

## Closure recommendations

Library	District/ Borough	Ownership of current building	Recommendation
Blackfield	New Forest	Freehold	Closure
Chineham	Basingstoke	Freehold	Retain with reduced operating costs
Elson	Gosport	Freehold	Closure
Emsworth	Havant	Leasehold	Retain and move to reduce operating costs
Fair Oak	Eastleigh	Freehold	Closure
Horndean	East Hants	Freehold	Closure
Lee-on-the-Solent	Gosport	Freehold	Closure
Lyndhurst	New Forest	Leasehold	Closure
Odiham	Hart	Freehold	Closure
South Ham	Basingstoke	Freehold	Closure

This option generates **£340,000 in short term savings**, with the potential for additional savings to be made in the longer term.

## Reducing and standardising opening hours

Whilst more respondents preferred a reduction in opening hours, this does not unlock the same level of longer term savings. Moreover, opening hour reductions have a more significant impact on the larger branches. A reduction of opening hours of 20% (together with closures) is therefore proposed.

**The consultation also offered a choice between a blanket reduction in hours, or standardising hours of comparable libraries.** 56% of respondents supported the proposal for standardising hours.

**It is therefore recommended that hours be reduced across the portfolio averaging 20% (with the opening hours of some libraries increased or decreased by up to 39% to achieve this standardised approach). This achieves c£775k.**

	Current Hours		Future Hours	
	Range	Difference in range	Range	Difference in range
<b>Tier 1 (inc. Discovery Centres)</b>	50 - 62	12	41.5	0
<b>Tier 2</b>	34 - 50	16	26.5 - 34	7.5
<b>Tier 3</b>	11.5 - 35.5	24	16 - 26.5	10.5

- Opening times will be set according to public preferences
- Volunteer groups may want to open libraries outside of staffed hours
- Libraries will still be available for hire outside staffed hours

## Community Libraries - background

The Library Service network includes **four Tier 4 community-managed libraries** in Kingsclere, Lowford (also known as Bursledon), Milford-on-Sea and North Baddesley. These libraries are managed by community groups, run by volunteers and supported by a regular visit by a member of Library Service staff. Hampshire County Council provides books, some equipment and public Wi-Fi.

Although the running costs are currently shared with communities, and are therefore comparatively lower than Tier 3 libraries, Tier 4 libraries still cost the County Council approximately **£49,000 per year to run in total**. Further, the capacity of the Library Service to continue to support this model, particularly the weekly staff visits, buddy branch support and weekly delivery, will be negatively impacted by recommendations elsewhere in this report.

Consultation responses generally supported the transition to independent community managed libraries:

- The majority of respondents (70%), would continue to use their library if it was independent of the County Council and managed by the local community.
- With the exception of Kingsclere Community Library users, users of Tier 4 community-managed libraries felt that an independent community-managed library model could meet the needs of their local community.

The most commonly cited impacts were:

- The availability of a fresh supply of stock.
- The ability to reserve specific items from other libraries across Hampshire.
- The accessibility of alternative council-run library branches due to transport issues.

## Community Libraries - recommendations

The concerns raised about the proposed withdrawal of support from these libraries have been considered and the following mitigation is proposed:

- Any community organisations wanting to set up an independent community library, where a library or a community managed library is proposed for closure, would be welcome to apply for a one-off pump priming award through the Recreation and Heritage Community Fund towards the costs of transitioning into independent library models. Such awards would be individually assessed and would be expected to be less than £10,000.
- The Library Service will extend its current Group Membership scheme to include independent community libraries. This will enable them to refresh their physical stock by accessing all items within the Hampshire Library Collection and allows service users to reserve specific items to be collected locally.

It is therefore recommended that support be withdrawn from Tier 4 community-managed libraries and they be supported to transition to an independent model.

# Financial Summary

Activity	Proposed saving as published in consultation £'000	Revised saving proposed £'000
Early savings – completed in 2019/20	170	240 (including an additional £50,000 operations contribution and £20,000 income generation contribution)
Planned additional savings – to be completed in 2020/2021	0	210
Changing how services are delivered by closing libraries/reducing opening hours (Operations)	1,040	1,115 (comprising: • £340,000 from the closure of 8 libraries; • £775,000 from opening hour reductions)
Transition of Tier 4 Libraries	49	49
Increase in Income	355	0
Efficiencies	146	146
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,760</b>	<b>1,760</b>



## Equalities, climate change and HR impacts

- Comprehensive draft equalities impact assessments for both staff and service-users have been prepared, informed by the responses to the consultation. Although the proposals may have some localised impacts for people with certain protected characteristics (age, disability, pregnancy & maternity, poverty and rurality), the overall impacts can be reduced to a reasonable level through the mitigation proposed.
- Whilst all remaining libraries are accessible by public transport, it remains the case that the closure of some libraries will require some people to make additional journeys either by car or public transport. It is likely that some trips may be combined (as people may also visit shops and other services when visiting an alternative library).
- The proposals contained within the EMRH report would mean the reduction of 40-50FTE. All possible steps will be taken to minimise compulsory redundancies arising from these changes.

# A comprehensive and efficient service

If the recommendations in the report are agreed, the County Council's Library Service will comprise:

- A network of **40 physical libraries**. These libraries will be reasonably accessible to all residents; where libraries have been proposed for closure, these are reasonably close to the nearest alternative library and open for around 1200 hours a week.
- Library buildings hosting a **comprehensive lending offer and a range of other public services**, with a particular focus on activities relating to children's literacy and wellbeing, community activities and digital access and support. Opening times will be informed by community need. Outside of staffed opening hours, libraries will be available for hire or lease and, where appropriate, volunteer groups or other organisations, will be able to open buildings to allow access for basic library functions (such as self-service borrowing or access to IT).
- **Different delivery models** ensuring that the Library Service is able to support those communities who do not currently engage with traditional library services, particular in areas of deprivation.
- **A range of options for people who are unable to visit their local library**, but still wish to borrow physical books including development of the existing Home Library Service and Good Neighbour Schemes, and the newly introduced Ready Reads Service.
- **A Group Membership scheme** which will enable Tier 3 and Tier 4 libraries which have transitioned into independent models to access fresh stock and Hampshire's stock reservation service.
- A range of **specialist services and membership schemes** including Music, Drama and Reading Groups.
- **A comprehensive, and growing, digital library**. In 2018/19, Hampshire had the highest digital lending figures of any library in the UK and digital lending increased significantly in 2019/20 . Hampshire will continue to invest to expand the breadth and depth of the digital library.
- A range of well used **digital resources and reference materials** to support learning, reading and study.
- A lively and active **online presence**. Hampshire's Social Media and YouTube channels are well followed and will continue to host a range of activities and content including Rhymetime, Storytime, book reviews, groups, activities and information.
- A targeted **Learning in Libraries offer** focusing on health and wellbeing, employability skills and digital support delivered both physically and digitally.
- A high performing **School Library Service** supporting children's literacy and a lifelong love of reading for pleasure for schools in Hampshire and beyond.
- A **financially sustainable** business model with services funded by a balance of revenue contribution and generated income where appropriate.

## Implementation timeline

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Through **July and August**, libraries are operating on significantly reduced opening hours (approximately 53% reduction) as part of the Covid-19 Service recovery. Service hours will be increased and transitioned from their Covid-19 recovery hours to their new operating hours following this decision.

It is anticipated that the majority of library closures will **take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021**. This will give a period of time for the Library Service to negotiate with any interested parties who wish to take on the running of services or buildings. However, there may be one or two cases where (particularly in leasehold libraries) there may be reason to bring the closure forward from this date (such as the coincidence of a lease renewal date).

It is proposed that **Community Libraries be given 8 months notice of the intention to withdraw support**, and that these libraries become fully independent **with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021**. This will enable the community library management groups time to arrange for the transition of services.

Work to re-provision of some libraries to better meet community need and projects to generate additional income are longer term pieces of work and, although they will commence immediately, **will continue into 2021 and beyond**.

The proposals set out to Deliver Efficiencies will be dependent on when contracts come up for renewal and will be **complete by March 2021**.

**A staff consultation will be held between September and November 2020**, with these staffing changes largely implemented by April 2021. Further, targeted staff consultations may be required in 2021 to consider support and managerial staffing levels.

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