



Committee
Cabinet
27th July 2016

Review of Shropshire library opening hours

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1. Summary

This report sets out the progress that Shropshire Council has made in redesigning its library services, information on patterns of usage and trends and suggests our future approach to supporting the provision of modern and sustainable library services.

Specifically the report makes recommendations for reducing the opening hours at 11 libraries following a review of patterns of usage and a recent public consultation.

1,355 people responded to the consultation illustrating the importance that the public attach to their local library and to on-going service provision.

2. Recommendations

1. That Cabinet confirms the recommendations set out within section 7.0 of this report to reduce library opening hours for Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, Whitchurch, Bayston Hill, Ellesmere, Gobowen, Much Wenlock, the Lantern and Wem and delegates to the Director of Place and Enterprise in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure Services all aspects of the detailed implementation of the proposals.
2. That Cabinet delegates the final recommendation to review library opening hours at Bridgnorth to the Director of Place and Enterprise in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure Services following consideration of the outcomes of the public consultation on Customer Service provision.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

Detailed below is an overview of the risks associated with the proposed changes to library opening hours.

Risk	Mitigation plans in place
Changes to library opening hours fail to comply with S7	The proposed changes to library opening hours will comply with the requirements of the act to

Public Library and Museum Act 1964 (see below)	provide a comprehensive and efficient library service (see below for details of the act). In particular there are no proposals made within this report to close libraries and proposed reductions in library opening hours respond to existing pattern of usage and are informed by a public consultation.
Changes to library opening hours fail to meet equality and social inclusion obligations	Shropshire Council has a strong commitment to working to promote equality, diversity and social inclusion and the potential impact of the preferred proposal on library users, particularly those who might be impacted by any change, is assessed through the completion of an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment.
Detrimental impact to proposed approach to reduce library opening hours due to lack of partner engagement and failure to communicate effectively with stakeholders	The final recommendations have been informed by a county wide public consultation which has been promoted within local libraries.
Savings target not achieved	The savings target outlined within this report meet the council's revised financial savings requirement; any adjustment will result in further pressures on the library budget and the requirement to make further savings going forward.

The Council's statutory responsibility

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#) 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it (section 7). In considering how best to deliver the statutory duty each library authority is responsible for determining, through consultation, the local needs and to deliver a modern and efficient library service that meets the requirements of their communities within available resources.

In providing this service, local authorities must, among other things:

- have regard to encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service (section 7(2)(b))
- lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (section 8(3)(b)) Note that there are exceptions for example for the notification of the availability of reserved items and library overdue charges, and for the lending of audio visual material.

The council also has statutory duties under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and [section 149: Public Sector Equality Duty](#) in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees. An Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment is included within **Appendix 1**. This has been updated following receipt of the consultation responses and to take into account the adjusted proposals.

4.0 Financial implications

Libraries' current net controllable budget is £2,536,560, which is split across the following functions:

- Six libraries in principal market towns: £1,306,730
- Sixteen smaller libraries: £310,980
- Mobile libraries: £171,910
- Management, administration, I.T. and support services: £746,940

The above budget takes into account £415,990 ongoing annual savings that are scheduled to be made within 2016/17 through a combination of efficiency savings and improved operating arrangements, including £55,390 proposed annual savings from reductions to opening hours.

The reductions to opening hours recommended in section 7.0 below, following the outcome of public consultation, are forecast to result in ongoing annual savings of £52,360. The shortfall of £3,030 on the original savings included in the budget will need to be made elsewhere within the wider Libraries budget.

5.0 Background

Three reports taken to the Environment Services Scrutiny Committee on 8th December 2014, 22nd June 2015 and 11th July 2016 summarise progress made on the county-wide redesign of library services.

A report taken to Cabinet on the 14th October 2015 confirmed that a “locality commissioning approach” would be adopted for the introduction of new management arrangements at smaller libraries and that a new management and delivery structure would be developed for the larger principal market town libraries and customer service points.

The proposed reduction in library opening hours are part of a wider review of library services that aims to create a sustainable business model. Elements of this include:

- A proposed reduction in library opening hours to reflect changing patterns of library usage and the way that people are accessing library services.
- Working with local community partners in the day to day provision of a full range of library services and, where appropriate, moving to new local management arrangements. Seven of our libraries have been transferred in this way so far and work is underway to transfer others.
- The provision of a mobile library service that is affordable and meets local needs, particularly those of Shropshire’s rural communities.
- The development of online library services including access to e books, magazines and newspapers.
- The provision of home library services for people unable to readily get out and about.

6.0 Background to the review of library opening hours

Recent county wide trends for static libraries are shown below:

Shropshire static libraries	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% change over 5yrs	% change from 14/15 to 15/16
Visits	1,358,493	1,303,234	1,245,224	1,038,883	1,001,593	-26%	-4%
Active Borrowers	49,362	46,281	42,944	40,196	40,201	-19%	0%
Computer Time Used (mins)	6,238,920	5,824,934	6,026,964	5,504,397	4,773,696	-23%	-13%
Total Loans	1,305,346	1,185,536	1,118,219	1,010,907	893,033	-32%	-12%
Requests	86,018	85,598	78,655	78,909	71,702	-17%	-9%

The overall decline in key measures reflects national trends.

Online developments mean that it is now easier to access a range of library services without actually visiting a library. This includes renewing and requesting items and accessing a selection of online resources, plus newer services such as e-books and e-magazines. While the use of these remote services is increasing, there has generally been a corresponding reduction in the number of physical visits to libraries and in the use of library computers.

The number of total loans will also have been affected by the wider availability of discounted paperbacks in supermarkets and from online retailers.

The review of library opening times reflects these changes in library use.

7.0 Outcomes of the public consultation on library opening hours

Proposals for revised opening hours were set out within a public consultation for 12 libraries – Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry, Shrewsbury (the main library and the Lantern), Whitchurch, Bayston Hill, Ellesmere, Gobowen, Much Wenlock and Wem. The proposals are described within **Appendix 2**.

The proposals to changes to library opening hours do not affect libraries that have already transferred to alternative community management arrangements or are being directly supported by local parish council and other funding.

It should be noted that a separate public consultation is planned in the near future on the future provision of Customer Service Point opening times. This could potentially impact the recommendations set out below for Bridgnorth library and accordingly no final decision will be taken until the outcomes of this consultation are understood.

Registrar opening times are unaffected by these proposals.

1,355 people responded to the public consultation undertaken between 24 May 2016 and 6 July 2016. The consultation was both available on-line and from individual libraries. Alongside the consultation a set of Frequently Asked Questions was available.

The proposals set out within the public consultation were informed by an analysis of visitor numbers in each library in order to identify the quietest periods. Specifically it was proposed to limit library opening times as follows:

- Evenings – No libraries will open after 5pm except for some limited early evening access at Oswestry and Shrewsbury, the two largest libraries
- Early mornings – No libraries will open before 9.30am
- Saturday afternoons – With the exception of Shrewsbury, no libraries will open after 1pm on a Saturday afternoon
- Sundays – No libraries will open on a Sunday; this only affects Shrewsbury

The proposed reductions are more in line with library usage and would provide a more consistent set of opening times across all the potentially affected libraries.

The overall outcomes of the public consultation to the proposals set out are summarised below.

How often do you generally use the library?

More than once a week	About once a week	Once or twice a month	Less than once a month
24.13%	30.26%	35.87%	9.74%

What are you visiting the library for?

Borrow / return books	Borrow return audio books/DVDs	Use the computers	For information	Attend story time/children's activities
91.96%	19.11%	24.8%	41.77%	8.56%
Other: Quite space/study, Wi-Fi, Reading Group or other activity e.g. Knit and Natter/attending classes/author talk, photocopying, customer services, volunteering, research, reading newspapers.				

Do you agree with the proposals described within this consultation?

Yes	No
31.44%	68.56%
<p>Comments varied depending on the location and these are summarised for each branch within Appendix 2. However, the general key themes that emerged can be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that proposals would disadvantage those who work full-time during the week. • Desire to retain at least some evening opening where possible. • Concern that reduced opening times would lead to reduced use of libraries, thus paving the way for further cuts. • Reluctant agreement with proposals if the reductions are likely to secure the future of libraries. 	

Respondents to the consultation showed the following characteristics:

Age bracket:

Under 16	16 -25	25 -59	60 -75	Over 75	Prefer not to say
1.16%	2.78%	39.92%	40.08%	13.9%	2.16%

Nationality and ethnic origin:

White British	Black or Black British	Asian or Asian British	Chinese	Mixed background	Other ethnic group	Prefer not to say
89.96%	0.15%	0.62%	0.31%	0.85%	1.78%	6.33%

Sex:

Male	Female	Transgender	Prefer not to say
32.9%	62.78%	0.08%	4.25%

Disabilities:

Physical disability	Learning disability	Another disability or need	No disabilities	Prefer not to say
8.34%	1.08%	5.02%	48.49%	37.07%

The detailed response to individual library proposals are included within **Appendix 2**. **Appendix 2** also sets out for each library a range of information on usage, final recommendations for revised opening hours and revised cost savings.

Alongside the public consultation local Members and parish / town councils were advised of the proposals either directly or via the media and provided with more detailed information where they requested it.

The recommendations resulting from the consultation are summarised below:

Principal market town libraries:	Opening hours recommendations
Bridgnorth	Open 9.30 – 6.00 on Mondays instead of 9.30 – 7.30. Open 9.30 – 3.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.30 – 5.00. Reduction = 11.5 hours (subject to the outcomes of the public consultation on Customer Service Point opening hours)
Ludlow	Open 9.30 – 6.00 on Mondays instead of 9.30 – 5.00. Open 9.30 – 5.00 on Fridays instead of 9.30 – 7.30. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00 Reduction = 6 hours

Market Drayton	Close at 5pm on Fridays instead of 6pm. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Reduction = 5.5 hours
Oswestry	Open from 9.30 Mon – Sat instead of 9.00. Open 9.30 – 4.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Close at 5.00 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday instead of 6pm Reduction = 8 hours
Shrewsbury	Close at 7pm on Tuesdays instead of 8pm. Close at 5pm on Thursdays instead of 8pm. Open 9.30 – 4.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Do not open on Sundays. Reduction = 8.5 hours
Whitchurch	Open 9.30 – 5.00 on Mondays instead of 1.30 – 5.00. Close at 6pm on Tuesdays instead of 7.30pm. Close at 5pm on Thursdays instead of 6pm. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Reduction = 3 hours
Local market town libraries:	
Bayston Hill	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays instead of 7.30pm. Reduction = 2.5 hours.
Ellesmere	No change to opening hours as a preferred bidder has recently been secured to deliver Library Services from the Meres Community Centre.
Gobowen	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays instead of 7pm. Reduction = 2 hours
Much Wenlock	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays instead of 6pm. Reduction = 2 hours
Shrewsbury, the Lantern	Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Reduction = 3 hours
Wem	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays instead of 6pm. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.30 – 4.00. Reduction = 5 hours

In summary the proposed revised opening hours are equivalent to a total reduction of 57 hours across 11 libraries compared to the originally proposed reduction of 68 hours across 12 libraries. Generally the revised opening hours:

- Retain a late evening opening where consultation feedback appears to justify it
- Close at lunchtime on Saturdays where consultation feedback appears to justify it
- Open from 9.30 am in the morning

8.0 Next steps

Changes to opening hours resulting from the confirmation of recommendations within this report are unlikely to take effect before October 2016.

The impact of these proposals on staff will be different at each library and a staff consultation process will take place, as appropriate, before any changes are implemented.

Alongside this review work will continue to:

- Confirm new management arrangements for the smaller libraries (and Customer Service Points where appropriate) within the context of reducing the budget to nil cost as soon as possible.
- Develop new management and delivery structure for the larger principal market town libraries (and Customer Service Points)
- Review back office library support.
- Invest in on-line services

It is also proposed to develop a detailed plan for the future development of library services over the coming five years which will be consulted on and reported to Cabinet later in the year. This report will explore in more detail the future shape of library services in response to future needs. Some early considerations, which will be developed further within the Cabinet report, are provided within the recent report to Environment Services Scrutiny, 11 July 2016.

Usage of library service provision will continue to be monitored and kept under review.

<p>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</p>
<p>Opening hours across Customer Service Points, Cabinet, 13 July 2016</p>
<p>Shropshire Council library service, the next five years, Environment Scrutiny Services Committee, 11 July 2016</p>
<p>Redesigning Shropshire Council's library service and customer service points, Cabinet 14 October 2015</p>
<p>Update - future commissioning and provision of library services, Environment Services Scrutiny Committee, 22nd June 2015</p>
<p>Future commissioning and provision of library services and community co-location, Environment Scrutiny Services Committee, 8 December 2014</p>
<p>Cabinet Member: Cllr Stuart West, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Culture</p>
<p>Local Members: Changes to library opening hours has a potential county wide impact affecting all local members</p>
<p>Appendices: Appendix 1 - Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment Appendix 2 – Detailed recommendations for each library</p>