

## **Proposals for the closure of Shawbury Library and for alternative library service provision**

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### **1. Summary**

This report seeks Cabinet approval, in the absence of alternative management proposals, to close Shawbury Library from autumn 2016. In making this proposal, the Council has taken into account:

- The relatively low level of use at Shawbury Library and the relatively high transactional costs
- The outcomes of a six week public consultation
- Its worsening financial position determined by central government cuts potentially resulting in services such as leisure, libraries, museums, public open spaces and support for youth activities facing significant cutbacks or in the worst case scenario - closure.

The report considers the outcomes to an extended period of public and stakeholder consultation on future options for the delivery of the library service alongside the profile and pattern of existing library use.

The report references a detailed Needs Assessment and Equality & Social Impact Inclusion Assessment (ESIIA) which bring together a range of information and describe how the Council will meet the specific library requirements of children and adults under section 7(2)(a) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, as well as the specific needs of individual groups: older people, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, people with disabilities, and workless adults.

The following options for alternative library provision are suggested:

- The provision of a mobile library service
- Support for the development of the Village Hall as a “Community Hub”, subject to the successful termination of the current lease arrangement
- Continuation of provision of static library services from Wem, Sundorne Shrewsbury and Market Drayton
- The development of on-line library services
- Home library services for people unable to readily get out and about

Reference is made to the existing lease that Shropshire Council has with the landlord, the Shawbury Village Hall Committee, and to options for the future development of the existing library space for community use.

### **2. Recommendations**

1. That Shawbury Library is closed as soon as practical and that a new weekly mobile library service is introduced
2. That discussions are undertaken with the Shawbury Village Hall Committee with respect to the future use of the existing library space and that in principle financial support is provided for potential investment in the reconfiguration of the existing space on an “invest to save basis”, should agreement be reached that the current lease arrangement can be terminated.
3. To delegate authority to the Director of Place and Enterprise in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure to take any further consequential decisions relating to the closure of the library.

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

#### 3.1 Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation plans in place
The consultation process undertaken is formally challenged	Full details of public and stakeholder engagement is described below. This led to a 6 week formal consultation and additional focussed stakeholder engagement, including with Shawbury Parish Council, the Shawbury Village Hall Committee, Shawbury RAF base and Shawbury Primary School. Formal consultation was supported by a range of detailed background information brought together within the Shawbury Library Needs Assessment, 4 May 2016 – see <b>Appendix 1</b> . The feedback from all this activity has been recorded, analysed and used to inform the recommendations in this report.
Library closure fails to comply with S7 Public Library and Museum Act 1964 (see below)	Shropshire Council intends to meet the library needs of residents in the Shawbury area using a combination of delivery methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of a mobile library service</li> <li>• Support for the development of the Village Hall as a “Community Hub”, subject to the successful termination of the current lease arrangement</li> <li>• The provision of static library services from Wem, Sundorne Shrewsbury and Market Drayton</li> <li>• The development of on-line library services</li> <li>• Home library services for people unable to readily get out and about</li> </ul>
Library closure and new service provision fail to meet equality and social inclusion obligations	An Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment has been completed using a range of information including comments made via public and stakeholder engagement – see <b>Appendix 2</b> . Although the usage of Shawbury library is relatively limited and declining its potential closure will clearly have an impact on the existing 268 active library users.

#### 4.0 The Council’s statutory responsibilities

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.

*“A comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library. This has never been the case. Comprehensive has therefore been taken to mean delivering a service that is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources. Decisions about the Service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough.”*

*Ouseley J in Bailey v London Borough of Brent [2011] EWHC 2572 (Admin)*

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.

The recommendations within this report will enable this statutory duty to be met. While the recommendation proposes the closure of the public library this is presented in the context of alternative library service provision.

## 5.0 Outcomes of public consultation and stakeholder engagement

### 5.1 Timetable of consultation and engagement work

Activity	Date
<b>General consultation and stakeholder engagement on alternative delivery approaches</b>	
LJC Meeting	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2015
Drop in Event	27 <sup>th</sup> July 2015
Consultation on future management	6 <sup>th</sup> Nov -18 December 2015
Shawbury Parish Council Meeting	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Meeting with Town Council and Village Hall Committee	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Drop in Event	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Meeting with Village Hall Committee	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2016
<b>Formal consultation and stakeholder engagement on potential closure</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> May -24 <sup>th</sup> June 2016
Drop in Event	25 <sup>th</sup> May 2016

### 5.2 General consultation and stakeholder engagement on alternative delivery approaches

Since February 2015 Shropshire Council has been discussing future management options for Shawbury Library with the local member, Cllr Simon Jones, local residents and organisations including Shawbury Parish Council, Shawbury Village Hall committee, RAF Shawbury and St Mary's CE Primary School. These discussions included a drop in event at the library in July 2015 that was attended by 16 people. Feedback forms were completed by 8 residents, comments were made suggesting that the library could be run by volunteers and become an internet café; concerns were raised about children missing out on the opportunity to use the library and that there should at least be a mobile library service as it is expensive to travel to other libraries.

Shropshire Council further consulted on options for alternative management arrangements for the library service during a six week period running from 6<sup>th</sup> November to 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015. A public drop in event was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> November for anyone interested to look around the library and to discuss their ideas with officers from Shropshire Council. No organisations or individuals attended.

Shropshire Council received a petition in July 2015 titled “We the undersigned wish to protest the planned closure of Shawbury Library” with 1,094 signatures from Shawbury residents.

Despite these discussions taking place, to date no suggestions for alternative management of Shawbury library service have been made or are currently being developed. A number of responses have been received from key potential partners and / or stakeholders including:

Shawbury Village Hall – The Village Hall Committee has confirmed that the withdrawal of the library would provide an opportunity to enhance the provision within the hall for the Shawbury community. They are keen to investigate the possibility of creating a ‘Community Hub’ which could provide a meeting area for villagers with access to IT facilities including broadband connection, desktop computers and printers. It could also be equipped with easy chairs and tea and coffee making facilities to make it an attractive environment in which villagers could meet on a daily basis. It could have displays and shelves for exhibiting printed materials and possibly a book exchange. Additional space would also be gained which would provide an opportunity to increase revenue to the Hall Committee by hiring out rooms (to help off-set the loss of revenue from the Library Service).

To enable these changes to be made, the Village Hall Committee would look to Shropshire Council to help with the initial costs of making changes to the structure of the building.

Shawbury Parish Council – The parish council confirmed at a meeting in December 2015 that for financial reasons they are unable to take over responsibility for the library service and because they do not own the Village Hall feel that it is not appropriate for them to take responsibility for the computers. The council would support a decision to provide a mobile library service.

RAF Shawbury – RAF Shawbury have confirmed that they would be unable to take on the running of the library due to staffing implications and also the practicalities that this would entail. They also indicate that they have a library facility on the base for all their personnel and families.

### **5.3 Formal consultation and stakeholder engagement on potential closure**

A formal consultation ran for 7 weeks from 6th May to 24th June 2016, and was available online via Shropshire Council’s website. Paper copies of the consultation document were made available in the library and press releases were issued to promote the survey.

In the consultation material members of the public and stakeholders were provided with details of the current Shawbury library, including usage and the operating costs. Residents were asked if they agreed with Shropshire Council’s preferred approach - closure of Shawbury Library and support for alternative means of accessing library services. Residents were also given the opportunity to indicate if there were any alternatives that should be considered for the future delivery of library services that met our required outcomes to reduce costs.

A third library open day took place on 25th May, two members of the public attended.

A total of 6 people responded to the consultation. The responses are summarised below.

**Proposal** – Having read all the information available, do you agree with our preferred approach for the future delivery of library services in Shawbury?

Yes – 4 (67%)

No – 2 (33%)

Comments		Shropshire Council response
Considerations must be given to the time and position of the mobile library to ensure it is not too restrictive	2	The mobile library will visit the Village Hall on a weekly basis within its existing timetable
The continue provision of free supported access to computers and the internet is important	1	Shropshire Council will work with the Village Hall Committee to support the development of the Village Hall as a "Community Hub" including potential access to broadband connection, pc's and printers, , subject to the successful termination of the current lease arrangement
As an aging population some residents may not be able to travel to nearby libraries	1	A fully accessible mobile library will visit the Village Hall on a weekly basis. The existing Home Library Service using local volunteers to deliver books to housebound readers will be extended
For the small amount of money involved it should be kept on. A mobile library is not an adequate replacement	1	The library is no longer viable in terms of best use of resources because of the low level and high cost of usage when set against the context of savings the Council must make

#### 5.4 Library user survey

82 people responded to a user survey in early 2016. Of those surveyed:

72 White British; 1 White Other; 7 Not Said

60 Female; 17 Male; 5 Not Said

13 with Physical Disability; 2 with Learning Disability; 2 with Another Disability

4% under 16, 6% between 16-25, 21% between 26-59 26%, 37% between 60-75, and 20% over 75

57% of people travelled to the library by car and 41% walked

97% of people found the library easy or quite easy to get to

32% of people used the library at least once a week and 15% less than once a month

76% of people used the library to borrow/return books, 9% to borrow/return AV & DVD's, 22% to use the computers, and 4% to attend story time sessions

This survey has confirmed proposal for potential library closure and helped to shape an understanding of alternative library provision.

#### 5.5 Consultation conclusions

In conclusion the consultation and stakeholder engagement work undertaken has shown support for the Council's preferred approach – Closure of Shawbury Library and support for alternative means of accessing library services.

### 6. Financial Implications

**6.1** The net controllable cost of Shawbury Library in 2015/16 was £14,687. As £3,880 of current costs relate to the lease arrangement with Shawbury Village Hall, it is anticipated that ongoing revenue savings from closure will be approximately £10,800 per annum if the lease arrangement cannot be terminated, and £14,690 per annum if it can.

**6.2** It is likely that termination of the lease arrangement (see 7.3) may be subject to a one-off cost to Shropshire Council of investment in the building to support the creation of a community hub. The

value of any investment would be subject to further discussion with Shawbury Village Hall Committee and the decision to go ahead would be subject to an internal options appraisal, taking into account the remaining period of the rental agreement, annual charges and the payback period of the investment.

**6.3** One-off staff redundancy costs relating to two part time staff will be incurred should the decision to close the library be taken.

**6.4** Existing mobile library routes will be reconfigured so there are no additional costs anticipated from the provision of a mobile library stop in Shawbury.

## 7. Background

7.1 Details of the library and its services are provided below:

<b>Library location</b>	Shawbury Village Hall, Church Road, Shawbury, Shropshire, SY4 4NH
<b>Management organisation and tenure</b>	Shropshire Council provide library services within a 35 year lease, which commenced in 2005, with the Shawbury Village Hall Committee. Early termination of the lease is by agreement with the Village Hall Committee.
<b>Library opening hours</b>	Monday 12:00 - 16:00 Tuesday Closed Wednesday 14:00 - 18:00 Thursday Closed Friday 12:00 - 16:00 Saturday 10:00 - 13:00
<b>Access to IT / computers</b>	Four public computers available free to library members One-to-one adult computer and tablet lessons with trained volunteers available on request
<b>Summary of library services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• free membership for all</li> <li>• the lending of adult books, audio books, large print books and DVDs</li> <li>• a children's library area and range of books for children from age 0 upwards</li> <li>• a collection of books for teenagers</li> <li>• local history resources</li> <li>• regular exchange of books with other libraries</li> <li>• request service - obtaining books from other libraries requested by customers</li> <li>• free access to public computers for library members; internet access and printing</li> <li>• trained staff to issue and return books, answer enquiries, help people to choose books and use computers</li> <li>• online services on the <a href="#">Library Service website</a> for use 24/7</li> <li>• regular events such as story times, rhyme times, class visits from local schools, adult and teenage reading groups, author talks and social events</li> </ul>

Library usage		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
	Visits		7,325	7,460	6,284	4,579
Active borrowers		305	278	289	286	268
Computer time used (mins)		63,888	70,440	54,738	42,756	26,513
Total loans		8,679	7,624	7,857	8,138	5,253
Requests		372	328	328	294	278
<b>Space for community activities</b>	The library provides a meeting space for community groups, e.g. Reading Group, and a range of activities e.g. children's story time					

Shawbury Library is on average the least used library in Shropshire of all of its libraries.

The overall decline in usage is a reflection of national trends. Within Shropshire, online developments mean it has now become easier to access a range of library services remotely, such as renewing and requesting items, e-magazines and e-books, and a wide selection of online reference resources. This will have had a detrimental impact on physical visits.

Despite recent local publicity on the future of Shawbury library there has been a significant decline in visits, active borrowers, computer use, loans and requests in 2015/16, all (except for requests) significantly greater than the county average.

The overall drop in computer time used is a reflection of the increase in ownership of internet devices, particularly smartphones and tablets.

**7.2** The cost per visit at Shawbury is £3.64 which, because of the low number of visits, makes it the most expensive in Shropshire, followed by Much Wenlock with a cost of £2.67 per visit. The cost per loan at Shawbury is £2.73, which makes it the fourth most expensive behind Oswestry, Bridgnorth and Highley. The average cost per loan/visit combined is £3.19 which also makes Shawbury the most expensive library in the county. The low level of usage directly impacts on the cost of providing a library service.

**7.3** The Library is housed in Shawbury Village Hall, which is owned by Shawbury Village Hall Committee. Shropshire Council lease the space occupied by the library under a 35 year part – repairing lease which is due to end in 2039. There is no council break clause to this lease and while the rent is a peppercorn there is an annual service charge, insurance charge, and contribution to a restoration fund.

Throughout this process there has been strong engagement with the chair and trustees of the Shawbury Village Hall Committee, who have supported discussion on the potential closure of the library and the development of alternative ideas for the future use of the space, see 5.2.

Once formal closure of the library is agreed these discussions will be further progressed. One off investment by Shropshire Council in the refurbishment of the existing space to meet future community needs will be considered within an “invest to save approach”, i.e. based on an ongoing council commitment to pay £3,880 service charges per annum equivalent to a total of approximately £89,000 for the remainder of the lease (assuming no inflation).

**7.4** Within the Needs Assessment we set out in detail how Shropshire Council intends to meet the library needs of residents in the Shawbury area. This is summarised below:

- the provision of a mobile library service
- Support for the development of the Village Hall as a “Community Hub”, subject to successful termination of the current lease arrangement
- the provision of static library services from Wem, the Lantern at Sundorne Shrewsbury and Market Drayton

- the development of on-line library services
- home library services for people unable to readily get out and about

It is recognised that it will be difficult to provide on-going support for existing regular library activities such as rhyme times and holiday activities for children and occasional class visits from the primary school. The school could potentially bring children to borrow books from the mobile library and it may be possible to hold a story time event during the summer holidays but these activities might be impacted by space constraints. Options will continue to be researched, good practice elsewhere considered and ideas from the local community welcomed.

**7.5** Subject to Cabinet confirmation the current library staff will be at risk of redundancy or redeployed. They are a Branch Manager on 11 hours per week and a Library Assistant on 1.75 hours per week. In addition there is a vacancy for a 6.25 hour post which is currently being staffed from Market Drayton Library on additional hours.

## 8. Conclusions

**8.1** In making a recommendation for the closure of static library provision within Shawbury we have considered a range of responses and materials including:

- the responses received from extensive consultation and stakeholder engagement
- the completion of a detailed Needs Assessment and Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment
- The relatively low level of use at Shawbury Library and the relatively high transactional costs
- The worsening financial position determined by central government cuts potentially resulting in services such as leisure, libraries, museums, public open spaces and support for youth activities facing significant cutbacks or in the worst case scenario - closure.
- Options for alternative library provision via:
  - The provision of a mobile library service
  - Support for the development of the Village Hall as a “Community Hub”, subject to successful termination of the current lease arrangement
  - The provision of static library services from Wem, Sundorne Shrewsbury and Market Drayton
  - The development of on-line library services
  - Home library services for people unable to readily get out and about

**8.2** Usage of alternative library service provision by Shawbury residents will be monitored and alternative service provision will be kept under review.

Alongside this the Council will continue to look at best practice elsewhere, encourage comments and ideas from local residents and actively encourage the participation of local community groups, including the Village Hall Committee, the Parish Council RAF Shawbury and the local school and the development of alternative approaches for delivering library services.

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>          Redesigning Shropshire Council’s library service and customer service points,          Cabinet 14 October 2015          Shawbury Library Frequently Asked Questions 04 May 2016</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member:</b>          Cllr Stuart West, Portfolio Holder for Leisure &amp; Culture</p>
<p><b>Local Member:</b>          Cllr Simon Jones</p>
<p><b>Appendices:</b>          Appendix 1 – Shawbury Library Needs Assessment          Appendix 2 - Equality &amp; Social Inclusion Impact Assessment</p>



