

Shropshire Council  
Legal and Democratic Services  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 6ND

Date: 28 March 2014

**Committee:**

**Decision Making by Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ipe and Commissioning (North)**

**Date: Monday, 7 April 2014**

**Time: 10.00 am**

**Venue: Room 1S 131, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

You are requested to attend the above meeting.  
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

**Members of Decision Making by Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ipe and Commissioning (North)**

Steve Charmley

Your Committee Officer is:

**Penny Chamberlain** Principal Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 252729

Email: [penny.chamberlain@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:penny.chamberlain@shropshire.gov.uk)

# AGENDA

## 1 Shropshire Archives - Opening Hours (Pages 1 - 14)

The Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ip&e and Commissioning (North) will consider a report by the Director of Commissioning on opening hours for Shropshire Archives.

Contact – George Candler: 01743 255003

Note: **Portfolio Holder Decision Making Sessions are not open to the public.** However Members of the public are welcome to submit a request to address or ask a question of the Member making the Portfolio Holder decision. Any request should be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive at The Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND by no later than 2 clear working days before the proposed Member Session. This is to ensure that the individual member has sufficient time to decide whether or not to hear such persons and if so the arrangements to be made. If you would like further details please telephone 01743 252729 or email [penny.chamberlain@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:penny.chamberlain@shropshire.gov.uk)



<p><u>Portfolio Holder Decision</u> <u>Making Session</u></p> <p>10am</p> <p>7 April 2014</p>
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<p><u>Item</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p><u>Public</u></p>
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## **SHROPSHIRE ARCHIVES – REDUCED OPENING HOURS**

**Responsible Officer** Mary McKenzie  
 Email: [Mary.mckenzie@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:Mary.mckenzie@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 255356 Fax: 01743 255355

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### **1. Summary**

This report sets out the options for reducing opening hours at Shropshire Archives. The Portfolio Holder is asked to decide the future opening hours from 16 April 2014 for Shropshire Archives in light of the current staffing and financial issues and after taking into account the outcome of the public consultation.

### **2. Recommendations**

To:

Agree the following opening hours at Shropshire Archives from Wednesday 16 April 2014

Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 4.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
Saturday (1 in 2)	10.00 – 2.00
Saturday (2 in 2)	Closed

**TOTAL**                      **20 hours** limited library service from 2.00pm

Reasons for decision:

Budget reductions at Shropshire Archives have resulted in reduced staffing levels from April 2014. This has meant that a reduction in opening hours has to be introduced.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

A public consultation has been carried out based on the questionnaire in Appendix 1. This offered a choice of 4 options. A total of 550 responses have been received.

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been carried out which identified that the change in opening hours will have a low to medium impact on customers and stakeholders. The service will remain open on 3 weekdays, plus open one Saturday in two. By retaining an element of weekend opening, access is provided for those in full time work or education.

The changes to opening hours will still allow Shropshire Council to meet its statutory requirements for access to records and information.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

The changes to the opening hours are necessary as a result of budget reductions. Shropshire Archives' budget for 2014/15 has been reduced by £58.5K from the 2013/14 budget of £495K gross (£315K net). 6 staff (3.44 FTE) are leaving at the end of March 2014 with an additional one (1 FTE) leaving at the end of July 2014. A staffing restructure is currently taking place with a formal end to staff consultation on 31 March 2014.

#### **5. Background**

Budget reductions require a major adjustment in staffing and functions at Shropshire Archives. Inevitably this means a reduction in the service's opening hours. A public consultation took place from 24 February 2014 to 23 March 2014 on a range of options based on opening 20 hours a week, a reduction of 10 hours from the current opening hours. ( Appendix 1 )

The current opening hours are:	Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
	Wednesday	10.00 - 5.00
	Thursday	10.00 – 8.00
	Friday	10.00 – 5.00
	Saturday	10.00 – 4.00

In recent years, the number of actual visitors to Shropshire Archives has gradually declined to an apparent steady figure of approximately 10,000. The current opening on Thursday evening is generally not well used. Saturdays vary in use, but most users do not stay for the whole day. The proposal is to reduce opening hours to 20 hours a week (currently 30). Staffing levels during opening hours will be reduced from 2.00 pm, providing a library style service without access to original documents.

This reduction in opening hours will ensure that the service can continue with other essential behind the scenes cataloguing and conservation work which supports public access to archives. An enquiry service will continue to be maintained from Tuesdays to Fridays. Local History Centres, housed in a number of libraries and other venues across the county, will also continue to provide access to their local and family history resources.

#### **6. Consultation**

The public's views on three options were sought with the additional option of suggesting their own opening pattern as a fourth option. The consultation was available online at [www.shropshirearchives.org.uk](http://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk) and through a paper form distributed to libraries and other venues across the county.

The consultation closed on Sunday 23 March 2014. The results of the consultation were as follows:

### Option A

Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 4.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
Saturday (1 in 2)	10.00 – 2.00
Saturday (2 in 2)	Closed
TOTAL	20 hours, limited library service from 2.00pm

**57.45% in favour**

### Option B

Saturday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 6.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
TOTAL	20 hours, limited library service from 2pm

**14.36% in favour**

### Option C

Service closed one week a month with access to archive material during opening hours. Opening hours pattern either following Option A or Option B.

**15.09% in favour**

### Option D

The public were asked to give their own suggestions under Option D. A variety of responses were received which are detailed in Appendix 2. There was no clear consensus on a particular additional option, though a majority of respondents were in favour of retaining an element of Saturday opening. This will be achieved if the recommended option is accepted.

**13.09% in favour**

There is therefore a clear preference for option A.

A full analysis of the results, including demographic details of the respondents, can be found in Appendix 2.

Shropshire Archives will be closed from Sunday 30 March to Tuesday 15 April, with the agreed new opening hours starting from Wednesday 16 April 2014. This closure period will allow staff to work on a planned move of archives and records to a refurbished store and to complete essential staff training following the restructure.

A communication plan is in place to ensure that the public are aware of the changes to the opening hours following the decision, and before the reopening on 16 April. This will ensure that a variety of media channels are used to communicate the news to the public as efficiently and effectively as possible. In addition, existing customers and stakeholders will be informed directly via existing communication channels.

## 7. Additional Information

### Timetable

24 February 2014	Public consultation opens
23 March 2014	Public consultation closes
30 March to 13 April 2014	Shropshire Archives closed
16 April 2014	Shropshire Archives reopens with amended opening hours

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, given the extent of the consultation and the responses to this and having considered all the information, including the responses to the consultation, and the outcome of the Equalities Need Impact Assessment, the recommended option is Option A.

It is recommended that this is agreed and implemented from Wednesday 16 April 2014.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):</b> Appendix 1 – Public consultation form Appendix 2 - Analysis of results of public consultation
<b>Key Decision: Yes</b>  <b>Included within Forward Plan: Yes</b>  <b>If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: N/A</b>
<b>Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:</b>  Councillor Steve Charmley
<b>Local Member:</b>  County wide
<b>Appendices:</b>  Appendix 1 – Public consultation form Appendix 2 – Analysis of consultation results

**Declaration of Interest**

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled .....

Signed .....

Portfolio Holder for .....

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment : .....

.....

.....

Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.

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Appendix 1

**Shropshire Archives**

**Options for reduced opening hours, February 2014**

Budget reductions, part of the overall spending pressures on Shropshire Council, require a major adjustment in staffing and functions at Shropshire Archives. Inevitably this means a reduction in the service's opening hours.

Our current opening hours are:	Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
	Wednesday	10.00 - 5.00
	Thursday	10.00 – 8.00
	Friday	10.00 – 5.00
	Saturday	10.00 – 4.00

In recent years, the number of actual visitors to Shropshire Archives has gradually declined to an apparent steady figure of approximately 10,000. The current opening on Thursday evening is generally not well used. Saturdays vary in use, but most users do not stay for the whole day. The proposal is to reduce opening hours to 20 hours a week (currently 30). Staffing levels during opening hours will be reduced from 2pm, providing a library style service without access to original documents.

This reduction in opening hours will ensure that the service can continue with other essential behind the scenes cataloguing and conservation work which supports public access to archives. An enquiry service will continue to be maintained from Tuesdays to Fridays. Local History Centres, housed in a number of libraries and other venues across the county, will also continue to provide access to their local and family history resources.

The consultation closes on Sunday 23 March 2014. A final decision on the options following the consultation, will be made by the Portfolio Holder : Business Growth and Commissioning (North) at a decision making session.

Shropshire Archives will be closed from Sunday 30 March to Tuesday 15 April, with the agreed new opening hours starting from the week beginning Monday 14 April. This closure period will allow staff to work on a planned move of archives and records to a refurbished store and to complete essential staff training following the restructure.

We are seeking people's views on three options and inviting them to suggest a fourth, one of which will be in place from April 2014.

Please complete the form and return to Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury SY1 2AQ.

You can also complete the survey online via our website at [www.shropshirearchives.org.uk](http://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk)

For further information please contact Mary McKenzie Team Leader, Archives,  
Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury SY1 2AQ,  
Telephone 01743 255356  
email [mary.mckenzie@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:mary.mckenzie@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Options for opening hours at Shropshire Archives**

Option A

Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 4.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
Saturday (1 in 2)	10.00 – 2.00
Saturday (2 in 2)	Closed

**TOTAL**                    **20 hours** limited library service from 2.00pm

Option B

Saturday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 6.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00

**TOTAL**                    **20 hours** limited library service from 2pm

Option C

Service closed one week a month with access to archive material during opening hours.

Option D

Or is there a different option? Please let us know if you think there is an alternative solution, recognising that there is a maximum of 20 hours open per week.

**1 My preferred option is**

Option A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option B	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option C	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option D (My solution)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please describe your alternative solution below

.....

.....

.....

.....

**2. If the service was closed one week a month would you prefer option A or B for the opening times?**

Option A

Option B

**3. If you have any comments about the above proposals please tell us here.  
(To help us understand your feedback please be clear which option you are commenting on)**

.....

.....

.....

Please tell us the following information which will help us to plan our services

**4. How often do you use Shropshire Archives in person?**

Weekly

Monthly

Once a year

Haven't used the service yet

How often do you use Shropshire Archives remotely via phone, email, website etc

Weekly

Monthly

Once a year

Haven't used the service yet

**5. Are you .....**

A volunteer with the service?

Yes/no

A member of the Friends of Shropshire Archives?

Yes/no

### Demographics

The following questions are voluntary and the information will not be shared with anyone else. They will be used to see if there are differences between the views of different groups of people and to understand if a good cross section of people took part in this survey.

**6 Your gender**

Male

Transgender

Female

Prefer not to say

**7 Your age**

0-4

20-29

60-64

5-9

30-39

65-74

10-14

40-49

75 or over

15-19

50-59

Prefer not to say

**8 Your ethnicity**

White- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/ British	<input type="checkbox"/>	White- Gypsy or Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>
White-Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other White background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups – White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups – White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups – White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian/Asian British – Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian/Asian British – Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other Asian background	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Arab	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other ethnic group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**9 Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (Include problems related to old age)**

Yes limited a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes limited a little	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. What is your sexuality?**

Heterosexual/straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gay/lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**11. What is your postcode? (This will be used for analysis purposes).**

Your Postcode .....

**Thank you for your help.**

Appendix 2

**Shropshire Archives**

**Results of the Public Consultation on options for reduced opening hours,  
February – March 2014**

**Summary of results**

A total of 550 responses were received with the following results:

**Option A**

Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 4.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
Saturday (1 in 2)	10.00 – 2.00
Saturday (2 in 2)	Closed
TOTAL	20 hours limited library service from 2.00pm

**57.45% in favour**

**Option B**

Saturday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 6.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
TOTAL	20 hours limited library service from 2pm

**14.36% in favour**

**Option C**

Service closed one week a month with access to archive material during opening hours. Opening hours pattern either following Option A or Option B.

**15.09% in favour**

Within this group, 77.12% in favour of opening following the Option A pattern and 22.88% in favour of opening following the Option B pattern.

**Option D**

The public were asked to give their own suggestions under Option D.

## 13.09% in favour

### Analysis of responses received under Option D.

A variety of responses were received. There was no clear consensus on a particular additional option, though a majority of respondents were in favour of retaining an element of Saturday opening. This will be achieved if the recommended option is accepted.

Of those in favour of option D the majority (65.38%) provided comments that were variants on option A, 0.19% suggested variants on option B. 13% suggested more shorter days and 17% suggested fewer longer days.

### Analysis of general comments received about the service

Overall 220 respondents gave additional comments about the service. Many of the comments stressed the importance of keeping some Saturday opening for those who work during the work, these included:

- I think you need to maintain a Saturday opening for people who cannot visit on weekdays.
- For people who are working, the only opportunity to visit the archives would either be on the late finish or Saturdays. Therefore, with the late finish being 6pm and most people work until 5pm which doesn't give time to get there, so Sat mornings are more valuable. Especially if other members of the family go into town shopping, etc, there is opportunity for those who wish to visit the archives to do so. I think Saturday morning openings therefore are very valuable. Otherwise the service just ends up as another one for the retired or non-working members of the population.
- Two of us work and can therefore only get to the library on Saturdays. Currently when we go we spend about 6 hours.
- I do not believe it is a good idea to close one week a month. Whilst I realise the need for economic measures to be put in place it is essential that a regular opening regime is one that is easily understood. I do not like the idea of alternate Saturday closing but appreciate that if 20 hours has to be achieved then this is the better alternative.
- Many archives open 3 days during the week with one or two Saturdays open each month. I think option A is the most viable.
- From a personal perspective (though I expect I am not alone) access on Saturdays is important as I live away, and work, and therefore tend to visit at the weekend. A solution which eliminates weekend use, and without evening opening, would seem to limit use for a range of users and potential users - including school project work.
- I do not think there should be any reduction of hours. If there are to be reductions please have the Archives open at sometime on Saturdays for people who work Monday to Friday.

Concerns were also expressed about the proposed restrictions on the level of service during opening days.

- I am already appalled at the present low number of Opening Hours e.g. not opening on Mondays and Tuesdays. This is a Public Service and should concentrate on being open EVERY day if possible to meet users' requirements. If the Opening Hours have to be cut from 30 to 20 then there should certainly not be any restriction to users' access to material on the days that the Archives ARE open.
- I have made 37 visits to Shropshire Archives in the last two years in the furtherance of academic research. It seems that with a 33% reduction in hours that delivery of original documents to researchers will in addition be slower due to demand during the periods when the facility is open. The adverse impact upon academic research will therefore represent a double hit.
- The continued cuts to the Archives Service public access are most unwelcome. Much of the material in the Archives collections has been donated or placed there with the expectation that this material is freely and readily accessible to the public. The restriction of the availability of

non-library documents to weekday morning periods (Options A and B) would discriminate against anyone who has to travel any distance to use the service - i.e. rural Shropshire residents - and those who work.

Many other comments were supportive of the service in general, these included:

- It is a huge pity that this invaluable facility will have reduced opening hours
- I greatly value our Archives Service, and any of these options will represent a significant reduction in my opportunities to access it in person, as I work full time. It is such a shame when the Archives have a really good, purpose built centre to work from, and have over recent years done so much to attract both new users and volunteers and to increase access both online and through the Local History Centres. This reduction in opening hours risks undermining much of what has been achieved in recent years. Care must be taken to ensure that it does not trigger a vicious spiral of decline.
- I realise that cuts will have to be made, but I do hope that the invaluable service provided by Shropshire Archives will be able to continue, as far as possible.
- I am very sad to hear that further closures are necessary. I think that to accommodate researchers and students as well as the general public that Saturdays are important, as are later hours during the week.
- The staff are VERY helpful and I could not have done my work without them. The catalogue needs improving.
- It is important to retain as much access to the archival material as possible - this material is only available here (only a little is available digitally) whereas much of the secondary source material is available elsewhere (other local libraries).

Several also stressed the need for opening hours to be as simple and consistent as possible.

- I think it is important to keep the opening hours as simple as possible. If the late opening on Thursdays is not well used perhaps it would be best to cancel it altogether.
- How on earth would people remember which week closed!! You have a beautiful building which attracts tourism - are you going to waste all the money spent on it by keeping it empty and unused?

## **Analysis of respondents**

### *Use of Shropshire Archives in person*

- 15.07% use the service weekly
- 44.3% use the service monthly
- 32.17% use the service once a year
- 8.46% haven't used the service yet

### *Use of Shropshire Archives remotely via phone, email, website etc*

- 11.24% use the service weekly
- 40.68% use the service monthly
- 28.99% use the service once a year
- 19.10% haven't used the service yet

### *Volunteers and Friends*

- 13.36% were volunteers with Shropshire Archives
- 16.24% were member of the Friends of Shropshire Archives

### *Gender of respondents*

- 42.48% Male
- 55.05% Female
- 0 % Transgender
- 2.48 % Prefer not to say

### *Age of respondents*

0% 0-14	3.74% 30-39	16.82% 60-64
0.19% 15-19	7.48% 40-49	36.82% 65-74
2.62% 20-29	17.57% 50-59	11.79% 75 or over
2.99% Prefer not to say		

### *Ethnicity of respondents*

- 91.49 % White British
- 0.57 % White Irish
- 0.19% White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- 1.51 % Any other White background
- 0.19% Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background
- 0.19% Any other Asian background
- 0.19% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African
- 5.67 % Prefer not to say

### *Respondents whose day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability*

2.12% limited a lot	12.31% limited a little
80.96% not limited	4.72% Prefer not to say

### *Respondents' sexuality*

77.3% Heterosexual/straight	0.8% Gay/lesbian
0.8% Bisexual	0.6% Other
20.08% Prefer not to say	

### **Postcode analysis**

43.19% Shropshire
15.95% Telford and Wrekin
7.97% Rest of West Midlands
38.71% Rest of UK
0% Europe
2.14% Rest of the world