



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

Date: 19th March 2015

Committee:

Decision Making Session by Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North)

Date: Friday, 27 March 2015

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 Session by Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North)

Steve Charmley

Your Committee Officer is:

Penny Chamberlain Principal Committee Officer

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AGENDA

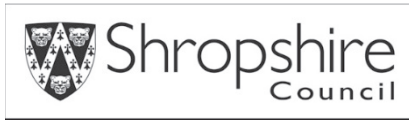
1 **Redesign of Library Service in Church Stretton (Pages 1 - 88)**

Report of the Director of Commissioning is attached marked 1.

Contact – George Candler – 01743 255036

Note: Since the publication of the agenda, report and appendices on Thursday, 19th March 2015 it became apparent that Appendix 2 entitled *Summary of Targeted Engagement Work* was the incorrect document and subsequently withdrawn. The correct version of Appendix 2 entitled *Church Stretton Library Consultation – Engagement Plan* was published on Monday, 23rd March 2015.

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 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



Portfolio Holder Decision Making Session

Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North)

27th March 2015 10am

Item

1

Public

REDESIGN OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN CHURCH STRETTON

Responsible Officer: Michael Lewis/Kate Garner
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1. Summary

This report seeks Portfolio Holder agreement for the creation of a shared public and school library at Church Stretton School. This will involve the creation of a community hub that plays a key role in providing the information, advice and guidance that supports health and well-being, the provision of a developed Health Zone and the development of the role of Community Connectors. This will be done in a manner that complements and adds value to existing provision in Church Stretton, such as the Mayfair Community Centre. The recommendations have been informed by the discussions of the Church Stretton Asset/Services Working Group, the information contained in the listed Background Papers and the consideration of the feedback received through a 6 week period of a local Community Conversation, a 6 week period of formal consultation and focussed engagement with Protected Characteristic groups identified through the completion of the accompanying Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA).

2. Recommendations

- That a coterminous public and school library is created at Church Stretton School and Church Stretton's library service is relocated to, and delivered from this newly designed shared space
- That further work be undertaken to facilitate Shropshire Council working with the community and local partners as detailed within this report
- To delegate authority to the Director of Commissioning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North) to take any further decisions relating to the delivery of the recommendation.

Reason(s) for decision:

The agreement of the above recommendations will result in –

- The opportunity to create a modern, sustainable and accessible library service in Church Stretton that reflects the council's vision for a transformed library service as described in the its successful Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) bid.
- The opportunity to maximise revenue savings for the council – the proposal to relocate the library to the school will provide a maximum return on the future revenue costs of delivering a library service in Church Stretton
- The opportunity to utilise TCA funding in 2015/2016 and contribute to the successful delivery of the wider Community Hub programme in Shropshire

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1 The activity undertaken to create, develop and consult on the recommendations within this report

A summary of the activity undertaken by Shropshire Council, Church Stretton School, its local partners and the Church Stretton community, including the work of the Asset and Service Working Group and the periods of community consultation and engagement is attached as Appendix 5.

3.2 Timeline of consultation and engagement work

Activity	Date
6 week Community Conversation with accompanying FAQ document	Nov/Dec 2014
Drop-in event and presentation at Strettondale Local Joint Committee	6 th November 2014
Meeting with Church Stretton Library Support Group	15 th December 2014
6 week formal consultation period on the council's preferred option, including opportunity for alternative proposals	Feb/March 2015
ESIA created and additional engagement plan that reflects highlighted issues	February 2015
Additional engagement plan delivered	Feb/March 2015
Public meeting organised by the Library Support Group	4 th February 2015
Petition opposing the preferred option delivered triggering a debate at full Council	16 th February 2015
Petition presented at full council and debate held	26 th February 2015
Formal consultation period ends – ESIA updated and action plan created – alternative proposals received	16 th March 2015 onwards
Portfolio Holder Decision Making Session	27 th March 2015

3.3 Key themes that arose from the Community Conversation and the council's responses to these

- A community conversation on the proposal for Shropshire Council to work in partnership with Church Stretton School to provide a joint public and school library located at the school opened on 6th November 2014. The community conversation closed on 19th December for which there were 223 responses to the proposal. These responses were analysed and from this analysis 6 key themes or issues have emerged, which are summarised below.

Theme	Description	Percentage of the total responses where this theme is mentioned
1	Distance from town centre	33.26%
2	Don't want any change	26.74%
3	Car parking availability	13.70%
4	Transport options	11.96%
5	Opening hours	7.61%
6	Accessibility	6.73%

- Distance from town centre of the library if it was at the school
Concerns were raised over the location of the library if it moved to the school. These concerns focused on the school being further town centre than the current library building and the perceived difficulty for users in being able to travel to the school. To understand more about where active library users live in relation to both the current and the proposed location, the council has analysed the data relating to this. Basing this data on 1469 active users (borrowed something from the library during 2014). 65% of these users live within 2km of both the current library location and the school. Currently 49% of active borrowers live less than 1km from the library. If the library moved to the school that figure would drop to 34% and those living between 1 and 2km from their library service would increase from 16% to 31%.

A travel survey of library users has been carried out during the consultation period and the details of 102 journeys have been gathered. The full survey results are listed as Background Paper 9. In summary –

26 people use a car now and would use a car to get the relocated library
 26 people walk now and would use a car to get to the relocated library
 23 people walk now and would walk to get to the relocated library
 3 people walk now and would use the bus to get to the relocated library
 3 people use a car now and would walk to get to the relocated library
 2 people cycle now and would cycle to get to the relocated library
 1 person would walk now and would cycle to the relocated library
 1 person uses a wheelchair now and will use their mobility scooter
 15 people walk now and say that they wouldn't go to the relocated library or would have difficulty getting there
 1 person uses a car now and say that they wouldn't go to the relocated library
 1 person uses the Ring and Ride service now and say that they wouldn't go to the relocated library

Journeys to the library building	Potential journeys to Church Stretton School
102 journeys	102 potential journeys
31 people used a car	57 people would travel by car
67 people walked	25 people would walk
1 person used their wheelchair	5 people would travel by bus
2 people cycled	5 people would cycle
	17 people say they have difficulty going or wouldn't go as they don't support a relocation to the school

57 postcodes were extracted from the survey responses. 46 of these were a greater distance from the school than the library building and 11 were a shorter distance. For the people who completed the survey the average difference in journey length between their home and the library building and their home and the school is 323m one way and 646m for a return journey – this would be using roads to walk or drive. It is recognised that at the moment library users park at the central car park and walk to the library – a journey of 322m/644m. Walking from the car park to the school would increase their journey to 800m/1.6km.

Shropshire Council and Church Stretton School are jointly committed to effectively addressing this issue. The opportunities to mitigate the impact on library users of the change in location and potential greater distance to travel are shown in the ESIIA Action Plan attached as Appendix 4.

- Don't want any change to the delivery of the library service in Church Stretton
Shropshire Council's budget is reducing and the way in which it delivers services is changing. We are coming to the end of the first year of a 3 year financial plan through which another £80 - £90m will be saved. The challenging demographics of Shropshire's population means that vital services such as looking after elderly people and vulnerable children have to be prioritised. Changes to all local and strategic services are unavoidable. The budget reduction for the library service of £1.3m means that the budget available for Church Stretton library will not be sufficient to deliver the service in the current way or location. This applies to all of our libraries across the county and the back office function of the service, not just Church Stretton. We are seeking local solutions to these challenges that will result in a sustainable library service that meets our statutory duties.
- Car parking availability for the library located at the school
Initially there will be ten dedicated parking bays within the school parking areas and three disabled bays at the rear of the library. However, the school is in the process of finalising developmental projects that will increase parking for library users to approximately 20/30 parking spaces by the time of the proposed relocation. A bike rack at the front of the school allows for 20 bicycles.
At present there are approximately ten parking spaces and one disabled parking space at the library building.
- Transport options to the library if it was located at the school
The transport options that would be available to travel to the school if the library should move there include a public bus service with the bus regularly stopping outside the school. It has been proposed by the school that its minibus could operate free transport between the school and the town centre for library users who would benefit from this. The recommendation within this report is for a working group, made up of library users affected by the relocation, community representatives and council and school reps will be set up to design the interventions that will enable people to travel to the library, either for regular visits or to be part of groups and organised activities. Consultation on this specific issue will continue.
- Opening hours for the library if it was based at the school
The proposal is that the library would be open for 45 hours over 6 days a week. For 5 days - 9am – 5pm, and for 1 day - 9am – 7pm, including during the school holidays. There would be lunchtime closures on weekdays.
This compares to the current opening times of 32.5 hours over 4 days a week. Monday – closed, Tuesday – 9.30am – 7.30pm, Wednesday – closed, Thursday – 9.30am – 5pm and Saturday – 9.30am – 5pm.
- Accessibility linked to safeguarding issues that would result from a shared library
Concerns were raised over the accessibility to a shared public and school library space as a result of the need to ensure pupils are appropriately supervised during the school day. Safeguarding of pupils is obviously a priority for the school. It is proposed that the library would operate in a similar way to the leisure centre with separate access for students and public. Inner doors would have to be closed when required during breaks and lunchtimes but during the day and other times students using the library would be supervised by staff. The council and the school want to work with local partners to create a redesigned space that meets the needs and aspirations of all that use the library. This will involve the creation of an

ongoing Advisory Group to ensure that members of the community are fully involved in both the design and delivery of the new library.

3.4 Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

The ESIIA relating to the recommendations within this report is attached as Appendix 1. This was initially written at the start of the period of formal consultation and has been updated at regular intervals following the analysis of the responses received through this and other engagement and survey work. At the start of the consultation period an initial assessment of the potential impact of the proposal was carried out for each of the Protected Characteristic Groups and for the impact on social inclusion.

Initial assessment for each group

Protected Characteristic Group/Impact	Actions to mitigate negative (-) impact or enhance positive (+) impact of the service change
Age +ve	Positive impact of a library location at Church Stretton School should be enhanced through publicity and promotion to encourage usage from families with children who may not currently be active members
Age -ve	Needs a full report following further consultation
Disability -ve	Needs a full report following further consultation
Social inclusion +ve	Positive impact of a library location at Church Stretton School should be enhanced through the opportunities for intergenerational activities and ventures that a public and school library in a shared space could offer.
Social inclusion -ve	Needs a full report following further consultation

An engagement plan was created and delivered to ensure that older people, people with disabilities and young people were either engaged with specifically on the proposal or were made aware of the consultation and how to respond to the proposal through the process. The plan and a summary of the feedback received is attached as Appendix 2.

A Part 2 ESIIA full report has been completed and an assessment made on the impact of the recommendation on the Protected Characteristic groups and other groups. The report shows that the perceived impact on the groups can be moved from high negative to medium negative through the delivery of the Action Plan. The Action Plan shows the mitigating actions that will be delivered to ensure that negative impact is mitigated and positive impact is enhanced and is attached as Appendix 3.

3.5 Outcome of the formal consultation

325 formal consultation responses were received either through hard copies left at one of several collection points in the town, or through an on-line survey. 81.85% or 266 of responses were against the proposal and 18.15% or 59 responses were in favour of the proposal. The response rate of 325 is 22% of the library's 1494 active members (Feb 2015 figures) and 5% of the library's 6388 registered members. Key themes or concerns have emerged and these are summarised below.

Shropshire Council notes the time and energy that members of the Church Stretton Library Support Group have put into the creation of its response to the Church Stretton Library consultation, attached as Appendix 7, and notes its content as part of the consultation process.

The council has responded to many of the points raised in the document through the updated Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment and the associated Action Plan. A summary of key responses, clarifications and corrections are made here by the council as part of the decision report and is attached as Appendix 5.

It is the council's view that there has not been a fundamental change to the proposal it made in its consultation process – to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School to create a shared public and school library on the grounds that it is the most appropriate option to deliver a sustainable library service for the town.

It is also the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made and in a couple of instances where it has not been able to provide very specific information about staffing costs or future plans for the library building, the reasons for this have been explained.

Finally, it is the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made.

**Church Stretton Library Consultation
Summary of responses – key themes**

	Theme	No. of times mentioned	% of the total responses where this theme is mentioned
1	Distance from the town centre having a negative impact on accessibility	112	26.73%
2	The town centre location is valuable and should be kept	62	14.80%
3	Concerns about design, size, opening hours, disability access and general accessibility of the new library	60	14.32%
4	Concerns over safeguarding	41	9.79%
5	Concerns over the sustainability of the library at the school	35	8.35%
6	Concerns over the parking provision	31	7.40%
7	Concerns over the transport provision proposals	29	6.92%
8	Concerns over not being able to combine a visit to the library with other town centre activities leading to a reduction in usage	19	4.54%
9	Value attached to the present public library staff	17	4.05%
10	Concerns over the impact on local trade	13	3.10%
	Total	419	100%

Key themes that arose from the consultation and the council's responses to these

1. Distance from the town centre having a negative impact on accessibility
This issue has been identified as potentially having a negative impact and mitigating actions are included in the ESIIA Action Plan.
2. The town centre location is valuable and should be kept
The location of the new library service is 800m away from the town centre within a hub of facilities that service the town and to complement this a satellite library provision will be created in the town centre.
3. Concerns about design, size, opening hours, disability access and general accessibility of the new library
This issue has been identified as potentially having a negative impact and mitigating actions are included in the ESIIA Action Plan.
4. Concerns over safeguarding
Ensuring that all library users are safe is of paramount importance to everyone. Actions to ensure that this is the case are included in the ESIIA Action Plan and complement the information detailed previously in this report.
5. Concerns over the sustainability of the library at the school
A Service Level Agreement will be created between Shropshire Council and Church Stretton School to detail the future management of the joint library and this contract along with the ongoing involvement of the council's library service in the running of the new library will ensure an appropriate style of service delivery, quality of delivery and the sustainability of delivery.
6. Concerns over parking provision
The outcomes of the travel survey that the council has carried out shows that more people are more likely to drive to the library at the school than drive to the library in its current location, which indicates that there is a need for an increased number of parking spaces for library users. The school is committed to providing these. Initially there will be ten dedicated parking bays within the school parking areas to complement the existing parking spaces at the school, and three disabled bays at the rear of the library. The school is in the process of finalising developmental projects that will increase parking for library users to approximately 20/30 parking spaces by the time of the proposed relocation. A bike rack at the front of the school allows for 20 bicycles.
7. Concerns over the transport provision proposals
This issue has been identified as potentially having a negative impact and mitigating actions are included in the ESIIA Action Plan.

8. Concerns over not being able to combine a visit to the library with other town centre activities leading to a reduction in usage
The location of the new library service is 800m away from the town centre within a hub of facilities that service the town and to complement this a satellite library provision will be created in the town centre that people will be able to use as part of a town centre-only visit.
9. Value attached to the present public library staff
Shropshire Council is pleased to see that the staff working in the library currently are valued by users and are delivering an excellent service. Any members of staff at Church Stretton Library affected by the recommendations within this report will be communicated with and consulted where appropriate.
10. Concerns over the impact on local trade
The location of the new library service is 800m away from the town centre within a hub of facilities that service the town and to complement this a satellite library provision will be created in the town centre that people will be able to use as part of a town centre-only visit. If the building that currently houses the library is used for an alternative purpose in the future that could bring more people into the town centre to work and do business, which could be beneficial for local trade.

3.6 Alternative proposals

271 consultation responses included alternative proposals and the most common proposals, 260 in total, have been summarised in the following table, which shows the most common alternative proposals and the percentage of the total responses where each is mentioned.

Church Stretton Library Consultation Alternative proposals

Proposal	No. of times mentioned	% of the total responses where each alternative proposal is mentioned
Run the library as charitable trust, a Community Interest Company, or as community-run organisation	52	20%
Leave the library where it is with no change	25	9.62%
Relocate the library to another town centre location	22	8.46%
Reconfigure the library building space to keep the library service there and generate income from alternative use of the remaining space	37	14.23%
Reduce hours and reduce the service	33	12.69%
Fundraising or introduction of fees, subscriptions or charges	27	10.42%
Raise council tax	22	8.46%
Increased use of volunteers to run the library service	25	9.62%
Support for CSLSG proposal	17	6.5%
TOTAL	260	100%

Through the consultation Shropshire Council has received an alternative proposal from the Church Stretton Library Support Group (CSLSG) and a request for the council to remodel its approach to transforming library services on the approaches being taken by 2 other local authorities and this is attached as Appendix 7. The council has considered these alternative proposals and its response to these is attached as Appendix 6.

The council has considered the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the alternative proposals and looked specifically at key areas of the proposals, and compared these to its preferred option of creating a joint public and school library at Church Stretton School.

The option of creating a joint public and school library at Church Stretton offers greater opportunity for delivering an enhanced and sustainable library service in the town that fits with the council's future vision for Shropshire's library service. It also provides a greater opportunity for necessary council revenue savings and a shorter timeline

to achieving a transformed service. The potential weaknesses and threats associated with this proposal are demonstrated within this report and the ESIIA and ESIIA Action Plan and mitigating actions identified.

3.7 Risk management

Risk	Mitigation plans in place
Decision making on recommendations not made in a timely fashion, which impacts on the ability to complete the relocation in 2015 and consequently the delivery of the TCA bid programme	Advice from the council's Legal & Democratic Services has been sought to ensure the decision making process is correct and in line with the council's constitution. Attention has been paid to the creation of a Decision Report, Background Papers and Appendices that contain the relevant data and information needed by the Portfolio Holder to make his decision.
The consultation process undertaken is not deemed robust and is formally challenged	A 6 week Community Conversation, a 6 week formal consultation and additional focussed engagement work has been undertaken. The formal consultation period has enabled alternative proposals to be put forward. The feedback from this activity has been recorded, analysed and used to inform both the recommendations and the mitigating actions contained within this report. The alternative proposals put forward have been assessed by the council.
The completed ESIIA does not robustly demonstrate how it will take mitigating measures to address the possible high negative impact identified.	An ESIIA has been completed using the information gathered during the period of formal consultation. Mitigating measures to address issues of possible high negative impact have been identified and noted in both that document and this report.
Concerns around safeguarding cannot be addressed, impacting on the viability of a shared library space	Learning from other shared school/public libraries has been noted. Detailed plans for the design and use of the proposed space will be created. The council and the school will work together taking any necessary advice to ensure that the safeguarding concerns can be addressed whilst ensuring the delivery of the joint library service isn't compromised.
The delivery of the public library service is compromised by being delivered alongside a school library service in a school setting	Discussions between the council's library management and the school management are in place and will continue to ensure that each is aware of the needs and expectations of the other. A Service Level Agreement will be put in place between the council and the school to formalise the service delivery details of the public library and this will be monitored by the council's library management.
The full capital funding package required to complete the relocation and redesign works cannot be delivered	Full costs of these works not known yet as formal tendering process has not been undertaken. TCA funding of £170K ring-fenced and other potential external funding sources identified.

3.8 Any members of staff at Church Stretton Library affected by the recommendations within this report will be communicated with and consulted where appropriate.

4. Financial Implications

External funding through the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) will provide £170k capital contribution towards the building works required at the school in order to facilitate the transfer of the library during 2015/16. Once the transfer has taken place, the full year revenue saving will be £52,200. This saving will only be achieved if the public library service is coterminous with the school library at Church Stretton School, as in this scenario no ongoing Shropshire Council revenue contribution to the library will be required.

5. Background

5.1 Shropshire Council's budget is reducing and the way in which it delivers services is changing. We are coming to the end of the first year of a 3 year financial plan through which £80 - £90m will be saved. Shropshire's current and future population demographics means that vital services such as looking after elderly people and vulnerable children have

to be prioritised. Changes to all local and strategic services are unavoidable. The Cabinet approved budget reduction for the library service of £1.3m means that the budget available for Church Stretton library will not be sufficient to deliver the service in the current way or location. This applies to all of our libraries across the county and the back office function of the service, not just Church Stretton. We are seeking local solutions to these challenges that will result in a sustainable, if altered library service that meet our statutory duties.

The council is working with partners to re-design existing face-to-face customer-focused services, including its branch libraries to provide places where residents can access services and get the information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community. This joint-working and co-creation approach is being taken across the county, and services are being redesigned to be delivered by others in flexible ways that best suit their locality and meet the individual needs of people ensuring that those who have specific needs can access services appropriately.

We want to align the future of our libraries with our commitment to locality commissioning, community asset/service transfers and to building resilient communities. If libraries stay directly under council management, then it is likely that our imperative to reduce their operational costs will result in a radical reduction in opening hours or the closure of some. We will have lost the opportunity to impact on a wider set of outcomes and it will become more challenging for us to deliver the services locally that make a difference to people's lives.

The redesigned library service will result in a range of different delivery activities including face to face provision, digital and virtual provision and an outreach programme targeted at specific groups. Alongside this change the network of library buildings will be reconfigured.

The library network will include -

- 6 strategic library hubs in major towns to improve accessibility and cater for the larger populations in the larger market towns.
- 10 local hubs/libraries offering core community services in partnership with town and parish councils, local organisations or voluntary and community groups, with a core aim of increasing opening hours.

Church Stretton library is in the latter group and since early 2014 Shropshire Council alongside key local partners in the town has been discussing and developing opportunities for new ways of delivering the services currently housed in the library building in Church Stretton. Proposals for key local organisations to deliver the Customer Service Point (CSP) and local organisations or businesses to deliver Visitor Information Services (VIS) have been agreed.

5.2 Shropshire Council's preferred option for Church Stretton's library service is that a coterminous public and school library is created at Church Stretton School and that the library service is relocated to, and delivered from this newly designed shared space. The aim is to provide a vibrant and modern library facility that meets the needs of the whole community including active users of the branch library, the wider public who may not currently use the library and students at the school.

5.3 Clarification of the council's statutory duties to deliver library services

Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 ("the PLMA"):

Under the provisions of the PLMA, the Council, as a library authority, has a statutory duty (not a discretionary power) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons wishing to make use of it.

The PLMA does not define what is meant by "comprehensive and efficient". However it does provide that the library authority must provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons in the area that want to make use of it and lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

It also provides that in fulfilling the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, it shall in particular have regard to the desirability of:

- Providing facilities for the borrowing of, and reference to, books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirement both of adults and children; and
- encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service, providing advice as to its use, and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required; and
- securing co-operation between the library authority and others exercising public functions within the county.

The recommendations within this report will enable this statutory duty to be met. The recommendations do not propose the closure of the public library or a reduction in the service, they propose relocation of the public library and a model of delivery that is sustainable at a time of tremendous change in public services.

5.4 The library service in Church Stretton will reflect the vision for a transformed library service as described in Shropshire Council's TCA bid. The school is located in a natural hub of activity that also contains the primary school, the leisure centre, the Children's Centre and the pre-school nursery. There is real opportunity for the users of this hub of services – who may not be current library members - to benefit from the relocated library service proactively providing the information, advice and guidance and prevention services for mental and physical well-being for all. A Health Zone with the range of Books on Prescription and reminiscence resources will be a key part of the new library service and valued activities such as Time to Listen will continue.

5.5 Another element of the wider vision, reflected in the TCA bid, is the development of Community Connectors. Community Connectors will transcend services, organisations and sectors, but will be specific to a locality. They will be helpful, knowledgeable, friendly and interested people based in communities who know about everything that goes on in places – community and voluntary-wise and have the attitude and aptitude to match people's interests and needs with these. As part of a community's team of first line of support they will also have a knowledge and understanding of the service delivery in their locality and will have a relationship with the people delivering these services that mutually adds benefit to their work. They will be part of an early help team that could also include, amongst others, those delivering information, advice and guidance services, library staff, customer service staff, Community Enablement Officers, town/parish council officers, Community & Care Co-ordinators and volunteers. In Church Stretton the Community Connector role would work with activities across the town to link up people with services – specifically focussing on building connections between the library and other places of activity.

All of the above must be done in a manner that complements, adds value to and involves existing provision in Church Stretton, such as the Mayfair Community Centre.

5.6 The school and the library service will be jointly committed to providing and enhancing all the existing public library functions. Further to this, a joint approach will offer opportunities to develop services that will appeal to a wider range of the community than is currently served by either library. The result for Church Stretton will be a strong library service with a sustainable future.

5.7 The school and its students place high emphasis on the importance of library use, reading and writing, and follow this through in a number of ways. There are library lessons, pupil librarians on a rota throughout the week and Reading Ambassadors. World Book Day has just been celebrated at the school with story competitions, a book swap, a Scholastic book fair; and with the Reading Ambassadors visiting a local primary school to read with pupils. There is a poster in all classrooms - **DEAR - Drop Everything And Read** – to remind everyone that reading is not only about one off events, but is a habitual activity across the school both in lesson time and out of class. The school feels that their current ethos of celebrating books and reading translates itself well into a commitment to the shared library use recommended within this report.

5.8 With the support of the Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) and Association of Local Councils (ALC), the council has received Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) funding to redesign a number of libraries and Customer Service Points in 2015/16. Investing in this redesign must result in ongoing revenue savings for the council. The proposal to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School using £170K of capital funding from the TCA will result in annual revenue savings of £52K.

5.9 The development of the recommendations being made in this report has been informed by periods of engagement and consultation with Church Stretton residents. This includes a 6 week community conversation, a 6 week formal consultation and focussed engagement with Protected Characteristic groups that were identified through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA).

5.10 Shropshire Council is committed to take mitigating actions to address the concerns that have been raised by consultees in response to the proposal to relocate the library to the school, and these are detailed in this report and in an ESIIA detailed in Appendix 1.

6. Additional Information

Attached within the Background Papers and Appendices

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, given the extent of the engagement and consultation and the responses to these, and having considered all of the information, including:

- i. the responses received to the Community Conversation, the formal consultation and the focussed engagement work
- ii. the alternative proposals that have been put forward
- iii. the concerns pertaining to the proposal that have been raised and the ESIIA Part 2 Action Plan that has been created to address these

- iv. the level of financial savings and the social value to be achieved through relocating a redesigned library service to Church Stretton School
- v. the opportunity to create a redesigned library service that plays a key role in providing information, advice, guidance and early help services for mental and physical well-being for all members of the Church Stretton community – complementing the invaluable existing provision in the town,

creating a coterminous public and school library at Church Stretton School and relocating Church Stretton's library service to this newly designed shared space to create a service that is sustainable, modern and accessible is the recommended option.

This will enable the Council to achieve its ambition of keeping its branch libraries open, redesign the service to provide an important health and well-being function for all residents and assist in meeting its financial challenges.

Shropshire Council is committed to take mitigating actions to address the concerns that have been raised by consultees in response to the proposal to relocate the library to the school as detailed in the ESIIA and ESIIA Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 3.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):

1. Shropshire Council's Business Plan and Financial Strategy 2014 - 2017
2. Church Stretton Parish Profile
3. Shropshire Council's Transformation Challenge Award bid 2015/16
4. Summary of activity taken to create and consult on proposals for the future delivery of Church Stretton library,
5. Community conversation document on the proposal to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School – November 2014
6. Consultation document on the proposal to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School – February/March 2015
8. Frequently asked questions and answers to accompany the consultation document – updated 04/03/15
9. Plan of additional engagement work relating to the ESIIA
10. Church Stretton Library Travel Survey and analysis of the location of Church Stretton Library members

Key Decision: Yes

Included within Forward Plan: Yes

If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: Yes / No

Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:

Cllr Steve Charmley

Local Member:

Cllr Lee Chapman
Cllr David Evans

Appendices:

1. Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) relating to the proposal to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School
2. Church Stretton Library Consultation – Engagement Plan
3. ESIIA Part 2 Action Plan
4. Summary of activity taken to create a proposal for the future delivery of Church Stretton library, upon which a decision can be made by Shropshire Council
5. Shropshire Council's response to 'Response to the Shropshire Council consultation on the proposed relocation of the Church Stretton library to the Academy on Shrewsbury Road' submitted by the Church Stretton Library Support Group
6. Shropshire Council's response to the alternative proposals submitted by the Church Stretton Library Support Group
7. 'Response to the Shropshire Council consultation on the proposed relocation of the Church Stretton library to the Academy on Shrewsbury Road' submitted by the Church Stretton Library Support Group

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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Shropshire Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Contextual Notes 2014

The What and the Why:

The Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) tool replaces the Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) tool previously in use by Shropshire Council. It is a tool to help us to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

What we are now doing is broadening out such assessments to consider social inclusion. This is so that we are thinking as carefully and completely as possible about all groups and communities in Shropshire, including people in rural areas and people we may describe as vulnerable, as well as people in what are described as the nine 'protected characteristics' of groups of people in our population, e.g. age, or gender reassignment. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging or delivering services.

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services, such as through a new policy or a change in procedure. Carrying out ESIIAs helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010 to have what is called *due regard* to the three equality aims in our decision making processes. These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

The How:

The assessment comprises two parts: a screening part, and a full report part.

Screening (Part One) enables energies to be focussed on the service changes for which there are potentially important equalities and human rights implications. If screening indicates that the impact is likely to be positive overall, or is likely to have a medium or low negative or positive impact on certain groups of people, a full report is not required. Energies should instead focus on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection, enabling incremental improvements and adjustments that will lead to overall positive impacts for all groups in Shropshire.

A **full report (Part Two)** needs to be carried out where screening indicates that there are considered to be or likely to be significant negative impacts for certain groups of people, and/or where there are human rights implications. If you are not sure, a full report is recommended, as it enables more evidence to be collected that will help you to reach an informed opinion.

Shropshire Council Part 1 ESIIA: initial screening and assessment

Please note: prompt questions and guidance within boxes are in italics. You are welcome to type over them when completing this form. Please extend the boxes if you need more space for your commentary.

Name of service change

Church Stretton Library Service

Aims of the service change and description

Background

Shropshire Council's budget is reducing and the way in which it delivers services is changing. We are coming to the end of the first year of a 3 year financial plan through which £80 - £90m will be saved. Shropshire's current and future population demographics means that vital services such as looking after elderly people and vulnerable children have to be prioritised. Changes to all local and strategic services are unavoidable. The Cabinet approved budget reduction for the library service of £1.3m - £1.5m means that the budget available for Church Stretton library will not be sufficient to deliver the service in the current way or location. This applies to all of our libraries across the county and the back office function of the service, not just Church Stretton. We are seeking local solutions to these challenges that will result in a sustainable, if altered library service that meet our statutory duties.

Shropshire Council aims to deliver library services in partnership with communities so that they can be tailored to support the individual needs of people in their communities and help ensure that those who have specific needs can access services appropriately.

The redesigned library service will result in a range of different delivery activities including face to face provision, digital and virtual provision and an outreach programme targeted at specific groups. Alongside this change the network of library buildings will be reconfigured.

The library network will include -

- 6 strategic library hubs in major towns to improve accessibility and cater for the larger populations in the larger market towns.
- 10 local hubs/libraries offering core community services in partnership with town and parish councils, voluntary and community groups, with a core aim of increasing opening hours.

Church Stretton library is in the latter group and since early 2014 Shropshire Council has been working in partnership with key organisations in the town to develop a solution for the future of the library that is high quality, affordable and sustainable.

Data, information and intelligence

In addition to the information and intelligence we gather through the 2nd February to 16th March consultation period, we will gather, analyse and understand statistical data relating to Church Stretton to complete this ESIIA and inform the final decision making. This will include, but not be limited to the data listed below. Looking at the detail below we can see, as examples, that there is a higher proportion than average of people aged over 65 living in Church Stretton, at the moment 21% of active users live within 0.5km of the library building and if the service was located at Church Stretton School, this would fall to 14% and that the number of active users of the library has decreased over the years,. These are just examples of the important information that we will be taking into consideration within this ESIIA and in our decision making.

Key Facts: Church Stretton Parish (note that users of the library may live outside the parish boundary). A full parish profile can be found at <http://shropshire.gov.uk/media/931405/Church-Stretton-Parish-Profile-2014.pdf>

Area	3132.5 hectares
Population density	1.50 persons per hectare
Total population	4671 (2209 males, 2462 females)
Household population	4537 (97.1%)
Households	2180
Dwellings	2350
Communal Establishment no./ population	16 Communal Establishments totalling 134 residents (2.9% of total population)

Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics, © Crown Copyright 2014.

Church Stretton Parish - population age structure

Early years	3.0% (139 children) of the population were aged 0 to 4 years in March 2011. This compares with 5.1% at County level, 6.3% regionally and 6.3% nationally.
School age	12.0% (562 children) of the population were aged 5 to 17 years in March 2011. This compares with 14.9% at County level, 15.8% regionally and 15.1% nationally.
Working age	49.7% (2321 people) of the population were aged 18 to 64 years in March 2011. This compares with 59.3% at County level, 61.0% regionally and 62.3% nationally.
Retirement age	35.3% (1649 people) of the population were aged 65 and over in March 2011. This compares with 20.7% at County level, 16.9% regionally and 16.3% nationally.
Over 85 year olds	6.4% (298) of the population were aged 85 and over in March 2011. This compares with 2.7% at County level, 2.2% regionally and 2.2% nationally.

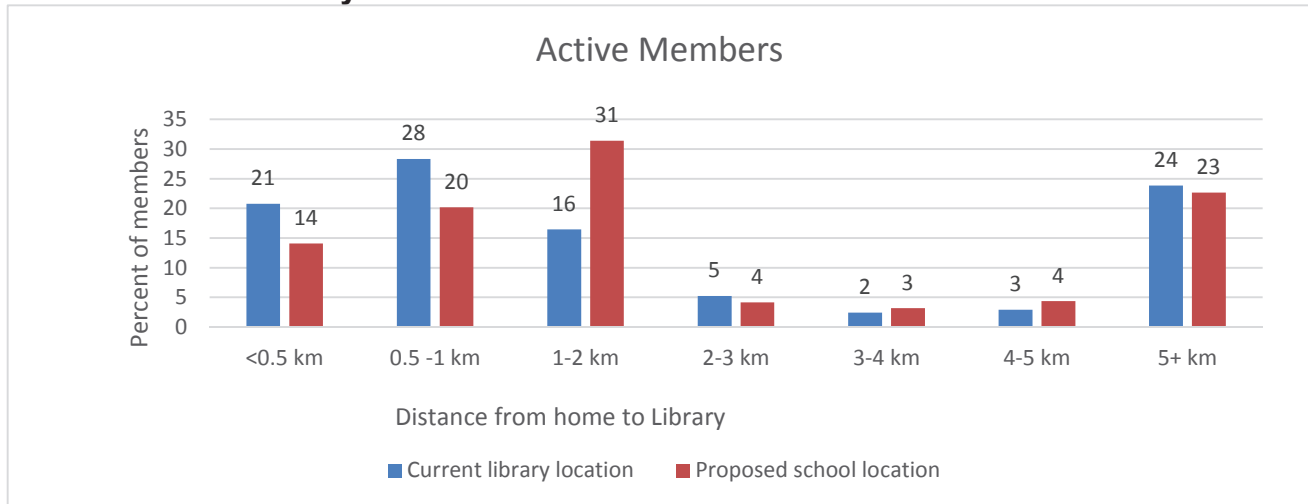
Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics, © Crown Copyright 2014.

Church Stretton library use statistics

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	
Visits	44318	46865	38663	36588	-17.5%
Active users	1,881	1,769	1,705	1,642	-13%
Computer time	289,771	262,280	248,831	235,457	-18.75%
Loans	55,344	54,773	52,098	50,372	-9%
Requests	2332	2,711	2,471	2,116	-9%

*number of current active users is 1494 – a 20.5% decrease from 2010/11

Church Stretton library user location data



Church Stretton School proposal

Church Stretton School has developed and presented a proposal to create a public and school library, to be managed by the school, in a new shared space at the school. There would be on-going central library service support and important services such as the Home Delivery Service and Books on Prescription would remain unaffected. This is Shropshire Council's preferred option for a future library service in the town as the school's proposal will reduce the ongoing direct running costs of the branch to zero – the school will cover these costs. Capital funding is needed to invest in reconfiguration work of classrooms to create the new shared space and it is planned that this would come from external funding sources.

Consultation period

Shropshire Council, Church Stretton School and the partner organisations who have been working together all recognise that moving the library service to a new location could affect some 'protected characteristic groups' and the impact of this proposed change and any consequent proposed mitigating action needs to be fully understood before a final decision is made. A 6 week consultation period with targeted engagement with older people, people with disabilities and young people will now be carried out and the results analysed before any final recommendation is made.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

- All residents of Church Stretton and the surrounding area – specifically all registered members of the library and particularly all 1469 active members (who have borrowed a book in the last 12 months).
- Older people, people with disabilities and young people who have been identified as potentially being affected by the service change – this is a particular need for Church Stretton.
- The volunteers who support the work of the library – both in delivering the home library service in and around Church Stretton and within the library itself – shelving books, etc.
- Members of the groups who use the library building for activities, e.g. Rhyme Time sessions, Time to Listen and the Reading Group.

Evidence used for screening of the service change

- Analysis of the 223 responses to the community conversation that took place in November/December 2014 on the proposal to relocate the library service to Church Stretton School.
- Analysis of data on the location of library users' home addresses in relation to both the current library location and the proposed location of Church Stretton School.
- Analysis of the consultation on the future of the library service to be held from 2nd Feb to 16th March 2015.
- Analysis of a survey on library users' travel arrangements to be held during the consultation period.
- Analysis of the targeted consultation with older people, people with disabilities and young people.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

- A community conversation that took place in November/December 2014 on the proposal to relocate the library service to Church Stretton School.
- A drop-in information session held in November 2014
- Presentation on the proposal at Strettondale LJC in November 2014
- Engagement with Church Stretton Library Support Group
- Consultation period held between 2nd February and 16th March 2015
- Additional engagement and targeted consultation as informed by the ESIIA
- Survey on current library users' travel arrangements held during the consultation period

Potential impact on Protected Characteristic groups and on social inclusion

High Negative	Significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place or no evidence available: urgent need for consultation with customers, general public, workforce
Medium Negative	Some potential impact, some mitigating measures in place but no evidence available how effective they are: would be beneficial to consult with customers, general public, workforce
Low Negative	Almost bordering on non-relevance to the ESIIA process (heavily legislation led, very little discretion can be exercised, limited public facing aspect, national policy affecting degree of local impact possible)

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>	Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i>

<p>Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g. young person with disability)</p>	<p>√ -ve impact on those people unable to access the library in a different location due to their age. Mitigation through additional transport arrangements must be considered.</p>		<p>√ +ve impact of more opening hours on working people +ve impact on children and families if the service was located closer to the nursery, the Children's Centre, the leisure centre and the primary and secondary schools</p>	
<p>Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)</p>	<p>√ -ve impact on those people unable to access the library in a different location due to a disability. Mitigation through additional transport arrangements must be considered.</p>			
<p>Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)</p>				<p>√</p>
<p>Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)</p>				<p>√</p>
<p>Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)</p>				<p>√</p>
<p>Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)</p>				<p>√</p>
<p>Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)</p>				<p>√</p>

Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				√
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				√
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)			√ +ve impact intergenerational opportunities if the public and school library was a shared space √-ve if some people were unable to access the library if it was in a different location	

Decision, review and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Part One ESIIA Only?		√
Proceed to Part Two Full Report?	√	

If Part One, please now use the boxes below and sign off at the foot of the page. If Part Two, please move on to the full report stage.

Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change
<p>Age +ve Positive impact of a library location at Church Stretton School should be enhanced through publicity and promotion to encourage usage from families with children who may not currently be active members.</p> <p>Age -ve Needs a full report following further consultation</p> <p>Disability -ve Needs a full report following further consultation</p> <p>Social inclusion +ve Positive impact of a library location at Church Stretton School should be enhanced through the opportunities for intergenerational activities and ventures that a public and school library in a shared space could offer.</p> <p>Social inclusion -ve Needs a full report following further consultation</p>

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change**Before final decision is made on service change**

- Consultation period to be held between 2nd February and 16th March 2015.
- Survey on current library users' travel arrangements to be held during the consultation period.

After final decision is made on service change

- Users of the library service, both current and new should be involved in the design and delivery of any changed service and also play an important critical friend role in the ongoing delivery, e.g. Working Groups, Advisory Groups or similar.
- Ongoing monitoring of any changed service by library staff and library service managers.

Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer carrying out the screening</i>	Kate Garner	02/02/15
<i>Any internal support</i>		
<i>Any external support</i>		
<i>Head of service</i>	Michael Lewis	02/02/15

Sign off at Part One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer's name</i>	N/A	
<i>Head of service's name</i>	N/A	

Shropshire Council Part 2 ESIIA: full report**Evidence used for assessment of the service change: activity record**

- Analysis of the consultation
- Analysis of the targeted engagement
- Analysis of the survey on the travel arrangements of library users

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change: activity record

A plan was created and delivered to ensure that older people, people with disabilities and young people were engaged with specifically through the consultation period and that either their feedback on the proposals was gathered directly or that the ongoing consultation and the opportunity to respond the proposals within it was promoted.

Further and ongoing research and consultation with intended audiences and target groups for the service change: activity record

Following any service change the following activity can be used for ongoing research and consultation –

- analysis of library user data to assess any change in membership
- feedback from library service users
- an Advisory Group to engage with members and non-members and raise concerns and ideas for on-going change on both the design of the building and the activity that takes place there
- a Working Group to address the accessibility issues identified through the consultation and engagement work

If a specific intervention is put in place to mitigate a known effect of the change in service, e.g. support with transport to the library if it was located at Church Stretton School, then on-going feedback from users of this intervention would be sought to ensure that it is as effective as possible.

Full report assessment for each group

Please rate the impact as you now perceive it, by inserting a tick. Please give brief comments for each group, to give context to your decision, including what barriers these groups or individual may face.

Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire	High negative impact	High positive impact	Medium positive or negative impact	Low positive or negative impact
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g. young person with disability)			√ -ve impact on those people unable to access the library in a different location due to their age. Mitigation through additional transport arrangements must be considered	
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)			√ -ve impact on those people unable to access the library in a different location due to a disability. Mitigation through additional transport	

			arrangements must be considered.	
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)				
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)			√ +ve impact intergenerational opportunities if the public and school library was a shared space √-ve if some people were unable to access the library if it was in a different location	

ESIA Full Report decision, review and monitoring

Summary of findings and analysis - ESIA decision
Church Stretton Library relocation ESIA decision
To make changes that will remove or reduce the potential of the service change to adversely affect any of the Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social inclusion.
Through its consultation and engagement work Shropshire Council recognises that the Protected Characteristic Groups of age and disability and Social Inclusion could be negatively impacted by

Church Stretton library moving to Church Stretton School and a joint public and school library created there. Through the delivery of the action plan summarised below and attached in full, the council believes that these negative impacts can be mitigated and the positive impacts can be enhanced.

The council is working with partners to re-design existing face-to-face customer-focused services, including its branch libraries to provide places where residents can access services and get the information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community. This joint-working and co-creation approach is being taken across the county, and services are being redesigned to be delivered by others in flexible ways that best suit their locality and meet the individual needs of people ensuring that those who have specific needs can access services appropriately.

We want to align the future of our libraries with our commitment to locality commissioning, community asset/service transfers and to building resilient communities. If libraries stay directly under council management, then it is likely that our imperative to reduce their operational costs will result in a radical reduction in opening hours or the closure of some. We will have lost the opportunity to impact on a wider set of outcomes and it will become more challenging for us to deliver the services locally that make a difference to people's lives.

The redesigned library service will result in a range of different delivery activities including face to face provision, digital and virtual provision and an outreach programme targeted at specific groups. Alongside this change the network of library buildings will be reconfigured.

The recommendations within the decision report will enable Shropshire Council to meet its statutory duty to deliver library services. The recommendations do not propose the closure of the public library or a reduction in the service, they propose relocation of the public library and a model of delivery that is sustainable at a time of tremendous change in public services.

The library service in Church Stretton should reflect the vision for a transformed library service as described in Shropshire Council's Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) bid. The school is located in a natural hub of activity that also contains the primary school, the leisure centre, the Children's Centre and the pre-school nursery. There is real opportunity for the users of this hub of services – who may not be current library members - to benefit from the relocated library service proactively providing the information, advice and guidance and prevention services for mental and physical well-being for all. A Health Zone with the range of Books on Prescription and reminiscence resources will be a key part of the new library service and valued activities such as Time to Listen will continue.

Another element of the TCA bid is the development of Community Connectors. Community Connectors will transcend services, organisations and sectors, but will be specific to a locality. They will be helpful, knowledgeable, friendly and interested people based in communities who know about everything that is goes on in places – community and voluntary-wise and have the attitude and aptitude to match people's interests and needs with these. As part of a community's team of first line of support they will also have a knowledge and understanding of the service delivery in their locality and will have a relationship with the people delivering these services that mutually adds benefit to their work. They will be part of an early help team that could also include, amongst others, those delivering information, advice and guidance services, library staff, customer service staff, Community Enablement Officers, town/parish council officers, Community & Care Co-ordinators and volunteers. In Church Stretton the Community Connector role would work with activities across the town to link up people with services – specifically focussing on building connections between the library and other places of activity.

All of the above must be done in a manner that complements, adds value to and involves existing provision in Church Stretton, such as Mayfair Community Centre.

Shropshire Council will also ensure that there are processes in place for continuous engagement and consultation with library users to ensure that the new library is doing the things that people want it to do and benefit from – a continuing shaping and developing of what happens there.

Delivery of the recommendations within the decision report will result in the opportunity to maximise revenue savings for the council as the proposal to relocate the library to the school will provide a maximum return on the future revenue costs of delivering a library service in Church Stretton, the opportunity to create a modern, sustainable and accessible library service in Church Stretton that reflects the council's vision for a transformed library service as described in the its successful TCA bid and the opportunity to utilise TCA funding in 2015/2016 and contribute to the successful delivery of the wider Community Hub programme in Shropshire.

Shropshire Council believes that there are many opportunities to develop positive actions to address the concerns that have been raised through consultation and engagement being raised in relation to the proposal around age, disability and social inclusion, and that through working with users of both the public and the school libraries, the community and local partners any potential negative impact can be addressed and mitigated.

Summary of actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change – full Action Plan attached.

Age -ve	<p>Creation of a Working Group to address accessibility issues raised through the consultation</p> <p>Creation of a satellite library in town centre</p> <p>Continuation of the Home Library Service</p> <p>Creation of an Advisory Group to play an active part in the design of the new shared library space</p> <p>A programme of 'getting to know the new library' familiarisation activities</p> <p>A programme of staff training to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge to work with all age groups</p>
Age +ve	<p>Development of the Health Zone and associated resources in the library</p> <p>A programme of publicity and open sessions to encourage new members</p>
Disability -ve	<p>Creation of a Working Group to address accessibility issues raised through the consultation</p> <p>Creation of a satellite library in town centre</p> <p>Continuation of the Home Library Service</p> <p>Creation of an Advisory Group to play an active part in the design of the new shared library space</p> <p>A programme of 'getting to know the new library' familiarisation activities</p> <p>A programme of staff training to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge to work with all age groups</p>
Disability +ve	<p>Development of the Health Zone and associated resources in the library</p> <p>A programme of publicity and open sessions to encourage new members</p>
Social inclusion -ve	<p>Creation of a Working Group to address accessibility issues raised through the consultation</p> <p>Development of the Community Connector role to link the library and its users with other activities and provision in the town</p> <p>Provision to be made for existing groups and volunteers and attention paid to meeting their needs</p>
Social inclusion +ve	<p>A programme of intergenerational activities to maximise the benefits of the shared library</p>

Consultation and engagement results

Outcome of the formal consultation

325 formal consultation responses were received either through hard copies left at one of several collection points in the town, or through an on-line survey. 81.85% or 266 of responses were against the proposal and 18.15% or 59 responses were in favour of the proposal. The response rate of 325 is 22% of the library's 1494 (February 2015) active members and 5% of the library's 6388 registered members. Key themes or concerns have emerged and these are summarised below and the council has responded to these with its decision report.

	Theme	No. of times mentioned	% of the total responses where this theme is mentioned
1	Distance from the town centre having a negative impact on accessibility	112	26.73%
2	The town centre location is valuable and should be kept	62	14.80%
3	Concerns about design, size, opening hours, disability access and general accessibility of the new library	60	14.32%
4	Concerns over safeguarding	41	9.79%
5	Concerns over the sustainability of the library at the school	35	8.35%
6	Concerns over the parking provision	31	7.40%
7	Concerns over the transport provision proposals	29	6.92%
8	Concerns over not being able to combine a visit to the library with other town centre activities leading to a reduction in usage	19	4.54%
9	Value attached to the present public library staff	17	4.05%
10	Concerns over the impact on local trade	13	3.10%
	Total	419	100%

A response to the consultation has also been received from the Church Stretton Library Support Group and Shropshire Council notes the time and energy that members of the group have put into The creation of its response, and notes its content as part of the consultation process.

The council has responded to many of the points raised in the document through this updated Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment and the associated Action Plan. A summary of key responses, clarifications and corrections have been by the council as part of the Decision Report and an attached Appendix

It is the council's view that there has not been a fundamental change to the proposal it made in its consultation process – to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School to create a shared public and school library on the grounds that it is the most appropriate option to deliver a sustainable library service for the town.

It is also the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made and in a couple of instances where it has not been able to provide very specific information about staffing costs or future plans for the library building, the reasons for this have been explained.

Finally, it is the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made.

Summary of targeted engagement work

A plan of additional engagement work relating to the ESIA is attached to the Decision Report as an Appendix. The summary table below give the feedback received from conversations about the proposal to relocate the library service to the school held with students at the school, the Library Reading Group, the Library Local History volunteers, the Home Library Service volunteers and people with disabilities who attend day services at the Mayfair Centre.

Group	No.	Representing	Comments	Alternative proposals
Church Stretton School House Council Representatives	25	Young people	Would like free wi-fi, would like the fact the library will be bigger Should have solar panels fitted on the new library space – it should be eco-friendly Role for student librarians There should be a modern style - bean bags, comfy chairs, places for internet use There should be new, good computers Should be a minibus to pick up people Try and make it more accessible The community can become more involved with young people Opportunities for volunteers Would like the library to have more of a range of books and to be a bit bigger E-books should be introduced	None
Library Reading Group	10	Library group	Distance – for some reading group members the school would involve a longer walk. Others would have to drive so increasing carbon footprint. Those who would have to drive felt that parking would be a problem. Concerned there would not be sufficient space in the library for the group to meet. Lunchtime closure and avoiding beginning/end of the school day would limit when the group could meet. Concerned that the school would not be committed to supporting the reading group service – should be included in any SLA.	Could the school run the library but keep it where it is?

Library Local History Volunteers	6	Library volunteers	<p>Concerned about public being able to access the computers when they are in use by the school.</p> <p>Feel that the school lack awareness of what the Local History volunteers do. There would be no commitment from the school to support the volunteers. Concerned that there would be no designated space in the new library for Local History stock, or table space for going through documents etc with customers.</p> <p>Concerned there would be no space for the microfiche and microfilm readers. Felt that many of their enquiries came from people who happened to have come in to the VIC and were directed to the volunteers for further info. Would not get this at the school.</p> <p>Highlighted the need for printing and photocopying facilities.</p> <p>The school would not publicise the service sufficiently.</p> <p>Would the volunteers still be able to communicate with customers via email and telephone from the school?</p> <p>Concerned there would not be enough space for the Local History materials as some of them are quite large eg: Tithe maps.</p>	None
Home Library Service Volunteers	3	Library volunteers	<p>Extra distance for volunteers who walk would make it difficult, particularly when carrying bags of books.</p> <p>Service users currently have a familiarity with the existing building and layout. This would be lost at the school. Having the service based at the school would make it difficult to recruit new volunteers because people wouldn't want to be involved with the school.</p> <p>Lunchtime closure and avoiding school drop off/pick up times would make it harder for volunteers to fit in their visits.</p> <p>Existing library staff support volunteers in their role – this could be lost at the school.</p> <p>Concern there would not be the breadth of stock if the library were located at the school.</p> <p>Existing library staff are a vital link between volunteers/service users. This could potentially be lost.</p>	Could the Mayfair Centre host a collection of large print/audio in addition to what is held at the library (if it moves to the school)
Church Stretton Day Services	9	Disabled people	<p>Less likely to visit to due distance</p> <p>Safeguarding concerns around the public at the school</p>	None

			The library is part of the community in the town centre - easier for tourists to access and local people Is the size going to be reduced?	
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Shropshire Council has taken the issues raised through this engagement work into consideration and they have informed the creation of the ESIIA Action Plan, which shows how potential areas of negative impact can be mitigated and how areas of positive impact can be enhanced.

Travel survey

A travel survey of library users has been carried out during the consultation period and the details of 102 journeys have been gathered. The full survey results are listed as Background Paper 9. In summary –

- 19 people use a car now and would use a car to get to the relocated library
- 26 people walk now and would use a car to get to the relocated library
- 21 people walk now and would walk to get to the relocated library
- 3 people walk now and would use the bus to get to the relocated library
- 3 people use a car now and would walk to get to the relocated library
- 2 people cycle now and would cycle to get to the relocated library
- 11 people walk now and say that they wouldn't go to the relocated library or would have difficulty getting there

Journeys to the library building	Potential journeys to Church Stretton School
102 journeys	102 potential journeys
25 people used a car	45 people would travel by car
62 people walked	24 people would walk
	3 people would travel by bus
2 people cycled	3 people would cycle

57 postcodes were extracted from the survey responses. 46 of these were a greater distance from the school than the library building and 11 were a shorter distance. For the people who completed the survey the average difference in journey length between their home and the library building and their home and the school is 323m one way and 646m for a return journey – this would be using roads to walk or drive. It is recognised that at the moment library users park at the central car park and walk to the library – a journey of 322m/644m. Walking from the car park to the school would increase their journey to 800m/1.6km.

Shropshire Council and Church Stretton School are jointly committed to effectively addressing this issue. The opportunities to mitigate the impact on library users of the change in location and potential greater distance to travel are shown in the ESIIA Action Plan.

Alternative proposals made through the consultation

271 consultation responses included alternative proposals and the most common proposals, 260 in total, have been summarised in the following table, which shows the most common alternative proposals and the percentage of the total responses where each is mentioned. The council has responded to these alternative proposals within its decision report.

Proposal	No. of times mentioned	% of the total responses where each alternative proposal is mentioned
Run the library as charitable trust, a Community Interest Company, or as community-run organisation	52	20%
Leave the library where it is with no change	25	9.62%
Relocate the library to another town centre location	22	8.46%
Reconfigure the library building space to keep the library service there and generate income from alternative use of the remaining space	37	14.23%
Reduce hours and reduce the service	33	12.69%
Fundraising or introduction of fees, subscriptions or charges	27	10.42%
Raise council tax	22	8.46%
Increased use of volunteers to run the library service	25	9.62%
Support for CSLSG proposal	17	6.5%
TOTAL	260	100%

Alternative proposals have also been made by Church Stretton Library Support Group and Shropshire Council notes the time and energy that members of the Church Stretton Library Support Group have put into the creation of these alternative proposals and notes its content as part of the consultation process.

The council has assessed these alternative proposals and its response to them is attached to the Decision Report.

Scrutiny at Part Two full report stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer</i>	Kate Garner	19/03/15
<i>Any internal support</i>		
<i>Any external support</i>		
<i>Head of service</i>	Michael Lewis	19/03/15

Sign off at Part Two full report stage

Signature (Lead Officer)	Signature (Head of Service)
Kate Garner	Michael Lewis
Date: 19/03/15	Date:19/03/15

Appendix: ESIA Part Two Full Report: Guidance Notes on Action Plan

Action plan is attached

Church Stretton Library Consultation – Engagement Plan 09/03/15

Group	Date	Venue	Time / By when	Approach / outcome
Mayfair centre users - Day centre - Crèche - Ring and ride - 44b gp - Residents	Friday 6 th March Monday 9 th	Mayfair Centre	10 – 1pm	Promote the consultation Attended day centre and 44b group to collect comments. Flyers given to Mayfair to distribute widely through own services and networks COMPLETED
Secondary School	Tuesday 10 th	School	10am	20 forms completed from house council representatives. COMPLETED School arranged own flyer to parents.
Youth Groups		By email initially	By 13 th Feb	LB to email round summary to all on the youth stakeholders list and promote link to the proposals and offer to attend any sessions to get group feedback. COMPLETED 13/02/15
Primary School			By 11 th Feb	Flyers to be distributed by the primary school before half term COMPLETED
Preschools: Busy bees St Lawrence's Watlings Playgroup	Thursdays 4 th March	Parish Centre Methodist Hall, Watling St		LB to offer to attend sessions but promote with flyer as well. Flyer distributed 25/02/15 Flyers distributed 05/03/15 Booked to attend 04/03/15 – paperwork circulated to those present and spare copies left.
Library – Home Library Service volunteers	Mon 2 nd March	Library	10am	EW will contact volunteers and invite to library to give comments from volunteer perspective. RP will attend. Completed 02/03/15
Library – Local History Volunteers	Thurs 26 th Feb	Library	4pm	EW will contact volunteers and invite to library to give comments from volunteer perspective. RP will attend. Completed 26/2/15
Library – general volunteer	Thursdays (26 th Feb)	Library		One volunteer shelper. RP will approach to get specific views. Completed 05/03/15
Refuge				LB to liaise with SSHA regarding asking for views on the proposals from their users perspective and encourage individual or group comments if possible. Email has been sent 13/02/15 Flyers distributed 02/03/15
Ley Gardens	19 th for lunch club	11.00am	Lunch club Thursdays	Attended session and forms completed. Friday afternoon is also a social session but likely to be the same people.
Rhyme Time		Library	Tuesdays 10.30	Promote consultation and get feedback on any specific concerns. EW can do. Completed

Reading Group		Library	1 st Weds on month	Next meeting Weds 4 th 2pm. Rawden offering to visit next session for any specific feedback. Completed 04/03/15
Tuesday Day Centre	Tuesday 24 th Feb	URC	1.30pm	Attended session on 24/02/15 – forms had already been completed the previous week
Churches Together				Emailed local contact for advice as to best approach. St Lawrence's contacts have agreed to help distribution of flyers which have been emailed through.
Church Stretton Area Local History Group	Thurs	Library	11 th Feb 1 - 4	This is advertised as their next session... Completed.
Time to Listen		Library		Promote consultation and get feedback on any specific concerns. Ellen can do. Completed 03/03/15
Food bank?				Anticipated through general church contact and flyers left in the Parish Centre.
Denehurst				Number for manager obtained – LB to arrange visit asap. No manager on site currently, flyers delivered to communal area – 02.03.15
Ashbrook Court				Flyers delivered through all doors – 02.03.15
Chamber of Trade	5th March	District Club	6.00pm	Meeting visit booked through Eileen Roberts No library discussion took place.

Church Stretton Library Service
 Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment
 ESIIA Part 2 Action Plan

Protected Characteristic Group	Medium positive or negative impact	Identified areas of negative impact that need mitigating Identified areas of positive impact that need enhancing	Opportunities to mitigate and enhance identified areas	Actions to review and monitor Actions to ensure continuing engagement
Age	-ve impact on those people unable to access the library at the school due to their age	<p>Increased distance for some library users to travel and, if walking, to carry books, which means they either have difficulty in traveling to the library at the school or don't want to go. Mitigating actions need to be co-designed and in place by the time of the library relocation</p> <hr/> <p>Some library users may not feel comfortable going to the new library or when they are first there are not familiar with the new layout and the things work</p>	<p>Shropshire Council and Church Stretton is jointly committed to effectively addressing this issue. A working group, made up of library users, community representatives and council and school reps will be set up to address the issues that have been raised about the impact of relocation on some library users. Consultation on this specific issue will continue.</p> <p>Shropshire Council to work with local partners and the community to create a satellite library provision in a town centre location that provides a link to the main library, provides a place where people can drop off and pick up books and choose from a small selection</p> <p>Continuation of the Home Library Service and the support of the valuable volunteering that supports this</p> <hr/> <p>Creation of an advisory group of users from the public and school libraries and supporting officers to play an</p>	<p>Working group and its activity</p> <p>Further consultation activity</p> <p>Ongoing partnership working</p> <p>Strong and effective engagement with the current volunteers</p>

		<p>New external environment that people will need to familiarise themselves with</p> <hr/> <p>People who come to the library with walkers, buggies, mobility scooters need to feel welcome and have somewhere safe to store these</p> <p>The library will be accommodating all age ranges from pre-school to the elderly and therefore will need to be designed and managed with this in mind, both from a safeguarding and a best possible experience point of view.</p> <hr/> <p>Potentially the staff within the jointly run library will come from a school experience and a branch library experience and will need to work together and learn from each with to ensure that everyone gets an appropriate and excellent service with to ensure that everyone gets an appropriate and excellent service</p> <hr/>	<p>active part in the design of the new shared space</p> <p>A programme of familiarisation sessions for library users with staff and pupil librarians to assist people with getting to know and feeling comfortable in the new space.</p> <hr/> <p>This will be considered as part of the design process for the new space with the involvement of the advisory group.</p> <hr/> <p>Actions to be put in place to ensure that staff learn about each other's work and the needs of the users they work with. This will include, where needed, safeguarding, CSE and related training and Dementia Friends Awareness training.</p> <hr/>	<p>Activity of the advisory group</p> <p>Activity of the advisory group</p> <p>Include in SLA Operational activity</p>
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	<p>+ve impact on the people who may have an age related vulnerability, e.g. older people, teenagers</p> <hr/> <p>+ve impact of more opening hours on working people +ve impact on children and families as the library will be located closer to the Children's Centre, the nursery, the leisure centre and the primary school</p>	<p>Through the redesign of the library service there will be an investment in resources and support available within libraries around information, advice and guidance and prevention services for mental and physical well-being for all</p> <hr/> <p>Potential new users may not be aware of all that the library offers or how to become members and benefit from the service</p>	<p>A Health Zones with a range of Books on Prescription, self-help books and Reminiscence Resources will be a key part of the new library service and valued activities such as Time to Listen will continue. This will be developed and promoted through the Community Connector role and in partnership with the Mayfair Centre.</p> <hr/> <p>Publicise and promote the new service to encourage people who are currently not active members of the library to join up</p> <p>Organise open sessions and activity sessions to link with after school, after Children Centre sessions, sheltered housing communal activities, after work and after popular times at the leisure centre to enable people to come in, find out more and join up. Work with partner organisations to design and promote these sessions.</p>	<p>Deliver through the Transformation Challenge Award funding and monitor progress through its governance</p> <hr/> <p>Library service and school to work together to create a programme of activity</p>
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<p>Disability</p>	<p>-ve impact on those people unable to access the library at the school due to a disability</p>	<p>Increased distance for some library users to travel and for people with reduced mobility this could mean that they either have difficulty in travelling to the library at the school or don't want to go</p> <hr/> <p>Some library users may not feel comfortable going to the new library or when they are first there are not familiar with the new layout and the things work</p> <p>New external environment that people will need to familiarise themselves with, feel safe in and that meets their needs</p>	<p>Shropshire Council and Church Stretton is jointly committed to effectively addressing this issue. A working group, made up of library users, community representatives and council and school reps will be set up to address the issues that have been raised about the impact of relocation on some library users. Consultation on this specific issue will continue.</p> <p>Shropshire Council to work with partners and the community to create a satellite library provision in a town centre location that provides a link to the main library, provides a place where people can drop off and pick up books and choose from a small but regularly changing selection.</p> <p>Continuation of the Home Library Service and the support of the valuable volunteering that supports this</p> <hr/> <p>Creation of an advisory group of users from the public and school libraries and supporting officers to play an active part in the design of the new shared space</p> <p>A programme of familiarisation sessions for library users with staff and pupil librarians to assist people with getting to know and feeling comfortable in the new space</p>	<p>Activity of the working group Further consultation</p> <hr/> <p>Activity of the advisory group</p>
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	<p>+ve impact on the people who may have an age related vulnerability, e.g. older people, teenagers</p>	<p>People who come to the library with walkers, buggies, mobility scooters need to feel welcome and have somewhere safe to store these</p> <p>The library will be accommodating all age ranges from pre-school to the elderly and therefore will need to be designed and managed with this in mind, both from a safeguarding and a best possible experience point of view.</p> <p>Potentially the staff within the jointly run library will come from a school experience and a branch library experience and will need to work together and learn from each with to ensure that everyone gets an appropriate and excellent service with to ensure that everyone gets an appropriate and excellent service</p> <p>Through the redesign of the library service there will be an investment in resources and support available within libraries around information, advice and guidance and prevention services for mental and physical well-being for all</p>	<p>Seek expert advice from Disability Access Groups on the design of the new shared space</p> <p>This will be considered as part of the design process for the new space with the involvement of the advisory group.</p> <p>Actions to be put in place to ensure that staff learn about each other's work and the needs of the users they work with. This will include, where needed, safeguarding, CSE and related training and Dementia Friends training</p> <p>A Health Zones with a range of Books on Prescription, self-help books and Reminiscence Resources will be a key part of the new library service and valued activities such as Time to Listen will continue. This will be developed and promoted through the Community Connector role and in partnership with the Mayfair Centre.</p>	<p>Activity of the advisory group</p> <p>Include within SLA Operational activity</p> <p>Deliver through the Transformation Challenge Award funding and monitor progress through its governance</p>
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<p>Social inclusion</p>	<p>-ve impact if some people were unable to access the library at the school</p>	<p>Increased distance for some library users to travel and for people with reduced mobility this could mean that they either have difficulty in travelling to the library at the school or don't want to go</p> <hr/> <p>Groups that currently run at the library and that will continue at the joint library need to be timetabled – there is a risk that this could be done without consultation with current members who then could not attend</p>	<p>Shropshire Council and Church Stretton is jointly committed to effectively addressing this issue. A working group, made up of library users, community representatives and council and school reps will be set up to address the issues that have been raised about the impact of relocation on some library users. Consultation on this specific issue will continue.</p> <hr/> <p>Develop the Community Connector role to work with activities and in buildings across the town to link up people with services – specifically focussing on building connections between the library and other places of activity.</p> <p>Ensure that the programme of groups and activities that currently runs from the library continues and develops in the new location and steps are taken to ensure that people can access these.</p> <p>Steps are taken to ensure that groups such as the Reading Group and the Church Stretton Area Local History Group are properly accommodated and welcomed in the new shared space</p> <p>Groups and activities are timetabled in consultation with current members and attendees.</p>	<p>Activity of the working group Further consultation</p> <hr/> <p>Transformation Challenge Award governance</p> <p>Include within SLA</p>
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		There is a risk that current and new library users feel that the library at the school is not for them and they won't be welcome or benefit from visiting	A programme of clear and accessible promotion and publicity about the new library will be put in place to explain what the library has to offer and when it's open. The Community Connector can play a key role in encouraging people to visit.	Library service and school will work together to create a programme.
	+ve impact as intergenerational activities can be held at the shared public and school library space		Positive impact of the library located at the school will be enhanced through the opportunities for intergenerational activities and ventures that a public and school library in a shared space can offer	

This action plan has been written in consideration of Shropshire Council's corporate responsibilities to promote equality and social inclusion – namely eliminating harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

The action plan will be delivered in partnership with local organisations, library users (from both original libraries), voluntary and community groups, and Church Stretton School. A Service Level Agreement will be created between Shropshire Council and Church Stretton School to detail the future management of the joint library and will include the actions detailed in this plan that the school either has sole or shared responsibility for delivering.

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Church Stretton Library – future delivery

Summary of activity and decisions relating to the creation of proposals for the future

Date	Action
2013 -2014	Shropshire Council leads on locality commissioning and service redesign activity in Church Stretton – working with local partners wanting to look at other assets and services for opportunities of delivering services differently
March 2014	Church Stretton Asset and Service Working Group created
28 March 2014	Purpose of the group established – services and organisations involved asked to create statements of aspirations for future delivery – includes the library service
16 April 2014	Working Group meeting
9 May 2014	Working Group meeting. Church Stretton School shares a vision of co-locating the public and school library at the school
28 May 2014	Working Group meeting
13 June 2014	Working Group meeting
11 July 2014	Draft proposals for library, customer service point and visitor information services created and shared with the Working Group.
August 2014	<i>Decision made to not hold a county-wide formal consultation on the future of libraries and customer service points – solutions to be found locally instead</i>
5 Sept 2014	Working Group meeting
3 October 2014	The developed proposals for the redesign of the services currently being delivered from the library building agreed by the Working Group. Agreement to build these into a Community Conversation – a period of informal consultation
October 2014	Community Conversation engagement plan created
6 November – 19 December 2014	Community Conversation period. FAQs and answers created and updated on 2 December
6 Nov 2014	Drop-in information event and presentation at Strettondale Local Joint Committee (LJC) meeting
25 Nov 2014	Confirmation of Transformation Challenge Award funding that can be used to support the redesign of libraries and customer service points
28 Nov 2014	Working Group meeting
15 December	Engagement with the Church Stretton Library Support Group begins Representatives of the group meet with members and officers at Shirehall
17 Dec 2014	Working Group meeting
January 2015	Community conversation feedback analysis. 223 paper and on-line responses – the library proposal is generating the most comments. Decision made to hold a formal consultation on the future of the library service
20 th Jan 2015	Working Group meeting
2 nd February 2015	Formal consultation period begins (end date 16 th March) with accompanying ESIIA. Additional engagement plan created that addresses the need to engage specifically with the Protected Characteristic groups identified in the ESIIA.
4 th Feb 2015	Public meeting organised by the Library Support Group – Shropshire Council officers, representatives of Church Stretton School and local members attend
12 th Feb 2015	Update on library consultation at Strettondale LJC meeting
16 th Feb 2015	Petition opposing the relocation of the library delivered – triggering a debate at full Council meeting
26 th Feb 2015	Full Council meeting where petition is presented and debate held. Portfolio Holder decides ‘no action’ as consultation period still open.
26 th Feb 2015	Working Group meeting
2 nd February – 16 th March 2015	Additional engagement plan activity delivered FAQs updated to reflect issues identified during the consultation period.
16 th March 2015	Formal consultation period ended – consultation responses collated and analysed ESIIA updated to reflect feedback received through the consultation Alternative proposals assessed
27 th March 2015	Portfolio Holder Decision Making Session on the future of the library service in Church Stretton

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Shropshire Council's summary response to the Church Stretton Library Support Group's response to the Shropshire Council consultation on the proposed relocation of the Church Stretton library to the Academy on Shrewsbury Road.

Shropshire Council notes the time and energy that members of the Church Stretton Library Support Group have put into the creation of its response to the Church Stretton Library consultation, and notes its content as part of the consultation process.

The council has responded to many of the points raised in the document through the updated Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment and the associated Action Plan. Church Stretton School has clarified many of the questions that have been asked about the proposal. A summary of key responses, clarifications and corrections are made here by the council as part of the decision report.

Responses to specific points are noted below –

CSLSG

'The level of public support for our campaign is overwhelming'

SC response

The response rate to the council's formal consultation was 325 responses, which is 22% of the library's 1494 active members (Feb 2015 figures) and 5% of the library's 6388 registered members. 59 responses were in favour of the proposal.

CSLSG

'Clearly, the majority of the community in Church Stretton wish to keep the library in its current building.'

SC response

The population of Church Stretton parish is 4671. Through its consultation Shropshire Council has received feedback from approximately 325 people – 59 of them in favour of moving the library to the school.

CSLSG

(Re. the school proposal document being subject to change following consultation and further design works) 'We contend that this is unacceptable, unless another phase of the consultation is held, based on whatever information the school may be planning to release, and refer you to Woolf's guidance as follows: "Changes mid process/new options: If the public body fundamentally changes its proposal mid-process or is minded to proceed in a way which was not part of the proposal consulted upon, then basic fairness may require it to re-consult or consult afresh on the changed proposal."

'The school's brochure, which forms the basis of the Council's proposal to move the public library to the school cannot be used as a reference point in this phase of consultation, and thus invalidates the entire exercise'.

SC response

It is the council's view that there has not been a fundamental change to the proposal it made in its consultation process – to relocate Church Stretton library to Church Stretton School to create a shared public and school library on the grounds that it is the most appropriate option to deliver a sustainable library service for the town.

CSLSG

(Re. a perceived lack of available information) 'Again turning to Woolf, he states "The obligation is to let those who have a potential interest in the subject matter know in clear terms what the proposal is and exactly why it is under positive consideration, telling them enough (which may be a good deal) to enable them to make an intelligent response."

'The material provided to the public for the Library Consultation is seriously flawed and does not provide a secure basis for decision making'.

'We contend that the presentation of this option fails this test. No attempt has been made by the Council to enable constructive consideration of the "Keep it where it is" option as a basis for the development of alternative proposals by a member of the public working on the February 2nd 2015 consultation documents'.

SC response

It is the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made and in a couple of instances where it has not been able to provide very specific information about staffing costs or future plans for the library building, the reasons for this have been explained.

CSLSG

'Correspondence between leading school governor Alan Fox and ex-governor Roger Wilson, CBE concerning misleading assertions by Mr Fox in support of the school's proposal in Church Stretton community magazine "Focus" February edition (readership 60% of Church Stretton households)'.

SC response

Both Shropshire Council and Church Stretton School feel that the inclusion in this part of the document and therefore into the public domain, the employment details of a member of staff is highly inappropriate and the CSLSG has not added anything to the consultation process by doing this.

CSLSG

'Shropshire Council might aim to deliver services in partnership but there has been little partnership working within this community'.

SC response

The council has been working in partnership with the community, key organisations and groups in Church Stretton for many years. The recent creation of the Asset/Service Working Group to find solutions to some challenging shared challenges is the most recent demonstration of this effective partnership working.

CSLSG

'41.7% of the population are 65 and over, this percentage is in the ascendancy and is likely to be for the foreseeable future'.

SC response

35.3% of the population of Church Stretton parish are aged 65 and over is the correct statistic at the time of the 2011 Census.

CSLSG

'During discussions, there was strong support for: *'Keep the building. Strip the service down to minimum and build up after a period of revenue seeking and income generation.'*

Raising the Council Tax below the referendum limit received many favourable comments, and was seen as a way of distributing the load more fairly across the county, while some wanted the County's reserves to be called upon, especially given the poor rates of interest on the county's investments of £126m'.

SC response

Interest rates have been low for a considerable amount of time, the Bank of England has kept the official bank rate at 0.5% since 2009 at this rate is not expected to rise until the first quarter of 2016. Even then it is only expected to rise to 0.75% so we continue to be in a historically low interest rate environment which is reflected in the returns we get on the Council's investment balances. Security of the capital invested continues to be the main priority but we do aim to achieve the highest returns possible within the agreed risk parameters set in the Treasury Strategy. The balance of the council's investments fluctuates throughout the year depending on its cash flow.

CSLSG

'The current period of decline in public services and progressive reduction of Council spending on public services will come to an end and we are determined that we will still have the basics in place and can ensure that Church Stretton thrives economically, socially and as an outstanding community of national significance in its many examples of community activities, facilities and citizen involvement in delivering a high quality of life'.

SC response

The public sector was tasked with making £6bn in savings as part of the first Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 and Shropshire Council as a result had to find £86m in savings over three years. This was achieved at the end of this three year period.

A further Comprehensive Spending Review in 2013, together with building in the increasing demand in adult social care and children's services, has resulted in Shropshire Council having to find a further £80m beginning 2013/14 – with such unprecedented savings over a 6 year period all areas of current activity are having to play their part.

Shropshire Council would challenge that all of this has undermined community life in Shropshire – there are numerous examples of where communities have come together, recognising that the status quo is no longer an option, and worked to create new models of delivery that preserve the core offer of what local communities feel is important, but within a financial envelope that is affordable for Shropshire Council.

The current evolution of the public sector led by central government is expected to continue until at least 2020 with the gradual reduction of the Revenue Support Grant - the main source of funding from government. Therefore the drive to do more co-creation in local communities of existing provision will continue for many years to come.

CSLSG

'We have shown that the plan to relocate our library is fundamentally flawed. The Council has failed to give consultees clear, unambiguous evidence on which to base decisions'.

SC response

It is the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made.

CSLSG

'The Council has conducted one consultation that was subsequently redesignated as a "community conversation"

SC response

The period of community engagement during November/December 2014 was always called a community conversation and was never cited as a formal consultation.

CSLSG

'and failed to report the most important result it should have reported which was the number of respondents who wanted the library to stay where it is and the number who did not or did not know'

SC response

A yes/no question of this kind that would have enabled answers to be collated and analysed was not asked of respondents in the community conversation.

CSLSG

The Council then, at our request, initiated a second consultation but failed to link it with clear information and repeatedly told us that the information we wanted would only become available after the decision was made.

SC response

The council was perfectly able to decide itself that the results of the community consultation meant that a formal consultation period would be necessary. It is the council's view that sufficient evidence has been made available to enable consultation respondees to consider the proposal being made.

18th March 2015

CSLSG

'The Council has failed to work up options that could deliver budget savings at the same time as keeping the library where it is. The Council has failed to demonstrate that its' plans for Church Stretton meet basic standards of evidence-based decision taking and has failed to demonstrate that the Church Stretton plan is a fair and proportionate element in a Shropshire wide plan locality approach to achieve £1.3 million budget savings in a way that is moderated by the need to rural proof the County and protect older age groups. The Council has failed to show that its' decision making is fair and proportionate across the county. We still do not know how the £1.3 million budget cut will be allocated across 22 libraries and 4 mobiles and it is not acceptable that the Council presses on with its plan for Church Stretton without demonstrating its county wide strategy for dealing with library cuts.'

SC response

The council has explained to members of CSLSG the Shropshire Council's locality commissioning approach. We are working with local communities and organisations to identify opportunities to reduce the costs of the libraries in the towns across the county to enable a library service to continue in each of these places. Solutions are being worked through with each community on a place by place basis. We are not applying the proportion of the library service savings that relates to branch libraries in a blanket way across the county. The opportunity at each location to make savings relate to the current cost of delivering a library service there and the new way of running the service that is identified as being best for that place, will inform the savings that can be made. In Church Stretton it may appear as though the level of savings is high – that is because the solution that is being proposed for the future running of the library service does not involve ongoing revenue costs.

CSLSG

'The Council has failed to follow the good examples of more community-minded local authorities investigating new models of providing library services in an age of budget cuts and austerity. Both Suffolk and Kent Councils have engaged with new models of providing library services including the same ideas we have arrived at in our own discussions e.g. the charitable trust idea'.

SC response

The models adopted by Kent and Suffolk councils will suit the particular circumstances of those areas. It has been agreed that the approach that Shropshire Council will adopt to redesign its library service is locality commissioning and the council would argue that this approach is fundamentally community-minded.

CSLSG

'We very much regret the lack of initiative within our Council and the lack of engagement with citizens in the joint production of new models of service delivery'.

SC response

Specifically through its locality commissioning approach the council has been engaged with the Church Stretton community and key local organisations – the town council, the school, the Mayfair Centre and others – for the last 2 years. For the last year an Asset/Service Working Group has been jointly coming up with new ways of working that will ensure that the services and assets that are of value to the town are retained and enhanced, and run in a way that suits local people. The council does not recognise the group's regret over its lack of initiative and lack of engagement with citizens.

The CSLG's alternative proposals for the future running of the library service in Church Stretton are addressed in a separate document.

Shropshire Council's response to the Church Stretton Library Support Group's alternative proposals to the proposed relocation of Church Stretton library service to Church Stretton School.

Shropshire Council notes the time and energy that members of the Church Stretton Library Support Group have put into the creation of alternative proposals to the proposed relocation of Church Stretton library services to Church Stretton School, and notes its content as part of the consultation process. The council has responded to some of the detail of these proposals within the Decision Report as they were identified through the consultation process.

The council's additional response to these alternative proposals are noted below –

The council has considered the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the alternative proposals and looked specifically at key areas of the proposals, and compared these to its preferred option of creating a joint public and school library at Church Stretton School.

A high level comparison of the key areas of the CSLSG proposal and the school proposal has been made using the information that has been provided.

CSLSG proposal compared to the Church Stretton School proposal

	CHURCH STRETTON LIBRARY SUPPORT GROUP – STAGE 1	CHURCH STRETTON SCHOOL
Area of floor space	127sqm	155 sqm - across 2 rooms plus 95 sqm storage room
Opening hours	22 hours a week	9am – 5pm 5 days a week 9am – 7pm 1 day a week Including school holidays 45 hours over 6 days – lunchtime closure on weekdays
Parking	Approximately 10 spaces to be shared with any other tenants	10 dedicated parking spaces within the school parking area rising to 20 -30 spaces and 3 disabled parking spaces at the rear of the library.
Access to IT	Yes – as part of the library within the main room of the building	There would be provision for up to 10 computers and access to printing, photocopying, laminating
Information and advice about other services	Yes	Information, advice and guidance on a range of issues would be available to complement what is already available in the town. There would also be appropriate signposting to services

Space for community activities	Yes, but affected by reduced floor space	All existing activity would be able to continue and opportunities for new activities would be welcomed
Volunteers to support the service	Yes	It is hoped that the current library volunteers would feel able to continue to support the library service – new volunteers would be welcomed
Management option	Shropshire Council during Stage 1 Charity/CIC at Stage 2	Operational management by Church Stretton School as detailed in a SLA.
Wi-fi	No	Yes
Impact of the use of the building	An organisation(s) wanting to move into the current CSP/VIS space and computer room would have to be sought.	A newly created space would accommodate both the public and school library
Income generation ideas	Yes, but detail needs to be confirmed	As per status quo of the current library service
Income generation based on current figures	£4,142	£0
Staffing costs to SC	£23,967 p.a.	£0
Buildings & Services costs to SC	£8,725	£0
Running costs for Shropshire Council of the local service	£32, 692, less income generated	£0
Timeline for implementation	Start of Stage 1 – TBC Period before Stage 2 can start – 12 months	September 2015
Future sustainability	Dependent on continued revenue funding from Shropshire Council in the first year - assumed ongoing support from the council needed through a Service Level Agreement	Sustainability of the library service will be assured through the council's SLA with the school. Future delivery of the library service will not be affected by any further library service budget cuts.

The option of creating a joint public and school library at Church Stretton offers greater opportunity for delivering an enhanced and sustainable library service in the town that fits with the council's future vision for Shropshire's library service. It also provides a greater opportunity for necessary council revenue savings and a shorter timeline to achieving a transformed service.

The potential weaknesses and threats associated with this proposal are demonstrated within this report and the ESIIA and ESIIA Action Plan and mitigating actions identified.

Email from John Whitelegg on 9th March 2015

'The library support group is investigating ways we can keep the library where it is and at the same time assist the Council in dealing with its budget constraints. Our investigations have revealed very creative approaches to this kind of community involvement and we are disappointed that Shropshire Council has not shown the same level of initiative that is present in Suffolk and Kent, for example.

Please look at the Suffolk approach on this web site:

<http://suffolklibraries.co.uk/opportunity-and-independence>

Similar original thinking is underway in Kent:

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Iraconsultation/consultationHome>

The Suffolk and Kent experiences are very good examples of the problem we drew to your attention when we met at Shirehall on 15.12.14 when we expressed our disappointment that the Council had not worked out a strategy for the whole library service based on different options and had not presented any options other than relocation of the school to residents and library users in Church Stretton.

It is not too late to follow the good examples of Kent and Suffolk and we request that you work up and present us with options of the kind being discussed in these two local authorities'.

Shropshire Council response -

Suffolk and Kent libraries and archive services are large scale service developments that have been developed by the councils as a way of reducing operating costs by merging services and allowing them to become charitable trusts or spinning out of council control. The term spin-out is shorthand for the conversion of an in-house service into a social enterprise, mutual, charitable trust, local authority trading company or a transfer to community management. Spin-outs do not include shared services or outsourcing to an existing private or third sector provider.

Spinning out does not protect service delivery; it looks at ways of delivering the service at a cheaper cost. Suffolk and Kent will have to combine income generating services and have not ruled out closing branches or changing staff contracts as the funding they receive from the main funder who is the host authority will ultimately decrease.

Shropshire Council has identified similar ways of innovation using the locality commissioning model inherent in inventive service delivery by having community models which although different, secure services for the future.

There is a complex range of options for authorities to consider when examining alternatives to direct service delivery. The perception that there is only a choice between private and public provision is no longer true. Increasingly, the responsibility for providing services is shared. Spinning-out is only one option and on average takes three years of planning to implement and of the 353 local authorities only 20 have gone down this route.

Taking into consideration the length of lead-in time to implement these models that is a lone service with little income generation under consideration and the pressing need to implement the three year savings strategy outlined by central government, the models adopted by Kent and Suffolk councils will not be adopted by Shropshire Council in the redesign of its library service.

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Church Stretton Library Support Group

Response to the Shropshire Council consultation on the proposed relocation of the Church Stretton library to the Academy on Shrewsbury Road.

14th March 2015

Executive Summary

This consultation response has been produced by the Church Stretton Library Support Group (CSLSG). The CSLG was formed in November 2014 to campaign for the retention of the library in its current premises. The CSLSG has spent approximately four months researching the case for closing the library in the centre of Church Stretton and relocating it to the school on Shrewsbury Rd. Its findings are described in this submission and point overwhelmingly to the flaws in the proposal and the strength of the case for “keeping it where it is”.

At an early stage in the life of the group it decided that it was not appropriate to focus solely on a campaign against the relocation proposal. We accept that we should explore the potential for delivering budget cuts on the current site and exploit the potential for setting up new funding and governance arrangements to secure the long term future of a valuable public service in the heart of the community it serves.

This consultation submission focusses on 7 areas of weakness and poorly specified plans associated with a relocated library. These are:

- Demography and Accessibility
- The Council’s ESIIA document
- Safeguarding and staffing
- Public transport, the minibus, disabled issues and parking at the academy
- The impact on Church Stretton, retail viability, unplugging valuable activities
- The lack of answers to questions, misleading information, defective consultation
- Public opinion (report on our market stall activities, the petition, the public meeting and the drop-in)

The submission then explores options for the future based on the principle that the library stays where it is. We note in passing our disappointment that the Council has not identified options that retain the library “where it is” and this task has had to be taken up by a community group. Our options fall into short term options and options that will take longer to put in place. In the short term we are confident that a combination of reduced hours, reduced space, the letting of released space at commercial rates and income generation can make a substantial contribution to achieving budget cuts and retain the library at the heart of our community. In the medium term we suggest that new governance and funding arrangement is put in place to secure the long term future of the library and protect it from Council cuts. This medium term strategy is discussed in this submission as either a charitable trust or a Community Interest Company.

In our view it would be a serious error for Shropshire Council to pursue its single option of relocation given the overwhelming public rejection of this proposal summarised in the body of this submission in the public opinion section, the seriousness of the many defects in the relocation plan and the willingness of an energetic support group to continue to work co-operatively with the Council to deliver the Council's own objectives at the same time as respecting the democratic wishes of residents and users.

In our conclusion we say:

“We want to work with the Council to achieve an outcome that assists it with its budget cuts and to make sure that we maintain and develop community facilities in this town. That work continues. All that remains to make sure the democratic process works to a high standard, people are listened to and robust options are developed, is for the Council to abandon the relocation plan and give us 12 months to demonstrate that the library can stay where it is, develop new models of service delivery and deliver proportionate budget cuts”

Introduction

The Church Stretton Library Support Group was formed on 28th November 2014 when it became clear that Shropshire Council was promoting the closure of the library in its current building and its' relocation to the Academy on Shrewsbury Road. During that time we have devoted hundreds of hours to our attempts to clarify the detail of what would be on offer at the academy and we have had meetings with senior Council staff and councillors at Shirehall (15.12.14) and with Cathy Thomas at the school. We have organised a petition that attracted over 1100 signatures, organised a public meeting attended by 203 residents and organised a drop-in session at the Silvester Horne Institute that attracted over 130 participants. We have handed out leaflets to hundreds of people outside the Co-op and the Spar shops and at our two market day stalls and we organised a walk to the school from Market Sq so that all those interested could experience the difficulties of walking to the Academy with books.

Our activities have been widely reported in the "Shropshire Star" and the "South Shropshire Journal" and on BBC Television "Midlands Today" after filming over 50 local residents outside the library voicing their concerns and their strong support for keeping the library where it is.

The level of public support for our campaign is overwhelming and is associated with a positive appetite for change to assist the Council in dealing with budget pressures. In our view and described in detail in this consultation response, there is an overwhelming case for retaining the library in its current premises and for making a contribution to budget savings with the library on its current site and in a way that meets with public support.

This consultation response is divided into 8 sections:

Demography and Accessibility

The Council's ESIIA document

Safeguarding and staffing

Public transport, the minibus, disabled issues and parking at the academy

The impact on Church Stretton, retail viability, unplugging valuable activities

Lack of answers to questions, misleading information, defective consultation

Public opinion (report on our market stall activities, the petition, the public meeting and the drop-in)

Options that will deliver budget savings whilst retaining the library in its current premises

The consultation response is a collaborative effort written by the following people:

Lesley Dench

Bernard Ford

Madeline Haigh

Sue Hird

Felicity Thomas

Hazel Whitehouse

Chris Whitehouse

John Whitelegg

Demography and Accessibility

To quote Shropshire Council's own ESIIA document, the Council must pay "due regard" to the "protected characteristics" of communities in Shropshire. In terms of our response, we must look to the same census statistics as the council, to show that our demography in this area is special and evolving differently from populations in other areas. 41.7% of the population are 65 and over, this percentage is in the ascendancy and is likely to be for the foreseeable future.

School age children account for 12%, so even in crude numerical terms this relocation can be seen as disadvantageous to a majority of the population in the parish of Stretton.

Shropshire Council, whilst protesting that they cannot possibly afford to disadvantage either the young or the elderly, seem to be concentrating their efforts on providing for the minority, and on not placing "due regard" on the requirements and wishes of the majority. It is therefore proportionally unrepresentative to move the library service away from where it is best for the elderly. What rationale does Shropshire Council have for disadvantaging this "protected characteristic" group?

Anecdotally, elderly and disabled residents have told the Library Support Group that they are finding it hard to envision and support a SERVICE that expects them to:

Travel out of town, away from the other services and retail outlets that currently they can access all together in one trip.

Wait for buses - often in inclement weather, or depend on a minibus service that STILL may or may not be available, and may not suit their needs.

Fit in with an increased level of timing issues, so as to ensure proper safeguarding.

To accept a 'service' that is diminished because of the lack of a correct level and appropriateness of staffing, and set in an area that is diminished too, in its size and in the services it can provide.

To make decisions based on such little consistent information, knowing that the results of Shropshire Council's second consultation will probably form part of an agreement that is so ill-defined, yet could affect them so deeply.

Many of these more elderly residents have told us that if the library moves to the school they will be unable and/or unwilling to go there. Their perception is that the library would then fail and be subsumed into the school.

Church Street Library is a respected site in the community, in the same way as the Council Offices and Mayfair are described as the 'familiar and respected sites' that have been chosen to deliver public service points. To insist on a move to the school pushes these residents into an unfamiliar environment that does not take account of their 'protected characteristic' status. The conditions pertaining to this proposed new and unfamiliar situation are still not detailed nor presented in any consistent form by Shropshire council nor its key partner, Church Stretton School. Providing the detail AFTER the consultation is not logical.

A decision to move the library to the school without proper consultation and consideration of other options and without giving the level of detail and time required, pushes elderly residents to the margins of the decision-making process and makes them feel completely unrepresented by the people who are supposed to do so.

It is difficult too, to align the Council's requirement of itself in the ESIA document to deal with the problems that disabled residents have identified, with their inaction so far. Is there, or is there not, a suitable minibus available for transport? When a member of the Library Support Group asked Councillor Chapman this very simple question, he replied that there was a service bus that stopped outside the school. When then asked if this was his answer to such a fundamental question for some residents - he shrugged!

Propelling a mobility scooter, walking frame or buggy so much further than the town centre, along pavements that are narrow and uneven, is an issue of great impact. There is no consideration of parking or storage facility for these transports and aids - nothing detailed either for the baby/infant buggies that are regularly seen at Church Street library. The real needs of the disabled in our community are not clearly recognised in the Council documents.

Again these library users are being taken away from the town centre, and away from the other places that are usually factored in and amalgamated into one trip to the centre of Stretton. Unless things have changed considerably, the school does not offer a GP surgery, a dentist, supermarket, chemist, baker, newsagent or coffee shop. People - especially those potentially disadvantaged groups of elderly and/or disabled - need their services together and within easy and logical access.

The Council's ESIIA document: an evaluation

1. First Impressions

- Not a lengthy document, on considering decisions are to be made which will affect many peoples' lives, not least some of the most vulnerable in our society.
- Not a lengthy document to alter the face of Church Stretton, as there are no guarantees from the council how this lovely building will be used, if not housing the Library and Information Services.
- Not a lengthy document in which to describe what factors, advantages and risks have played a part in the decision-making process.
- An even shorter document when you take into account that almost the all the first page is taken up with the description of the tool which the Council are using to determine need. However, the concept that this assessment tool should be expanded to include social inclusion is a good one; except that not all the groups are mentioned. Perhaps they were of lesser importance or not applicable to Church Stretton. *It is essential that everyone is considered in a democratic process i.e. single parent families, those living alone, those registered disabled but also those with significant health needs that might be affected by these proposals. Not to mention people on low incomes, etc.*
- Considerably more detail is required from this document if the Council is not to lay itself open to severe criticism and even possible action over infringement of human rights legislation. It is obvious that there is a considerable amount of data/information/detail missing or undeveloped.
- Because of the lack of information and poor engagement with the Church Stretton Community there is a real sense of discrimination and lack of advancement of equal opportunities.

2. The How

- If the necessary information had been collected prior to the November meeting it would have been obvious that the requirement for this project required a full ESIIA Report early on in the process. This document is insufficient to allow for the needs/wants/expectations of the Church Stretton Community.

3. Name and change of Service

- This project as it stands is not for a relocation of Church Stretton Library - it is a proposal for the expansion of Stretton School library. For all that it be called the Community Library, it will be housed and managed within the school. As an interested party, the school should be named in the beginning. It raises the question as to whether there any more interested parties that we know nothing about .i.e. what decisions have been made about the existing, attractive, Victorian library building?

4. Aims of the service

- As part of the background information Council expressed its need to reduce expenditure of library services to between £1.3m - £1.5m, a difference of £200,000. This would appear to be an extraordinary differential. £200,000 would go a long way to keeping Church Stretton Library the way it is.
- The overall aim is to support the vulnerable elderly and the young in Shropshire but there seems to be no regard for them at all in re-siting a service away from the centre of town making extra difficulty for both young mothers with pushchairs and the elderly with mobility problems.
- In assessing numbers of the vulnerable whether young or old, nationally statistics show that there is an increasing number of the vulnerable elderly, whereas it would seem the reverse is true for the young. The elderly would be the most disadvantaged by this proposal. Surely it is the Council's aim to promote independence in the elderly, not restrict it.
- Shropshire Council might aim to deliver services in partnership but there has been little partnership working within this community. No consideration was given to enhancing activities within the current library, although I am aware that this work is being undertaken now. The risks of not being able to afford to keep the library open have been considered but not the risks of keeping an 'out of town community library' when its potential is not met.
- The library network is listed as 6 major towns and 10 local hubs, nowhere is there listed in this document a breakdown of use in these localities; the use of the library might be far more consistent in Church Stretton than in another location, it might not; but it needs to be demonstrated.
- The Council should be able to satisfy its population that it is working in a democratic manner and that by changing a venue it will not run the risk of perhaps 1/3 of the current service users not being able or wanting to access different premises

5. Data and Information

- The lack of sufficient data has already been identified. However, as some of the data has been collected without consultation with the staff involved, there are inaccuracies and misconceptions; for example, there may be only 21% of active users recorded but of those 21% some of them may be taking out books on behalf of someone else, a child, grandchild, spouse, partner, friend or neighbour. Without ascertaining this information, the 21% is not an accurate answer.

6. Key Facts

- These are interesting but to comply with human rights legislation, we need to know a good deal more. How many live alone, how many have cars, how many need significant help using transport. The cost and maintenance of a specialist disability friendly vehicle is prohibitive. The school will have a 'duty of care' to ensure that the operatives are suitably trained and insured to support the kind of person using this transport. The data on potential use and costs is missing and is an essential component of this project.

7. Population Structure

- It would appear that the numbers of school children compared to the overall population is very low compared with the adult population and particularly with the over 65 years. It seems very unbalanced to move large to small rather than the other way round, particularly as the large is getting bigger and the small, smaller.

8. Church Stretton Library User to location data

- This was an interesting bar chart and one would have expected the reds and blues to add up to 100% but in both cases it is 99% - some consistency! Of the 65% of active users living within 2kms of the proposed location nearly half of those living furthest away will have twice as far to travel, if the proposal goes ahead.

9. Stretton School Proposal

- The School library proposal outlines very clearly all the advantages to the pupils and staff of the school and some of the benefits to the general public but few of the difficulties. Information from the Community Library proposal should have been available in this document as a comparison.
- Accessibility is a key component of this and although consideration has been given to use of school transport and pick-up points, there is no mention of the logistics of maintaining a service for the public and a service for the school. It needs to be established who the transport is designed for and this detail has not been considered, but this is imperative in a project appraisal document.
- The proposed layout of the new project has also given cause for concern and there is no evidence of these concerns in this document.
- The other key issues are around revenue. There seems to be a sense that there will be revenue savings in this venture but there is no evidence. The aim is to staff and run a building during hours not currently part of the normal school working hours and this will have enormous cost implications. Nowhere is there any sense that the extended working days, additional weekend and holiday openings have been costed out.
- How can an approval in principal be considered without all the financial details - not just capital but revenue and on-costs?

10. Intended audiences and target groups for service change

- Church Stretton is a venue for thousands of tourists, many of whom visit the library. They ask questions of the very knowledgeable staff and take advantage of the information, books, and histories etc. that are available. They are not registered. Where is their input into this process?
- People who are not necessarily registered with a disability would find the half mile trek to the school unacceptable.

- The volunteers currently do not claim expenses. They might feel differently if they have a further mile to travel with each visit.
- It may be more difficult to accommodate the different groups that currently meet in the library particularly as there would be further constraints of school breaks and lunch-times.

11. Evidence

- This item demonstrates how much necessary information has not been provided in order to proceed with this project and yet it would appear that already this is the Council's preferred option. This has not been a democratic process; the whole action from start to finish is flawed. No Public Service Body should be making financial decisions without the backing of sound data – this has not been available. There is a lack of transparency and openness in this supposed democratic process.

12. Specific Consultation

- All these specific groups have been formed since the November meeting, but this is work that should have been done before. There needs to be good clear evidence of the benefits, advantages and risks of all options before a preferred option is agreed. This has not happened.

13. Potential Impact

- If the necessary work had been undertaken by the officers of the Council, it would have been evident months ago that there would be a high negative result to this proposal, and the full report determined before the November meeting. The loss of time, energy and money involved in this is totally unacceptable in an environment where every penny counts and we are being told to give up our wonderful library because there are insufficient funds.

14. Initial Assessment

- The layout to this is appalling, the English language is designed to be read from left to right but this table is so designed that not only does the title grid not appear at the top of the page, but words are written underneath one another.
- There is no evidence of the threat that boisterous teenagers might unintentionally present to older people, which is very much about safeguarding both the young and the elderly.

- Concern has to be raised about the general public trying to negotiate playgrounds, car parks, entrances and exits at the beginning and end of the school day, not to mention break times.

15. Actions to Mitigate Negative Impact

- Positive impact solutions need to show exactly how families with children and adults will use the library and what is the likely change to their use of the library if it moves. Mothers with small children might feel less intimidated using a public library in town than a community library in the senior school. Will there be more children using the library after school than currently use the public library? This is debateable.
- Access remains an important issue, disabled people have the right to be treated equally and a proposed back entrance which is kept locked does not facilitate this.
- Perhaps the “Intergeneration activities” could be described in more detail, as these could be misinterpreted.

16. Review of actions before decision –making

- In order to review any actions, a full detailed financial report needs to be made available of the real costs of running the current service in its’ present location.
- At the moment there seem to be blanket figures being produced.
- What is the current library worth in terms of resale or rental potential? This information is necessary in order to look at other options.
- Staffing is another major issue; two experienced Public Library staff are at risk of losing their jobs to a service which will be undermanned in general, let alone covering late hours opening, weekends and school holidays. Where is the justice/democracy in this? The staffing figures that have been produced do not add up. There is no differentiation between senior staff and assistants. Are domestic staff e.g. cleaners included or does this come under maintenance?
- What are the maintenance costs? Has major work been undertaken, or is part of the consideration potential work that needs to be done? This is not just about an extension to a school building, it is the support and maintenance when the school is closed.

- With regard to the proposed new community library, transport has been highlighted, but much more detail is required, e.g. running costs. Car parking is always a nightmare. What steps will be taken to ensure that the general public have access where and when appropriate?
- Safeguarding is not just about children.

CONCLUSIONS

There is an overriding sense that the Council expected to make a major change as to how the Church Stretton Community go about their ordinary lives without any fuss or bother. There was insufficient contact and exchange between the Community and the Council Officers in order for latter to assess what was wanted/needed/expected by the former from their library service. The major complaint about the whole process is the access to reliable, trustworthy data and evidence of detailed finance planning. There was also a requirement for some worked up alternatives to the only two options on the table; the “do nothing” option does not count and one remaining option is unacceptable as it does not demonstrate democratic process. The whole reason for having open transparent discussion and alternatives to the Council process is to ensure that all legal issues are covered.

Safeguarding and Staffing

The Head of the school has publicly stated that ‘safeguarding’ in the proposed library will be a priority of the school and that he would allow nothing to threaten the safety and well-being of the pupils. We accept that this is a very sincere stance. However, the plans submitted by the school do not fully explore the staffing implications of ‘safeguarding’.

The plans for the new library at the school show a reverse L-shaped building, with an adult entrance at the front and near the road, and the pupil entrance at the rear. There is to be a partition separating the pupil from the adult section, though at this stage it is not clear where the partition will be. The connecting door will be locked at break and lunch time, though the Wi-Fi access will be in the pupil area. Two manned desks will be needed, one to serve the public and one to serve the pupils.

With the issue of ‘safeguarding’ we maintain that two members of staff will be needed at the pupil end in order that they may carry out their normal duties and supervise the activities of pupils and adults using the Wi-Fi facility.

At the adult end two librarians will be needed, the minimum number accepted by the Library Service for the present Church Stretton library.

At present the school employs in its library one librarian (not qualified) on four days a week, and two Resources staff, one full time and one part time. The duties of the Resources staff are mainly connected with other school matters.

This is clearly insufficient to make-up the number of staff we feel are necessary for the proposed library. It is significant that at the Phoenix school (referred to by the school) the Dawley public library is indeed on the same site but there is no integration during the school day and the connecting door is kept locked because of the issue of ‘safeguarding’. At the Bishop Heber school in Cheshire (again referred to by the school), they do have integration. However, the librarian can see the whole room from her desk and the adult library is open only two days a week, between 1.30 and 7.30pm.

We are told that the school governors have indicated that they are not willing to incur extra staffing costs so how will they address the issue of staffing and ‘safeguarding’? It is not good enough for the school to say that staffing will be worked out when and if the decision is made to re-locate the library to the school.

Public transport, the minibus, disabled issues and parking at the academy

For car users, dedicated library-user parking adjacent to the library area is essential. More people will have to use their cars to go to the library than at present because of the out of town location. The restriction imposed by the school proposal's lunchtime closure will concentrate library use and therefore parking into a much smaller time span during the day.

Any car park access will be very difficult at school finishing time between 3.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m.

Access to the building for the disabled demands the shortest possible distance from the car to the library. The disabled access library entrance requires going through the school library. For safeguarding purposes, this access point will be locked to public library users when the school is using their library. Thus users who need mobility aids such as wheelchairs, mobility scooters, walkers or sticks might find their specific entrance, and the disabled access toilet, not simply closed to them, but locked.

For many elderly people without a car, the half-mile walk from town to Academy, carrying their books, is not an option, especially in bad weather and during the winter months. The Ring-and-Ride service has already told us that they would not be able to take this on as a new route.

For those using mobility scooters to get to the library, there is the prospect of a half-a-mile journey out of town, along the busy Shrewsbury Road and on narrow pavements, with the same bad weather problems-- the rain, the fog, the snow- and the early darkness of the winter months.

Transport to the proposed location is a major issue. The 'Community Library Proposal' brochure stated: "*The school minibus could also be used to provide a shuttle service from the town centre for a small fee*"

The school minibus would be a single destination service —it runs only to the library and back. If a fee is charged it would be, in effect, a charge to use the library and moreover one levied on the most vulnerable in our society. It would arguably be in breach of the spirit of the 1964 Public Libraries and Museum Act which provides for free access to the library for the user.

The Library Support Group has repeatedly asked: "Please confirm that the minibus will be free of charge to users" but received evasive replies such as;

"Yes we would endeavour to do this, although we may consider a small fee."

This ambiguity is repeated in the Council's own second consultation documents, where a free service is quoted in 'Item 4 Transport Options', but the accompanying FAQs 2/2/15 refers yet again to a small fee.

The Library Support Group also asked for confirmation that the minibus would run every weekday and on Saturdays, and for an indication of a possible schedule. The school's reply: "*Will run on weekdays only. Schedule to be arranged.*" means there is NO Saturday service on offer even though the Library will be open all day.

The school minibus does not have wheelchair access. There is no space for baby buggies. There is no space for the shopping trolleys used by the elderly who cannot carry their books, or who may continue to try to fit a library visit in with shopping in the town. There is no indication that groups such as the Book Clubs, and audiences for talks/events/pre-school and other specifically timed activities can all be accommodated on the minibus.

There is no indication that any thought has been given to alternative arrangements and public notification when the vehicle is off the road for any reason, such as repairs or servicing, or even through non-availability of a driver. Furthermore, the school minibus does not have a dedicated driver but is driven by school staff as required. It is a reasonable expectation that Shropshire Council should have provided information on the legal and regulatory regime within which the minibus will operate, when carrying the general public rather than the school's own students. The use of the vehicle may mean it should be formally registered as a Community Transport operation, and the drivers required to undergo training and/or PSV licence requirements.

The public bus service, the 435, is seen as one of the main methods of getting out to the school, and there is a bus stop, without a shelter of any kind, outside the school. However, 'Minsterley Motors Company' controls the 435 bus timetable, not Shropshire Council, or Church Stretton School. The Weekday service is one bus every hour; on Saturdays, one bus every 2 hours.

On Monday –Friday there are 2 buses in the morning which would enable library users to catch the bus back before the new library shuts for lunch. In the afternoon, the outgoing bus and the return buses arrive at the school during the school's own finishing time between 3.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. respectively. This is a tremendously busy time of day, with 600 pupils leaving by school coaches, or being collected on the school run and is therefore a period which most people would prefer to avoid.

On Saturdays, there is only a 2-hour service and to miss the return bus at 4.06 p.m., means waiting until the last bus back which is after 6.00 p.m. The library, of course, closes at 5.00 p.m. The weekday Evening opening hours until 7.00 p.m. will be almost inaccessible for the 435 bus service users as the last bus to pass the School returning to the town is around 6.16 p.m.

The problems and restrictions of the bus service timetable and the school/library schedule make an unsatisfactory combination for library users.

The impact on Church Stretton, retail viability, unplugging valuable activities

“The Rural Services Network believes that local services – such as village shops, pubs and post offices – are at the heart of functioning communities, as well as offering a lifeline to many vulnerable residents. Their steady erosion needs to be addressed and reversed.”

Source: Rural Services Network (2015)

<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/files/rsn-manifesto2015.pdf>

We would argue that libraries have a role and status at least as important as shops, pubs and post offices and in terms of cultural and educational provision and the support of older age groups, even more so.

The Rural Services Network tracks the decline of services in rural areas and links this to the damage it does to the interests of older residents and to the local economy:

“When the last outlet closes, it is often no exaggeration to say that a tipping point has been reached. A focal point in the community has gone and a place where residents would meet has disappeared. There is now little option but to climb in the car and go elsewhere. Those who find it hard to travel may become isolated. Job opportunities in those local outlets no longer exist and the money that was spent in them flows out of the community.”

Source: Rural Services Network (2015)

<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/files/rsn-manifesto2015.pdf>

Libraries are part of the solution to the problem of decline:

“• Encourage the public sector to look to local rural retailers and outlets to improve access to their services. Examples include library drop-off points and prescription pick-up points within village shops.”

Libraries bring people into a local community especially an attractive town like Church Stretton and they add to the footfall (the number of people visiting the town, using cafes and businesses, spending money and supporting jobs). Cutting off this source of revenue and community gain at a time of austerity and budget cuts is counter intuitive and must be resisted.

It is government policy to “rural proof” its policies and this public policy commitment applies equally to local government:

“• Recommit to the principle of rural proofing by Whitehall and its delivery agencies, to ensure a fair outcome for rural communities. Make clear that that commitment comes from the top and has the backing of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. • Apply rural proofing rigorously to its post-2015 programme for Government. In particular, to think carefully about the targeting of needs-based policies to ensure they reach rural communities.”

“The Rural Services Network wants to see all Government policy making being subject to rural proofing, so sufficient early thought is given to how those policies will benefit rural communities and so any unintended rural consequences can be identified.”

Source:

<http://www.rsonline.org.uk/images/files/rsn-manifesto2015.pdf>

Removing a library from the heart of a community is a contribution to diminishing the economic viability of small towns when we should be doing the opposite. This has been recognised by local businesses in Church Stretton and was referred to in one of our press releases (Appendix 1 to this section of our report)

Shropshire Council is a member of the Rural Services Network (RSN) and is committed to protecting rural services.

Pursuing the closure of the library at the heart of the community is a clear example of a local authority saying one thing and doing the opposite. It is time for Shropshire Council to protect and enhance local services, footfall and rural economic viability and not pursue policies that damage these outcomes.

Appendix

Press Release

Immediate

17th February 2015

Church Stretton businesses back the campaign to keep the library where it is

The campaign to keep the library where it is has received a boost from the backing of local businesses. The library support group has argued strongly for the library to remain where it is for a variety of reasons including keeping as many Church Stretton facilities and destinations in the town as possible. The many hundreds of people we have spoken to, the 1100 people who signed the petition and the 203 people who turned up at the public meeting on 4th February have all expressed support for keeping the library where it is because it is more convenient and links in with their use of shops, cafes, GP surgery and a large variety of destinations.

The overwhelming support for retention by residents of Church Stretton has now been strengthened by the views of our business community who also support retention of the library on the current site.

John Gott (Berry's café) said:

"A market town centre stands like a house of cards: the whole much greater than its individual parts. If one of the more significant parts - in this case the library - is taken away then the whole becomes less attractive."

Ros Ephraim of Burway books said:

"The Church Stretton Community needs its Library Hub in the centre of the town"

John Vine of Newsworld on Sandford Avenue said:

"The library should stay where it is. This is important for users of all ages and for businesses in the town centre and is good for the community as a whole"

Jane van Doesburg of the High St delicatessen said:

"The proposed relocation of our town library would compromise its value within the community"

Commenting on the support of the business community, Felicity Thomas, a spokesperson for the support group said:

"One of the many delights of living in Church Stretton is the wide range of independent, high quality, retail outlets and cafes in the centre. These businesses add a great deal to our quality of life and to the tourist economy of this town and we want to see them thrive. Once we start "unplugging" important facilities from our town we damage the mutual benefits that all our facilities and businesses gain from the presence of each other. If the library leaves the town this will damage our economy and its small businesses and that is not acceptable. We are delighted that businesses support our campaign and we will support them in any way we can."

Lack of answers to questions, misleading information, defective consultation

The material provided to the public for the Library Consultation is seriously flawed and does not provide a secure basis for decision making.

First, the documents concerning the Council's preferred option of relocating the public library service at the school.

- 1. The school's brochure, which forms the basis of the Council's proposal to move the public library to the school cannot be used as a reference point in this phase of consultation, and thus invalidates the entire exercise.**

On 3rd March 2015, in an email to Bernard Ford, Cathy Thomas made this statement on behalf of the school:

"Our document was an outline proposal. It is a working document that is evolving as we become fully appraised of the emerging issues and options. Therefore to base your response on it as it stands at the moment would not be appropriate.

Our document may also include answers to questions we are asking - some of which may be related to statements made by the Library Support group.

We will be clarifying - as far as we can - the specific points you raise on space; staffing; and use of the mini-bus. I say as far as we can because as I am sure you will appreciate the issue of staffing in particular has sensitive and confidential considerations attached to it. Staffing will be confirmed on any adoption of the project.

We intend to submit our document -in any revised form - as part of our response to the consultation. I repeat therefore that to base some of your arguments on the document as it stands at the moment may not be appropriate."

We find it quite astonishing that the prime source of information on the Council's preferred option is making this retraction of its own document as a source of information for response just 13 days before the end of this second consultation phase. This situation has not been made known to the general public, many of whom have completed their response forms on the basis of material now judged by its own creator as not an appropriate basis for comment.

We contend that this is unacceptable, unless another phase of the consultation is held, based on whatever information the school may be planning to release, and refer you to Woolf's guidance as follows: "Changes mid process/new options: If the public body fundamentally changes its proposal mid-process or is minded to proceed in a way which was not part of the proposal consulted upon, then basic fairness may require it to re-consult or consult afresh on the changed proposal."

2. Correspondence between leading school governor Alan Fox and ex-governor Roger Wilson, CBE concerning misleading assertions by Mr Fox in support of the school's proposal in Church Stretton community magazine "Focus" February edition (readership 60% of Church Stretton households).

Roger Wilson 24th February 2015 to Alan Fox.

*"Dear Alan,
.....I read your letter about the Library development with interest, and then with some dismay when I reached the sentence "There are three dedicated library staff already employed by the school including one qualified school librarian."*

I know for a fact this is not the case. I know I have not been a governor for the last 12 years but I am in touch with the school and the library in particular because of Sheelagh's past involvement.

The truth is that the school librarian is not qualified as a librarian. She is paid on a clerical grade - a fact we agreed as governors in the 1990s when Jean Brayford ceased to be the teacher in charge of the library. She also works 0.8FTE. Cover is provided by Resources staff as and when required, not on a scheduled basis.

Your statement is deceptive, although I accept there is no deliberate attempt at deception. The trouble with statements like this is that they rebound. There will be those in the community who see the statement as a clear promise. It suggests that the school library currently carries a staffing budget of about £50,000 per annum (maybe more - I am out of touch with rates) and will carry that forward into the new structure if the proposed idea is implemented. The reality is more like one quarter of that sum implying that to meet the new staffing commitment the school will have to find a substantial sum of new money to meet it.

*The staffing case is however complicated because the school's responsibility for safeguarding children in an area shared with the public in an unregulated way implies that more staff are needed at any rate. As it would be irrational to re-site Resources from the main building there will no longer be readily available on-site cover.
Because of your remark this issue now needs clear statements of policy from the school. My understanding is that school collaboration over the library is conditional on no additional unfounded budgetary demands for the school. If that position has changed we need to know and a statement from the Chair would be appropriate.*

If it has not changed you should publicly withdraw the statement made in the letter to Focus."

Following this Alan Fox has submitted a correction for publication in the April edition of Focus which will be distributed some two weeks after the end of the consultation period.

Misleading statements on behalf of the school will therefore have been in the public domain for the entire period of the consultation, again undermining the credibility of the process.

On 02/03/2015 Roger Wilson provided the follow-up information below:

“I am very happy for my email to be quoted or used in full. However, anything more than a summary of Alan's response should have his explicit agreement. I think a fair summary would be something along the lines of:

In reply to Mr Wilson's email Mr Fox accepted that he had made a mistake by not double-checking facts which his own observations had led him to. He confirmed that the situation is as described in Mr Wilson's email. He is planning a further letter to Focus to set matters straight.

As a result of the exchange of emails it is fair to conclude, until the school says otherwise, that:

The school is able to relocate one member of staff who currently acts as school librarian.

She is on a clerical grade, employed 0.8FTE during term time alone.

She has no library qualifications.

No other school employees will be assigned under current plans although governors have the power to redistribute budgets.

Without budget being made available to permit new employment:

The library would have to be closed to the public when pupils are in the building.

The library would have to be closed to the public when the school librarian takes a break.

The library would have to be closed one day a week to non-school users.

There is no staff cover in the event of illness.

The library would be closed during school holidays.

The school governors would have to make specific decisions to change this situation. It is not within the power of the head, local councillors or local authority officers to do so, even if they can provide the necessary funding. “

Roger Wilson CBE

3. Further misleading information published in the Shropshire Star on Saturday 14th February concerning Church Stretton Library Staff.

As the Support Group entered into extensive correspondence with Council staff and elected members on this matter we will not go into detail here. We would point out, however, that because of Council recalcitrance in this matter, the misleading statements were not corrected in the newspaper until the publication of Cllr. Charmley's letter on 27th February, following a complaint to the Chief Executive. **Again, we take an extremely serious view of the delay involved in providing accurate information to the public.**

Now we move on to the proposal contained in the February 2nd document as "A reduced service in the current building". It is our contention that this is presented in such an unsubstantiated and biased way as to make any intelligent assessment of its viability impossible without further information and independent research.

On issuing questions about the figures and statements in this option, the following became clear:

- a) no costings had been obtained by the Council to provide likely income from rental of any part of the current library building. At a Support Group meeting with Kate Garner and Lee Chapman, (Shire Hall 25.2.15) when we queried the failure to obtain accurate rental costings, we were invited to go and find this information for ourselves. We contend that in a proper consultation the onus is on the Council to provide such information to the public in the documents circulated for comment.
- b) no rationale exists for the Council's proposal to rent out the main library area as opposed to the two existing office spaces: "*there are no definite thoughts on this at the moment.*" (Council response to question posed on 25.2.15)

- c) no information has been provided by the Council to explain substantial variations in staff costs between current hours and suggested hours of 18.5 per week. The council's response that "*We're not going to answer this question as we have agreed that going into the details of staffing/salary costs to this level is not appropriate*" **fails to address the substance of this enquiry, and hampers public attempts to build on this option.**
- d) Our enquiry about the disproportionate distribution of service costs in this option is explained by the Council as "*worst case scenario*" and again this response has no discernible basis.
- e) The exclusion of storage space in the current library compared with its inclusion in the school option again is indicative of the bias visible throughout this "option". The Council response that "*Existing library storage space considered as an operational detail not relevant to the public consultation*" gives no justification for this withholding of information.

Again turning to Woolf, he states "The obligation is to let those who have a potential interest in the subject matter know in clear terms what the proposal is and exactly why it is under positive consideration, telling them enough (which may be a good deal) to enable them to make an intelligent response."

We contend that the presentation of this option fails this test. No attempt has been made by the Council to enable constructive consideration of the "Keep it where it is" option as a basis for the development of alternative proposals by a member of the public working on the February 2nd 2015 consultation documents.

In conclusion, with only a few days remaining to the end of the current consultation period, we consider that the inadequate and constantly changing material put forward by the supporters of the school option, much of it not available to the public supposedly being consulted, is not a safe or satisfactory basis on which to make a decision.

Public opinion (report on our market stall activities, the petition, the public meeting and the drop-in)

In December 2014, more than 40 people gathered at the Silvester Horne Institute to present their questions and concerns about the proposal to the Town Council Meeting. Since then, opposition to the School library site has grown considerably, involving town residents with a wide range of ages and background, and those in outlying areas who rely on the town's facilities.

The Petition to retain the Service in its current building was launched at CSLSG's Market Stall in the Market Square in December, with a second Market stall in January, and on both Market Days, people queued to add their signatures. Members of the Chamber of Trade joined the Support Group campaign, with the petition placed in local shops and cafes. Over a thousand people responded to the straightforward premise of the Petition – to retain the library on its present site and to abandon plans to move it to the School on Shrewsbury Road. The Petition, containing 1,102 signatures, was presented to Full Council at Shirehall on 26th February. Twenty Supporters were able to travel to Shrewsbury for the morning meeting, many saying they were also representing friends, family and neighbours unable to get there.

In January, a Walk to the School from Church Stretton town centre took place, when people tried out the journey carrying their library books, which were weighed before setting off. Eight hardback books weigh 14 lbs. (6.3kg.), six paperbacks weigh 4lbs. (1.8kg.). The book-weight and distance involved, a return journey of a mile from the Market Square, will impact not least on the Home Delivery volunteers.

On 4th February the Support Group organised a Public Meeting in the Silvester Horne Institute, attended by over 200 people. The Group presented detailed analysis of documents from the first "Consultation", gave councillors, council officers and the School Head the opportunity to respond, and then opened the debate for more questions and comments from the audience. The audience rejection of the School scheme was overwhelming, and the Council much criticised for the poor quality information offered in the proposal documents.

On 5th March, the Support Group held a 'Drop-In' at the Silvester Horne Institute from 2.00-6.00 p.m., with displays showing suggestions for viable alternative options. Several residents, as well as members of the Support Group, had offered ideas, and there was an interesting uniformity of solutions from the contributors. The Support Group Committee answered questions and listened to concerns. A special display board was available for people to add comments and further suggestions. A Straw Poll was conducted to indicate which of the suggestions was most favoured to be taken forward.

The display also featured the work of the Support Group in exposing the astonishing and disgraceful incompetence in the compilation of Shropshire Council's second Consultation's published statistics which provoked both anger and disgust

The Drop-In attracted 124 people. As an example, at 3.30pm there were 49 people in the display area, reading the information and writing their comments.

A summary of the contributions made by local residents at the drop-in session held on 5th March 2015

Setting up a Charitable Trust received the most votes in the Straw Poll (55), with many commenting that a charitable trust could receive gift-aided donations. A Community Interest Company received the next highest vote (44), and there were suggestions that a combination of Trust and CIC would achieve most for the Library, getting the benefits of both. These two options were seen as providing a firm financial footing on which to develop and grow the library service. It is recognised that these are complicated issues which need careful consideration but these are viable options which received strong public support.

Moving the Visitor Information Service out of its present space, releasing the room for either rental to a tenant or for the library to use for income-generation, by holding events/ regular group letting/evening classes, was also popular. A volunteer-run Town Museum (charging an entrance fee), in the VIC room was suggested as a tourist attraction, as was a cafe. Some if not all of the income-generating activities could be run on days when the library itself is closed, providing income throughout the week.

During discussions, there was strong support for: *'Keep the building. Strip the service down to minimum and build up after a period of revenue seeking and income generation.'*

Raising the Council Tax below the referendum limit received many favourable comments, and was seen as a way of distributing the load more fairly across the county, while some wanted the County's reserves to be called upon, especially given the poor rates of interest on the county's investments of £126m.

A retired professionally qualified librarian, new to the debate, asked about the qualifications of the school library staff, and what would be transferred to the school location e.g. the issue system, the inter-library lending facilities, professional supervision. She commented that Church Stretton Library is receiving a financial cutback which is out of proportion to other branch libraries. She stressed *'It is important that the public library remains a public library and not a school library that the public are allowed into. Will the school 'librarian' report to the school head as the line manager or to a chartered librarian at a main library/county HQ? If it is the former rather than the latter then the ethos and ideals of a public library rather than a school library may be lost. Is the school librarian professionally qualified i.e. a library school graduate who also has public library service experience?'*

She commented *'There does not seem to be provision for quiet study space, hard copy materials e.g. newspapers. This is an important function of public libraries to provide a space for quite often less affluent members of the community who do not have space at home.'* She expressed concerns about Governance. *'At the moment the library is under local authority control. The local authority is democratically elected. The proposal takes the library into the control of the school which is outside LEA control and is run like a business with 'income generation' becoming increasingly important. The people of Church Stretton surely have a right to veto this proposal'*. Like many others she was prepared to see some reduction in hours and some staffing to keep the service in the present building so that it would be there when funding is increased, looking ahead even if only as far as May 2015 and possibly a new political regime.

Options that will deliver budget savings whilst retaining the library in its current premises

Church Stretton Library Support Group have considered the responses to the previous 'community conversation ' and the second consultation, via a hugely well-attended public meeting that they organised on 4th February and a more recent information-giving and gathering event. In many cases residents of Church Stretton have sought out members of the support group, to offer their thoughts and opinions. On 5th March, an exhibition was held, explaining other options and showing revised and **ACCURATE** statistics. Many respondents were able to identify viable options, to discuss and add detail to these, and offer their thoughts and ideas to people who actually listened.

Clearly, the majority of the community in Church Stretton wish to keep the library in its current building. We are all very aware of the parlous state of public spending, and whilst we do not agree with reducing space and hours at the Church Street library, if this must happen at the beginning of the next phase, then a fair and proportional budget cut should be clearly indicated across all 22 libraries in the county.

These are some of the options that should have been democratically considered at the beginning of the process that Shropshire Council embarked upon eighteen months ago. The options fall into two stages:

STAGE ONE.

- Initially, consideration could be given to some possible reduction in staff hours. This should be done collaboratively, and only after detailed planning with staff and CSLSG. We would then envisage staff hours recovering and extending as the service grew. Staff have also identified improvements in library processes that could lead to efficiencies.

- The Public Library remains in the largest part of the building and VTIC stock and literature is moved into the main body of the library. The library is then awarded whatever fee would have been available to other agencies, and tourist information would stay where people expect to find it.

- The area that VTIC was based in would then be made available for tenancy or as a multi-purpose area, used by many agencies, becoming an income-generating base for the library.

With staff collaboration, some internal reorganisation could allow a freeing up of the area that is currently the computer suite.

We have taken local advice on commercial tenancy of these areas and the estimates are as follows:

VTIC area rental: £3000 pa

Computer Suite: £2500 pa

We recognise that commercial tenancy may be a “safe” route to a small income, but there will be many other income-generating ideas that we feel would offer more. These would include collaborative work with other statutory agencies and more community groups: U3A group hire, creative writing groups, and Arts Festival events. Many more suggestions and comments on library usage and income generation are included later in the full document.

- Another income generation possibility is currently under discussion, this being the installation of a train-ticket machine. This could give a substantial income - between £5000 and £10,000 p.a.. and we envisage could be staffed by volunteers from a specialist Rail Users group.

As Shropshire Council offered only one option when the community was eventually presented with plans for the library service, CSLSG has had to do this preliminary option analysis - and in a very short time period.

We now wish the Council to agree to a plan to keep the Library where it is during a period of time while we develop and implement the plans outlined in Stage One of our Options document. At the same time, Church Stretton Library Support Group and other supporters will work to offer our Stage Two plan to put the Library on a long-term financially sustainable basis, with a new structure forming and signing an S.L.A. with the Council.

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STAGE TWO.

Preliminary Option Analysis suggests that for the library service to be delivered in a Locally Commissioned format via the School is not seen as workable or representative. Following various meetings and exhibitions, Stage Two options are:

- For CSLSG to work collaboratively with Shropshire Council on plans to develop making the library a Charitable Trust or a Community Investment Company - or a combination of these two.

It needs to be acknowledged that these proposals would take time, but also that work has already begun, and further, experienced personnel have been identified to help with these proposals. Given that the council have had eighteen months ' head start ' to develop and offer their options, CSLSG, supported by the community, would hope for and expect sufficient time to clarify and detail these proposals, after the second consultation period ends and BEFORE the portfolio holder makes any decision. We would hope then to be in a position to sign a Service Level Agreement with Shropshire Council.

OPTION FOR A REDUCED SERVICE AND INCOME GENERATION

We do not agree with the detail in the “Consultation document” and have queried the Controllable Budget staffing figures which do not compare with the figures given for the current service.

Current service staffing costs shown equate to £20.95 per hour over 32.5 hours per week for 52 weeks. Using the same calculation, the document’s figures given for a service reduced to 18.5 hour per week equates to £28.78 per hour. There has been no explanation for this.

PREFERRED OPTION

Our **Preferred Option** would be for the library to be kept in its current building. We do not agree with the reduced space option given but would acknowledge that if cuts have to be made a fair and proportionate budget cut would be to reduce by 1/3 including all 22 libraries.

Our Option would be for a **22hour a week** service in the **127 sq.m. space** which, using the figures given for a 32.5 hour per week service, would cost:

Staffing costs: £23,967

Building and Services: £8,725

Total: £32,692

The lettings income for 2013/14 is given as £4,142.

This figure would reduce the costs to a **TOTAL £28,550 (only £865 more than the Council’s reduced option which drastically reduces the floor space and hours!)**

However, lettings income is increasing and library staff are working unpaid to make this happen.

A reduction of space by 56sq m. (i.e. the VIC and Computer room only) would provide an opportunity for letting and income generation to reduce the £28,550 still further and also make use of the library space over 7 days each week.

We would expect the lettings to be for complementary services e.g. arts events, youth cafe, railway ticket sales and perhaps work with the Academy to assist student in library use and research.

Staff and Volunteers are prepared to work collaboratively with the Council to do this.

Church Stretton Library Statistics

The figures given on p.3 for **VISITS**, i.e. **footfall** are **INCORRECT for the years**

2009 – 2012 (the first 3 columns)

This should have been realised when the document was compiled.

There is a “clicker” at the door which is activated when anyone walks in – and out. Therefore, the daily visit figure is, in fact, half the number of clicks – because people who walk in usually also walk out!

VISITS should read:

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Difference
32819	44318	38933	38663	36588	+11.5%

This is very different from the -44% shown in the ESIIA upon which respondents are expected to form their opinions.

Also the **REQUEST** figure for 2010/11 is **wrong**. It should be 2332, not 153.

The % change is correct.

CURRENT USE

Having obtained the more recent figures to enable us to compare Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec) in 2013/14 with Quarter 3 in 2014/15 this clearly shows a picture of **INCREASED USE**:

Library use is changing. Overall book borrowing is decreasing, as it is nationally, but Church Stretton library is following the trends and Computer Time and Event Attendance is **INCREASING** dramatically:

	Q3 2013/14	Q3 2014/15	Difference
VISITS	8,928	9,926	+15%
COMPUTER TIME (minutes)	48,764	52,941	+7.9%
EVENT ATTENDANCE	124	267	+53%

In the same period Total Loans were down 12.5%, Items Requested were down 1.9%, again reflecting the national trend to greater computer and ebook use. The Active Borrowers recorded were down 1.9% but it has been observed that families often only use one ticket and do not take items out on tickets for each member of the household.

These figures show a greater **INCREASE** in overall use rather than a downward trend which the ESIIA mistakenly shows. The staff are encouraging individual family members to take out items on their own tickets which will give a clearer picture of Active Users.

Borrowing does not complete the picture. Computer Use and Event Attendance are well up which indicates how Church Stretton is responding to national changes.

Visitors often come in to use the Local History resources and use reference material or read newspapers and do not borrow any books. Last year about 80 Thursday-afternoon Family/Local History users requested help with research – most did not borrow “books” but used the resources available and computer time together with assistance from volunteers. This would most certainly not happen if the stock were to be re-located to the Academy.

A suggested revenue generation idea

It is the view of the Library Support Group that the library in its current location is a very valuable community hub and asset and has a great deal of potential to increase its already large contribution to our community and to the economic viability and vitality of the town. We have reviewed a number of revenue generation ideas all of which depend absolutely on keeping the library where it is and all of which have the objective of contributing revenue to the library and assisting the Council in achieving its budget cuts. One of these ideas is discussed below.

Selling train tickets

Church Stretton does not have a place where we can talk to a real person, buy rail tickets and get really good advice. Our station has approx 110,000 “entries and exits” p.a. and for a small town is very well used. The ticket machine on Platform 1 is frequently out of order and does not sell the best value tickets or give advice on how to plan the journey at a lower cost. It cannot even be used to pick up tickets ordered and paid for on the internet because it is out of order so often.

The legislation covering the privatised rail system allows anyone to set up a ticket selling operation. We also have a very enthusiastic group of rail users and rail activists in Church Stretton who would be able to volunteer as very knowledgeable ticket sales representatives. The ticket sales desk would be based in the library, staffed by volunteers, incur no running costs and generate several thousand pounds of revenue p.a. depending on the volume of ticket sales and the commission on those sales. We are in contact with the main organisations that regulate this business (ATOC and ORR) and a meeting has been arranged in London to discuss this proposal on 20th March.

The retail commission on ticket sales is listed in the table below.

Retail Commission rates for selling rail tickets

ATOC's intended future commission rates 2015-2019

Market	Channel /Threshold	Third Party Sales	Inter-TOC Sales
Public internet	Non-Season Ticket sales	5.0%	5.0%
	Season Ticket sales	2.0%	2.0%
Public telesales	All sales	9.0%	9.0%
TMC/TA and TOC BTS sales	All sales	3.0%	3.0%
Business Account Facility (Public internet sites)	Sales up to £50k	5.0%	N/A
	Sales over £50k	3.0%	
Station and On-train sales	Ticket Offices, Ticket Vending Machines and On-Train	Non-Season Tickets	9.0%
		Season Tickets	2.0%
International sales (from 1 Oct 2014)	BritRail Passes	9.0% until 31 March 2017, then 8% until 31 March 2019	N/A
	Domestic point to point fares	8.0%	

Overall Conclusions

We do not approve of the massive cuts in Council budgets that are undermining community life in Shropshire but we will play a full and proportionate role in assisting the Council to make those cuts. We do this because we take the view that we must limit the damage that is being done nationally and locally so that we retain the capacity to restore public services and community life to the levels we can expect in one of the richest countries in the world. The current period of decline in public services and progressive reduction of Council spending on public services will come to an end and we are determined that we will still have the basics in place and can ensure that Church Stretton thrives economically, socially and as an outstanding community of national significance in its many examples of community activities, facilities and citizen involvement in delivering a high quality of life.

To achieve all this we need the Council's help. We need the Council to withdraw its proposal to move the library and give us 12 months to develop all our ideas, set up new structures and demonstrate that we can match the budget savings that are associated with closing the library in its current premises. The Library Support Group has the critical mass to do this but we do not have time if the Council chooses to ignore the overwhelming support we have been given by the residents of Church Stretton.

We have shown that the plan to relocate our library is fundamentally flawed. The Council has failed to give consultees clear, unambiguous evidence on which to base decisions. The Council has conducted one consultation that was subsequently redesignated as a "community conversation" and failed to report the most important result it should have reported which was the number of respondents who wanted the library to stay where it is and the number who did not or did not know. The Council then, at our request, initiated a second consultation but failed to link it with clear information and repeatedly told us that the information we wanted would only become available after the decision was made. The Council has failed to work up options that could deliver budget savings at the same time as keeping the library where it is. The Council has failed to demonstrate that its' plans for Church Stretton meet basic standards of evidence-based decision taking and has failed to demonstrate that the Church Stretton plan is a fair and proportionate element in a Shropshire wide plan to achieve £1.3 million budget savings in a way that is moderated by the need to rural proof the County and protect older age groups. The Council has failed to show that its' decision making is fair and proportionate across the county. We still do not know how the £1.3 million budget cut will be allocated across 22 libraries and 4 mobiles and it is not acceptable that the Council presses on with its plan for Church Stretton without demonstrating its county wide strategy for dealing with library cuts.

The Council has failed to follow the good examples of more community-minded local authorities investigating new models of providing library services in an age of budget cuts and austerity. Both Suffolk and Kent Councils have engaged with new models of providing library services including the same ideas we have arrived at in our own discussions e.g. the charitable trust idea. We very much regret the lack of initiative within our Council and the lack of engagement with citizens in the joint production of new models of service delivery.

In spite of all this we want to work with the Council to achieve an outcome that assists it with its budget cuts and to make sure that we maintain and develop community facilities in this town. That work continues. All that remains to make sure the democratic process works to a high standard, people are listened to and robust options are developed, is for the Council to abandon the relocation plan and give us 12 months to demonstrate that the library can stay where it is, develop new models of service delivery and deliver proportionate budget cuts.

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