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Albrighton Parish Council

Consultation on the future delivery of the Albrighton library service and Customer Service Point

This consultation outlines proposals concerning the future delivery of the library service and customer service point from Shropshire Council to Albrighton Parish Council.

Introduction – what is this consultation about?

Shropshire Council is working with partners to re-design face-to-face customer focused services, and to create places where residents can easily access services and get information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community. This approach will help us to create and maintain resilient communities at a time of reducing public service budgets and increasing pressure on services due to the changing demographics of the county.

Important elements of the resilient communities approach are the creation and development of community hubs, places where the health and well-being of individuals and communities will be supported by the provision of advice, information and signposting at an early stage.

Our vision is that traditional face-to-face services will be delivered by town and parish councils or community enterprises that are active within those communities. Town and parish councils are the first tier of local government. They provide communities with a democratic voice and a structure for taking community action. A community enterprise is the same as a social enterprise, i.e. an organisation trading for social purpose with any profits reinvested rather than going to shareholders and provides benefits to a particular local neighbourhood or community and is an organisation run for the community. These enterprises are best placed to utilise their links into communities and therefore maximise every contact that is made with them.

Our approach is also linked to making savings, and to working to ensure that we find ways to continue to deliver high quality services that provide positive outcomes for individuals and communities, but at a lower cost.

Over the last year Shropshire Council and Albrighton Parish Council have been discussing and developing opportunities for new ways of delivering and improving services in Albrighton on the management of the library service and customer service point and the re-location of the parish council offices.

Shropshire Council's preferred proposal for the future delivery of the library service and customer service point in Albrighton is to transfer the responsibility for their day-to-day management to Albrighton Parish Council. This would result in the existing services continuing to be delivered in their current location at Station Road. Shropshire Council's library service would continue to provide the books, library management system and the support of a librarian based in Bridgnorth. The library would be run under an agreed Service Level Agreement between Shropshire Council and Albrighton Parish Council. The existing staff would become employees of the Parish Council. Opening hours would be reduced from the current 23.5 to

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21.5. This decision is based on evidence that not enough people are using the library between 5.00 and 7.00pm on Fridays to justify keeping it open.

The proposal includes extending the opening hours of Customer Services for local residents to access Shropshire Council services via a free-phone facility or to do their business on-line via a dedicated public computer. Library and Parish Council staff will be on hand for anyone who needs help.

Supported by some relatively minor changes to the internal spaces of the building Albrighton Parish Council would also move its existing rented offices into the library.

Both Shropshire Council and Albrighton Parish Council believe that this approach provides the best way to improve financial efficiency of the existing services (for both organisations), to sustain them over the long term and to develop them in a way that best meets the needs of the local community.

The second proposal included in the consultation document is that Albrighton Library continues to be run by Shropshire Council. Under this proposal and to make the same savings as the preferred option, the hours that the library is open would be reduced from 23.5 per week to 16 hours per week.

Shropshire Council is now seeking responses to these proposals. No formal decision has yet been made and there is an opportunity for alternative proposals to be made. The information we receive through the consultation will be used to inform any decision made on the future delivery of the library service.

When considering these proposals it will be helpful to bear in mind Shropshire Council's vision for community hubs and the role of libraries in the future, and also what the Council's statutory duties to deliver libraries are.

A set of **Frequently Asked Questions** is available alongside this consultation document.

The potential impact of the preferred proposal on users of these services and assets, particularly those who might be impacted more by any change, is assessed through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment.

This consultation will run from **Friday 23rd October to Friday 4 December 2015**. Completed forms can be returned to Albrighton Library. Comments can also be submitted online by going to www.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved and searching for Albrighton Library Consultation.

To take part, please read through the proposals first, and then complete our short survey.

The results of the consultation will be collated, analysed and considered by Shropshire Council and used to inform any decision making on the future delivery of the library and other services in Albrighton.

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Background to existing services in Albrighton

Albrighton Parish Council

Albrighton Parish Council is currently located at The Red House, Albrighton, WV7 3LU within rented accommodation.

The Parish Council is the first tier of local government for the area. It provides the community with a democratic voice and a structure for taking community action. It's activities fall into three main categories to meet local needs; representing the local community, delivering services to meet local needs, and improving quality of life and community well-being. These existing powers were recently strengthened by powers contained in the Localism Act 2011.

Albrighton Library

Albrighton Library is located at Station Road, Station, Albrighton, WV7 3QH and is owned and managed by Shropshire Council. The library offers the following services:

- free membership for all
- the lending of adult books, audio books and DVDs
- a children's library area and range of books for children
- a collection of books for teenagers
- a selection of books in large print
- regular exchange of books with other libraries
- request service - obtaining books from other libraries requested by customers
- free access to public computers for library members
- trained staff to issue and return books, answer enquiries, help people to choose books and use computers
- Online services on the library website for use 24/7
- regular events such as story-times, rhyme-times, class visits from local schools, reading groups, author talks-
- space for meetings of community groups, reading events, children's story-times and activities and class visits from local schools
- information and advice about other local services and community groups.

The present library opening hours are:

- Monday 2pm to 5pm
 - Tuesday 10am to 1pm, 2pm to 5pm
 - Wednesday 2pm – 5pm
 - Friday 10am to 1pm, 2pm to 7pm
 - Saturday 9.30am to 1pm
- Total = 23.5 hours per week

In common with other libraries across the county and beyond library usage has been declining:

	Visits	Active borrowers	Loans	Computer use / hours
2010/11	29,758	1,378	36,938	1,415
2011/12	27,435	1,352	33,858	1,405
2012/13	25,921	1,245	31,666	967
2013/14	23,459	1,137	28,308	1,442
2014/15	20,357	1,066	25,824	1,261

Disabled car parking is available on site and there is also free public parking nearby.

The direct running cost for Shropshire Council of managing the library is £27,800 per annum.

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Albrighton Customer Service Point

The Customer Service Point is located within the library at Station Road. The Customer Service Point provides signposting to a range of services including:

- council and public information and services
- community information to help with your everyday queries on health and care, money, leisure activities, what's on and much more
- specialist advice sessions
- free on-line access to information and services
- free-phone access to council services.

The Customer Service Point opening hours are the same as the Library.

Usage figures have been declining in recent years:

	Annually	Weekly
2010/11	1056	20
2011/12	943	18
2012/13	1204	24
2013/14	1008	20
2014/15	596	11

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Option One (our preferred option) – The transfer of assets and the management of the library to Albrighton Parish Council

Shropshire Council will transfer the day to day running of Albrighton Library and Customer Service Point to Albrighton Parish Council, who will provide the same range of library and Customer Service Point services currently available under a renewable 3 year Service Level Agreement. The library and Customer Service Point will remain in its existing location at Station Road, Albrighton. Opening hours would be reduced from the current 23.5 to 21.5. This decision is based on evidence that not enough people are using the library between 5.00 and 7.00 on Fridays to justify keeping it open.

Some alterations to the Albrighton Library building will be made to create office space for Albrighton Parish Council, providing the opportunity for Albrighton Parish Council to become more visible and thereby more accessible to the public. This will provide the opportunity to refurbish the library with movable shelving and to create a more modern flexible space.

Support for the customer service provision would be improved to align with the full library opening hours. The Customer Service function for Shropshire Council and Albrighton Parish Council will become more integrated and seamless for the public while still maintaining sufficient space for library services.

This approach will provide the best chance for the development of the library and associated information and advice services to reflect local community circumstances and for the library services to be retained and sustained into the future.

It is important for consultees to understand that the individual elements within this proposal are interdependent and whilst comments can be made on the different elements they must be considered as one when consultees state whether they agree with the proposal or not.

Anticipated savings to Shropshire Council from these proposals - £7,950 pa

Anticipated savings to Albrighton Parish Council from these proposals – approximately £930 pa

1. Do you agree with Option 1?

Yes

No

If you answered no please give your reasons why here...

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Option Two – Library and assets stay under the management of Shropshire Council

Albrighton Library will continue to be run by Shropshire Council's library service with the hours that the library is staffed reduced from the current 23.5 hours per week to 16 hours per week.

However, as with option 1 support for local residents to access Shropshire Council services will be provided via a free-phone facility and a dedicated public computer but for fewer hours. The library staff will be on hand for anyone who needs help.

There will be no internal changes to the building and Albrighton Parish council office would remain in its current location.

Within this option there is a recognition that further financial pressure may come on the library and the on-going review of provision will be necessary.

Anticipated savings to Shropshire Council from these proposals - £7,950 pa

Anticipated savings to Albrighton Parish Council from these proposals - Nil

Do you agree with Option 2?

Yes

No

If you answered no please give your reasons why here...

3. Please indicate if there are other alternatives Shropshire Council should consider for the delivery of a library and other assets in Albrighton, which would assist the council in meeting its required outcomes in reducing costs and delivering a sustainable library and other services.

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If you would like to be kept informed about this work as it progresses, please complete your name and contact email address below.

Name.....

Email address.....