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Libraries Consultation 2014 Analysis of Results

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The libraries consultation took place between 16th July 2014 and 7th October 2014. There were a total of 4,255 responses to the survey, which was statistically robust, as well as feedback received via letters, emails, organised events and a young people's survey.

Overall Views on the Proposals

31% of respondents agreed that the current proposals would safeguard the future of Staffordshire's Library Service while 34% disagreed. The main areas of concern raised were related to the proposed 'Library Local'. The principal concern related to the availability of and/or the skills of volunteers. There was subsequent concern that libraries would close if the County Council was unable to mitigate the impact of any such short-fall.

Overall Views on the proposed Library Categories

The proposals offered three categories of library; Library Extra, Library Core and Library Local. 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that libraries had been allocated to the correct categories and felt that services would be improved. 34% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, feeling that certain libraries had been allocated incorrectly, that the geographical spread (of 'Library Extra' in particular) should be reconsidered whilst expressing concerns that it would not be feasible for 'Library Local's' to be run entirely by volunteers.

There were notable variations in levels of agreement between the districts with over twice as many respondents from Lichfield agreeing/strongly agreeing that libraries had been allocated to the correct categories, compared to respondents in South Staffordshire.

Library Extra

More than half (53%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the 'Library Extra' proposal. Those in agreement felt that this proposal would ensure an improved service in these libraries and that it made sense to locate these libraries in the larger towns. However, some respondents felt there should be more of this type of library offered in Staffordshire, as the proposed sites were not sufficiently spread out around the county. Many thought Stafford should have a 'Library Extra' as the county town.

Library Core

More than half (53%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the 'Library Core' proposal. Respondents who commented in agreement with the 'Library Core' proposal felt that the proposal was similar to current provision, that it was reasonable, sufficient, sensible, the best option out of the three and the proposal most likely to safeguard libraries in the future.

Some agreed that sharing facilities made sense and that having the flexibility to evolve libraries to meet local needs would be valuable. However others felt that careful consideration of which partners to share facilities with would be essential to ensure that the fundamental purpose of libraries was preserved.

The proposed revision to opening hours was generally supported by older residents, however other residents suggested that opening hours should include weekends, evenings and earlier morning options as well as enhanced opening times during school holidays.

Library Local

Less than a third (30%) of overall respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the 'Library Local' proposal. Lichfield District was the only district where a greater proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal than disagreed/strongly disagreed.

The main concern with this proposal was that libraries could not be run by volunteers alone. Respondents felt they would not have the necessary knowledge and expertise to conduct the role in the same manner as qualified and paid librarians currently do. It was also felt that volunteers were subject to other pressures which could compromise their role within the libraries. Consequently, the most common suggestion was the need for access to a paid member of staff. It was felt that this, combined with support from volunteers could provide a workable solution.

Community Led Libraries

Respondents were asked to what extent they might want to be involved in helping to run a local community led library in their area. Approximately 20% of respondents said they might want to be involved in helping to run a local community library 'a great deal' (4%) or 'a little' (16%) however the majority (63%) did not want to help at all.

The overriding motivation from those who registered their interest in supporting community led libraries was the desire to preserve the service and prevent closure, although access to a wide range of information, advice and support would be essential. This was followed by a need for more information about the library. The support of Staffordshire County Council was viewed as vital in the early stages.

The most popular option was to contract a local community group/organisation to lead and develop the library offer.

Library Plus Online Services

Almost two thirds (62%) of respondents identified that they had used the Staffordshire's Library Online services, although only just over one third (34%) use it once a month or more frequently. Of the respondents who do not use the service, many did not have access to a computer/internet connection or preferred to read physical books and have personal contact via the libraries. Some however, were just not aware of the services. Some who currently do not use the service stated that they would not use it, regardless of any changes. Suggestions for improvements that would encourage greater usage included making the service more user friendly as well as improving and updating available resources.

Impacts on Residents and Communities

Overall 24% of respondents stated that the proposals would have a 'significant effect' on them or their organisation, with a further 29% stating they would have 'some' effect. 30% of respondents stated that the proposals would not affect them at all.

The most common concern was that the implementation of the proposals could lead to reduced access to local services with consequential impacts across the community. This would be a concern if there were not enough volunteers for Library Local. Respondents were concerned that this would lead to eventual closures and it would be more difficult or impossible for them to travel to alternative venues. Concern was also raised in relation to the proposed changes to opening times. Whilst comments suggest that the changes would not affect older respondents, it would however be an issue for those who work full-time.

Evening openings would be preferable for these people to enable them to fit library visits around their working commitments.

Community Impact Analysis

A community impact analysis has been conducted to look at whether the proposals are likely to have a negative impact on vulnerable groups. The potential impact on communities was the most commonly cited community impact issue. Respondents suggested that libraries should offer an equal service to all, and should be the centre of the community. 64% of respondents who cited impacts relating to 'age' were over the age of 60. Respondents anticipated difficulties in travelling to alternative venues as well as the need to have professionally trained staff on hand to assist with technology. The importance of libraries as educational resources and the potential impact on young people was also highlighted

Access was a key issue for respondents with disabilities, specifically the need to travel to alternative venues. Respondents who were concerned about other vulnerable groups suggested that libraries in deprived areas should be prioritised with 'Library Local's' restricted to areas where they have a chance of surviving.

Other Feedback, Events and Correspondence

Additional consultation events were held in all districts and comprised a range of drop-in sessions, question and answer sessions and community led workshops. Attendees expressed concerns relating to loss of staff and the subsequent loss of expertise, as well as concerns over volunteers and funding which were reflective of the issues many respondents detailed in their survey responses.

The additional external events held with local communities did not generate a great level of interest in the consultation on the part of many attendees, particularly those who were non users of libraries. Young attendees were particularly unlikely to want to engage with many indicating that they never used libraries.

In addition to the survey, there were approximately 90 letters and emails received from residents. The majority of these were made in direct reference to particular libraries. Residents were concerned that the ultimate aim was to close their local library, or that the proposals amounted to a 'downgrading' of the service.

At the time of writing, nine petitions with a total of 8,255 verified signatures have been received regarding the library proposals.

A number of responses were received from MPs and Councillors as well as from District and Parish Councils. The views expressed in the feedback reflect those expressed in the wider consultation and highlight similar themes to those included throughout this report.

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3. INTRODUCTION

As the way people use libraries continues to change, Staffordshire County Council wants to work with communities to move away from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach for the service, to reshape and reform libraries for the future.

Libraries have changed considerably over the last decade, and the County Council wants people to have a bigger say about their libraries so that the future service reflects their needs. The County Council has consulted widely on their proposals for the library service and this report provides a summary of consultation findings.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

The consultation took place between 16th July 2014 and 7th October 2014, with residents and other stakeholders encouraged to share their views through a survey, by email and letter and at consultation events across the County.

Involvement was actively encouraged from young people through an easily accessible questionnaire and focus groups sessions, and contact was made with protected and vulnerable groups such as young people (Youth Box, Children in Care Council, Leaving Care Forum), those from ethnic minority backgrounds (Eton Asian Women's Group, Hum Sab Women's Group) and those with disabilities (Staffordshire Public Access Network and Chesterton Vision Disability Marketplace).

The consultation was widely publicised including:

- ⇒ 27,000 active library members (those who have borrowed an item in the last 12 months) who had previously provided an email address were contacted at the beginning and seven days prior the end of the consultation.
- ⇒ Meetings were held with a number of important individuals and groups including; MPs, District/ Town/Parish Councils, VAST, Support Staffordshire, South Staffordshire College, SPAN and Keele University.
- ⇒ Library District Managers and District Commissioning Leads promoted the consultation in their districts and to a number of protected groups.
- \Rightarrow A number of protected groups were contacted at the start of the consultation.
- ⇒ There was an article in the September edition of the Your Staffordshire magazine, which is delivered to every household in the County; over 35,000 households in total.
- \Rightarrow Four press releases accompanied by media coverage of specific drop-in events.
- \Rightarrow Extensive use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) particularly to target hard-to-reach groups.
- ⇒ A targeted social media campaign over the final 10 days of the consultation focussed on increasing responses from various geographical areas.
- \Rightarrow Ongoing internal communications to County Council Staff.
- \Rightarrow Promotion via posters and plasma screens in libraries.
- \Rightarrow A series of organised events and drop-in question and answer sessions.
- \Rightarrow Consultation Portal on the Staffordshire County Council website.
- ⇒ Letters were sent to all Staffordshire maintained schools and academies and to third sector organisations through VAST.
- ⇒ Three sets of communications went to all District and Borough Councils, as well as to members and Parish and Town Councils in Staffordshire.

3.2 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

4,255 survey responses were received to the full consultation and 194 to the young people's survey, of which, 154 respondents stated that they were aged 19 or under.

The rate of response to the consultation is statistically significant, meaning that had the entire population of Staffordshire answered the survey, 99% of the time the same response would have been seen plus or minus 2%. For example had 45% of survey respondents strongly agreed with a question, 99% of the time between 43% and 47% of the Staffordshire population would have given the same answer.

There were 90 letters and additional responses received.

Approximately 3,300 were reached through events. These included over 1,000 people who attended events in libraries and an estimated 2,300 who attended additional events in the community. Nine petitions were also received which in total included 8,255 signatures.

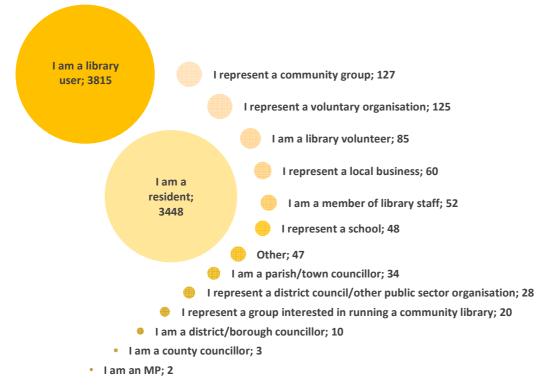
Themes arising from the young people's survey, events and other forms of feedback will be incorporated throughout this report.

3.3 SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Respondent Characteristics

Not all respondents provided details of their characteristics. Figure 1 shows the context in which people responded to the survey, where details were provided. The majority of respondents were Staffordshire residents (90%) or library users (81%).

Figure 1: Details of respondent types



- ⇒ The response rate from female residents was disproportionately high: 65% of respondents were female compared to 58% of active borrowers. Respondents aged 35 and above were also over-represented in comparison to the active borrower population.
- ⇒ Although the proportion of young people completing the main survey was under-represented in comparison to the active borrower population, alterative methods of obtaining the views of the young were used; specifically the young people's survey as well as focus groups.
- ⇒ Analysis of postcodes provided by respondents shows the number of responses from each district was generally representative of the population, with just South Staffordshire being over-represented (18% of total respondents compared to 13% of the Staffordshire population).
- ⇒ 16% of respondents considered themselves to have some form of disability. Although it is not possible to provide an exact comparison to the Staffordshire population, the 2011 census recorded that 19% of the Staffordshire population have long-term health problem or disability that limits day to day activities a little or a lot.
- ⇒ 14% of respondents looked after someone in their family with an illness or disability. The nearest Staffordshire comparator is from the 2011 census where 12% of Staffordshire residents have provided unpaid care.
- \Rightarrow 95% of respondents described themselves as White-British compared to 96% in the Staffordshire population.

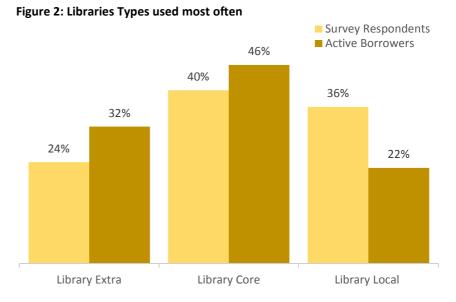
⇒ 48% of respondents visited a public library in Staffordshire once a week or more often, 87% visited at least once a month or more. Only 31 people who had not used a library in the past 12 months gave a reason for not doing so and due to the small numbers, it is not possible to determine if these views are reflective of the Staffordshire population.

Library Usage of Respondents

Respondents were asked to select up to three libraries they used most often, figure 2 shows the results of responses split by proposed library type in comparison to the proportion of active borrowers; those who have borrowed an item in the 12 months to December 2013.

A larger proportion of respondents cited use of a proposed 'Library Local' than the proportion of active borrowers who are registered to one of those library types.

A smaller proportion of proposed 'Library Extra' and 'Library Core' were seen in survey respondents than in the active borrower population. A full breakdown of responses by each library is available in the appendix.



Important Library Services

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the most important library services. Being able to borrow books, access information and use public PC's/free public Wi-Fi were the top three most important issues, as illustrated in figure 3.

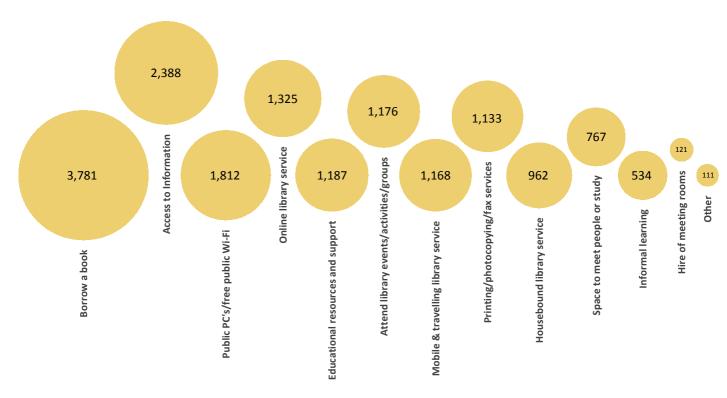


Figure 3: Most Important Library Services, Number of Responses, by Category

4. PROPOSALS TO THE LIBRARY SERVICE OVERALL

Safeguarding the Future of Staffordshire's Library Service

Respondents were asked:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposals will safeguard the future of Staffordshire's Library service?

31% of total respondents agreed that that the current proposals would safeguard the future of Staffordshire's Library Service while 34% disagreed, as illustrated in figure 4. Notably, more than a third of respondents (35%) stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed, or did not know.

Respondents who felt that the proposals would not impact on them, their family or organisation were more likely to agree/strongly agree with the proposals (58%) than those who felt the proposal would have some impact on them (30%). Those who felt that the proposals would have a significant impact were considerably less likely to agree/strongly agree; just 7%.

85% of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed with the proposals had visited a public library in Staffordshire at least one a month or more in the last 12 months, similar to the over picture (87%).

Residents aged 60+ (52%) were more likely to agree with the proposals than other residents.

Residents of Lichfield and Tamworth districts had the highest proportion of residents who agreed/ strongly agreed, with 39% of respondents in Tamworth and 46% in Lichfield agreeing that the proposals would safeguard the future of Staffordshire's Library Service.

Residents of South Staffordshire and Cannock Chase had the lowest proportion of residents who agreed/strongly agreed, with 22% of respondents of South Staffordshire, and 28% in Cannock Chase agreeing that that the proposals would safeguard the future of Staffordshire's Library Service.

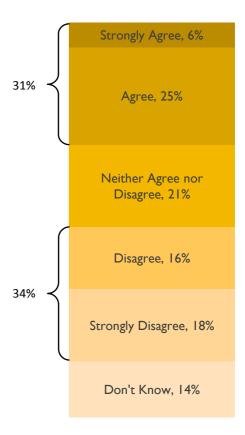
Respondents were invited to explain their answer and asked how if at all, the proposals could be changed. More than 1,700 comments were received.

The main areas of concern raised related to the 'Library Local' proposal. The principal concern related to the availability of and/or the skills of volunteers. There was subsequent concern that libraries would close if the County Council was unable to mitigate the impact of any such short-fall.

In the Young People's survey, residents were asked what they thought about the proposed changes. Views ranged from "what changes?", to "it's good", "it's bad", "I want it to stay as it is". There was concern that libraries "will close".

Young people suggested better opening hours, more events and activities and updated facilities including new books would encourage use of libraries. Comfy chairs, drinks and play areas were also seen as a way of encouraging more usage.

Figure 4: What Extent do you agree or disagree that the proposals will safeguard the future for Staffordshire's Library Service?

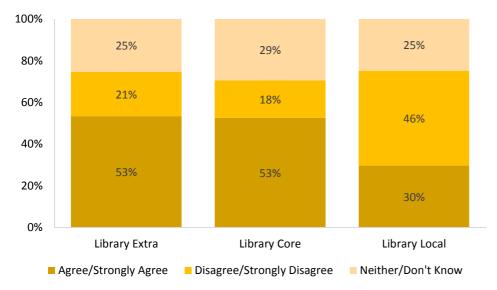


5. PROPOSED LIBRARY CATEGORIES

The proposals offered three categories of library; 'Library Extra', 'Library Core' and 'Library Local', with each of Staffordshire's libraries proposed to become one of the three. This section explores what residents thought about the proposed library categories.

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the library proposals.

A similar proportion of respondents agreed with the 'Library Extra' and 'Library Core' proposals (53% of respondents for both categories). However the proportion of respondents who agreed with the 'Library Local' proposal was just 30%. Additionally, almost half of respondents stated that they disagreed with the 'Library Local' proposal.



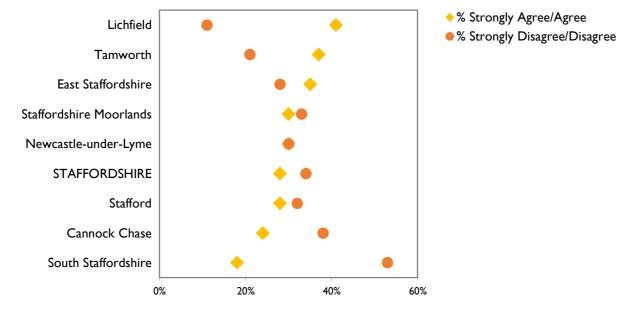


To what extent do you agree or disagree that our proposals have allocated libraries to the correct categories?

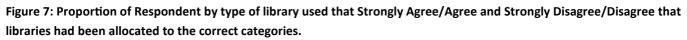
Overall, 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that libraries had been allocated to the correct categories and 34% disagreed or strongly disagreed, leaving a large proportion neither agreeing or disagreeing.

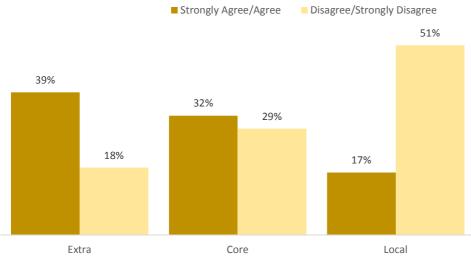
There were notable differences in the responses from different districts (figure 6) with as many as 41% agree/strongly agree that libraries had been allocated to the correct categories in Lichfield, compared to only 18% in South Staffordshire.

Figure 6: Proportion of Respondents that Agree/Strongly Agree and Disagree/Strongly Disagree that libraries had been allocated to the correct categories, By District



There were also substantial differences of opinion regarding the library classifications based on the proposed category of the respondents current library (figure 7). Respondents who currently use a proposed 'Library Extra' were much more likely to agree or strongly agree that libraries had been allocated to the correct category compared to those who currently use a library proposed to become a 'Library Local'.





More than 1,700 additional comments were provided on the library category allocations.

Comments from respondents who agreed with the allocations followed two main themes:

Libraries have been correctly categorised

Respondents felt that libraries had been *"categorised by demand and usage which is the most logical way"*. It was felt that the categorisation provided a balance which preserves the current service, satisfies the demand of the tax payers and considered budgetary constraints, and that the proposals were *"realistic"*.

The service will be improved

Respondents felt that the proposals were offering continued or an enhanced level of service. For example, the proposals *"protect Uttoxeter library to a large extent which helps me and my family"*.

Comments from respondents who disagreed with the allocations followed three general themes.

Certain libraries had been incorrectly allocated

Those who disagreed generally did so because they felt libraries had been allocated to the wrong category. The discussion focused primarily on 'Library Extra' and 'Library Local'. Respondents wanted to see libraries upgraded from Local to Core or from Core to Extra.

The geographical spread was unfair

Additional concerns regarding the 'Library Extra' proposals included concerns that the current geographical spread should be reconsidered. It was identified that accessibility to these libraries would be an issue for those who did not live close to one, for residents who lived in rural areas and for those who did not have access to their own or public transport.

Library Local may not be feasible

The 'Library Local' proposal was viewed by some as unfeasible. Respondents were concerned that it would not be feasible for these to be run entirely by volunteers.

5.1 LIBRARY EXTRA

More than half (53%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the 'Library Extra' proposal, however respondents who currently use a proposed 'Library Extra' were more likely to agree with the proposal than those who do not. 70% of current users agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 53% of proposed 'Library Core' users and 44% of proposed 'Library Local' users.

There were also considerable differences in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the proposal across districts, as illustrated in figure 8, with the highest proportion of respondents agreeing in East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Tamworth and Newcastle Borough. These are the districts where proposed 'Library Extra' are to be located. There was little variation in agreement by gender or age.

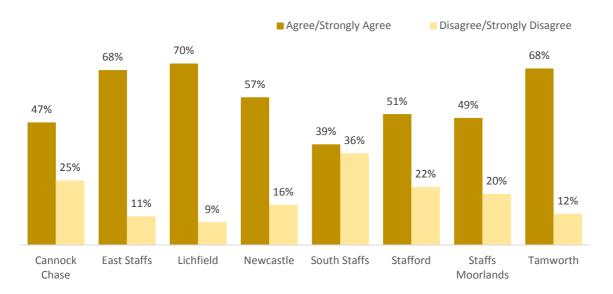


Figure 8: Extent of agreement with 'Library Extra' by district

2,541 respondents commented on the Library Extra proposals.

Library Extra makes good sense and will provide a better service

Respondents who agreed with the 'Library Extra' proposal were more likely to state that the proposal makes sense, and for the *"larger towns to have the best facilities."*

In "times of austerity" respondents generally agreed that "if there is a need to save money I feel it is better for main libraries to offer a full range of services rather than close libraries which are less well used".

It was suggested that Library Extra could offer "a better quality of service", provide a "wider range of activities" and was consequently likely to encourage "improved usage".

There should be more Library Extra's

Some respondents who agreed with the proposal felt that more libraries should be categorised as 'Library Extra'. Stafford Library was commonly mentioned; it should be *"a 'Library Extra' as it is the county town."*

Everyone needs good facilities in their local area

Respondents who disagreed with the 'Library Extra' proposal generally felt that *"facilities should be available locally to all."*

The option of 'Library Extra' is "providing a postcode lottery of services across the county." "This is fine for people who live near a Library Extra but seems to mean a worse service for those who don't". "The sacrifice of local library services is a disgrace!"

The geographical spread needs improving

It was felt that the libraries proposed as 'Library Extra' were not spread out sufficiently around the county, and that not everyone who lives in Staffordshire would have easy access.

For example, my "nearest 'Library Extra' will be over 25 miles away", "They will be inaccessible to the majority of the population in the south of the county, particularly the elderly and those without transport. The proposals heavily favour the north and east of the county, and people in more rural South Staffordshire, an area of much poorer public transport and pockets of social deprivation, will have another valuable public service reduction".

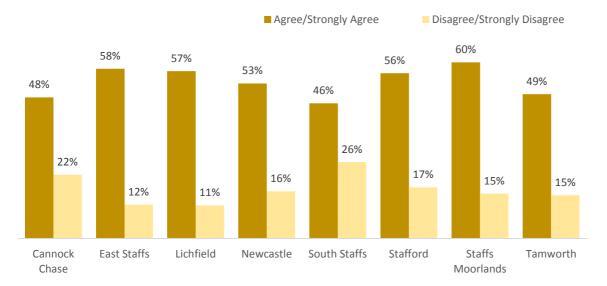
The main function of libraries may change with 'Library Extra'

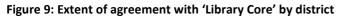
Some were concerned that the main function of the library would change. For example, I am concerned that "providing space in libraries for other services will mean less space for books". "The stock that libraries have seems to be dwindling as it is". "Also, I think it is important that libraries are quiet places where people can concentrate - what will be the noise levels of other services being based in the library?"

5.2 LIBRARY CORE

More than half (53%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the 'Library Core' proposal, however respondents who currently used a proposed 'Library Core' were less likely to agree with the proposal than those that currently used a proposed 'Library Extra'.

There was also considerable differences in the proportion of respondents who agreed with the proposal across districts, as illustrated in figure 9, with Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire both showing lower proportion of positive feedback and higher proportion of negative feedback than the other districts. There was little variation in agreement by gender or age .





2,053 respondents commented on the 'Library Core' proposals.

Library Core is the best option

Respondents who agreed with the 'Library Core' proposal stated that the proposal was similar to the current provision. For this reason, this option was considered reasonable, sufficient, sensible and the best option out of the three. Respondents also agreed that this option was likely to safeguard libraries in the future.

Communities need flexible libraries

It was suggested that communities need flexible libraries and respondents generally felt that the 'Library Core' proposal met this requirement. Respondents also agreed that sharing facilities made good sense and that having the flexibility to evolve libraries to meet local needs would be valuable.

Do not change libraries

Respondents who disagreed with the proposal generally did not want to see the current library structure change. They valued *"keeping libraries as they are"* and felt that *"everyone needs community libraries"*. They were concerned that *"sharing libraries may not work"* and some were concerned that libraries would not be *"close enough"* to where they live.

680 respondents commented on how Library Core could be improved. The views which respondents voiced were diverse.

Make more libraries 'Core' or 'Extra'

Whilst the majority of people commented positively on 'Library Core' this question did prompt a wide discussion on the overall categorisation of library services.

Some people wanted to see more 'Core' libraries. For example, *"stop confusing people and turn libraries back into libraries - with a clear primary purpose"* or make *"more"* or *"all"* libraries 'Core'. Blythe Bridge was mentioned here.

Others respondents wanted libraries to be upgraded; *"upgrade to your definition of Library Extra, and implement 'the best' across all library buildings"* and make more libraries, 'Extra,' Stafford was mentioned here.

Additional themes from respondents are outlined below.

Improve our access to the services/facilities which we want

A general theme raised was access to different services or facilities. Whilst there was real diversity in the facilities which people felt should be offered, and many were library specific, examples of the facilities included improved book stock, children's facilities, quiet spaces, provision of meeting rooms and more clubs, for example book clubs.

Give careful consideration to the partners which are selected

Respondents felt that those who were selected to work in partnership/be located with 'Core' libraries should be subject to careful selection. For example *"be very careful about who your sharing partners are so that the fundamental atmosphere and purpose of a library is not spoiled"* and *"library values need to be core and all partnerships need to reflect that."*

Some felt that partners' opening hours may enable more accessible opening hours for libraries in general in the longer term.

Re-consider the proposed opening hours

The proposed opening hours were commonly mentioned by respondents. Whilst retired people generally felt they could work around changes to opening hours, the changes were considered more of a concern for those who were of working age. For example, *"I feel that if it is to meet the needs of the local community then it must take into account the opening hours to give consideration to workers who cannot attend during office hours"*. These concerns are discussed, alongside suggestions for improvement in the following section.

5.3 LIBRARY CORE: OPENING HOURS

As part of the consultation respondents were asked to what extent they thought the proposed changes in opening hours for their library would affect their ability to use the library service. 13% felt it would affect them a great deal and 21% a little. Although the proposed changes were for 'Library Core' hours, a greater proportion of current 'Library Local' users felt they would be affected a great deal (figure 10).

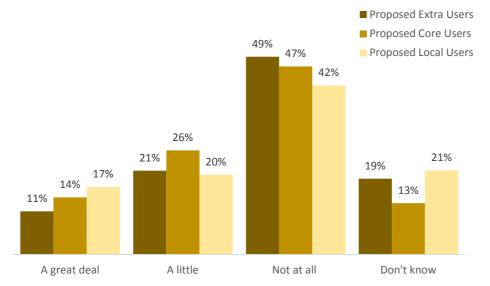


Figure 10: Extent Affected by Proposed Change in Library Hours by Proposed Category of current used Library

There was little variation in responses by gender, however respondents aged 45 to 75+ were more likely to say that they would not be affected than younger respondents. There was considerable variation by district with as little as 6% thinking they would be affected a great deal in Tamworth, compared to 16% in Cannock Chase (see the appendix).

2,085 respondents provided comments about why they felt they would be affected to the extent they had suggested.

Changes to the opening hours will affect me a great deal

People who worked full-time and working parents felt they would be impacted the most by changes to opening hours. These respondents also felt that opening hours should include weekends. It was suggested that opening hours should include weekends, evenings and earlier morning options. An enhanced opening schedule during school holidays was also supported.

The changes will affect me a little bit

Some people who were retired were of the view that they would be affected a little bit but generally most felt they could adapt to different opening hours.

Others who worked full-time would find weekday visits impossible where late night openings were cut or reduced. For example, *"cutting hours after 5pm means I can only visit on a Saturday."* One other suggested consequence was that some may reduce the frequency of their library visits. Some also said they would likely spend additional time travelling to another library.

Respondents who felt they would be affected a little bit were generally receptive to change and flexible in their approach. They did however have some preferences, for example, *"I will adjust to meet new hours*

but please do keep some evening openings as I cannot always get to the library after working full-time".

The changes won't affect me at all

There were a number of reasons why respondents felt that the changes to opening times would not affect them. Most commonly mentioned was that respondents were *"flexible now retired"* and could easily visit the library during the proposed opening times. For example, *"I only use within the times suggested anyway."*

Others were unaffected either because their library times were *"not changing,"* because they *"don't use a core library"* or because they mostly *use "the online service"*.

5.4 LIBRARY LOCAL

Less than a third (30%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the 'Library Local' proposal. Notably, a greater proportion of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the 'Library Local' (46%) proposal than agreed with it. However respondents who *currently use* a proposed 'Library Local' were more likely to agree with the proposal.

There was also variation by age, with a larger proportion of 16 to 19 year olds and those age 75+ agreeing with the proposal than the other age groups. Respondents aged 35-59 were least likely to agree with the proposal.

There were considerable variations in the level of agreement by district (figure 11), with just 23% of respondents from Cannock Chase, and 26% from South Staffordshire agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. Only in Lichfield did a greater proportion of respondents agree or strongly agree than disagree or strongly disagree.

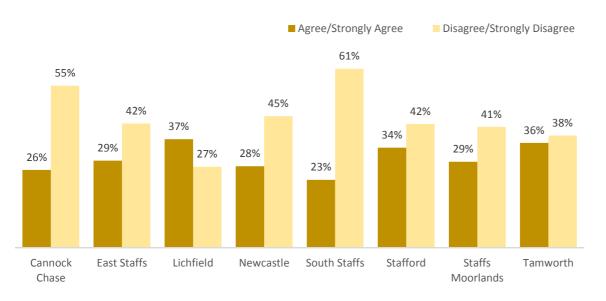


Figure 11: Extent of agreement with 'Library Local' by district

2,487 additional comments were made about the 'Library Local' proposal. More than half (59%) from respondents who disagreed with the proposal.

Library Locals cannot be run by volunteers alone

The overriding theme from respondents who disagreed with Library Local was that they did not believe that libraries should be run by volunteers alone. It was considered hard to see how they could work in practice.

Respondents were concerned that volunteers would not have the experience, knowledge, professionalism and reliability which they felt full-time, paid staff currently provide. For this reason, respondents felt that libraries should remain under Local Authority control or each library should at least have some access to paid, experienced librarians.

Volunteers are already stretched

An associated concern was the pressure which volunteers are already facing. It was felt that there was already a lot of pressure on volunteers due to other volunteering commitments and further pressure would water down the support they were able to offer.

5.5 How Could 'LIBRARY LOCAL' BE IMPROVED?

813 survey respondents provided suggestions as to how the proposals for 'Library Local' could be improved. A further 358 commented saying that the 'Library Local' proposals should be abandoned. The main ways that were suggested to improve the Library Local proposal were:

Providing access to a paid member of staff

The most commonly mentioned suggestion was the need for access to a paid member of staff. It was felt that this, combined with support from volunteers could provide a workable solution.

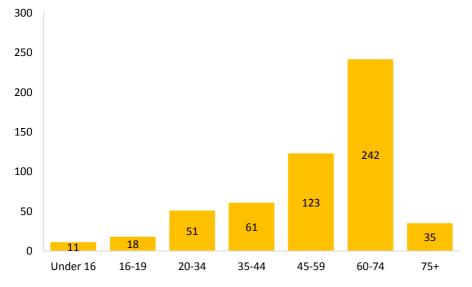
Facilities should be developed and improved to suit the needs of the local community

The second most commonly mentioned theme was the need for suitable facilities to meet the needs of each 'Library Local'. These included a consideration of improvements or the inclusion of extra or different facilities. As there was quite a large diversity of facilities which people felt should be offered, the suggested facilities must be understood in the context of the immediate locality.

Respondents were asked to what extent might they want to be involved in helping to run a local community library in their area. Approximately 20% of respondents said they might want to be involved in helping to run a local community library 'a great deal' (4%) or 'a little' (16%). However 63% of respondents did not want to help at all.

Those aged 75+ were *least* likely to say they wanted to get involved, with more than three quarters saying they did not to be involved at all. Respondents under the age of 19 appeared keen to have involvement however the number of young people who responded to the consultation was comparatively small.

Figure 12: Number of Respondents in each age group who wanted to be involved in the running of a local community library 'A Great deal' or 'A Little'



Just over half of respondents (53%) wanted to provide less than four hours a week. 17% wanted to help less than two hours per week and 36% between two and four hours.

190 survey respondents registered their interest in getting involved in helping to run a community library in their area via the online survey and three others sent their details directly to the volunteerlibrary@staffordshire.gov.uk email address.

A number of groups/organisations completing the survey already shared space with a library, or were interested in doing so in the future:

- \Rightarrow 73 currently shared a building with a library
- \Rightarrow 23 were interested in having a library service occupy space in their premises
- ⇒ 20 were interested in moving their business/service/groups into an existing library building
- \Rightarrow 27 had a building that could be available to host a community led library
- ⇒ 34 were interested in setting up a community organisation, or agreeing for an existing organisation to manage a community led library or mobile library service.

Of those who registered an interest in providing support, they documented a wide range of roles which they would be happy to assist with. These ranged from leading activities to cataloguing, shelf stacking and helping users e.g. on computers and with book selections. Many were prepared to help with *"any tasks"*.

Respondents to the Young People's survey suggested that to help support their library they would sign a

petition, undertake a fundraiser, donate books or volunteer to support their library. Using a library regularly or more often were also popular responses.

When asked what might encourage respondents to get involved in supporting a local community library a number of themes arose.

To preserve local libraries

The overriding theme from those who registered their interest in supporting community led libraries was the desire to preserve the service and prevent closure.

Provision of the right conditions

Hours of work which suited the individual appeared to be key to securing involvement although what this meant varied from person to person. For some this meant regular timeslots, whilst for others flexibility was important. Respondents recognised that supporting community led libraries would provide a good opportunity for local involvement and that it could provide an opportunity to meet like-minded people and would be a good opportunity for people who are retired.

Another key area to securing involvement, was good, professional training and support as it was acknowledged that respondents were not trained librarians.

What Information, Advice or Support did respondents feel they would need from Staffordshire County Council to successfully run a local community library?

Those who were interested in supporting community led libraries did express a keen interest in having access to a wide range of information, advice and support. Initially, more information about the proposals would help respondents decide if they truly wanted to get involved in the running of a community led library. This was followed by a need for more information about the library. This could include information on current usage, a floor/buildings plan and detailed costs involved in running a library.

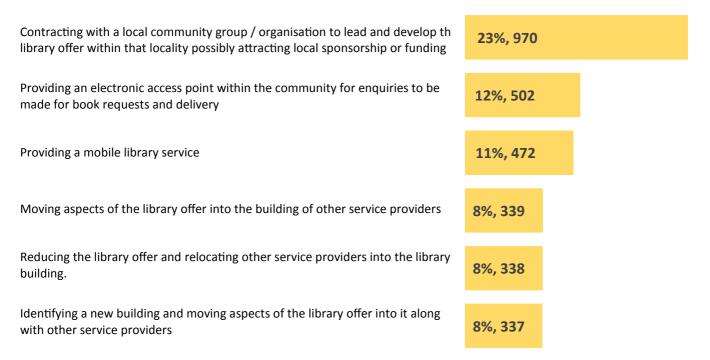
The support of Staffordshire County Council was viewed as vital, particularly in the early stages. The County Council could, for example, assist in bringing volunteers together. It would also be helpful if the council could provide support and advice with getting the libraries up and running and then some back-up for a while after that. Support was voiced for having professionals working alongside volunteers. The council could also facilitate the linking of libraries together to enable them to support one another in the longer term.

Training was also viewed to be of particular importance. Initially this would consist of training in how to use ICT systems e.g. for borrowing books. In the longer term advice on how to secure money to pay for things would be beneficial. This could for example include advice on how to source money for new books or to pay for continued internet access.

What options should be considered for respondents local library?

Figure 13 shows which options respondents felt Staffordshire County Council should consider for their local library. The most popular option was to contract a local community group/organisation to lead and develop the library offer.

Figure 13: Which options should Staffordshire County Council consider: Percentage of Total and Number of Respondents



5.8 LIBRARY LOCAL: COMMUNITY MANAGED WORKSHOPS FEEDBACK

47 people attended one of the four community managed workshops which were supported by volunteers from Warwickshire.

These volunteers outlined their experiences of running community led libraries which provided reassurance for some, while encouraging participants to raise questions. Attendees wanted to better understand the appetite for community led libraries and wanted more information on existing library usage.

Additional questions which were raised covering a number of key themes. These are summarised below with a more detailed list in the appendix.

- \Rightarrow Will there be a contract?
- \Rightarrow Who is responsible for the building?
- \Rightarrow How will supporting equipment be managed?
- \Rightarrow How will we staff the service?

Additional questions were asked about when the changes would happen and whether there would be support from Staffordshire County Council. Training was considered a key element of the required support. Participants questioned what would happen if there was no appetite locally to support community led libraries, and asked whether there were any other existing organisations who may potentially want to take over the running of a community led library.

5.9 LIBRARY PLUS ONLINE SERVICE

Respondents were asked specifically about the current online service, 'Your Staffordshire Online' which is proposed to be enhanced.

Almost (62%) two thirds of respondents stated that they had used the Staffordshire's Library Online services and just over one third (34%) used it at least once a month or more frequently. 14% of respondents used Staffordshire's Library Online services at least once a week or more while 38% of respondents have not used the service at all. Male respondents were more likely to have used the service once a week or more (20%) than females (12%) and a smaller proportion of males (32%) had never used the service in comparison to females (39%).

1,585 respondents shared additional reasons as to why they did not use Library Online. Many did not have access to a computer/internet connection and said they preferred to read physical books and have personal contact via the libraries. Some however, were just *"not aware of it"*.

Respondents were asked which features would encourage them to use the Library Online service more often. The most popular features were 'One catalogue for books and e-Books' (53%), 'Personalised book recommendations' (45%) and 'Online payment of fines' (45%).

558 people provided additional features/comments on what would encourage them to use the online service more. Some respondents were adamant that they would never want to use Library Plus Online. Others did use it and did not feel that it needed any improvement. Some however did identify efficiencies and facilities which would encourage them to use it more;

It needs to be user friendly and easier to use

Many of the respondents requesting improvements wanted the service to become more "user friendly" / "easier to use". For example, "I can't get anything to download on my mobile device yet I am used to using technology. How can someone who is less proficient manage it? Not everyone has an IT degree." Others agreed that the service was "slow" or "freezes". It needs to be "faster, with better search facilities" and "the mobile app needs to contain more information". This for example should include "when books are on loan and might be returned."

Having to renew the Wi-Fi password each month discourages use for some, whilst others said they found the logins overly complicated – "these are ok for a barcode but not a user name!"

Others had found that books were often missing and the catalogue was not kept up-to-date. These were considered key functions which need to be improved to encourage use.

Respondents also felt that it should be possible to *"cancel reservations online"*. This was considered particularly important for those who worked full-time. *"It's difficult to get to the library and costs mount up." "Quicker delivery of books"* and *"lower fees"* in general would additionally encourage use.

Facilities need to be improved / updated

There were also some requests for improved/updated facilities. These included up-to-date books, a wider selection of books, audio books and a music collection. Young people responding in their survey said they would be encouraged to use it more if they knew about it, if the logins were easier and if it could assist with homework.

6. IMPACTS ON RESIDENTS AND ORGANISATIONS

Respondents were asked how current proposals would impact on them, their families or their organisations. A total of 3,233 people responded and of these, 24% (769) stated that the proposals would have a 'significant effect' on them or their organisation, with a further 29% (930) stating they would have 'some' effect. 30% (977) of respondents stated that the proposals would not affect them.

A larger proportion of females (54%) said it would have significant or some impact on them/their organisation than men (49%). Respondents aged 16 to 19 (38%), 60 to 74 (35%) and 75+ (41%) were more likely to think they would not be affected by the proposals. Of those who stated that the proposals would have an impact, 46% were over the age of 60.

A larger proportion of people with a disability (22%) felt they would not be affected by the changes than people without a disability (16%).

A total of 1,646 respondents offered explanation as to why this would be the case, and there were two main reoccurring themes.

There could be reduced access to services

The first theme was a concern that the implementation of the proposals could lead to reduced access to local services with consequential impacts across the community. This would be a concern if there were not enough volunteers for 'Library Local'. Respondents were concerned that this would lead to eventual closures and it would be more difficult or impossible for them to travel to alternative venues.

The changing opening times would impact on those of working age

The second was the changes to opening times. Whilst comments showed that this would not be an issue for retired respondents, it would however be an issue for those who worked full-time. Evening openings would be preferable for people working full-time to enable them to fit library visits around their working commitments.

6.1 COMMUNITY IMPACT ANALYSIS

A community impact analysis has been conducted on all the responses received to open ended questions throughout the consultation. This looked at whether the proposals were likely to have a negative impact on vulnerable and protected groups. Comments have been grouped into four broad themes: The localities agenda, age, disability and other vulnerable groups.

The Localities Agenda

The localities agenda, or the potential impact on communities, was the most commonly cited community impact issue. Some respondents suggested that libraries should offer an equal service to all, and how they are, or should be, the centre of the community.

Many offered suggestions for alternative or shared uses of the space, such as Citizens Advice, a Police post, job centres/careers advice and opportunities for café or coffee shop franchises. Some respondents were also aware of housing developments in the pipe-line, the expansion of their communities and the subsequent need for local services to match the potential increase in demand.

Age

64% of respondents who cited impacts relating to 'age' were over the age of 60. Several of these respondents also had a disability. Comments included anticipated difficulties in travelling to alternative venues as well as the need to have professionally trained staff on hand to assist with technology.

Many comments also highlighted the importance of libraries as educational resource and the potential impact on young people. These centred around libraries providing encouragement to read and libraries being an important resource for education; any resultant closure to libraries might therefore be detrimental to learning. A small number of respondents also cited young people struggling to travel to libraries outside of their local area.

A total of 196 individuals completed the young people's survey. While this number is not statistically robust, respondents did not tend to suggest any impacts themselves and tended instead to discuss what they thought about the proposals.

For example some expressed that they were worried it might mean closure for their local library and that they liked their libraries how they were and wanted them to remain the same. Others suggested that they would like them to change; *"Overall; the changes being made are a positive rejuvenation of the service, it is hoped for by myself that this brings the life and soul back into libraries."*

Disability

Access was a key issue for respondents with disabilities, specifically the need to travel to alternative venues: *"many local people can visit a local town if they need a specific service, however many disabled people find travelling into a town very a difficult experience"*. Other benefits cited were *"actually speaking to a person"* and the *"need (for) staff to support me in using the library"*.

Other Vulnerable Groups

Respondents who were concerned about other vulnerable groups suggested that libraries in deprived areas *"should be prioritised"* with *"Library Local's (should be) restricted to wealthier areas where they have a chance of surviving"*.

Respondents also mentioned the planned increase in armed forces population in the county coupled with an increase in the general population. This, together with the perceived disparity in distribution of libraries across the county, caused some respondents to feel that residents of rural communities (particularly in the north of the county) could be better served by the proposals. This section summarises the feedback received through events other than those that were community led, as well as additional correspondence received.

Event Feedback

A total of 47 events were held in libraries across the county throughout the 12 week period of consultation. Events were held in all districts and comprised a range of drop-in sessions, question and answer sessions and community led workshops. These were supplemented by eighteen additional consultation opportunities which targeted popular locations such as supermarkets, or events which were already occurring, which were used as an opportunity to engage with a large number of Staffordshire's residents.

More than 3,300 people were estimated to have been reached through these events. These include over 1,000 people who attended events in libraries and an estimated 2,300 engaged through additional events in the community.

Drop-in Session and Question & Answer Sessions

During the drop-in and Q & A sessions there was some negativity expressed. Attendees reiterated general concerns relating to potential staff redundancies and the subsequent loss of expertise, as well as concerns over volunteers and funding. These concerns are reflective of the issues many respondents detailed on their survey responses.

Attendees also queried what had already been done 'behind the scenes' to save money. Some questioned whether the main central library should be closed to allow the branches to remain open. Others questioned whether the consultation was simply a *"tick box exercise"* and whether the proposals were *"a done deal"*.

Concerns were raised about accessibility, particularly for older people who may have mobility issues. Concerns were also raised about some 'Library Locals' being situated in areas where potential volunteers may not have the necessary skills required to make the 'Library Local' proposal sustainable.

Attendees were keen to have more information on how the intended community led libraries would function and to understand the rationale behind the process of allocating existing libraries to the three proposed categories.

Residents also felt that the consultation should be publicised even more widely that it has been, for example *"to every household in Staffordshire"*. [It should be noted that it was included in the Your Staffordshire magazine that was delivered to every household in Staffordshire] Some residents were keen to understand the 'vision' for the future role of libraries, for example, what libraries might look like in 20 to 30 years time.

Additional Events

Attendance at these events appeared to encourage some additional participation, whilst some attendees indicated that they had already taken part in the consultation. There was, however, a lack of general interest in the consultation on the part of many attendees, particularly those who were non-users of libraries. Young attendees were particularly unlikely to want to engage with many indicating that they never used libraries. However, young people with disabilities tended to be more likely to want to share

their views and many indicated that they do use their local library.

Some of those who were happy to be engaged were concerned that professional staff would lose their jobs and then services would deteriorate as a consequence. There were also general concerns about volunteers. For example, that they would not be committed or reliable enough and if they should have access to confidential information. Additionally some attendees stated that they had 'heard' that libraries were going to close.

Petitions

In addition to the consultation and at the time of writing, nine petitions with a total of 8,255 verified signatures have been received regarding the library proposals. These were all similar in theme, opposing the proposals, and were submitted with specific reference to libraries in Brewood, Penkridge, Werrington, Barton-under-Needwood, Audley and Silverdale.

The petitions will be brought to full Council on 11th December 2014. In accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme, the lead petitioners will have the opportunity to introduce the petitions and the Cabinet Lead will respond before the petitions are then debated by Full Council.

Additional Correspondence

In addition to the survey, there were approximately 90 letters and emails received from residents, as well as a large amount of feedback from pupils at Penkridge Middle School. The majority of these were made in direct reference to particular libraries and to a large extent, echoed the sentiments already discussed in this document.

Residents were concerned that the ultimate aim was to close their local library, or that the proposals amounted to a 'downgrading' of service. Many stressed the importance of their local library to the community and the potential the library had to be more than just a place to borrow books. Residents cited the importance of libraries as an educational resource: *"What better place for such an activity (educational) to thrive? Could this aspect of the library service be expanded?"*

There were various references to the rural community, the lack of infrastructure, particularly in relation to broadband coverage: *"If you close Barton library that will be a disaster for those without other means of accessing the (these days) all important net".*

There was also concern for the availability of volunteers and the outcomes for library staff. Having attended a consultation, one resident wrote: *"They (local volunteer groups) were saying that they have only got so many volunteers who already do wonderful work in our community."* Another commented *"Do you agree with volunteers taking jobs from the present staff, causing intolerable stress and unemployment?"*

Views of Councillors and MP's

A number of responses were received from MPs and Councillors as well as from District and Parish Councils. Responses were received in the form of completed consultation surveys, letters and emails and the forwarding of petitions. These responses provided personal feedback as well as feedback on behalf of residents and constituents.

The views expressed in the feedback reflect those expressed in the wider consultation and highlight similar themes to those included throughout this report. There were also references to specific libraries which will be considered on an individual library basis.

Media Coverage

There were 307 mentions in the media concerned with Staffordshire's Libraries Consultation in the period 11.06.2014 to 20.11.2014. Of these 40% were positive, 41% neutral and 19% negative.

This included mentions on Midlands Today, The Sunday Politics Show (Midlands), BBC Radio Stoke, Signal FM, Touch FM and Radio WM. There was also coverage in the national press in the Bookseller and Adjacent Digital Politics Ltd.

8. Additional Comments

A total of 916 additional comments were submitted, their tone and content diverse. Many respondents used the space as an opportunity to reiterate views already expressed throughout the questionnaire.

Several respondents offered appreciation of the opportunity to input into the process, "thanks for asking my opinion", "it is encouraging that so much thought and effort is going into the continuance of the library service", while others felt that the consultation was simply a "simply a tick box exercise" and they would be interested "to see if objections to these proposals make any difference!".

The importance of the proposals was clear and consequently, there was an emotive aspect to many comments, *"I do very much care about what happens to the libraries they will affect me greatly", "please do be careful you make the right decisions they will affect us all badly", "I enjoy everything books, groups etc. at our library I would be lost if it was not there".*

There was a lot of praise for current services and appeals to "keep my library open".

Support for change but preserve fundamentals

Whilst respondents understood that libraries needed to change in accordance with new technologies and demand, *"I will support these changes that are necessary in order to respond to accelerating changes in technology and lifestyles"*, many stressed that it was important to maintain certain fundamentals such as physical resources:

"we are all too keen to embrace the digital revolution that has occurred in recent years, I believe we are in danger of forgetting the value and pleasure to be had from books provided onto paper, there is still a large section of society mostly elderly who have no computer or internet access, it is important that their needs are considered and met, as well as those who have embraced technology".

Valuable community asset

Many respondents described the libraries as a "much valued centre of the community" which are used by different people for different reasons, "it is a friendly face for lonely people, a break for those with children, support for those looking to learn.

Several respondents stressed the importance of reading as part of a child's development and the links between reading levels and good levels of literacy, *"we need secure libraries to help future generations with the enjoyment of reading at a young age which encourages learning at school."* Others highlighted the importance to older residents, *"for many older people, libraries not only offer reading and research facilities but also a safe venue to interact and socialise"*.

Several felt that it was "important to maintain a service for the community" and that these changes are used as "an opportunity to create a learning centre in every community, called the Library, recognising that the places we call libraries are not longer just places to borrow books, but accessible centres for local formal and informal learning".

Staff

The additional comments were full of praise for the commitment, knowledge and important role of the current staff, *"the library staff are an essential of the library experience, they are indispensable to the library user, both helpful and knowledgeable.....a valuable asset"*, and although there was some support for the suggestion of volunteers there was as much concern expressed that they would not have the same *"experience", "expertise"* and *"patience"* as the paid staff: *"volunteers have an important place in society but the front line library service is not appropriate for volunteers."*

9. APPENDIX

Library Extra

Library	Number of Respondents	% of respondents citing Extra	% of all respondents
Lichfield	488	32%	8%
Newcastle	412	27%	6%
Tamworth	333	22%	5%
Burton	288	19%	4%
	1521		

Library Core

	% of Number of respondents		% of all	
Library	Respondents citing Core respo		respondents	
Stafford	565	22%	9%	
Cannock	315	12%	5%	
Leek	217	8%	3%	
Burntwood	211	8%	3%	
Stone	175	7%	3%	
Clayton	158	6%	2%	
Rugeley	144	6%	2%	
Codsall	141	5%	2%	
Uttoxeter	120	5%	2%	
Cheadle	115	4%	2%	
Biddulph	114	4%	2%	
Perton	95	4%	1%	
Kidsgrove	92	4%	1%	
Eccleshall	85	3%	1%	
Wombourne	50	2%	1%	
	2597			

Library Local

		% of		
1.16	Number of	respondents	% of all	
Library	Respondents	citing Local	respondents	
Penkridge	222	9%	3%	
Blythe Bridge	220	9%	3%	
Brewood	172	7%	3%	
Barton-under-Needwood	168	7%	3%	
Baswich	144	6%	2%	
Hednesford	139	6%	2%	
Glascote	104	4%	2%	
Kinver	103	4%	2%	
Heath Hayes	100	4%	2%	
Silverdale	92	4%	1%	
Norton Canes	89	4%	1%	
Great Wyrley	85	4%	1%	
Werrington	84	4%	1%	
Shenstone	83	4%	1%	
Rising Brook	80	3%	1%	
Wilnecote	71	3%	1%	
Holmcroft	70	3%	1%	
Audley	68	3%	1%	
Cheslyn Hay	67	3%	1%	
Loggerheads	57	2%	1%	
Brereton	52	2%	1%	
Talke	50	2%	1%	
Knutton	15	1%	0%	
Gnosall	14	1%	0%	
	2349]		

Proportion of each age group in respondents, active borrowers and Staffordshire population

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents	% of Active Borrowers	% of Staffordshire population
Under 16	50	1%	38%	18%
16-19	49	1%	3%	5%
20-34	267	8%	9%	17%
35-44	477	13%	9%	13%
45-59	835	24%	13%	21%
60-74	1413	40%	19%	18%
75+	448	13%	9%	8%

Proportion of Respondents by District (Where a Post Code was provided) compared to Staffordshire Population

	Number of Respondents from each district	% Respondents from each district	% of Staffordshire Residents living in each district	
Cannock Chase	348	11%	11%	
East Staffordshire	340	11%	13%	
Lichfield	418	13%	12%	
Newcastle-under-Lyme	405	13%	١5%	
South Staffordshire	566	18%	13%	
Stafford	504	16%	١5%	
Staffordshire Moorlands	411	13%	11%	
Tamworth	220	7%	9%	

Community Managed Workshops Queries Raised:

Will there be a contract?

- \Rightarrow Will the contract contain minimum standards?
- \Rightarrow What will it cover?

Who is responsible for the building?

- \Rightarrow Who pays for the building? / Who pays rents?
- \Rightarrow Who is responsible for building maintenance?
- \Rightarrow How is 'maintenance of the building' defined?

How will supporting equipment be managed?

- \Rightarrow Will it be a book based service or a book and information service?
- \Rightarrow Who will provide the books?
- \Rightarrow Would we have to take all the books?
- \Rightarrow How would we manage fines and fees?
- \Rightarrow Do we have to leasing the ICT equipment?
- \Rightarrow Would we have to rent ICT support?
- \Rightarrow Who insures ICT equipment?

How will be staff the service?

- \Rightarrow Will there be redundancies?
- \Rightarrow Could we employ existing staff?
- \Rightarrow What if there are no volunteers?

Other

- \Rightarrow When will the changes happen?
- \Rightarrow Will there be support from Staffordshire County Council?
- \Rightarrow What if there are no volunteers?
- \Rightarrow What would happen if there were no appetite locally?
- ⇒ Where they any existing organisation who may potentially want to take over the running of a community-led library?

Extent Affected by Proposed Change in Hours by District

	Cannock Chase	East Staffordshire	Lichfield	Newcastle	South Staffordshire	Stafford	Staffordshire Moorlands	Tamworth
A great deal	16%	12%	11%	14%	13%	12%	13%	6%
A little	22%	18%	22%	22%	18%	24%	29%	14%
Not at all	49%	49%	50%	48%	48%	50%	45%	59%
Don't know	12%	22%	18%	17%	20%	14%	13%	21%