

Changes to library services

Consultation document

South Gloucestershire Libraries provide a statutory service to everyone in South Gloucestershire and this is currently delivered through a network of 13 branch libraries and one mobile library. Most libraries currently provide the following services and facilities:

- A comprehensive range of books, audio books and books in large print
- Access to computers and a range of software & free Wi-Fi access
- Information services
- DVDs and CDs for hire
- Photocopying (except Chipping Sodbury Library)
- Language learning packs
- A wide range of learning opportunities
- Newspapers and magazines
- A range of children's events and school holiday activities
- Space for hire

Like all councils, we are facing significant funding pressures and through our council savings programme we are working towards delivering £22M of savings a year between now and 2020. Our library service has been identified as an area which could potentially contribute towards these savings and a target of £650,000 a year by October 2017 has been agreed as part of the council's budget.

We know that library services in South Gloucestershire are valued and that users are very satisfied with them, however as budgets reduce we really want to know which services are the most used and valued by library users and whether there are different ways that libraries can be run and managed so that the library budget is used in the most effective and efficient way.

Our libraries cost £2.8million a year to run and is made up as follows.

Cost area	Amount
Stock	£241,000
Transport	£68,000
IT etc.	£105,000
Libraries West	£88,000
Other supplies	£122,000
Premises	£403,000
Staffing	£1,746,000
TOTAL	£2,773,000

Some £185,000 of income is raised by the service annually through renting stock and through fines, leading to a net annual running cost of £2.6m

By October 2017, the council needs to reduce its libraries budget by £650,000 to £2,123,000 and we need your views to help shape how this is done.

This is the first stage of consultation on potential changes to library services and the timescales we are currently working towards are set out below.

	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	
Council agrees library budget and savings target (17 Feb)	◆																					
Consultation period (22 Feb to 13 May)	◆			◆																		
Dialogue with communities and groups on individual library options																						
Report back to Communities Committee for initial decisions								◆														
Second phase of consultation on detailed proposals for each library																						
Final decision by Communities Committee to proceed													◆									
Preparation and transition period including training																						
Final implementation of service changes and library savings																						◆

Options under consideration: What services are affected?

We have explored different ways that we can make this level of savings and have identified that significant levels of savings can only be achieved by changing opening hours where staffing is funded by the Council, or by reducing the number of libraries as this makes up the majority of the current library budget.

Other councils throughout the country have introduced a number of different library delivery models including volunteer supported and community run libraries, creating charitable library trusts, libraries run by a staff mutual, libraries run by not-for-profit and profit making companies and unstaffed self-service libraries.

Library delivery models

There are a wide number of library delivery model options across the country, those listed in the consultation are some of the most common options and South Gloucestershire has been and will continue to liaise with other library authorities to learn from their experiences. Within each model there are variations and authorities have adapted the models to meet their own priorities and circumstances

Model	Description
Satellite / hub model	This model (the one costed within the report) provides five main hub libraries and seven smaller (satellite) libraries with fewer opening hours. Within each library the services will be similar and will ensure most communities have a local library. Opening hours will reflect local need

<p>Using volunteers to work alongside staff to support added value services such as storytime, using computers, events, etc.</p>	<p>South Gloucestershire already use volunteers. They are able to provide additional support to users such as taking books to people who cannot visit a library, supporting customers with IT and helping at coffee mornings and events. Other authorities use for such activities as storytimes, running events and gardening. The benefits to the service are customers are able to have more personalised service with the volunteers giving time to individual customers which staff aren't always able to do due to staff resources</p>
<p>Using volunteers to work alongside staff, with clearly defined roles for each</p>	<p>Volunteers in this role would help people using the service and help with some routine tasks. These might include helping people use self-service machines, shelving stock in addition to some of the tasks listed above. Staff would deal with enquiries, financial issues, delivery of any specialised services, manual issuing of items, complaints and managing the volunteers.</p> <p>The benefits to the service are that it enables the paid staff to be fully utilised on the tasks they are trained for and can extend the hours the library is able to be open each day</p>
<p>Using volunteers to supplement library opening hours without paid staff supervision</p>	<p>This is a further stage to the above with volunteers having a greater role in delivering services. They would be managed by the service but have more responsibility. Benefits are similar to the above but with possibly longer opening hours being possible.</p>
<p>Services run and operated directly by community based organisations and volunteers</p> <p>Transferring libraries to be run by a not-for-profit organisation, trust, charity or staff mutual</p>	<p>The service point could be operated by a community organisation, full details of this option is available in the Arts Council publication <i>Community libraries: Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities</i>. This identifies three models</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community managed where the service is community led and delivered with some support from the council 2. Community supported libraries which are council led and funded but with significant contribution from volunteers supported by paid staff 3. Commissioned by the council – these may be fully funded but managed by a social enterprise or not for profit organisation. This model could apply to a single library or whole authority
<p>Bringing in external funding (e.g. from parish councils or grants) to fund additional opening</p>	<p>External funding for core services is difficult, most external funding bodies will fund new projects but will not fund core services unless they are innovative. In 2014/15 South Gloucestershire has received funding from external agencies for</p>

hours and other library running costs	work on mental health, dementia, young volunteers and the implementation of wi-fi.
Renting out space to generate income to support library services	There are some local funds such as funding from town and parish councils which may be used for core services at a local level
Co-locating council one stop shops and potentially other services within libraries in Kingswood, Yate, Patchway and Thornbury	The council is reviewing the buildings that it currently runs services from on an area by area basis. There are options for using libraries to be the base for the delivery of other services such as one stop shops and advice agencies. In some authorities the libraries have moved into other premises such as schools, children's centres or extra care housing schemes.
Transferring libraries to be run by a commercial (for profit) organisation	Public libraries can be run by private companies on contract from the local authority, this is similar to many other services that have been out sourced from the local authority
Unstaffed self-service libraries	This is an option whereby the library is remotely opened and closed. Libraries could be staffed at core hours but entry outside staffed hours is controlled by swipe card. Libraries already have self-service for books and are introducing self-service printing this year. An example of this type of option can be seen at http://bit.ly/1KqIbou

Having looked at these, and the circumstances in South Gloucestershire, we have identified three ideas in order to achieve the savings targets within the library service and we are seeking views on these and alternative options from interested stakeholders.

Option 1

Close high-cost services / low use services and those close to existing main libraries and reduce other opening hours with a local opportunity to reduce impact

This option would affect Chipping Sodbury Library, the mobile library and opening times at all libraries across South Gloucestershire. We would seek volunteers and alternative external funding to minimise the reduction in opening hours on a local basis. We estimate that this option would save approx. £500,000 per year, meaning that additional savings would still need to be found from library or other council services.

The mobile library:

The current mobile has already passed its useful shelf-life and is in need of replacement. A decision has been taken to delay replacement pending this review. The mobile library is the most expensive library per member in South Gloucestershire. It costs £80,000 per year to run, and 578 people borrowed an item in the last 12 months and a further 200

people used it to return items borrowed from a library, meaning a cost per member of £102 per year compared to an average of £51, 87% of mobile library members also visit a static library, leaving a total of 101 unique users at a cost of £792 each. If the current mobile library service were to be withdrawn, vulnerable residents would be supported through the home visit service provided to the elderly and the housebound.

It is proposed that the mobile library service is no longer supported by South Gloucestershire Council and that vulnerable residents would be supported through the home visit service or are encouraged to use other library locations. Further information about the mobile library service is available in the mobile library information pack.

Chipping Sodbury Library:

Chipping Sodbury library premises costs are £9k as it is leased at a peppercorn rent. The majority of costs are related to staff (£33k) and IT and this library costs £42k to run. There are 1,276 members (£33 to run per member). This is below the South Gloucestershire average. 1,067 members also use other libraries leaving a total of 209 unique members at a cost of £200 each. Chipping Sodbury library is within a mile of one of South Gloucestershire's main libraries at Yate.

It is proposed that Chipping Sodbury library is no longer funded by South Gloucestershire Council and that this service is either supported through external local funding/volunteers or users are encouraged to use Yate Library. Further information about Chipping Sodbury library is available in the mobile library information pack.

Changes to opening hours across South Gloucestershire:

Excluding the mobile and Chipping Sodbury libraries, the remaining 12 libraries are open a total of 477 hours a week, at a cost across the whole service of approx. £2,830 per hour. It is proposed that library opening hours are reduced by 19% The Council would need to decide whether such a reduction should be pro-rata across all libraries, or focused on particular locations in order to distinguish main and satellite libraries. This would also need to take account of future population growth. Reductions in opening hours could be based on individual data such as users per hour; the needs of particular equality groups including young people and vulnerable people, so as reduce the impact on residents

It is proposed that library opening hours are reduced by 19% (88 hours a week) across South Gloucestershire libraries. The details of how this could be split is yet to be determined pending the outcome of the consultation and we would welcome views on this.

Reduction in the materials fund:

The materials fund is currently £240,000 per year and is used to purchase books, audio visual materials, online stock and newspapers. It is proposed to reduce the materials fund by £50,000 a year.

Use of external funding and volunteers:

Local groups and volunteers would be given the opportunity to fund additional hours, or to operate elements of the library service. The libraries would remain closed (outside the times funded by the Council) if local groups and volunteers did not come forward to extend opening hours or help support the delivery of services during core hours. It is proposed through the consultation to understand the level of interest in providing external funding

and the use of volunteers before making any decisions and we would welcome feedback on this.

Option 2:

As per option 1 with the provision of minimum staffing in satellite libraries with an opportunity to reduce the impact through external funding and the use of volunteers.

This option would see Chipping Sodbury library and the mobile library no longer funded by South Gloucestershire Council as per option one and libraries categorised as either a main library or a satellite library and resourced accordingly. External funding and volunteers could be used to minimise the impact of reduced staffing and opening hours. This option would deliver savings in the realm of £600,000 to £630,000 per annum and is the council's preferred option at this stage as it keeps as many libraries open as possible, while delivering significant savings.

The council, would also look at the spread of main population centres (taking into account future growth) and would categorise libraries as either main libraries or satellite libraries. Main libraries would continue to be fully staffed and operated by the Council. These are currently proposed as Kingswood, Yate, Patchway, Thornbury and Bradley Stoke. The remaining libraries would be designated as satellite libraries. We would welcome feedback on the classification of main and satellite libraries.

From current opening hours, main libraries would reduce their opening hours by an average of 8 hours per week. Satellite libraries would be staffed and operated by the Council for 18 hours per week (equivalent to 2 full days). Local groups and volunteers would be given the opportunity to fund additional hours or to operate elements of the library service. The satellite libraries would remain closed (outside the times funded by the Council) if local groups and volunteers did not come forward to extend opening hours or help support the delivery of services during core hours.

Support would be provided to train volunteers and to support any transition arrangements, which would be funded through savings in management and other central costs, and reductions to the materials fund.

Option 3:

Close all libraries except identified main libraries

This option would enable the Council to maintain the current level of provision at 5 main libraries taking into account geographic spread of main population centre libraries and future growth. These are currently proposed as Kingswood, Yate, Patchway, Thornbury and Bradley Stoke. It would deliver savings in the realms of £1m.

Local volunteers and the community would be given the opportunity to keep other libraries open in their area subject to these being assessed for service and financial implications.

Though this option provides greater savings it may be difficult for the Council to demonstrate it is delivering the comprehensive and efficient service required under the Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Alternative options and savings

These are just three ideas for how the council could make the savings to library services and illustrates the tough choices that these funding reductions could have. These options are not set and we fully expect them to evolve as a result of this consultation and conversations with service users and local communities over the coming months.

The council is therefore very keen to hear from local people, service users, staff, local communities and other interested parties of any alternative suggestions or ideas for the future provision of library services with reduced funding.

Other proposed changes to council services which could also impact on future library services

The council is also undertaking other service reviews which could have an impact on library services and these are subject to their own consultation running at the same time.

Review of council accommodation

(affecting Kingswood, Yate, Thornbury & Patchway libraries)

The council is reviewing the buildings that it currently runs services from on an area by area basis to explore whether savings of £928,000 could be made. This review has started by looking at the future of council buildings in Kingswood to explore how council office accommodation at the Civic Centre, library services, the one stop shop and other services could be located. Future stages of the review could also look at services in other areas such as Yate, Thornbury and Patchway.

This means that the range of library services and library opening hours will be decided in this review, but the location of library services in the longer term may change in these areas and be agreed as part of the accommodation review.

Further information about the review of council accommodation and ways to have your say on this review is available from: www.southglos.gov.uk/consultation

Review of One Stop Shop provision

(affecting OSS in Thornbury, Kingswood, Yate, Patchway and the contact centre)

The council is reviewing its One Stop Shop and customer services provision in order to make further savings of £60,000.

The council is proposing that the One Stop Shop currently operated out of Thornbury library becomes a pilot for a new way of providing advice and information digitally. It is also considering as an alternative to this, either reducing one stop opening hours across the four sites or retaining one stop shop provision as is and instead reducing the number of staff in the council's telephone contact centre.

Further information about the review of one stop shop services and ways to have your say on this review is available from www.southglos.gov.uk/consultation

How can I find out more, get involved and have a say?

Further information

We welcome comments on the options outlined in this paper for our library services and to understand better what the impact of any changes could be on service users, the provision of services and the wider community.

The consultation is open between 22 February and 13 May 2016.

To support this consultation, the council is making available a wide range of information which is available on our consultation webpage or from your local library:

- Information packs for each library outlining the current services provided and usage information, opening hours, running costs, satisfaction information, membership information and levels of staffing and volunteering
- An initial draft equality impact assessment for consultation. We welcome comments on this and it will be updated following the consultation and used to inform the decision making process for this project.
- Frequently asked questions, which we will add to as the consultation is running in order to provide answers to key questions we are asked.
- A copy of the report (and appendices) presented to Communities Committee on 20 January 2016
- Some national reports on libraries
- Information on the support available to volunteers and how groups or organisations can submit an expression of interest to get further involved in local library services

Our dedicated consultation webpage is: **www.southglos.gov.uk/librarychanges**

Ways to have your say

You can find out more or tell us your views by:

- Completing our consultation survey – available from the library or online
- Email: consultation@southglos.gov.uk
- Write to: FREEPOST RTCT-JXLE-EET, South Gloucestershire Council, Corporate Research & Consultation Team, Library Consultation, Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood, BRISTOL, BS15 9TR
- Phone: 01454 868154

We will be holding staffed drop in sessions at every library during the consultation period where you can find out more and ask questions. Details of these sessions and any other consultation events or meetings can be found on our website.

If you would like someone to talk to your group or organisation about these proposals, please contact us using the details above to arrange.