

Library Service Redesign: Changes to the way library services are delivered

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr David Hall – Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure

Division and Local Member(s): All

Lead Officer: Michele Cusack – Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning

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	Seen by:	Name	Date
	County Solicitor	Honor Clarke	10/10/2018
	Monitoring Officer	Scott Wooldridge	05/10/2018
	Corporate Finance	Peter Lewis	11/10/2018
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	09/10/2018
	Property	Claire Lovett	06/10/2018
	Procurement / ICT	Simon Clifford	05/10/2018
	Senior Manager	Michele Cusack	15/10/2018
	Commissioning Development Team	Vikki Hearn	11/10/2018
	Local Member(s)	All - all local members will have an opportunity to comment on the recommendations at the Scrutiny for Policy and Place Committee meeting scheduled on 24 th October 2018.	n/a
	Cabinet Member	Cllr. David Hall, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure	15/10/2018
	Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr. Simon Coles	15/10/2018
	Relevant Scrutiny Chairman	Cllr Anna Groskop Cllr Leigh Redman Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey	09/10/2018 15/10/2018 15/10/2018
Forward Plan Reference:	FP/08/07/01		
Summary:	Somerset County Council is fully committed in continuing to deliver a modern, thriving library service fit for its residents now and in the future. We are also committed to a financially sustainable future for the service.		
Summary (cont.):			

A vision, outcomes framework and strategic direction for the library service was determined in November 2017. This set an objective to review and re-design the libraries network, to modernise the library service in Somerset and to put the service on a sustainable financial footing. This report sets out recommendations for changes to the way library services are delivered. The recommendations have been developed having considered feedback from extensive community engagement and public consultation exercises, and with regard to a full assessment of needs, access, and equalities impact. All these considerations have informed the Council's understanding of the baseline 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service in Somerset which the Council is required in law to provide.

The vast majority of respondents to the public consultation exercise were strongly opposed to changes to library provision, particularly the potential closure of library buildings. Library closures would have a range of impacts, some of which could be significant for individuals, and in particular for those with certain characteristics which are protected under the Equality Act. The views of consultation respondents, and the potential impacts of library closures on people with characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act, are set out in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 to the report. Decision makers must consider these views and assessments carefully, and have regard to them and to the Public Sector Equality Duty (see "legal implications" below) when forming a judgment on the recommendations.

If implemented, the changes recommended will result in new services being delivered in some areas, and in withdrawing funding to library buildings in other areas. The County Council has been discussing the potential for communities to support library buildings, and we will work in partnership with community groups wherever possible to try to keep library buildings open. Where it is not possible to do this, library buildings would close, and library services would be provided in different ways to ensure the County Council provides reasonable access to library services which meet local needs.

Whilst we are encouraged by the response from communities to date, at this point the prospects of successfully agreeing Community Library Partnerships are uncertain. The County Council has a statutory duty to deliver public library services and accordingly, the council must not depend on community support for Community Library Partnerships (which may or may not be forthcoming) to deliver its statutory service.

An earlier officer decision has set a process and framework for agreeing and supporting Community Library Partnerships. This Cabinet report now builds on that decision by recommending that, for some specific communities, direct financial support is provided to support Community Library Partnerships, if these

Summary (cont.):

	<p>are developed. The report also recommends how the County Council should support Community Library Partnerships through property transfer and leasing arrangements, where this is possible.</p> <p>Following feedback from the consultation, consideration of the needs of specific communities and work to re-design the library service workforce, this report also sets out recommendations for further savings within the library service. These further savings will make an important contribution towards putting the library service on a sustainable financial footing. Finally, the report recommends bringing forward a policy on donations and philanthropic giving for local libraries, to enable businesses, communities and local people to take a stake in this much valued service and support the development of a thriving and dynamic library service into the future.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p>	<p>That the Cabinet agrees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To adopt the Library Service Delivery Plan set out in Appendix 1 to this report as the basis for the delivery of the statutory ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service in Somerset from April 2019. Consideration will have taken into account the Needs Assessment set out in Appendix 2, feedback from the public consultation exercise set out in Appendix 3, and the Equalities Impact Assessment set out in Appendix 4. A summary of the recommendations that will be implemented as a result of adopting the Library Service Delivery Plan is set out in section 2 below. 2. To authorise the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning to implement, subject to further consultation where appropriate, the further savings proposals for the library service set out in section 5 of this report. 3. To reduce the library service budget for 2019/20 as set out in section 6 of this report, delivering an ongoing saving of £345,000 per annum to be factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20+. 4. To authorise the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning to take the actions set out in section 3 and Appendix 5 of this report to provide support to Community Library Partnerships, where such partnerships are established. Support will include the agreement of the headline terms of potential property transfers or leasing arrangements as set out in section 4 of Appendix 5 to this report. 5. To note the process for taking forward Community Library Partnership discussions (summarised in Appendix 5), determined through an earlier decision by the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community Infrastructure. To also delegate authority for negotiating and agreeing arrangements for the

Reasons for Recommendations (cont.):

unaffordable. We no longer have the funding to provide the services we used to, and if library buildings in the 15 communities cannot be maintained with community support, some people will no longer be able to walk to the library. However, we estimate that around 320,000 people live within walking distance of the 19 libraries we are recommending should be retained - over 85% of those who currently live within walking distance of a library in Somerset. This figure includes over 55,000 people (15%) who live within walking distance of a library in one of the 7 communities where we are now recommending that the Council continues to operate a library building. The recommended library network will ensure that those people who can no longer walk to the library have reasonable access by car, bicycle, public transport or community transport.

- We are heartened by the number of communities who are exploring Community Library Partnerships, and we have listened to feedback from these communities. Our principle stakeholder group (the Friends of Somerset Libraries) have echoed a widespread view that the council should provide a higher level of funding to support the viability of Community Library Partnerships. We cannot afford to provide financial support in all affected communities, and we will support all Community Library Partnerships with a 'core offer' of technical support, book stock and ICT services. However, where local needs are higher, access to alternative libraries is more difficult, and where libraries currently provide good value for money, we are offering financial support over and above this core offer. We have increased the amount proposed in the consultation for affected communities by more than 70%. We are recommending this approach because it represents good value for money, and because we agree with the view that this will help ensure the viability of Community Library Partnerships.
- Many respondents to the consultation asked us to explore other ways of reducing costs or increasing income, as an alternative to closing libraries. The library service is already very efficient and generates more income per head than most comparable authorities. However, through the consultation process some communities and partners have suggested ways in which they may be able to support some library buildings, if these continue to be operated by the County Council. We have taken some of these proposals forward following the consultation. We have also carried out a full review of our workforce and will be launching a restructure of the libraries management team to reduce costs to address the County Council's financial challenge. In total, we believe that we will be able to make £75,000 of savings in these alternative ways, to enable us to continue to provide library buildings where they are needed most. Recommendation 6 of this report builds on these initial alternative proposals by taking forward the suggestion

	<p>made by many respondents that donations and philanthropic giving could play a key role in achieving the vision of a ‘thriving and dynamic’ library service in the future.</p> <p>Consultation feedback has also shaped the assessments of need, access, and equalities impact which underpin the recommendations in the report. The recommendations are grounded in a wide range of evidence and analysis which is set out in full in the relevant Appendices; a number of important reasons for the recommendations are set out in the summary boxes in Appendices 1 and 2. The equalities impacts set out in Appendix 4 are considered to be proportionate, taking into account the mitigatory factors, in the context of the County Council’s financial resources.</p>
<p>Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy:</p>	<p>Somerset’s Libraries Service supports the council’s priority outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People are supported through early years reading activities, skills development (Code Clubs, technology activities, volunteering opportunities) and study space with free Wifi. • We provide books on prescription and other health and wellbeing information resources, a wide range of health and wellbeing activities, and combat social isolation by bringing people together. • Through business events, access to digital making equipment and our specialist business resources collections, we support businesses to develop and thrive. <p>In order to continue to support these priority outcomes in the current financial climate, and to put the Libraries Service onto a sustainable financial footing, the report recommends a series of changes to the provision of library services. These changes will deliver a saving of £345,000, which will form part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy budget setting process for 2019-20.</p>
<p>Consultations and co-production undertaken:</p>	<p>The Libraries Service Redesign Programme has been conducted using a co-production approach throughout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic direction and outcomes framework which underpins the programme was shaped through discussion with a wide range of stakeholder groups (see the background papers listed in section 3 below for further details). • An extensive informal engagement exercise to better understand the need for library services at a local level, and the potential for greater community involvement to support libraries, was undertaken prior to the development of consultation proposals. In the autumn of 2017, the project team met with a wide range of parish, town, district and county councillors, representatives of library friends’ groups and other local stakeholders at a series of community engagement meetings.

Consultations and co-production undertaken (cont.):

- Ongoing dialogue with the Friends of Somerset Libraries group (who have acted as a valuable 'critical friend' through the many changes we have made to the service in recent years) has influenced the programme at every stage.

A major public and staff consultation exercise was carried out between 29th January and 13th June 2018. A wide range of stakeholder groups were consulted and provided feedback, focus groups were held with children and disabled people, and members of the public and staff provided feedback through separate survey questionnaires. Over 7000 people and organisations provided feedback, which has been carefully analysed and thoroughly considered. Appendix 3 explains how the consultation exercise was conducted, how results were analysed, and sets out a high level summary of results. Further detail is available in the background papers listed in this Appendix. The vast majority of respondents to the public consultation exercise were strongly opposed to changes to library provision, particularly the potential closure of library buildings. Where respondents were asked to express their preference for Community Library Partnerships or mobile / outreach options, there was an almost universal preference for the community partnership option as a means of retaining the library.

Feedback from this extensive exercise, and from the previous community and stakeholder engagement exercises, has been considered carefully in the development of recommendations, at every stage. The assessments of access, need, and equalities impact set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 4 respectively draw heavily on evidence gathered through the public and staff consultations, and the earlier community engagement work. The recommendations on support to Community Library Partnerships set out in Appendix 5 have been shaped by discussions in individual communities, and by the views of Friends of Somerset Libraries, the principle stakeholder group for the Libraries Service. A number of ideas for alternative ways of reducing costs have emerged through the consultation, and some of these proposals have been developed further and form part of the further savings set out in section 5 below.

Consultations and co-production undertaken (cont.):

The background paper '*County Council's response to the Consultation*' sets out, at a high level, a response to the consultation feedback. This includes an explanation of how the original proposals set out for consultation have been developed over time in response to feedback from the community.

The project team is very grateful for the significant effort that members of the public, county councillors and other elected representatives, and many key stakeholder groups have put into their consultation responses. We are particularly grateful for the ongoing input of Friends of Somerset Libraries. This feedback and the evidence and information gathered has

	<p>played a crucial role in shaping the future of the libraries service.</p> <p>Internally, discussions with senior library staff and supervisors, and with colleagues in Children’s Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Transport and Property Services have shaped the Library Service Re-Design Programme throughout. The project team has worked particularly closely with the property service in developing the recommendations on property matters set out in Appendix 5. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure has been consulted on the recommendations, together with other cabinet members and relevant members of the senior leadership team.</p> <p>The Opposition Spokesperson and the three Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees for Children and Families; Adults; and Policy and Place have been informed of the recommendations in this report. They will be consulted through the Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place meeting on 24th October, where they will get an opportunity to comment on the proposals and make alternative recommendations. All local members had an opportunity to comment on the proposals put forward for consultation and have been kept up to date through a number of Member’s Information Sheets. The comments of members who responded have been considered. All local members will have an opportunity to comment on the recommendations at the Scrutiny for Policy and Place Committee meeting scheduled on 24th October 2018. Any specific recommendations or alternative options from the Scrutiny Committee will be provided to the County Council’s Cabinet when they meet to consider the recommendations in this report on 5th November 2018.</p>
<p>Financial Implications:</p>	<p>Financial implications are set out in detail in section 6 below. The recommendations in this report would deliver an ongoing saving of approximately £345,000 per annum, with an overall one-off investment of approximately £445,000 (excluding costs incurred to date). The payback period is estimated at 1.3 years.</p>
<p>Legal Implications (cont.):</p>	<p>Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 places a duty on the Council to provide a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service for all residents of Somerset as well as anyone who works or studies full-time in the county. The council must consider various other legal obligations (e.g. the public sector equality duty and best value duty) when considering changes to service provision, and the council must ensure that any consultation it carries out meets the requirement for fairness.</p> <p><u><i>The duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service</i></u></p> <p>Not every person can live next to a library building and it is not expected that a comprehensive service should achieve this</p>

**Legal Implications
(cont.):**

aim. However, the service must be accessible to every person using reasonable means. Distances and times taken to reach a library building must be reasonable. Where residents have particular problems which make accessing libraries harder these should be capable of being met. The means of access can include, where appropriate, new technologies that might mitigate the effect of not living next to a library building.

The law requires that councils make the best use of their available resources. In order to do this the service must be developed within the context of a strategic plan which takes into account the needs and aspirations of communities within the library authority's area.

The case law on library authorities' duties under the 1964 Act makes it clear that the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service cannot be divorced from the reality of the financial constraints acting on the council. It is legitimate for councils to seek to make overall budget decisions and then subsequently to consider how best to structure their library service provision in the light of the available funding resulting from those budget decisions. Decisions on structuring service provision may only be made once the council has established the baseline for a "comprehensive and efficient" service in its area. It is clear that this baseline will be different in each local authority's area since it will depend on local factors such as need and aspiration, demand, social exclusion, economic deprivation and local demography and geography.

In order to meet its duty under the 1964 Act the council took the following into account when developing its proposals for the future of the library service:

- Assessment of need – the Council has considered how library service provision meets the needs of the population as a whole, as well as how the needs of specific communities and groups are met. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 were developed using a full needs assessment, which is set out in Appendix 2. The methodology and needs assessment data used to develop the proposals was made available for scrutiny and feedback during the consultation process, and has been reviewed since the consultation in the light of feedback gathered from individuals and stakeholder groups.
- The provision of reasonable access to library services for all residents taking into account distance and time taken to reach a library and the availability of digital technologies. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 have been developed using an assessment of access to library service provision, which has in turn been developed following full consideration of feedback from the public consultation exercise.
- Feedback from the consultation exercise has been reviewed and carefully considered; Appendix 3 sets out

**Legal Implications
(cont.):**

the detailed analysis of responses to the consultation. Some suggestions have been adopted within the proposals. Background paper '*County Council's response to the Consultation*' summarises how the proposals have been changed in the light of consultation feedback, and Appendix 1 explains the detailed reasoning for doing so. Paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 below explain how the council has considered, and rejected, two themes that emerged in consultation feedback.

Our view, taking into account the above factors, is that the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient service will be discharged by the Council in the event that the recommendations in this report are implemented whether all, some or none of the proposed Community Library Partnerships are established. Where a Community Library Partnership cannot be established the baseline comprehensive and efficient service will be provided by the alternate means set out in Appendix A.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

In carrying out a potential service redesign the council must discharge its Public Sector Equality Duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which requires the council, when exercising its functions (here, to provide the library service), to:

“have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under [the] Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”*

In practice this has meant carrying out a comprehensive equality impact assessment, and then rigorously taking the results of that assessment into account in formulating plans for service redesign and in the making of the decision. The impact assessment has been continually reviewed as the service design process has gone forward and the outcome has been taken into account in forming the proposals in Appendix 1. It should be noted that the equalities impact assessment is one of a number of factors that must be taken into account – each of them legitimate considerations which must be balanced in a way which is proportionate. Decision makers should ensure that they read and consider the equalities impact assessment and the other Appendices carefully before making the decision.

An initial impact assessment on the potential impact of re-designing the library network was undertaken when the vision,

	<p>strategic direction and outcomes framework for the service were considered – see background papers below for a link to this impact assessment. This initial impact assessment has been updated and expanded significantly during the course of developing the proposals, and is attached as Appendix 4 to this report.</p> <p><i><u>The Best Value duty</u></i></p> <p>The Best Value duty requires Councils to take steps, with the object of continuously improving the way services are delivered, to consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision. In contrast to the Equality Duty, Best Value requires the council to take action, rather than to pay “due regard”.</p> <p>This report and its appendices set out how, during the development of the proposals, SCC has consulted a wide range of persons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representatives of council tax payers • those who use or are likely to use the service • local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses • district councils • friends of libraries groups <p>The consultation was carried out at an early stage in the development of proposals for the re-design of library services – well before any final decisions may be made, but with proposals that were informed by a needs assessment and other considerations in order to provide a basis for a meaningful and useful consultation.</p> <p>Value for money, including economic and social value, has been considered in developing the proposals set out in Appendix 1, through the needs assessment described above, and through consideration of unit costs. The results of this analysis are incorporated into the needs assessment, .</p> <p>Environmental value considerations have also been considered and comments made during the consultation taken into account in developing the proposals.</p>
<p>HR Implications:</p> <p>HR Implications (con’t):</p>	<p>As noted in paragraph 6.3 below, the recommendations are likely to lead to a reduction in the number of staff required to run the library service - the size and structure of the frontline workforce is likely to change. The extent of this change will depend on whether communities choose to support libraries, and whether they decide to fund staff or operate libraries using volunteers.</p> <p>Staff and unions were consulted alongside the public in the consultation exercise, and their feedback played an important role in shaping the recommendations set out in the Cabinet</p>

**HR Implications
(con't):**

report. This followed a previous staff consultation on a high-level structure and new roles for frontline library staff, which informed a decision on these roles and high-level structure which was taken by the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning on 28th May 2018. The structure set through that decision will be modified if the recommendation to restructure the library service management team is agreed.

Once we have an indication of the intentions of communities regarding Community Library Partnerships, including the staffing implications, a further staff consultation exercise will be launched on the detailed structure of the libraries workforce. This will enable the previous decision introducing new roles and a high-level structure for the library workforce to be implemented. A revision to the structure of the libraries service management team, which will deliver a proportion of the saving described above, will also be included. The HR advisory team will support the consultation exercise, and the subsequent selection and appointment of staff to new roles within the structure. This complex and lengthy process will complete the workforce transformation element of the Libraries Service Re-Design Programme.

Some redundancies are likely to result from the implementation of the recommendations set out here (including the recommendation to restructure the libraries management team set out in paragraph 5.5 below). The project team will seek to avoid any compulsory redundancies through an offer of voluntary redundancy and through re-deployment within the libraries service and the wider council where possible.

We think it is unlikely that communities will decide to employ library staff directly, and so we do not anticipate any TUPE transfers arising because of the recommendations in this report in respect of frontline library staff. However, depending on the choices individual communities take regarding Community Library Partnerships, we anticipate that there could be TUPE implications for some cleaning staff, either those employed directly by the libraries service, or employed by contractors. Individual community groups have been advised of any such potential implications, and the HR advisory team will support any TUPE transfers arising.

Finally, cabinet members should note that the Libraries Service Redesign Programme has been underway for over a year now. One consequence is a long period of uncertainty for many library staff which will continue through the restructure and selection process. The continuing uncertainty has been highlighted by Union representatives, and through our Equalities Impact Assessment, as having an impact on staff wellbeing. Staff are being supported by the management team and other support structures and will continue to be supported through the remainder of the process. Libraries service staff are to be commended for the engagement and professionalism

**Risk Implications
(con't):**

Partnerships, and on ensuring, that through the agreed process, any Community Library Partnerships established are viable and likely to be sustainable.

Risk 2: That reductions to the library management team structure reduce the capacity to deliver commissioned outcomes and develop the service in line with the agreed strategy and vision, alongside the effective management of operational risks.

Likelihood	4	Impact	3	Risk Score	12
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Mitigation: Mitigation of this significant risk will be explored and developed through the next phase of workforce restructure, but some impact is likely. A key focus will be ensuring that a reduced management team structure can continue to provide effective oversight of Health and Safety risks within the service.

Risk 3: That alternative outreach and mobile library services cannot be delivered by the libraries service within the reduced budget available.

Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3
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Mitigation: A detailed assessment of the likely cost of additional mobile library and library outreach services has been undertaken as part of the development of recommendations, and has been reflected in the developing plans for workforce restructure.

Risk 4: That the decision to implement changes to the library service is challenged through the courts, or through a complaint to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Likelihood	2	Impact	2	Risk Score	4
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Mitigation: Legal advice has been sought at all stages in the consultation process, and (as explained in the legal implications section above) we are confident that the procedure followed has been fair and robust, and that recommendations have been put forward on a sound legal basis. The main impact of a legal challenge is likely to be a delay in implementation, which would have an impact on the momentum that has developed in some communities who are exploring Community Library Partnerships, and could increase the likelihood of library closures as a result. Any delay in implementation could also have a detrimental impact on staff well-being, by prolonging the period of uncertainty that staff have been subject to for many months now. These impacts would be difficult to mitigate.

Risk 5: That the opportunities to reduce the net costs of Langport, Cheddar, Martock and Ilminster libraries set out in section 5 below are not achievable.

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.)**

on groups with protected characteristics than the outcome of library closures. However, there are some potential impacts, which will be kept under review as Community Library Partnerships develop, and will be assessed again prior to entering into agreements. These impacts will be mitigated as far as possible through the support provided by the Council, and through provisions in partnership agreements.

- Library closures would have more significant impacts, which are more difficult to mitigate:
 - Older people are significant users of library services, are more likely to be impacted by social isolation, and may find it more difficult to access alternative library buildings.
 - Children under 5 and of primary school age are significant users of library services, and are less able to access alternative library buildings. The cost of inter-urban public transport in Somerset is likely to mean that pre-school children could be significantly impacted where their primary carer does not have access to a vehicle during the week.
 - Older children and teenagers use libraries for study, and a number of home-schooled children use library buildings to support their home-schooling. They are less likely to be able to travel independently to alternative library buildings. This impact is difficult to mitigate.
 - Disabled people are more likely to be impacted by social isolation, and some disabled people may find it more difficult to access alternative library buildings. Some disabled people with mental health conditions may be impacted because they find it more difficult to use busier, larger libraries.
 - People on maternity / shared maternity leave are significant users of library services, and the cost of inter-urban public transport in Somerset is likely to mean that new parents with babies could be significantly impacted where they do not have access to a vehicle during the working week.
 - Library closures in smaller, rural hub communities are likely to impact people with the characteristic of rurality more significantly. By allocating resources to maximise walking access to library buildings and focus services on higher areas of need, the recommendations are likely to have a disproportionate impact on those living in rural areas.
 - People on low incomes may find it more difficult to access alternative library buildings, and are more likely to use the public computer access facilities in libraries. Unemployed people claiming universal credit can be particularly

reliant on internet access. Again, the cost of inter-urban transport in Somerset is likely to make this potential impact more significant in some communities, for those who do not have access to vehicles.

- The nature and significance of impacts identified for library closures varies between different communities, depending on the use of the library, the services provided, and the access available to other libraries. Access by public transport to alternative library buildings is a key mitigation for many of the identified impacts, but the cost of public transport in Somerset makes it more difficult to mitigate impacts for children and families, and those on low incomes, where individuals are not eligible for the concessionary bus pass scheme.
- Staff working in the library service will be impacted by the changes recommended, and some of these impacts will be more significant for staff with protected characteristics:
 - Because of the demographic profile of the frontline library workforce, the majority of staff who are likely to be affected by the changes are likely to be female, or over 50, or have lower than average incomes (or they may have a combination of these protected characteristics).
 - Recommended changes are also likely to lead to a period of anxiety for many (but not all) staff, which could have health and wellbeing impacts. Following previous organisational changes within the County Council we know that some (but not all) staff with the characteristics of Age, Disability, Pregnancy or Maternity, Low Income or Caring Responsibilities may, for reasons associated with that characteristic, have a heightened sense of anxiety.
 - Feedback received during the staff consultation period suggested that some staff with the characteristics of Age (younger people), Disability, Sex (females), Low Income and Caring Responsibilities may be less able to take up re-deployment opportunities than people without these characteristics, meaning they are more likely to be impacted if the proposals are implemented

Other Implications (including due regard implications, cont.):

Recommendations have been designed to minimise impacts by maintaining access to library buildings, and providing alternative services to mitigate impacts wherever possible. Designing service provision around needs also plays a significant role in reducing the level of potential cumulative impact. The consideration and analysis of many of the impacts above was a key factor in developing recommendations to retain 7 of the library buildings where changes were originally

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.)**

proposed in the consultation period. A wide range of specific mitigating actions are set out in Appendix 4, and these will be followed through and carried out as required, under the management of the Libraries Service Redesign project team.

Access has formed a key consideration in the development of recommendations, which have been designed to provide reasonable access to library services which meet local needs. Access issues are considered in detail in Appendix 1 (in overview in section 5, and in detail throughout Part B), and as part of the Equalities Impact Assessments in Appendix 4.

Human rights implications have been considered; we have not identified any Human rights implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

Community Safety Implications

There are not considered to be any direct potential impacts on local crime rates, however libraries have a key role to play in the development of stronger communities, reducing social isolation and exclusion, and the overall quality of life. This being the case, the recommendations set out in the report could have an implication for Community Safety, particularly if they resulted in the closure of library buildings in some communities. The closure of library buildings would be likely to lead to:

- An overall impact on health and wellbeing for the community affected.
- An increase in social isolation, which could have a secondary impact upon local crime or re-offending rates, and / or an impact on the perception of crime and disorder.
- An increase in the exclusion of some groups from society; particularly homeless people and those on very low incomes, who can be dependent on library services to access information and services.

The design of recommendations has mitigated this potential impact as far as possible, through the detailed consideration of impacts on vulnerable groups, through the design of proposals to meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities and provide reasonable access, and through the effort and support to maintain library buildings through Community Library Partnerships.

The introduction of new library outreach services in deprived areas of Bridgwater, Taunton, Yeovil and Frome could have a positive impact on Community Safety. Bringing the benefits of library services to some communities where usage of the service is relatively low could reduce exclusion and improve wellbeing for some people, potentially with a consequential improvement to social cohesion.

Sustainability Implications

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.):**

Many respondents to the public consultation felt that library closures would have an impact on car travel, and associated increases in traffic congestion and air pollution. Having considered these points, we agree that library closures could influence travel behaviour which, in turn, could have an adverse environmental impact, and this implication should be considered by decision makers. In the unlikely event that no Community Library Partnerships could be established in the 15 communities where library buildings are at risk of closure because of the recommendations in this report, we estimate that around 55,000 people would no longer live within a 2-mile walking distance of a library building (this group represents about 15% of the current population of Somerset residents who, we estimate, live within walking distance of a library building). The network of 19 library buildings set out in paragraph 2.1 below has been designed to maximise accessibility by public and community transport. Nonetheless, car ownership is high in most of these affected communities and an increase in car journeys is likely. We do not, however, believe that any increase arising as a direct result of library closures would be significant. Feedback from the consultation exercise indicates that many people are likely to combine library visits as part of a trip into town with a wider purpose (i.e., the journey would take place in any event).

Feedback about the detrimental impact on town centre economies that could arise from library closures also came through very strongly in the public consultation response in some communities. Having carefully considered this feedback in the context of the resources available to the library service, our recommendation is that the town centre sustainability should not, be a direct objective for the Somerset libraries service. However, where local needs, access and affordability considerations justify the case for maintaining a library building, the library service will work with local economic development partners (principally district and town/parish councils) to support local regeneration and economic development objectives. This is a key reason for the recommendation to work with local partners to try to develop a town centre library / community 'hub' option for the relocation of the library building in Shepton Mallet.

Notwithstanding the above point, the risk of library closures in communities such as Somerton, Street, Wiveliscombe and Castle Cary, as well as other communities, carries with it a risk that town or village centre economies in these communities would become less sustainable. This in turn could have implications for wider sustainability issues – for example, maintaining healthy town centre economies in relatively distant rural hubs such as Wiveliscombe is likely to be a significant factor in reducing car journeys. Decision makers should have regard to these potential implications.

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.):**

The main mitigation for the sustainability implications described above is the support we will provide to communities considering a Community Library Partnership option. If library buildings can be maintained with community support in these 15 locations, then the impact on travel behaviour and emissions will be less significant.

There are some positive impacts that could arise as a result of the recommendations. Some Community Library Partnerships, and some of the initiatives set out in section 5 of the report, may involve the creation of shared spaces / community hubs, which could lead to an overall reduction in carbon emissions from buildings.

Health and Safety Implications

There are four principle Health and Safety implications, which should be considered by cabinet:

- The transfer of library buildings to Community Library Partnerships may mean that health and safety risk management in some library buildings will be undertaken by community partners, rather than the County Council. Responsibility for health and safety will depend on the nature of each Community Library Partnership agreement and will be clearly set out in each agreement. However, community partners are likely to take on responsibility for premises management and associated health and safety risks in most circumstances, and where Community Library Partnerships are operated through volunteer-led models, day to day operational health and safety risks will be managed by the community partner. This does not necessarily mean that there will be a greater risk of ill-health or injury, or non-compliance with Health and Safety legislation. Community Library Partnerships will be supported to set up Health and Safety risk management frameworks, policies and procedures.
- The restructure of the library service management team recommended in this report carries a more significant health and safety risk. Although libraries are not especially unsafe places, they are used by a large number of people, a small minority of whom can, very occasionally, present risks to staff and the public, or become aggressive to staff, leading to stress and anxiety. Young children are frequent users of libraries, and (non-serious) accidents happen occasionally. The management of health and safety risks associated with buildings is another important factor in the safe operation of library services. All these issues require management, and a reduction in management capacity is likely to lead to a greater risk of ill-health or injury, or non-compliance with Health and Safety legislation. This is a significant implication which decision makers should consider. Mitigation of this significant risk will be

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.):**

explored and developed through the next phase of workforce restructure.

- One of the 'community support' options recommended in section 5 below could result in an increase in lone working for Somerset County Council staff. The library service has procedures in place to protect staff working alone, and these would be adopted in any lone working situation. This being the case, the additional risk of ill-health or injury to staff is considered slight.
 - Finally, staff and union representatives have expressed concern about the pressure and strain that the library service re-design programme is having on frontline staff, including:
 - The length of time the process is taking, and the impact this had on staff wellbeing (because of the ongoing uncertainty about job security in the future).
 - Anxiety about having to go through an interview process.
 - Unease about how far staff may be expected to travel in a new structure, and the impact this may have on those with caring responsibilities.
 - The strain on frontline staff (particularly in single-staffed libraries) of being asked by members of the public if the library will close / if staff are going to lose their jobs.
- Some of these issues are related to the workforce re-design element of the Library Service Redesign Programme, which is underway and will continue regardless of Cabinet's decision on the recommendations presented here. However, the potential for library closures and / or the transfer of libraries to Community Library Partnership models is a significant contributory factor to staff anxiety, and decision makers should have regard to this point. The implication will be mitigated by supporting staff through the implementation process as far as possible. Further details are set out in Appendix 4(i).

Privacy Implications

A Privacy Impact Assessment has been carried out for the Library Service Redesign Programme (see background papers in section 7 below for further details). This is because if volunteer-led Community Library Partnerships are agreed as a result of the recommendations of this report, information about individuals will be disclosed to volunteers, who would have to access the Library Management System to operate the library. The information would include the name, address, email address and borrowing records of customers across the LibrariesWest consortium area and would be used by volunteers to carry out transactions for individual library customers: borrowing and returning items, checking and paying any late charges or reservation fees. Access to the information would be controlled through password-protected access, and it will be a strict condition of Community Library

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.):**

Partnership agreements that records of password holders and volunteer rotas are accurately maintained.

Personal data about all library service customers (whether customers of Community Library Partnerships or not) would remain within the control of the County Council as data controller. As such, the County Council will maintain robust controls over the protection and use of personal data held within the Libraries Management system. These controls have been set out in the guidance provided to community organisations who are considering the possibility of Community Library Partnerships in their communities, and robust and enforceable controls would form part of any agreement. Volunteers would be trained to ensure they understood privacy issues and data protection policies and procedures. This being the case, although there is a potential privacy implication that decision makers should have regard to, it is considered slight.

A further risk to individual privacy has been highlighted by some respondents to the consultation exercise. Some users of the library public computer access service receive assistance from members of staff to carry out tasks which can involve the disclosure of personal and sensitive information. If volunteered Community Library Partnerships are agreed, then some users may seek such assistance from volunteers outside of the control of the County Council, rather than County Council staff as now. There could be a consequential risk to privacy - unlike the personal information accessed through the libraries management system, information disclosed through these circumstances would not be in the control of the County Council and so there would be no recourse through data sharing agreements. Nonetheless, with appropriate awareness training for volunteers, the risk is assessed as tolerable.

Taking all the above into consideration, the final impact of the recommendations on the privacy of individuals is considered to be justifiable and proportionate. However, cabinet members should consider these implications and have regard to the potential risks when making judgments on the recommendations in this report.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendations set out in this report could have an implication for health and wellbeing, particularly if they resulted in the closure of library buildings in some communities. The closure of library buildings would be likely to lead to:

- An increased difficulty, for some people, in accessing information which can help to manage health and wellbeing issues. If people are required to travel further to access library buildings, 'books on prescription' services and other health and wellbeing information will be less convenient to access through the library service. The provision of digital and mobile library services will

**Other Implications
(including due
regard implications,
cont.):**

mitigate this impact to some extent.

- An increase in social isolation for some people. For many library customers, the act of visiting the library and spending time in the company of others can be a rare opportunity for social interaction. Library events and activities play a key role in bringing people together and reducing social isolation, particularly for the elderly and for new parents. Recommendations have been developed to maintain access to these services; either at alternative libraries, or through library outreach services in some communities. However, these mitigating services will be less convenient to access if Community Library Partnerships cannot be established.
- Research shows that reading has positive health and wellbeing benefits. If people need to travel further to access library buildings, borrowing books will be less convenient. Again, the provision of digital and mobile library services will mitigate this impact to some extent.
- Libraries provide a safe space for children, young people and adults to study, pursue personal development, and explore independently. Sometimes home environments are not conducive to study or personal development - for example, because of overcrowding, lack of internet or broadband access, disruptive younger siblings, homelessness. The pursuit of personal development is a key wellbeing benefit, which the closure of library buildings could impact on.

The design of recommendations has mitigated the potential for a Health & Wellbeing impact as far as possible. A detailed consideration of impacts on vulnerable groups, and the design of proposals to meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities have been considered to provide reasonable access. The main mitigation for the health and wellbeing implications described above is the support we will provide to communities considering a Community Library Partnership model. If library buildings can be maintained with community support in these 15 locations, then the impact on health and wellbeing will be greatly reduced. Indeed, Community Library Partnership models have the potential to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing - our experience of this model at Porlock Library has been that opening hours have improved, and the range of activities and events provided has increased.

As noted in the Health and Safety implications section set out above, staff and union representatives have expressed concern about the pressure and strain that the library service re-design programme is having on frontline staff. The recommendations set out in this report are likely to cause further anxiety for many staff in the library service, with associated health and wellbeing implications.

The introduction of new library outreach services in deprived areas of Bridgwater, Taunton, Yeovil and Frome is likely to

	<p>have a positive effect on health and wellbeing, on addressing health inequalities. Bringing the benefits of library services to some communities where usage of the service is relatively low could reduce social isolation and promote awareness of the 'social prescribing' resources available in libraries.</p>
<p>Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place will consider the recommendations presented in this report here at its meeting on 24th October. Any specific recommendations and/or alternative options will be reported to Cabinet prior to the Cabinet meeting on 5th November.</p>

1. Background

- 1.1. A Vision, Strategic Direction and Outcomes Framework for the Somerset Libraries service was set in November 2017 (see background papers below for further details). Many respondents in the consultation exercise expressed support for the vision statement:

“Somerset Libraries are a dynamic, evolving and integral part of the community that open up a world of opportunities for reading, understanding and discovery”

The strategic direction set an objective to review and re-design the libraries network, to modernise the Libraries Service in Somerset and to put the service on a sustainable financial footing.

- 1.2. A series of proposals were developed in January 2018, following a community engagement exercise, and an initial analysis of needs, access issues, potential equalities impacts and value for money comparisons. These proposals were the subject of an extensive staff and public consultation exercise, which was undertaken between 29th January and 13th June. A summary of feedback from the consultation is set out in Appendix 3 to this report. Detailed feedback and evidence from the consultation exercise has also been used to carry out a re-assessment of the needs, access issues and equalities impacts identified prior to the consultation.
- 1.3. The consultation was conducted through a survey questionnaire available online and in paper form, as well as by inviting responses from a wide range of stakeholder groups. 19 'drop in' events were held around the county, and the project team attended a number of further public meetings organised by various stakeholder groups. A separate consultation exercise, on the same proposals, was conducted with staff. The consultation was promoted through a wide range of channels which resulted in extensive media and social media coverage. Responders to the consultation were asked to comment on the proposals for their most-used library and were requested to supply their views on:
- the impact that the proposals would have on themselves;
 - the impact on their families, and
 - the impact on their community if implemented;
 - any further comments on the proposals, and
 - any suggestions or ideas for alternative proposals.

There were 6,410 consultation questionnaires completed plus a further 604

responses to the consultation in other formats - a total of over 7000 responses. Additionally, many young people and library customers expressed views verbally at focus group and drop-in events.

1.4. A full report on the consultation responses is included at Appendix 3. The overriding message for decision makers to consider is that the vast majority of consultation respondents were strongly opposed to changes to library service provision, especially where there was a potential risk of library closure. Where respondents were asked to express their preference for Community Library Partnerships or mobile / outreach options, there was an almost universal preference for the community partnership option as a means of retaining the library. In addition to this overriding theme, the analysis set out in Appendix 3 has identified a number of further themes in feedback, which were apparent across each library and each library area:

- Library users and consultation respondents in general do not think of the library as purely a book lending service and see the value of the wider services provided.
- Many responses spoke of how the local library provided a heart to the community and helped to alleviate social issues such as loneliness and social isolation. Others responded regarding the health and educational benefits of the Libraries Service, especially for the vulnerable, elderly and those in full-time education.
- One recurring theme was that the IT facilities and infrastructure that the library provides are invaluable to those without these services at home. Respondents thought that the closure of library buildings or a move to a mobile only provision would impact most heavily on those on low income and the elderly.
- The paucity of reliable public transport in Somerset was generally felt to be a substantial barrier to the ability of many users to access alternative library buildings should their local library building close. Many users expressed the importance of being able to walk to their local library.
- Although some understanding and empathy was expressed regarding the current financial situation of Somerset County Council, many respondents were categorically against closures of library buildings as a point of principle and believed that savings should be found in other ways.
- A number of suggestions were made regarding the potential for income generation to make the service more sustainable. Many suggested the introduction of membership and book borrowing fees as well as commenting on the potential to raise income through sharing library buildings and implementing café concessions.
- Mixed views were expressed on the use of volunteers with some areas supporting their use to supplement professional staff while others were against it as they thought service quality would be adversely affected. Some communities responded that the use of volunteers would not be sustainable due to the fact that they already deliver a number of services locally and the supply of volunteers is limited.
- The increasing future need for library services was also a recurring theme due to the level of planned housing development within communities. Feedback suggested that the requirement for a library would increase in communities due to the increasing populations and not diminish.
- In general, respondents were against changes to the library provision for their libraries and for their library area. Many expressed support for potentially affected libraries other than their own, especially in phase 1 of the consultation where respondents were asked to comment on the area-wide proposals.

- 1.5.** In addition to Appendix 3, a background paper '*County Council's response to the Consultation*' provides (for information only) a high-level summary of how the council's thinking, approach and the original consultation proposals were modified and changed following consideration of feedback from the consultation exercise.

A full, final needs assessment was carried out and is attached as Appendix 2; furthermore, a full Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out and is attached at Appendix 4. The analysis in Appendix 1 draws together feedback from the consultation exercise, information from the needs assessment, equalities impact considerations, a full analysis of access issues, together with a consideration of best value, to develop a framework and detailed recommendations for the re-design of the service.

2. Summary of recommendations set out in Appendix 1 (Library Service Delivery Plan):

- 2.1.** It is recommended that library buildings should continue to be operated by the County Council in Minehead, Dulverton, Williton, Taunton Town Centre, Wellington, Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Glastonbury, Langport, Chard, Ilminster, Crewkerne, Yeovil Town Centre, Martock, Wincanton, Frome, Wells, Shepton Mallet and Cheddar.
- 2.2.** In respect of library buildings at Langport, Ilminster, Martock, and Cheddar, it is recommended that opportunities to reduce the net cost of these libraries are pursued as set out in section 5 below, and that the budget for these libraries is reduced in line with the anticipated cost reduction. Cabinet should note paragraph 5.4 below when considering this recommendation.
- 2.3.** In respect of the library building at Shepton Mallet, having considered feedback from the public consultation exercise about the potential relocation of the library to the Shape Mendip hub, it is recommended:
- To continue to work with local partners to develop a town centre library / community 'hub' option for the relocation of the library building in Shepton Mallet. The solution needs to be sustainable for the long term, which reduces the cost of the library to the County Council, and which enables the extension of current opening hours through sharing with local partners or through other means.
 - To delegate authority to the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community Infrastructure, to take a separate and subsequent decision on the relocation of Shepton Mallet library to either the Shape Mendip hub, or an alternative town centre library / community 'hub' location. A robust options appraisal of both options will be completed, and consideration will be given to the feedback received in the public consultation exercise relating to Shepton Mallet library.
 - To require that a final decision on the future location of the library in Shepton Mallet is taken no later than June 2019, to enable the saving available from the relocation of the library to the Shape Mendip (or an equivalent saving from the relocation of the library to an alternative town centre location) to be delivered as soon as reasonably practicable.
 - To note that the level of saving set out in section 6 below is based on an assumption that the cost of Shepton Mallet library will reduce to the level

provisionally agreed for the Shape Mendip hub option by the end of the 2019/20 financial year.

2.4. It is recommended:

- To seek to establish Community Library Partnerships in Wiveliscombe, Bishops Lydeard, Nether Stowey, North Petherton, Milborne Port, South Petherton, Bruton and Castle Cary; or
- To provide library services through a combination of Mobile Library Services and Digital Library Services where Community Library Partnerships cannot be established, to complement reasonable access to alternative library buildings from these communities. Where it does not prove possible to establish Community Library Partnerships, library buildings would close.

2.5. It is recommended:

- To seek to establish Community Library Partnerships in Watchet, Somerton, and Street; or
- To provide library services through a combination of Library Outreach Services, Mobile Library Services and Digital Library Services, where Community Library Partnerships cannot be established, to complement reasonable access to alternative library buildings from these communities. Where it does not prove possible to establish Community Library Partnerships, library buildings would close.

2.6. It is recommended:

- To seek to establish Community Library Partnerships in Highbridge and Sunningdale (Yeovil); or
- To provide library services through a combination of Library Outreach Services and Digital Library Services, where Community Library Partnerships cannot be established, to complement reasonable access to alternative library buildings from these communities. Where it does not prove possible to establish Community Library Partnerships, library buildings would close.

2.7. It is recommended:

- To seek to establish a Community Library Partnership in Priorswood (Taunton); or
- To provide library services through Library Outreach Services (including some public computer access) from the current site, to complement reasonable access to the alternative library building in Taunton Town Centre from this community. If it does not prove possible to establish a Community Library Partnership, a Library Outreach Service would continue to be provided from the current site, but the library would close.

2.8. It is recommended:

- To seek to maintain the existing Community Library Partnership at Porlock, by ending the current pilot arrangement and developing an agreement for the longer term; or
- To provide library services through a combination of Mobile Library Services and Digital Library Services, if the Community Library Partnership cannot be maintained, to complement reasonable access to Minehead Library from this community. If it does not prove possible to continue a Community Library Partnership arrangement, the County

Council would cease support for the library building in Porlock and would provide a mobile library stop.

2.9. It is recommended:

- To provide additional, targeted Library Outreach Services in areas of high need in Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Frome.
- To continue the provision of Mobile Library Services elsewhere across the county, reviewed and revised from time to time in line with the current policy agreed by Cabinet in March 2015.
- To maintain the Home Library Service and Digital Library Service as part of the statutory Libraries Service.

2.10. The reasons and rationale behind these recommendations are explained in detail in Appendix 1. The recommendations have been shaped by feedback from the consultation exercise and are grounded in a wide range of evidence and analysis which is set out in full in the relevant Appendices. Summaries of the main reasons for the recommendations are set out in the summary boxes in Appendices 1 and 2.

2.11. Table 2.11 overleaf gives a high-level summary of the recommendations, for information:

<i>Libraries that would continue to be operated by the County Council:</i>	<i>Libraries where the County Council would seek to establish a Community Library Partnership, or close the library if this cannot be achieved:</i>
Bridgwater Burnham-on-Sea Chard Cheddar Crewkerne Dulverton Frome Glastonbury Ilminster Langport Martock Minehead Shepton Mallet Taunton (town centre) Wellington	Bishops Lydeard Bruton Castle Cary Highbridge Milborne Port Nether Stowey North Petherton Porlock* Priorswood (Taunton) Somerton South Petherton Street Sunningdale (Yeovil) Watchet Wiveliscombe

Wells Williton Wincanton Yeovil (town centre)	
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** Porlock is already operated as a community library. We will seek to maintain this arrangement, but if this cannot be achieved the library would close.*

3. Support for Community Library Partnerships

3.1. The recommendations above include a recommendation to try to establish or maintain Community Library Partnerships to maintain library buildings in 15 communities. Community Library Partnerships are explained fully in section 4 of Appendix 1. In summary, Community Library Partnerships:

- are partnerships between the County Council and one or more community partners, which provide a service from a library building in a community as an alternative to closing the library and providing services in other ways;
- would deliver a range of lending stock, public computer access and associated printing and scanning, public wi-fi access, and specific support for children through the Summer Reading Challenge and support to the Bookstart programme;
- would provide services to a minimum standard, monitored by the County Council through a legal contract;
- where established, would form part of the County Council's statutory Libraries Service.

3.2. An earlier officer decision by the Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning set out the process for developing and agreeing Community Library Partnerships, which is summarised for information in section 1 of Appendix 5. This earlier officer decision also confirmed the County Council's 'Core Offer' to Community Library Partnerships. Through this 'Core Offer', the County Council will provide book stock, ICT equipment and services (including public computer network access), and training and ongoing support to Community Library Partnerships. The Core Offer has been developed through an ongoing dialogue with community groups considering a Community Library Partnership and is summarised in section 2 of Appendix 5.

3.3. Appendix 5 also sets out recommendations for providing additional support to Community Library Partnerships in certain communities, for which this report seeks Cabinet approval. Firstly, Cabinet are asked to agree additional direct financial support to Community Library Partnerships in some communities, where:

- local needs have been analysed as more significant; or
- access is considered more difficult; or
- where the potential impacts of library closures are likely to be greater; and/or
- where current library buildings are providing good value for money.

The recommended additional financial support is set out in section 3 of Appendix 5.

3.4. Having considered feedback from Friends of Somerset Libraries (the principle

stakeholder group for the Libraries Service), we recommend that this financial support is provided through two elements:

- a 'base' element, which would be offered to 8 certain potential Community Library Partnerships, as set out in Appendix 5.
- an element of 'top-up' match funding, which would be offered if an equal or greater investment was made by one or more community partners in funding the cost of paid library staff. This funding would be provided to a sub-set of the potential Community Library Partnerships set out in Appendix 5 (as specified in the table at paragraph 3.6 of that Appendix), and would be conditional on an equal amount of matched investment in funding paid staff.

The match-funding approach could encourage communities to invest in some paid staff capacity in Community Library Partnerships, addressing a key concern raised during the consultation period about the sustainability and effectiveness of community libraries wholly run by volunteers.

- 3.5.** Secondly, Cabinet are asked to agree the headline terms of potential property transfers or leasing arrangements to support Community Library Partnerships, which are set out in section 4 of Appendix 5. These recommendations have been developed through discussions with communities, and with extensive input from the Council's property department.
- 3.6.** Cabinet must note that Community Library Partnerships will only be possible where community partners choose to provide financial support and / or take on significant responsibility. Feedback from extensive community engagement and consultation has highlighted that this is a significant challenge for many community partners. Some communities – for whatever reason - will choose not to provide the necessary support, and (as we have stressed during the consultation) there is no expectation that they should do so.
- 3.7.** The County Council has a statutory duty to deliver public library services and accordingly, the council must not depend on community support for Community Library Partnerships (which may or may not be forthcoming) to deliver its statutory service. For this reason, the recommendations set out in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.8 (inclusive) above each set out an alternative form of service delivery, which are all considered acceptable alternative means of meeting local needs in the communities specified.
- 3.8.** Further details on these alternative forms of library service delivery are set out in Appendix 1. Cabinet members must consider both potential outcomes, carefully considering the impacts of both outcomes and feedback from the consultation, when deciding on the recommendations. The recommendations are based on an analysis which concludes that the Council's statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service for everyone who wants to use it can be discharged through either the Community Library Partnership outcome, or the alternative forms of library service delivery specified.

4. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejecting them

- 4.1.** Many alternative options were put forward in the consultation and these have all been considered. Many have been taken forward in the development of the recommendations set out here. Other alternative approaches suggested during the consultation period have already been implemented, to one extent or another, within Somerset's Libraries Service. The main alternative suggestions

that are being taken forward as part of the recommended approach are summarised in a background paper '*County Council's response to the Consultation*', and include:

- Working with communities in Cheddar and Shepton Mallet to explore alternative ways of reducing the cost of these libraries, which have been suggested in the consultation.
- Working with South Somerset District Council to explore how libraries in Langport, Ilminster and elsewhere in South Somerset can be used to support or provide district council services, to make libraries more sustainable. This work has resulted from South Somerset District Council's helpful response to the consultation exercise.
- Exploring the potential to share library buildings to reduce costs in Shepton Mallet, Langport, Ilminster and Wellington.
- Developing a policy on donations and philanthropic giving, to take forward a suggestion made by many respondents that local fundraising could be a way of raising income for local libraries.

4.2. Some alternative options for delivering savings that were put forward in the consultation have been considered and are not recommended to be taken forward. Two of the more significant of these are summarised below.

4.3. a) *Reducing opening hours at most or all libraries*

Many individuals and stakeholder groups, including the Friends of Somerset Libraries, suggested that further reductions to opening hours should be considered as a means of reducing the cost of the Libraries Service, rather than seeking Community Library Partnerships, or instigating library closures if these could not be established. To deliver a saving of the equivalent level, opening hours would have to be reduced in most, if not all, of the libraries in Somerset's current network. This option has been considered by the project team, and rejected because:

- We have concluded that further opening hours reductions across the whole service are likely to lead to a slow decline in the whole Libraries Service. This is the opposite of the 'thriving and dynamic' vision for libraries that we have set. Existing, regular users of the Libraries Service often adapt to reduced opening hours, but occasional or new customers are very often put off by opening hours that can be confusing and inconvenient. The impact of reduced opening hours on libraries usage was noted by many respondents in the public consultation. We have concluded that a general approach of reducing opening hours further would not meet the strategic objectives of modernising the service and putting it on a sustainable footing. We also conclude that it would not be effective in meeting local needs.
- Reducing opening hours does not lead to a proportionate reduction in cost, but can, over time, have a disproportionate impact on usage. Premises related costs are largely fixed. This means that reductions to opening hours usually result in a reduction in overall value for money.

We have identified, through the needs and access assessment, certain exceptional locations where local needs could reasonably be met with reduced levels of opening. But this will only be considered as a last resort in these specific communities if community support or income generation initiatives do not work. Any reduction in opening hours would be subject to a further public consultation period.

4.4. *b) Charging for events, activities and other library services*

A number of individuals responding suggested various options for charging for library services. A wide spectrum of suggestions was made, and some of these are not possible to implement (there are restrictions to what we are permitted to charge for under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act). However, we do have discretion over other charges, and we have considered this feedback carefully. Whilst we will always keep the level of charges under review, we have concluded that we will not take a wholesale approach of raising prices or introducing new charges, as an alternative means of making the service sustainable. There are several different reasons for rejecting this alternative option:

- Many library services have a level of demand which is price-sensitive. Raising charges in many areas (for example, talking books, DVDs, printing) would not necessarily result in an increase in income, as price rises are likely to lead to a reduction in use. We have concluded that there is limited scope to raise significant amounts of income.
- Somerset's Libraries Service compares well with other, similar library services on income generation. The latest benchmarking data available shows that we generate more income per head of population than most of our 'peer group' of library authorities (see paragraph 3.2 of Appendix 1). This suggests, again, that there may be limited scope to increase the level of income generated.
- Many of our activities and events are delivered for no charge, or for a nominal charge to cover incidental costs, because we have concluded that this is the best way of meeting local needs and delivering public benefit. Some of the people who are likely to benefit most from library services are those who are least able to afford charges. Offering a 'free-at-the-point-of-use' service enables us to meet the needs of socially isolated or digitally excluded people from all income backgrounds, and to focus our educational, health and wellbeing and economic development offers on those that need them the most.

4.5. There are, of course, alternative options for the design of the network of library buildings; and a wide number of permutations for the delivery of Library Outreach Services and Mobile Library Services. Three alternative options for the network of council-funded and operated library buildings are set out below to illustrate the range of options considered during the iterative process of analysis, development of recommendations and impact assessment that we have undergone.

4.6. *c) Retain council-operated libraries at Street, Somerton, Wiveliscombe and Castle Cary*

This option has been rejected after careful consideration of feedback from the consultation, local needs, access considerations, impacts and the level of resources available. Taking into account the availability of resources, feedback from the consultation, the analysis of local needs and access considerations, and the impact of the changes we are proposing for these communities, we have concluded that our proposals for future service delivery in these communities strike the right balance between meeting local needs and reducing the cost of the service. Our analysis of need, access and impact does suggest that - for different reasons - the need for library buildings in these four communities is

higher than in other communities where we are proposing changes. However, we have concluded that providing library services in different ways, in conjunction with reasonable access to alternative library buildings, will fulfil our statutory duty in these communities. The reasons for these conclusions are set out in detail in Appendix 1. We estimate that the cost saving proposed in this paper would reduce by about £115,000 if these libraries were maintained. As a County Council we have to live within our means. We will support the development of Community Library Partnerships wherever possible, and for these communities we will provide funding to Community Library Partnerships, if they can be agreed.

4.7. d) Seek Community Library Partnerships, or alternatively close library buildings, in Cheddar, Martock and Ilminster

This option has been rejected because we feel that pursuing the alternative options set out in paragraph 5.3 below represents better value for the County Council, and because we have concluded that a library building is necessary to meet local needs in these communities. The reasons for these conclusions are set out in detail in Appendix 1. Considering the cost reductions that would be delivered through the recommendations set out in paragraph 5.1, and the cost of putting in alternative forms of service delivery, seeking Community Library Partnerships in these communities is only likely to reduce our net costs by around £35,000.

4.8. e) Implement option (d) above, and additionally seek Community Library Partnerships, or alternatively close library buildings, in Dulverton, Wellington, Shepton Mallet, and Crewkerne

We have calculated that an additional cost reduction of around £185,000 could be delivered by implementing the option to seek Community Library Partnerships or close library buildings in all 22 communities where this was put forward in the consultation. However, as with option (d) above, this option has been rejected because we feel that a library building is necessary to meet local needs in these communities. The reasons for these conclusions are set out in detail in Appendix 1. In particular, we have concluded that providing a library building in Dulverton is necessary to provide reasonable access to this remote community and its surrounding catchment and will deliver good value for money for the council. We have also taken into account the feedback from the consultation about the importance of being able to walk to library buildings, the value of library buildings to customers, the high levels of need in each of these communities and the impact of potential closures, particularly on those who currently have walking access to libraries. We estimate that around 55,000 people live within walking distance of one of the libraries in these 7 communities and maintaining funding to support this level of access will be key in delivering against our strategic outcomes.

5. Further changes proposed

5.1. In addition to the recommendations summarised in section 2, the report recommends that the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning is authorised to take forward a number of further savings proposals set out in this section. The proposals are set out below. The recommendations set out in paragraph 5.3 below have arisen as a direct result of suggestions made during the consultation period in relation to specific

libraries. All the proposals set out in appendix 5.3 are dependent on offers of support of one kind or another which have come forward during the consultation period. This being the case, we have assessed the potential for alternative means of reducing costs, in case we are unable to implement the proposals as planned, for reasons outside of the County Council's control. This is explained in paragraph 5.4. Finally, paragraph 5.5 sets out a recommended further saving relating to changes to the workforce, which, if agreed, would form part of the staff consultation on workforce changes.

- 5.2.** We are confident that these further savings proposals can be implemented without any negative impacts on customers (indeed, it is hoped that some may have a positive impact on customers). This being the case, an impact assessment on the implications for service users has not been completed in relation to these proposals, although impacts will be kept under review as proposals are taken forward, and if necessary, further decisions will be taken in line with the County Council's governance framework, with impacts identified and fully assessed if necessary. The proposals do have implications for some staff, and the impacts of these are assessed in Appendix 4(i). The proposal set out in paragraph 5.5 has a potential implication for Health and Safety, which is set out in the 'Other Implications' section above.
- 5.3.** Cabinet are recommended to authorise the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning to take forward the following savings proposals:
- Take up an offer from Cheddar Parish Council to fund the implementation of a self-service machine in Cheddar Library, and an offer from Friends of Cheddar Library to assist in publicising the recruitment of volunteer assistants and continue to work with the library to organise events. These offers will enable the library service to deliver the current level of service at Cheddar at a reduced cost. Cheddar library would still be staffed and operated by Somerset County Council, and we have concluded that maintaining a library building in Cheddar is necessary to meet local needs.
 - Explore the development of a customer access and digital inclusion service for South Somerset District Council, through an initial pilot at Langport Library, and with the potential to extend the service to Ilminster and other libraries in South Somerset. This could bring in a modest income which could support the sustainability of these libraries, as well as improving information services for customers in South Somerset District, and supporting the District Council's transformation objectives. Langport and Ilminster libraries would still be staffed and operated by Somerset County Council, and we have concluded that maintaining a library building in these communities is necessary to meet local needs.
 - Explore the potential to share space at Ilminster Library with local partners, as an option to bring in an income stream to support this library. Ilminster library would still be staffed and operated by Somerset County Council, and we have concluded that maintaining a library building in Ilminster is necessary to meet local needs.
 - Explore community support options at Martock Library, to reduce the net cost of this library building. Martock library would still be staffed and operated by Somerset County Council, and we have concluded that maintaining a library building in Martock is necessary to meet local needs.
- 5.4.** The successful delivery of the proposals set out in paragraph 5.3 is dependent on continued support from a range of third parties. Whilst we are confident that

all these proposals are achievable, there is a risk that support from third parties may not come through as anticipated, and this is outside of the County Council's control. This being the case, these recommendations are being put forward on the basis that, as set out in detail in Appendix 1, local needs in the four communities of Langport, Martock, Ilminster and Cheddar could be met through library buildings with a reduced level of opening hours. For the reasons set out in paragraph 4.3 above, it is recommended that any reduction in opening hours at these four libraries should only be considered as a last resort. Any reduction in opening hours would be subject to a separate and further public and staff consultation exercise in the locality affected.

5.5. Cabinet are also recommended to authorise the Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning to consult on a restructure of the Libraries Management Team, with a view to reducing the cost of the management team through a staff redundancy taking effect from October 2019. The libraries management team was restructured in 2015 as part of a set of back-office and management restructuring proposals; the management restructure delivered a saving of £220,000. Further reductions to management capacity would, if implemented, carry a significant level of operational risk. In particular, decision makers should have regard to the health and safety risks associated with this proposal, as noted in the 'other implications' section above. There is also a risk that further reductions in management team capacity could result in the library service being unable to modernise and develop in line with the agreed vision for the service. Certainly, if the recommendations set out in this report are agreed, existing management team capacity will need to be maintained until October 2019, to support the implementation and development of Community Library Partnerships and the implementation of operational workforce redesign and restructure. However, at that point (if the recommendations in the report are agreed), the county council will have reduced responsibilities for the management of library buildings. We have concluded that, given this reduced level of responsibility, the financial position of the County Council as a whole, and having considered the feedback from the public consultation, a reduction in management team capacity is feasible, and can make an important contribution to putting the Libraries Service on a sustainable footing without the risk of further library closures. The risks associated with this proposal will be explored through consultation, and a further officer decision on the final structure will be made in the light of a full assessment of risks, implications and impacts, and having carefully considered feedback from the next phase of staff consultation.

5.6. The exact level of cost reduction that we can deliver through these additional savings proposals will be determined as proposals are taken forward, through staff consultation and further discussions with the various third parties. However, we have concluded from initial assessments that a cost reduction totalling £75,000 is achievable across all the proposals, and the total saving has been put forward on that basis.

6. Financial implications and summary business case

Ongoing savings

6.1. The recommendations set out in this report would, if agreed, deliver a total net ongoing saving of approximately £345,000, which will be factored into the 2019/20 budget. This saving would comprise of two elements:

- A net saving of approximately £270,000 from the recommendations to seek

community support to maintain 15 library buildings through Community Library Partnerships, or close libraries and provide services in other ways if Community Library Partnerships cannot be agreed. Broadly, 55% of this £270,000 comprises of savings on staffing, 40% is savings on premises and related costs, and the remainder is savings on supplies and services (the exact breakdown of the saving will depend on Community Library Partnership discussions across the 15 libraries). These recommendations were consulted on as part of a wider set of consultation proposals. Having considered the feedback from this consultation and the assessments and analysis set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 4, the recommended approach delivers a lower level of saving than originally envisaged prior to the consultation. The net saving recommended makes provision for approximately £60,000 to support Community Library Partnerships with direct financial contributions (as set out in Appendix 5). Provision has also been made for the cost of providing alternative mobile and / or outreach services if Community Library Partnerships cannot be agreed, as well as additional library outreach services for high needs communities in Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Frome. The savings figure is approximate, because the actual level of savings will depend on the number of Community Library Partnerships that are agreed. We have calculated the financial implications of a range of scenarios, and the figures given here represent a prudent estimation; because the costs of supporting Community Library Partnerships and the costs of providing alternative means of service delivery are similar, the range of likely savings is relatively narrow.

- A further saving of £75,000 from the income generation, cost reduction and community support initiatives explained in section 5 above, which will be taken forward if the recommendations in that paragraph are agreed. Some of these savings are subject to further staff consultation, and (as explained in paragraph 5.4 above), further public consultation could be necessary if, as a last resort, we need to review opening hours in certain, specific libraries.

6.2. Further savings from ad-hoc, reactive property repairs and maintenance will be delivered if recommendations are implemented, but due to the way repairs and maintenance is budgeted for these are best viewed as an 'avoided cost' and have not been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan estimates set out above. Estimates from the property department put the value of this saving at around £50-70,000 over 10 years; or around £6,000 per annum on an annualised basis.

6.3. The majority of the savings set out above would come from either a reduction in staff costs, or through communities taking on responsibility for staff costs through Community Library Partnerships. If the recommendations are agreed, then prior to implementing the saving and once the broad intentions of communities are known, a further staff consultation exercise will be launched on the detailed structure of the libraries workforce. This would include consultation on a restructure of the libraries service management team (if the recommendation in paragraph 5.5 above is agreed).

One-off costs of delivery / implementation

6.4. The Libraries Service Re-design Programme has involved a significant effort from staff within the libraries service and elsewhere in the council. The vast majority of the cost of the programme to date consists of staff time spent on the consultation and community engagement exercises, the subsequent analysis of

data and feedback, and on the management and oversight of the programme (including input from specialist property, finance and legal staff). A considerable proportion of time has been spent supporting the initial phase of discussions with communities who are exploring community library partnerships. Work has largely been absorbed by staff from within the established workforce structure in Economic and Community Infrastructure and elsewhere, and this transformational work has been financed through capital receipts flexibilities, to support the 2018/19 in-year budget position. If the recommendations to seek Community Library Partnerships are agreed, then the County Council will make every effort to support the development of Community Library Partnerships. This would also involve a significant effort (and associated cost) in staff time during the implementation phase of the programme.

- 6.5.** If the recommendations are agreed, then the use of capital receipts flexibilities would continue for the remainder of the 2018/19 financial year, and into 2019/20, to fund the cost of implementing the changes recommended (this is estimated at between £235,000 - £275,000, on top of a 'sunk' cost to date of £145,000). This cost includes the cost of continuing to fund additional project management capacity for the first half of 2019/20, and an 18-month fixed-term contract post to support the implementation and development of Community Library Partnerships (a total cost of £65,000). It represents a significant investment in Community Library Partnerships, to try to achieve the objective of keeping as many library buildings open as possible.
- 6.6.** Further implementation costs will depend on the number of Community Library Partnerships we are able to establish, and the location and form of these partnerships. Potential costs include:
- Staff redundancy costs - these are likely to be in the range of £40-50,000 but could be higher if Community Library Partnerships are not established to the extent anticipated, or if Community Library Partnerships are largely volunteer-led.
 - The capital cost of purchasing an additional Mobile Library. The library service has two Mobile Library vans, one of which is currently being replaced with a new vehicle. With the anticipated level of interest in Community Library Partnerships, we do not anticipate that there will be a need to purchase a further Mobile Library. However, if we are unable to establish Community Library Partnerships in a number of affected communities, there could be an additional cost of around £120,000 to purchase a 3rd Mobile Library. If required, this cost could either be financed from capital receipts from the sale of library buildings, or from other capital funding, the revenue implications of which would be offset by a reduction in the budgeted contribution to community libraries. We stress that this is an unlikely scenario.
 - Capital investments in the re-modelling of buildings, to deliver some of the projects recommended in paragraph 5.3 above, and to support capital requirements associated with the transition of assets to Community Library Partnerships. The service re-design programme has an agreed capital approval which will finance the minimum estimated level of expenditure (estimated at £80,000). A further bid has been made as part of the 2019/20 capital budget setting process; if successful, this bid may significantly enhance the chances of developing successful and sustainable Community Library Partnerships in some locations, but it is not essential to deliver the level of saving recommended.

- 6.7. All of the above one-off costs have been factored into the councils' budgets and financial planning assumptions for the remainder of the 2018/19 financial year, and the 2019/20 financial year. This being the case, agreement of the recommendations will enable the delivery of a £345,000 saving from April 2019, with no associated unbudgeted cost.

Summary financial business case:

- 6.8. We estimate that the annual, ongoing saving of £345,000 per annum can be achieved with an overall one-off investment of £445,000 (excluding costs incurred to date) and a payback period of 1.3 years. This net saving provides for an ongoing revenue contribution of £61,000 to support Community Library Partnerships, which (it is hoped) will deliver significant value by mitigating the impact of library closures in areas where this is more significant. The majority of the one-off investment is to support the development, agreement and implementation of Community Library Partnerships. Community Library Partnerships were preferred over alternative forms of library service delivery by the vast majority of consultation respondents, and these would also enable the council to avoid the costs of providing mobile and / or library outreach services in the 15 communities where these are recommended as appropriate alternatives.

Implications for library stock valuations:

- 6.9. Appendix 1 contains a recommendation to set aside surplus library stock to enable the council to establish other Community Library Partnerships and small book exchange services in the future. There are many factors influencing the valuation of library stock, and the closure of a library building would result in stock being recycled, to one extent or another depending on the quality of stock, elsewhere across the library network. With the anticipated level of interest in Community Library Partnerships, and the recommendation to set aside stock, we do not anticipate any financial implications arising in relation to changes in library stock valuations. However, this will be kept under review through budget monitoring.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1. The analysis set out in Appendices 1-4, together with the approach to Community Library Partnerships set out in Appendix 5, represent the culmination of a year's work by the Library Service Re-design project team. Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 5 contain details of a large number of background papers, reference materials and analysis tools that are likely to be of interest to some stakeholder groups. These have all either been published on the Libraries Service Re-design website at <http://somersetlibraries.co.uk/redesign/>; or are otherwise available on request from the project team by contacting librariesmail@somerset.gov.uk.
- 7.2. A number of previous decisions have been made during the course of the Libraries Service Re-design programme:
- Vision, Strategic Direction and Outcomes Framework decision <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=566>
 - Consultation decisions
 - Decision to carry out Library Redesign Consultation

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=632>

- Extension of Library Redesign Consultation decision

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=682>

- Community Library Expression of Interest Procedure decision
<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=682>

7.3. We have carried out a Data Protection Impact Assessment to support our assessment of privacy and data protection. This is not included within the appendices but is available on the Libraries Service Re-design website at <http://somersetlibraries.co.uk/redesign/>.