

Decision Report – Cabinet Member non-key decision

Decision date – January 18th 2018

Somerset Library Service Consultation 2018

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr. David Hall - Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development

Division and Local Member(s): All

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

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	Seen by:	Name	Date
	County Solicitor	Honor Clarke	11/1/18
	Monitoring Officer	Julian Gale	11/1/18
	Corporate Finance	Kevin Nacey	12/1/18
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	11/1/18
	Property / Procurement / ICT	Richard Williams	15/1/18
	Senior Manager	Michele Cusack	12/1/18
	Local Member(s)	All - through Member's Information Sheet 2017-21(25) (Libraries Service Re-design Project Update)	27/10/17
	Cabinet Member	Cllr. David Hall	10/1/18
	Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr. Simon Coles	15/1/18
	Relevant Scrutiny Chairman	Cllr Leigh Redman Cllr Hazel Prior Sankey Cllr Tony Lock	15/1/18
Summary:	<p>Following on from the agreement of a vision, strategic direction and outcomes framework for the libraries service in November 2017, this report recommends the launch of a consultation exercise on specific proposals to shape the future of Somerset library services. A series of proposals for the future delivery of library services in different areas of Somerset are set out in Appendix 1 to the report and these will form the basis of the proposed consultation. No decisions will be taken, or have been taken, until the consultation exercise is concluded and all results are analysed – the sole recommendation of this report is to carry out a consultation exercise to obtain feedback on the options put forward and to explore possible alternatives.</p> <p>Section 1 of the report sets out the background to the proposed consultation exercise, as well as a summary of how the proposals have been developed and how the council proposes to provide library services in future. Further detail on the needs assessment methodology used to develop the consultation</p>		

	<p>proposals is set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and Appendix 3 of the report contains an analysis of potential equalities impacts that could arise from the consultation proposals.</p> <p>If the recommendation is agreed, a consultation will run from 29nd January to 22th April 2018. Details on the planned consultation exercise are set out in section 2 below.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p>	<p>That the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development agrees and authorises officers to consult on the proposals for the re-design of the Libraries Service set out in Appendix 1 to this report.</p>
<p>Reasons for Recommendations:</p>	<p>Somerset County Council is fully committed to 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. Feedback from a robust consultation exercise must be properly considered in any such review, and this is the overriding reason for the recommendation in the report.</p> <p>Proposals for changes to library services have been developed using information from an initial needs assessment exercise, equalities impact assessment, and a community engagement exercise conducted between September and November 2017. Access and value for money assessments have been carried out to inform proposals. Appendix 1 sets out a summary of the evidence collated at area level; full details of the evidence used to develop the proposals will be available on the consultation website.</p> <p>The consultation has been planned with due regard for the potential impacts of a service redesign process, and impacts of the changes proposed for consultation have been initially assessed and evaluated – details of this assessment are set out in Appendix 3 to this report.</p> <p>The proposals set out in Appendix 1 have also been developed with regard to estimated financial constraints that are likely to be faced by the service over the medium term. Putting the Library Service on a sustainable footing (in line with the medium term financial plan for the wider County Council) is a key reason for the recommended launch of a consultation exercise.</p>
<p>Links to Priorities and Impact on Service Plans:</p>	<p>Somerset's Library 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

	<p>wellbeing information resources, a wide range of health and wellbeing activities, and combat social isolation by bringing people together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Library Service onto a sustainable financial footing, the report recommends the launch of a consultation process to explore the re-design of library services in Somerset.</p>
<p>Consultations and co-production undertaken:</p>	<p>The strategic direction and outcomes framework which underpins the proposals in this report was shaped through discussion with a wide range of stakeholder groups (see the background papers listed in section 3 below for further details). The detailed proposals set out in Appendix 1 have been shaped through a co-production approach, which has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. The project team have 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. • 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). Their feedback has been considered at each stage in the development of the proposals. • Internal discussions with senior library staff and supervisors, and with colleagues in Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Transport and Property Services. <p>This co-production approach will continue on a more formal basis through the proposed consultation exercise. Feedback from staff, stakeholders, service users and the wider public will be considered fully before final decisions are made.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development has been consulted on the detailed proposals, together with other cabinet members and 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 proposals, and all local members will have an opportunity to comment on the proposals during the consultation exercise and at Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled during and after the process.</p>

<p>Financial Implications:</p>	<p>The consultation exercise will be funded from within existing budgets.</p> <p>Putting the Library Service on a sustainable footing (in line with the medium term financial plan for the wider County Council) is a key reason for the recommended launch of a consultation exercise. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 have been developed within the context of a forecast reduction in the net budget available to the service, set out in the table below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2017/18 (£'000)</th> <th>2018/19 (£'000)</th> <th>2019/20 (£'000)</th> <th>2020/21 (£'000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Estimated service budget for the year:</i></td> <td>3,890</td> <td>3,690</td> <td>3,560</td> <td>3,570</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The medium term financial plan for the County Council is still developing, and no decisions will be taken until the consultation exercise is concluded and all results are analysed. Financial implications can therefore only be estimated at this stage. The options that have been developed (and that are set out in Appendix 1) are forecast to deliver a real-terms net annual cost reduction of between £300,000 and £520,000, depending on differing options for different areas.</p> <p>The forecast cost reduction above is a net figure, after financial provision has been made for a combination of the potential proposed community partnership support measures set out in paragraph 1.8 below, and the potential proposed additional outreach and mobile library services set out in paragraphs 1.10 and 1.11 respectively. The mix of community partnership support and outreach / mobile services in different areas will not be determined until later in 2018, and at this stage an estimated annual cost of £100,000 has been provided for within the financial estimates. One possible outcome of the service re-design process is a significant expansion in the mobile library service, which could require the purchase of an additional mobile library, and this would have capital cost implications.</p> <p>It is important for decision makers to note that any subsequent implementation of the consultation proposals set out in Appendix 1 is likely to involve entering into a long term commitment to an ongoing annual revenue commitment of £100,000, and a possible commitment to additional capital investment in the mobile library fleet of around £120,000 (this is considered less likely at this stage).</p>		2017/18 (£'000)	2018/19 (£'000)	2019/20 (£'000)	2020/21 (£'000)	<i>Estimated service budget for the year:</i>	3,890	3,690	3,560	3,570
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<i>Estimated service budget for the year:</i>	3,890	3,690	3,560	3,570							
<p>Legal Implications:</p>	<p>The Council has a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The council must consider various other legal obligations (e.g. the public sector equality duty and best</p>										

value duty) when considering changes to service provision, and the council must ensure that any consultation it carries out meets the requirement for procedural fairness.

The duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service

Case law and previous judicial reviews make 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 must ensure that it properly considers the following elements in the development of proposals:

- A robust assessment of need – the Council must consider how library service provision meets the needs of the population as a whole, as well as how the needs of specific groups are met. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 have been developed using an initial needs assessment, the methodology for which is set out in Appendix 2 to this report. The methodology and needs assessment data used to develop the proposals will be made available for scrutiny and feedback during the consultation process, and will be reviewed after the consultation in the light of feedback gathered.
- 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. Again, the methodology underpinning the approach taken is set out in Appendix 2, and this methodology and the data used will be made available for scrutiny and feedback during the consultation process, and will be reviewed after the consultation in the light of feedback gathered.
- Feedback from a robust and meaningful consultation exercise – the recommendation in this report will address this requirement.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

In carrying out a potential service redesign the council has a duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. In practice this will mean carrying out a comprehensive equality impact assessment, and then taking the results of that assessment into account in formulating plans for service redesign. The impact assessment should be updated regularly as the service design proceeds and the outcome should be taken into account at each stage. It should be noted that the impact assessment will be 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.

An initial impact assessment on the potential impact of re-designing the library network was undertaken when the vision, 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 3 to this report. The impact assessment will be made available for scrutiny and feedback during the consultation process, and will be reviewed again after the consultation in the light of feedback gathered.

The Best Value duty

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 merely paying “due regard”.

The recommendations in this report ensure that SCC will discharge its duty to consult a wide range of persons including

- representatives of council tax payers
- those who use or are likely to use the service
- local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses
- anyone else who has an interest in the delivery of the service.

The consultation is being 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 have been informed by a needs assessment and other considerations in order to provide a basis for a meaningful and useful consultation. The consultation will make provision for respondents to put forward alternative options for consideration.

	<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 methodology underpinning the unit costing approach taken is set out in Appendix 2, and this methodology and the data used will be made available for scrutiny and feedback during the consultation process, and will be reviewed after the consultation in the light of feedback gathered.</p> <p>At this stage in the service review process environmental value considerations are considered to be negligible, but this position will be reviewed before any final decisions.</p>						
<p>HR Implications:</p>	<p>The proposals set out in Appendix 1 would 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.</p> <p>If the recommendation of this report is agreed, staff and unions will be consulted on the proposals set out in Appendix 1, and feedback will be analysed and considered by decision makers before any decisions are taken. The HR advisory team will support the consultation exercise; further detail on the proposed staff consultation is set out in paragraph 2.4 below.</p> <p>At this stage it is difficult to assess the extent of change; it is possible that some redundancies may result from the implementation of the proposed strategy. The project team will seek to avoid any compulsory redundancies through an offer of voluntary redundancy and through re-deployment within the library service and the wider council where possible.</p>						
<p>Risk Implications:</p>	<p>Launching a significant consultation exercise in this area has the following risk implications:</p> <p><i>Risk 1:</i> That the consultation exercise leads to extensive social media coverage which may mislead stakeholders and give rise to a misunderstanding of the proposals, the underlying rationale for the proposals or the purpose of the consultation. Such a misunderstanding could undermine the effectiveness of the consultation exercise.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Likelihood</td> <td>4</td> <td>Impact</td> <td>2</td> <td>Risk Score</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Mitigation:</i> The consultation exercise will be open and transparent, set out proposals clearly, and include a comprehensive level of detail on the underlying rationale. A dedicated web-based microsite will be promoted as an authoritative online information platform. The council's communications team will support the consultation exercise with a full range of proactive and responsive communications actions.</p>	Likelihood	4	Impact	2	Risk Score	8
Likelihood	4	Impact	2	Risk Score	8		

Risk 2: That the consultation exercise does not meet the council's legal requirement for procedural fairness.

Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3
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Mitigation: The consultation exercise has been designed with the support of council subject matter experts, and will be carried out with an appropriately comprehensive reach. The gathering and analysis of feedback will be robust and thorough. No decisions about the future of individual library buildings or delivering library services in different ways will be made until feedback from the consultation exercise has been analysed and fully considered.

Risks 3 and 4 set out below are not direct implications of the recommendations in this report, but have been identified at this stage as potential, high level risk implications of the proposals set out in Appendix 1 and are included here for contextual information. It is important to note that no decisions have been made at this point; full consideration of these potential risks (together with analysis of feedback from the consultation exercise) will shape decisions later in 2018.

Potential risk 3: That communities are unable or unwilling to support local libraries, meaning that library buildings may close in some areas.

Likelihood	4	Impact	2	Risk Score	8
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Mitigation: The proposals have been designed to ensure that library services will continue to be delivered comprehensively across Somerset whatever the outcome of this consultation. Where we are unable to keep library buildings open, we will deliver local library services in other ways, such as outreach or mobile library services. This will mitigate the potential impact of library closures to a degree and ensure that the council continues to meet its statutory duty in relation to library services. However, a key aim of the library service re-design process is to keep as many library buildings as possible open, and we will work in partnership with communities wherever possible to support this aim (further detail on proposed, potential support to community library partnerships is set out in paragraph 1.8 below). The potential cost of providing support to community library partnerships has been modelled as part of the development of consultation proposals.

Potential risk 4: That alternative outreach and mobile library services cannot be delivered by the library service within a reduced resource envelope.

Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3
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	<p><u>Mitigation:</u> A separate internal staff consultation on new roles and high level structures for the frontline library workforce is currently underway, and the proposals being considered include new roles focussed on providing targeted outreach library services. The potential cost of providing additional outreach and / or mobile library services has been modelled as part of the development of consultation proposals.</p>
<p>Other Implications (including due regard implications):</p>	<p><u>Equalities Implications</u></p> <p>Equalities implications are considered fully in Appendix 3 to this report. The project team have reviewed the initial Equalities Impact Assessment developed to assist the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development set a vision, strategic direction and approach to the service re-design process in November 2017. An overarching assessment, focussing on the aspects of the service re-design programme that we are consulting on, was developed and refined as the proposals developed. An analysis of equalities considerations at individual library level was undertaken in December 2017, and the consultation proposals have been developed with these considerations in mind. Once the draft proposals were fully-formed, full and detailed equalities impact assessments were carried out at overarching level, for staff, and for each of the libraries that may potentially be affected by the proposals. These full assessments have taken account of evidence from the analysis of equalities data at libraries catchment level, our needs assessment work, evidence developed to assess ease of access to alternative libraries, and feedback from the community engagement exercise. The Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning Director has been briefed at all key stages, and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development has been briefed fully on the final assessments. The County Council's Equalities Manager has been involved throughout.</p> <p>This process has enabled officers from the project team, and decision makers, to identify potential impacts which will be explored in the consultation. The consultation will make sure that all people who want to can take part. It will do this through different options of providing feedback such as online, paper copies in libraries and consultation sessions. We will also contact key equality groups that could be specifically affected (as identified in the equality impact assessment process) to see if they require the consultation information in alternative formats. Lastly we will make sure that this consultation is promoted in all libraries and our staff are able to explain and support members of the public where needed.</p> <p><u>Community Safety Implications</u></p> <p>There are no community safety implications arising directly from</p>

the recommendation to carry out a consultation exercise.

Considering the potential implications of the proposals to change library services, 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, changes to library service provision could have an indirect implication for Community Safety through an impact on these secondary factors. The overriding objective is to maintain a thriving and dynamic library service across Somerset, and we hope that the service will continue to have an increasing positive impact on wellbeing, social isolation, and the development of stronger communities. The potential reduction in funding to Library Services may potentially have some negative impacts. The project will work to mitigate these impacts as far as possible.

Sustainability Implications

There are no significant sustainability implications arising directly from the recommendation to carry out a consultation exercise.

Considering the potential implications of the proposals to change library services, the main potential impacts for sustainability have been assessed as follows:

- Community solutions for libraries may lead to a more efficient and sustainable use of buildings, lowering carbon emissions and improving sustainability through the re-use of surplus assets. Investment in new technology is also likely to lead to more efficient use of energy resources.
- In the event that the council operates fewer library buildings in the future, some people may travel further to access library buildings, which could have a marginal impact on congestion and carbon emissions.

Health and Safety Implications

Carrying out a major consultation exercise is likely to increase anxiety and stress levels for frontline staff and managers working in the library service. To minimise the impact on staff as far as possible, existing staff wellbeing support resources will be highlighted to managers and frontline staff, and staff will be given clear guidance to ensure that public consultation responses and media enquiries are directed to the project team and not fielded by frontline teams. Information on the consultation will be displayed in all Somerset libraries to help staff re-direct consultation related enquiries from service users and members of the public. As set out in paragraph 2.4 below, staff will be consulted on the proposals separately, and will be supported through this consultation process by managers and HR advisory staff.

There are not considered to be any significant potential Health and Safety implications arising from the proposals set out in Appendix 1 to this report. As noted above, anxiety and stress levels for staff working in the Libraries Service are likely to be negatively affected during the consultation period, and this impact may continue into any subsequent implementation phase. Lone working is currently a significant health and safety issue for some Libraries Service staff, and if partnerships with communities can be developed to sustain local library services in some areas where library buildings are currently single staffed, lone working may reduce.

Health and Safety and incident reporting procedures are robustly applied within the service, and the potential concerns noted here will be kept under review through standard monitoring and risk assessment processes.

Privacy Implications

There are no significant privacy implications arising directly from the recommendation to carry out a consultation exercise.

Potential privacy implications arising from the consultation proposals are considered to be limited. One possible outcome of the proposals is that, in some areas, library services may be delivered by communities using volunteers. Personal data of library card holders is maintained within the Library Management System (LMS), and if library services are delivered through volunteer based community partnerships, volunteers are likely to need to access this system (this currently happens at Porlock Community Library). In such a scenario, data protection will be maintained through robust training for volunteers, and through data sharing agreements with community organisations. In accordance with new data protection legislation, due to become law in May 2018, we will carry out a data protection impact assessment prior to the implementation of any changes that could impact on privacy.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

There are no significant health and wellbeing implications arising directly from the recommendation to carry out a consultation exercise.

Somerset County Council is fully committed to continuing to deliver a modern, thriving Libraries Service and maintaining a focus on supporting Health and Wellbeing will be a key aspect of this commitment whatever the outcome of the consultation exercise. This being the case, there are not considered to be any significant potential Health and Wellbeing implications arising from the proposals set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

	Although library services may be delivered in different ways in the future, the library service will continue to have a positive impact on Health and Wellbeing by supporting people to make informed choices and in dealing with specific health conditions, reducing social isolation, and improving mental health and well-being.
Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):	The Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place will consider the proposals in public session at its meeting on 6 th March, and comments and recommendations from that meeting will be considered alongside responses to the consultation, prior to any decisions being taken.

1. Background, methodology and proposed service delivery models

Background

- 1.1.** The County Council's Cabinet set a vision and outcomes framework for the Libraries Service in December 2015. This vision and outcomes framework was reviewed and re-affirmed, with an additional outcome added, by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development in November 2017, following discussion with the Scrutiny Committee for Policy and Place at its meeting in October 2017. The same Scrutiny Committee meeting considered a strategic direction for the Libraries Service, setting out an intention to review how best to continue to deliver a thriving, modern Libraries Service across a wide range of outcomes, with reducing resources over the medium term. All County Council services, including the Libraries Service, need to consider efficiency and cost reduction options. The Libraries Service is likely to have to deliver a real terms saving of around £500,000 over the next three years.
- 1.2.** The Libraries Service is currently performing well and has delivered a number of successful, innovative projects and initiatives which have gained national recognition. The service is guided by its 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 Libraries Service has many strengths, and (having delivered over £1m of savings over the last 5 years) it compares well with peers in value for money terms. In order to reduce costs further and continue to deliver a thriving, modern service, effectively targeted to meet the needs of the population, it is necessary to review and re-design how library services are delivered across Somerset. The strategic direction recently agreed set out an intention to engage and consult with stakeholders and community groups to re-determine how we provide a comprehensive and efficient Libraries Service in Somerset. The recommendation in this report takes that intention forward.

- 1.3.** Decisions on the future approach to delivering the County Council's statutory duty to deliver library services will not be taken until the results of the recommended consultation exercise have been collated and analysed, and fully considered in the development of final recommendations. The consultation

exercise is proposed to run from 29th January to 22nd April, and it is anticipated that decisions will be taken by the County Council's cabinet in June.

Methodology and approach to developing proposals

1.4. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 have been developed following the consideration of a wide range of information. Information and views gathered through a series of informal engagement meetings with library friends groups, library staff, parish and town councils, local county councillors and other stakeholder groups has been taken into account. In addition to this 'soft' information, the project team has considered a wide range of 'hard' data and information from a variety of sources to support assessments of need, access, value for money and equalities impacts for different areas in Somerset. This evidence-based approach ensures that the council addresses legal requirements to carry out:

- A robust assessment of need;
- An assessment of access considerations;
- A comprehensive equality impact assessment; and
- An assessment of value.

1.5. Decisions on the selection of relevant datasets and the approach to analysing and applying data have had a significant bearing on the development of proposals. For this reason, Appendix 2 sets out the methodology employed in the various assessments as well as the datasets used in some detail; this technical information will be made available for comment and feedback during the consultation exercise. In summary:

- An assessment of need in different areas of the county has been carried out by mapping various statistical measures of need across the county, using standard statistical geographies as well as existing library catchments to analyse differences in relative need. The need measures have been selected to address statutory considerations as well as the outcomes framework set for the Libraries Service, and the different levels of population in different parts of the county. The need for different types of library services in different areas has been considered using relative levels of current usage – based on the underlying logic that libraries that are well used are likely to address needs more effectively.
- Access considerations have been analysed by considering levels of car ownership in different geographical areas, as well as public and community transport links and driving distances and times.
- Equalities data from library user records as well as national census datasets have been used, where possible, to build an understanding of the relative numbers of library customers / Somerset residents with different protected characteristics in different libraries / library catchments. Statistical tests have been used to identify catchments and libraries where groups of people with certain protected characteristics are statistically significantly over-represented.
- The relative economic and social value of current libraries has been analysed through a range of usage measures, as well as the development of unit costs for current libraries.

Proposed service delivery models

- 1.6.** The proposals set out in Appendix 1 describe how we propose to deliver library services in the future. We currently deliver library services through library buildings (including one library in Porlock supported through a community library partnership), online library services, the mobile library service and a home delivery service for housebound customers. The consultation will not propose any changes to our online library services, or our home delivery service.
- 1.7.** We aim to keep as many library buildings as possible open. However, the consultation proposes that, for a number of libraries, we may require community support to do this, through partnerships with local communities. Where we are unable to keep library buildings open in communities, we will deliver library services in other ways, through new library outreach services delivered outside of library buildings, or through one or more additional mobile library stops. Our online services will continue to form an important part of library service delivery across the county. The consultation proposals for some communities set out an 'either / or' approach to delivering our statutory duty in the future – either (wherever possible) by maintaining library buildings through community library partnerships, or (where we are unable to achieve this) through alternative mobile and / or outreach services. In other communities, where we are proposing no change to existing library buildings, this means that we consider that our statutory duty requires the County Council to maintain a library building in that community into the future.
- 1.8.** We are using the term 'community library partnership' to describe the proposal to maintain library buildings through partnerships with local communities. We have a completely open mind as to how a community could support its library – every situation will be unique, as every community is unique. A community library partnership could mean a community taking on buildings and staff, volunteers working in the library, or financial support - for example through a parish precept – towards the cost of the library. The County Council will support any community wanting to take on their library with training and ongoing technical support, the provision of book stock (including a regular supply of new books) and ICT equipment. Over and above this, we are proposing that funding of £5,000 per annum will be available to support community library partnerships in some communities – those that have more difficulty accessing alternative library buildings, or where local needs are higher. Communities may want to commission the County Council to continue to manage and run a library building in their area rather than take on full responsibility for managing a library building, and the funding and support described above would be equally applicable in this potential scenario. There are many other potential models, which could involve sharing various responsibilities; the County Council will be as flexible as possible. Putting the Libraries Service onto a sustainable financial footing means that all community library partnerships would need to reduce the Council's costs, and be viable within the resources available to the library service in the future.
- 1.9.** We recognise that some of our proposals present difficult choices for communities and wish to stress there is no expectation that communities should step forward. This is entirely their choice. Where communities are unable to provide sufficient support to keep a building open, alternative library services will be provided such as library outreach services, online services or mobile library services.

- 1.10.** We are using the term ‘library outreach services’ to describe a new service delivery model where library services would be delivered outside of library buildings. Outreach services would be designed to meet the needs of more deprived communities, and deliver the library service commissioned outcomes in a targeted way through a wide range of activities, events and public internet access services. The exact mix of activities and services would vary, depending on the need in different areas. Some library outreach services, for example public access computer terminals, would involve installing permanent resources or equipment in other venues such as other Council buildings or in community venues. This could include small, specialist book collections in some areas. Other library outreach services, such as events and activities, would be delivered as a ‘pop-up’ service and would require no fixed equipment or resources. Currently many of our activities and events are delivered in partnership with other organisations, other council services and through volunteer or community groups and we anticipate that many library outreach services would be delivered through similar partnerships if these proposals are implemented in the future. As well as proposing outreach services as an alternative where library buildings cannot be maintained through community library partnerships, the consultation proposes the delivery of new outreach services in Somerset’s major towns.
- 1.11.** Mobile library services are delivered by our mobile library, a purpose-built ‘travelling library’ which serves a network of stops on a regular schedule, for an allotted period of time, in communities that do not have a library building. Our current mobile library also serves schools, nurseries and residential homes in some communities that do have a library building. Mobile library services are currently delivered at over 170 scheduled stops around the county and the network of stops is regularly reviewed under an agreed policy. For some areas, we are proposing to add one or more additional stops to the current mobile library network, as an alternative, where library buildings cannot be maintained through community library partnerships. The duration and frequency of any such additional mobile library stops would depend on the need and demand in different areas. We are not proposing to change the mobile library policy, which we developed recently following a consultation process, and which would continue to guide future changes to the duration, location and frequency of stops going forward. If the consultation proposals are implemented in a way which involves a significant increase in the mobile library service, there may be a need to invest in an additional mobile library to meet demand.

2. Proposed consultation process

- 2.1.** If the recommendation proposed in this report is agreed, public and staff consultation exercises will be launched on 29th January and 5th February respectively. These two consultation exercises will be carried out in tandem, but as separate exercises.
- 2.2.** The public consultation is proposed to run for 12 weeks to the 22nd April. The proposals and background information will be available publicly online, in paper form in each of our 34 libraries and on application in other formats. Details of the consultation and the dates of consultation events will be sent to a wide range of individuals and groups, including local press, social media, Parish and Town Councils, the library customer database, small business associations, library users and particular equalities groups through Compass Disability and the

Somerset Equalities Officer Group. An article including advance information about the public consultation was delivered to each household in Somerset in the 'Your Somerset' newsletter in December 2017. People and organisations will be encouraged to respond via an online or paper questionnaire. This will allow us to collect and analyse empirical data, as well as gathering feedback on the proposals and alternative ideas through 'free text' responses. An email address will be provided to enable people to give more detailed or specific responses.

- 2.3. There will be a drop-in event in, or nearby to, each community that could be significantly affected by the proposals during February or March. These events will provide an opportunity for interested parties to ask questions about the proposals or hold discussions with members of the Libraries Service management team, prior to individuals giving their views through the questionnaire or email address provided. Details of these events are set out in Appendix 4 to this report (note that some dates and venues are yet to be confirmed), and will be available on the consultation website. The consultation proposals will be presented to the Policy and Place Scrutiny Committee of the County Council on 6th March – this meeting will allow all elected county councillors an opportunity to discuss the proposals, and will also be open to the public. Where possible, officers may attend further public meetings to discuss the proposals if invited to do so by community representatives during the consultation period.
- 2.4. Feedback from Libraries Service staff will be very important in shaping any final decisions on the future delivery of library services, and we propose to seek their views (and the views of Trade Union representatives) through a separate staff consultation exercise. This is proposed to run from 29th January through to mid-March. The consultation will gather feedback on the same proposals (set out in Appendix 1), and staff will be able to access the same background information and detail of the proposals through the microsite, or through information in libraries. Staff will be asked to give their views on the proposals, the underlying rationale, and to suggest any alternative options. A series of face-to-face staff meetings will occur in February and March, which will provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions and discuss the proposals with members of the library management team; staff will be able to refer questions to the project team at any point through their local line manager.

3. Options considered and reasons for rejecting them

- 3.1. It would not be legal to take forward a review and re-design of the Libraries Service without a robust and meaningful consultation exercise, and so this option has not been considered.

4. Background Papers

- 4.1.
 - Library Service update and proposed strategy – report to Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee, 3rd October 2017 (available from www.somerset.gov.uk).
 - Library Service – Vision, strategic direction and approach to service re-design – Cabinet Member Key decision, 23rd November 2017 (available from www.somerset.gov.uk).

- Mobile Library policy set out in the Somerset Library Services Review approved by Cabinet 2 March 2015 (available from www.somerset.gov.uk).