



Somerset County Council

Press Release

Library Services Consultation Announced

A consultation on the future of how Somerset County Council library services could be delivered across Somerset is due to start at the end of this month.

A formal decision was taken today to consult on a set of proposals that seek to put the service on a sustainable footing for the long-term, at a time when all Council budgets are under enormous pressure.

The decision sets out that a public consultation will start on 29 January and run for 12 weeks (ending 22 April) and invites members of the public, businesses and organisations for their views.

Somerset County Council is proud to deliver a comprehensive, thriving and modern library service across the county and is fully committed to continuing to do so. Somerset County Council currently provides a library service online through LibrariesWest, a mobile library, a home delivery service for customers unable to visit a library for themselves and through 34 library buildings in major towns and villages.

As with many Authorities, Somerset County Council continues to face challenging financial times. Funds from central government reduce year on year whilst demand for services, such as adult and children's social care, increase and all County Council services are considering efficiency and cost reduction options.

In summary, under the proposals, 15 of our 34 library buildings would be seeking community involvement to remain open. Where this is not possible, services would instead be provided either through outreach in community venues or through additional mobile library stops.

For 7 of our libraries, the County Council is consulting on two alternative options – either to seek community involvement to maintain library buildings or to keep existing library services as they currently are.

Somerset County Council's Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Cllr David Hall, said: "These are challenging financial times and we must put libraries on a sustainable financial footing for the long-term, whilst still delivering a modern thriving library service across our County.

"Library services will continue across Somerset whatever the response from this consultation, but our proposals highlight that keeping some libraries open may require

community support. Where we are unable to keep libraries open, we will deliver library services in other ways such as via alternative venues or mobile library services.

“I would stress that no decision about the future delivery of library services in any community has been taken and no decision will be made until the results of this consultation have been fully analysed. Please take the opportunity to submit your views on the proposals from 29 January and offer your ideas or suggestions for any alternative proposals you may have.”

There are Somerset library service proposals for 9 areas in total available to view. Anyone taking part in the consultation will be asked to view the area of the library they visit most often before completing a questionnaire asking for their views on the proposals.

The proposals and the questionnaire will be available online from 29 January at www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation.

Ends

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 01823 355020 or email pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

- To view the decision made to go out to consultation, please click <http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=632>.
- Library services include book, audio book and DVD loans, public computer access, reading and support groups, digital skills support, a range of digital resources (such as 3D printing, Microbits and Raspberry PIs), events and activities, business support - and lots more besides.

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