

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	19 th December 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture & Heritage/Corporate Director: Environment & Economy
Head of Service	Head of Housing & Communities Service
Report author	Head of Housing & Communities Service
Title	Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal

1. What is the report about?

1.1. Library/One Stop Shop service cuts for 2024-25

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To detail the potential for savings from the Library/One Stop Shop service.

2.2. To detail the potential impact of making the savings

2.3. To highlight any particular considerations for Cabinet and CET to inform future discussions.

2.4. A decision is required on whether to make the proposed cut to the core Library/One Stop Shop service budget.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. For Cabinet to note the report and approve the proposal to reduce Library/One Stop Shop opening hours by c.40%, together with associated savings in other parts of the service, to release an expected saving of £360k.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

3.2. That Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood, and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1) as part of its consideration.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1. The financial challenge faced by the council is unprecedented, and all services will be required to deliver significant savings to meet that challenge.
- 4.2. The proposal to reduce the hours of operation for the Library/One Stop Shop service has come out of this corporate process to identify savings proposals. It is one of the list of major savings proposals that has been shared with Members. The Library/One Stop Shop proposal was subject to its own Member Briefing session on 26th October.
- 4.3. While it is recognised that Libraries are not 'just' places to borrow books, the variety of activities within Libraries should be noted. Key statistics for 2022-23 are:
- Income handled by Libraries/OSS (except Ruthin OSS) amounts to **£845,000**. Most of this was through the cash machines (in place in 5 of 8 libraries – staff cash up at the end of each day and often have to assist customers to use the kiosks), but £370,000 was collected by staff (ie members of the public were not confident in using the cash machines without assistance, or there is no machine at that location).
 - Libraries hosted over **950** partner activities through the year 22/23. These include events such as Talking Points, CAD drop-ins, Working Denbighshire and other DCC Services meeting customers.
 - Libraries submitted over **17,000** C360 enquiries on behalf of members of the public through the year.
 - Libraries hosted nearly **650** Library events (not including Bookstart), with nearly 10,000 attendees.
 - **51%** of the population are registered Library Users.
 - During the year there were **20,646** public IT sessions (ie members of the public using computers in the Library, often needing staff support to get online).
 - There are 54 staff members in the Library Service (32.18 FTE). It is a very loyal staff group: 15 staff members have continuous service of 20 years and over; 3 have worked for Denbighshire for over 30 years.

Proposed Model

- 4.4. There are only two ways to make significant savings in the Library/One Stop Shop service: either close libraries or reduce the opening hours of libraries. CET and Cabinet discussed these options and collectively agreed to try to avoid closing libraries completely.
- 4.5. The proposal for reducing the opening hours of all libraries is seen as a better and fairer way of delivering a significant saving than closing individual libraries, for example by having one Library/One Stop Shop in either Rhyl or Prestatyn; in Corwen or Llangollen; in Ruthin or Denbigh, St Asaph or Rhuddlan. This option ensures that all of Denbighshire's libraries remain open, albeit on a reduced basis, and they are potentially still available for use by communities outside of opening times. It also means that it will be easier to reintroduce the previous opening hours in future if the financial position improves, or if alternative funding can be secured.
- 4.6. A staff and public consultation was launched to seek feedback on a proposal to reduce Library/One Stop Shop opening hours and make associated reductions in service-wide functions.
- 4.7. There was an unprecedented response to the consultation: over **4,590** responses were received from the public and stakeholders.
- 4.8. While acknowledging that savings would need to be found, Cabinet instructed for the model to be amended in response to feedback from staff, customers, and stakeholders: the proposed reduction in opening hours is now just under 40%. Together with associated savings in other parts of the service, the proposed budget reduction is **£359,328** which equates to **21%** of the service budget (23/24 figures).
- 4.9. The model is summarised here, and is detailed in Appendix 2:

	Current Model	Model as consulted (50% reduction in opening hours plus associated savings)	Revised model (40% reduction in opening hours plus associated savings)
Total opening hours	251.5	129	159
Total frontline staff hours	742.7	420	489
Total frontline posts	40	24	30
Total frontline FTEs	20	11.3	10.91

Total posts	55	37	44
Total FTEs	31.12	19.78	20.31
Total savings (23/24 figures)		£450,540	£359,328
% of whole budget (£1.659m)		27%	22%

Savings (23/24 figures)	£
Frontline posts	223,585
Management and Supervisor reductions	55,316
Bookstart (term-time only)	4,305
Home Library Service reduce 25%	5,890
Delivery reduce 30%	5,008
Resources/Bookfund reduce 20%	23,360
Cleaning reduce 20%	21,522
Supplies reduce 30%	2,342
Relief reduction	18,000
TOTAL	359,328

4.10. The model also responds to much of the consultation feedback, for example, maximising opportunities to access the service outside school and working days as much as possible, fewer 'part day' openings, amended opening days.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. Libraries are an important part of delivering our corporate priorities, as well as key tools in achieving equality of access and opportunity, helping the Council and partners to deliver their equality agenda.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. Redundancy costs are difficult to estimate, due to the complexity of the changes. Redundancy costs could be zero if all staff are successfully redeployed, but, based on the most expensive potential redundancies, could be up to £235,500. Obviously, every effort will be made to minimise the need for redundancies and keep associated costs to a minimum. Finance and HR support will be required to deliver any changes.

6.2. A communications plan has been developed and Comms and Engagement support which have been critical to date will need to support the implementation of Cabinet's

decision to ensure that customers and stakeholders are aware of the changes and continue to maximise the use of Libraries/One Stop Shops.

- 6.3. Reducing the Library/One Stop Shop service could impact on some other services. Detailed discussions with services may be required to mitigate any impact.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. Score for the sustainability of the approach: 2 out of 4 stars. Actual score: 21/36
- 7.2. DCC's Library/One Stop Shop Service over the last six years has been developed in order to make an ever greater contribution to the Wellbeing of Future Generations, so a reduction in service is necessarily going to result in a negative impact on the goals. Mitigation of the negative impacts will need to be considered through engagement with staff, Library/One Stop Shop users and partners.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. Council Workshop 26 October.
- 8.2. Public Consultation 2-30 October. Over 4,500 responses: by far the most successful consultation in recent years. An analysis of the responses is in Appendix 3 but key headlines include:
- 8.2.1. Over 90% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would be able to visit their nearest or next-nearest Library/One Stop Shop when they need to.
- 8.2.2. Nearly 3,400 added comments about the proposals: 96% were negative comments to the proposed changes.
- 8.2.3. Key themes include: Impact on Library Facilities (Books/Computers/Internet Access/Printing); Impact on Community and Social hub/chat sessions; Lack of access due to hours (outside school/work); Cost of Living issues; Impact on access to education/training; Impact on access to help with information and Council Services; transport issues getting to other libraries; Impact on access to Bookstart/Rhymetime; Impact on the vulnerable more generally etc. The Council's response to the themes is outlined in Appendix 4.

- 8.3. The Staff Consultation 2-30 October. Staff comments largely reflected those of the public consultation. Appendix 5 is Unison's response on behalf of its members: the sentiment was largely shared by all other respondents. A response to staff has been published to respond to comments and update staff on next steps.
- 8.4. In response to Cabinet requests, Staff have been engaged in revising the model as consulted and Unison took part in the meeting to discuss it.
- 8.5. Key stakeholders, funders and regulators have been consulted and some responses are included in the pack (Appendix 6a-i)

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. The Council is facing severe real terms reductions in funding over the next few years, alongside increases in cost and demand, especially in services such as adult's and children's social services. This will require all services to make savings which will result in reductions in service. Although services have identified some saving proposals, the gap remains significant for 2024/25 alone, even if all those proposals are agreed and are deliverable. The libraries proposal forms part of these. Although obviously there are a wide range of factors to consider for each and every proposal it is important that the wider financial context for the next 3 years is taken into account when decisions are taken. Savings that are not delivered now will either be just delaying cuts later down the line or shifting the cuts to other valued services.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1. Risk of Judicial Review. Given the proposal is that all libraries remain open, this is considered unlikely.
- 10.2. Risk of Employment Tribunal: Legal and HR support is ensuring that policy is being followed. Unions have all been consulted and one has been engaged with revising the model as consulted.
- 10.3. Risk that making cuts will impact DCC's ability to continue to meet WG's Library Standards (12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators: [Welsh Libraries report 2020 to 2021 \(gov.wales\)](#)). The service as outlined in the paper has mitigated this risk and will continue to plan to mitigate it further in service design and delivery.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Local authorities are required under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

11.2. Public library services are funded and either run or commissioned by local government. Library authorities (unitary, county or metropolitan borough councils) have a statutory duty under the [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#) 'to provide a [comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons](#)' for all those who live, work or study in the area (Section 7).