

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	17th July 2025
Lead Member	Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture & Heritage
Head of Service	Head of Housing & Communities Service
Report Author	Head of Housing & Communities Service
Title	Library/One Stop Shop Service

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The work of the Libraries Task Force that was established to review the service delivery model following the reduction in Library/One Stop Shop (OSS) opening hours in June 2024.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. For Scrutiny to consider the work and the output of the Denbighshire Libraries Task Force established to measure the impact of the reduction in Library/OSS opening hours on residents, communities, and the authority; and consider alternative proposals or solutions under consideration for enhancing and/or expanding service delivery going forward.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee considers the actions and output to date from the Libraries Task Force.
- 3.2. That the Committee makes recommendations for any further work for the Libraries Task Force in the event of it continuing its work for a further 12 months.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1. The Denbighshire Library Task Force was established to monitor the impact of a reduction in service delivery of the Library/OSS Service following a reduction in core budget.
- 4.2. The changes in opening hours started in June 2024, following extensive consultation and the decision made by Cabinet in January 2024.
- 4.3. The Library Task Force was Chaired by the Lead Member for Welsh Language and Culture and included the Lead Member for Equalities (now Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy, Equalities & Assets), and representatives from each of the Member Area Groups, Rhuddlan Town Council and Unison.
- 4.4. The Task Force has met 8 times. The group has considered a number of items, including:
 - 4.4.1. Opportunities for more Town Councils to contribute towards Library Services.
 - 4.4.2. Opportunities for further external funding, including for project-based activities; private sector funding (e.g. Barclays Bank, InPost Lockers)
 - 4.4.3. Libraries' Charging policy for printing/faxing/room hire etc, resulting in new charging framework (see Appendix 1)
- 4.5. Key developments include:
 - 4.5.1. Rhuddlan Town Council extending their funding to Rhuddlan Library/One Stop Shop to stop any reduction in opening hours. (£12,000 plus additional £17,000).
 - 4.5.2. Financial reprofiling to remove a long-term borrowing commitment for Prestatyn Library (£28,837 reduction pa)
 - 4.5.3. Successful bid from Welsh Government (WG) Library programme to upgrade Corwen Library/One Stop Shop to include Library+ facilities (access for Library Members outside opening hours). (£83,469 capital grant)

- 4.5.4. Further successful grant applications to support 'added value' library services – e.g. to Keep Wales Tidy grant for a Community Garden in St Asaph Library, and a Tesco Stronger Starts grant for summer holiday activities in Prestatyn Library/ Commuted Sums grant for sensory garden in Rhyl Library.
 - 4.5.5. Working with Flying Start to extend the delivery of Bookstart Rhymetime sessions to Llangollen and Corwen.
 - 4.5.6. Development of a 'Friends of Rhuddlan Library' as a pilot approach for Library Users to contribute to future direction and funding opportunities for local libraries.
 - 4.5.7. Draft of a new Denbighshire Library Strategy (Appendix 2)
- 4.6. In addition the Task Force considered impacts of reduction of Library/OSS opening hours, including: Welsh Public Library Standards Adult User Survey (Appendix 3), Bespoke Library Staff Survey (see Appendix 4); Library Performance. Key messages include:
- 4.6.1. Over 94% of respondents thought the standard of customer care was either good or very good, which demonstrates how much the library customers value the frontline staff.
 - 4.6.2. Staff have been severely impacted by the reduction in opening hours, both through reduction in their household income and through added stress of delivering Library/One Stop Shop services during reduced hours and challenging operational changes across the Council.
 - 4.6.3. Performance monitoring has been challenging as a new All-Wales Library Management system went live in December 2024 meaning that a lot of performance information is inaccurate. Therefore, it will be difficult to compare pre-library reduction to post-library production. This will be the subject of a paper being brought to Scrutiny in the future.
- 4.7. Meanwhile Audit have undertaken a review of the project that reduced the opening hours: results of the review will be presented to Audit Committee in the Autumn.

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.
- 5.2. Libraries support the One Council approach by hosting events and making information available for all Council services; they are a critical vehicle for ensuring high levels of customer service for our communities.

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

- 6.1 The service was tasked with making £360,000 saving for 2024-25 as part of the council's programme of major savings. The service achieved the majority of the saving in 2024-25, to the figure of £315,000. The reason for not achieving the full savings of £360,000 was due to the implementation of the new model part way through the financial year. The full savings will be achieved for 2025-26.
- 6.2 Details of actions, initiatives and additional funding streams sourced to add value to the service are highlighted within the report.

7 What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment and what changes have, or will be made to the project or approach as a result of the assessment?

- 7.1 A well-being impact assessment was carried out to inform the decision, and has informed the work of the Task Force.

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

- 8.1 The work of the Taskforce has been informed by the Customer Survey (see Appendix 3) and by the bespoke Staff Survey (see Appendix 4). The development of the Friends of Rhuddlan Library has been facilitated by particularly successful engagement with Rhuddlan Library Users.

9 Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 It is positive to see the volume of work carried out around the Denbighshire Library Task Force and the successes achieved. Ultimately these successes are adding value to the libraries service post the reduction in opening hours. With the exception of Rhuddlan and Rhyl, to date, it has not been possible to identify recurring sources of funding that have enabled the extension of library opening hours.

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

- 10.1 No further changes are being recommended in this report. Risk management is embedded in service delivery.

11 Power to make the decision

- 11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 set out Scrutiny's powers with respect of policy development and review and performance monitoring.