Somerset Library Services Consultation 2018
Summary Proposal

Tell us your views on how we are proposing to deliver future library services in South East Somerset - Area 7 - Bruton, Castle Cary, Wincanton Libraries

We'd like to invite you to tell us your views on some potential changes we are considering making to the future delivery of library services in your community and across Somerset.

Somerset County Council is fully committed to continuing to deliver a thriving, modern library service across Somerset. As with many Authorities, however, we continue to face challenging financial times. Somerset County Council received £90million in 2013/14 from central government to support our services. This has reduced to just over £26million for 2017/18 and is set to reduce to nothing by 2020/21- whilst demand for services has increased, particularly in adult and children social care. We have managed to reduce our library budget by 20% since 2011, whilst keeping all of our libraries open. Going forward, we may need to consider more challenging changes in order to keep the Libraries Service on a sustainable financial footing.

The following summary proposal sets out how we might deliver library services in your community in future. There are another eight area summary proposals available to view, which include library proposals for the remaining areas of Somerset.

Please carefully read the following information, consider the proposed option then complete the questionnaire, basing your answers on the library you visit most often.

We stress that no decisions about the future delivery of library services in any community have been taken at this time and the results of this consultation will be taken into account in our decision-making. No decisions will be made until the results of this consultation (ending 22 April) have been fully analysed and reviewed.

More detailed information is available online ([www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries consultation](www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries)). You can also attend drop-in sessions taking place at some libraries during the consultation to discuss the proposals and give your feedback.

What are library services?
Our 34 Somerset libraries deliver a range of library services including 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.

Many of these services are available online or through a network of mobile library stops. In addition, we provide a home delivery service for customers unable to visit a library for themselves.

Area 7: South East Somerset Area profile

The map below shows the existing library buildings (green pins) in Bruton, Castle Cary and Wincanton and the existing mobile library stops (green dots) – 4 stops in this area per month. Library Area 7 is shaded red / orange, with darker shading indicating higher levels of deprivation, and lighter shading indicating lower levels of deprivation.
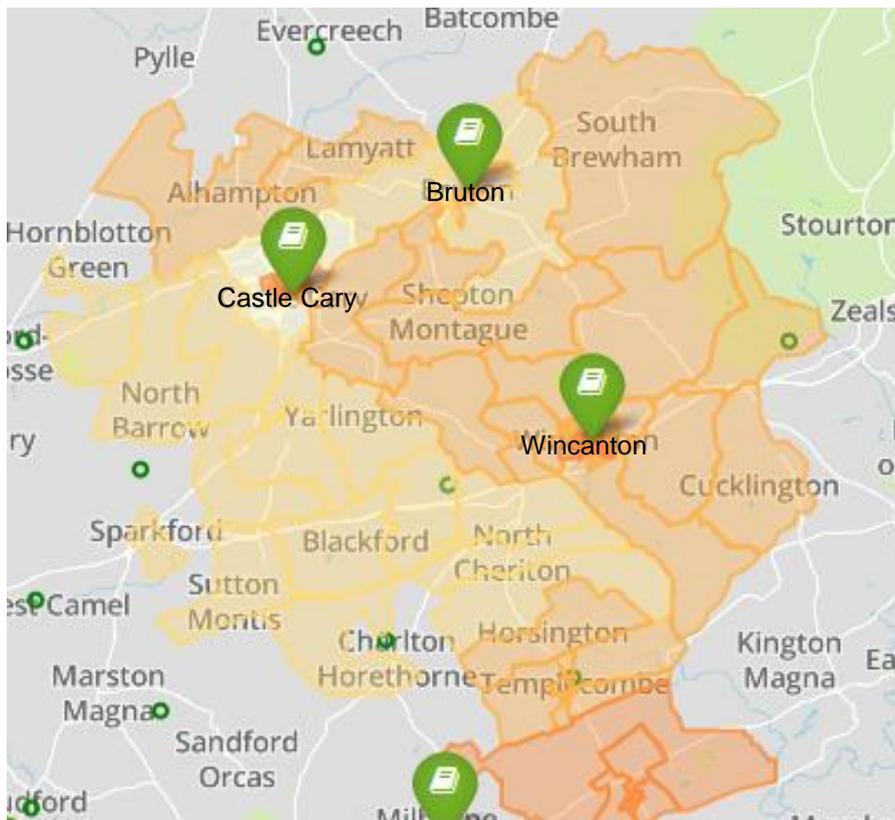
- The area includes the eastern part of South Somerset District.
- It has the smallest population (total 22,360) of the 9 library areas, and is relatively sparsely populated. The main towns are Wincanton (pop. 5,435), Castle Cary (pop. 3,232) and Bruton (pop. 2,984, including adjoining Pitcombe). Other sizeable communities include Templecombe (pop. 1,560) and Henstridge (pop. 1,530) in the south of the area.
- Commercial bus services run between Wincanton and Yeovil, linking Templecombe and Henstridge to Wincanton. A subsidised bus route links Castle Cary and Bruton to Wincanton and Street, and community transport serves most of the area, again running into Wincanton. The urban areas are small enough for walking and cycling access to town centres.
- The area is some distance away from the major towns of Somerset, with drive times to Yeovil / Frome of approximately 25 / 30 minutes from Wincanton and Castle Cary. In contrast, the three major towns are all within 10 minutes' drive of one another, and the vast majority of the area can be reached in 15 minutes' drive from Wincanton.

- Compared to other library areas, there are no significant areas of deprivation. Only 3 neighbourhoods – in Wincanton, Henstridge and Castle Cary – are more deprived than the Somerset average. Employment and income levels are higher than elsewhere in Somerset in the area as a whole, however income is relatively low (in the 40% most deprived for income deprivation) in Castle Cary. Many of the rural parts of the area have high levels of income and employment.
- Educational attainment and school readiness levels are lowest in Wincanton (which has a neighbourhood in the 20% most deprived nationally for education deprivation); educational attainment in Castle Cary is also relatively low. Social isolation is most pronounced in Castle Cary and Wincanton, and digital exclusion appears to be a significant issue in Castle Cary and Henstridge.

	Bruton Library	Castle Cary Library	Wincanton Library
Catchment population	4,698	8,326	18,121
Opening Hours per week	12	19.5	28.5
Active borrowers*	355	592	1,671
Annual footfall	5,096	8,832	29,564

Proposal

The following proposal demonstrates the aim to keep as many library buildings as possible open. The options highlight, however, that for a number of libraries we may require community support to help us achieve this. We stress that library services will continue across Somerset, whatever the outcome of this consultation.

If we are unable to keep library buildings open in communities, we will deliver library services in other ways, such as through outreach (i.e. in alternative venues within communities), online or mobile library services.

Please now consider the following proposal (Option a) and complete the questionnaire, basing your answers on the library you visit most often.

Area 7 Option a:

LIBRARY	PROPOSAL
Bruton	Provide library services through *either* • a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Bruton, *or* • an additional mobile library stop.

Castle Cary	Provide library services through *either* • a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Castle Cary (supported by some funding from the County Council), *or* • an additional mobile library stop.
Wincanton	No change to existing library service.

For further detailed information on the proposals, please visit
www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I have this summary proposal and questionnaire in an alternative format?
If you require the summary proposal and questionnaire in another language, a large format or braille version, please telephone 0300 123 2224 or speak with a member of library staff.

Do I need to read the proposals?
To fully understand the options and our reasoning for putting them forward, you need to read the proposals before completing the questionnaire.

I visit two or more libraries, can I complete more than one questionnaire?
We ask that one person completes only one questionnaire basing your answers on the library you visit most often.

I visit a town library, but I live in a village. Which library should I base my questionnaire answers on?
We recommend you base your answers on the library you visit the most often.

I don't visit a library, do I need to complete this questionnaire?
Even if you don't visit a library very often, we are keen to obtain your views. The results of this consultation will shape the library service within your community for the future.

When will the consultation end?
The consultation will end at midnight on Sunday 22 April.

When will the final decision be made?
Until the consultation has been completed and the results analysed, we would like to emphasise that no decisions regarding changes to the delivery of library services will be taken – the information set out here is just a proposal at this stage. We expect to make a final decision by the end of June.

How will you meet your statutory duty to provide library services?
We will continue to meet our statutory duty of ensuring all Somerset residents have reasonable access to library services. In some locations we are proposing to continue to deliver our statutory duty through a library building, as we do now. In other areas we are proposing to try to work in partnership with community groups to keep library buildings open. Where this isn't possible, we propose to deliver our statutory duty in alternative ways – for example through library outreach services, online, or through additional mobile library stops.

In the event that a community chooses to step out of a community library partnership in future, we may deliver our statutory duty in the alternative way described in these proposals without consulting on this change again.

What are library outreach services?
We are using the term 'library outreach services' to describe a wide range of activities, events and public internet access services that could be delivered outside of current library buildings (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 also 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.

How are you proposing to work with communities?
If communities choose to work in partnership with us in order to retain a library building in their area, we propose to make a long term commitment to help them to do so – including financial contributions in some areas. In the event that a community subsequently chooses to step out of a community library partnership in the future, we may deliver our statutory duty in the alternative way described in these proposals without consulting on this change again.

What's a Community library partnership?
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. But it 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. We recognise that some of our proposals present difficult choices for communities and want 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 outreach, online or mobile library services.

When you state in the proposals 'some funding from Somerset County Council', what do you mean?
We're proposing to make available funding for some communities – those that are likely to have more difficulty accessing alternative libraries, or where local needs are higher. This funding will be provided in addition to other support (training and technical support, the provision of book stock and ICT equipment) which will be offered to any community wanting to take on their library. The funding might be given to communities as a grant (where the community manages the library), or it could

form part of a joint funding arrangement to support a community partnership solution where a library continues to be operated by the County Council.

What is an Active Borrower?
Active Borrowers - an active borrower is a registered library user who has borrowed an item (such as a book or audio book) from the library service by 'checking' out that item using their library membership card. Borrower data has been included for the period of the year from 1st November 2016 to 31st October 2017.

What do you mean by 'digital exclusion', 'social isolation' and 'school readiness'?
To help us to understand where libraries are needed most, we have analysed a lot of information at community and neighbourhood level and we have taken this into account in developing our proposals. Digital exclusion, social isolation and school readiness are important aspects of this analysis.

Digital exclusion identifies those parts of the County where people are less able to access the internet / online services, taking into account factors such as age, income, disability, adult skills, and broadband speeds. Library services can support digital inclusion, by providing internet access and wifi, and by helping people learn about how to use computers and use the internet.

Social isolation identifies those parts of the County where people are more likely to experience loneliness, taking into account factors such as whether people are living alone, age, health (including mental health), income, car ownership, and internet usage. Library services can help lonely people by providing activities and events which bring people together, supporting people with hobbies, study and interests, and by helping people to get online.

Finally, school readiness is a measure of pre-school development using the national Early Years Foundation Stage learning framework.   We have analysed the percentage of children achieving a 'good level of development' across this framework. Library services can help children in their early years to learn about the world and to enjoy reading, through activities and events, book collections, and e-audio books.

More information about these and other measures can be found on www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation.

Are you changing your online services?
We are not proposing any changes to our growing online offer of e-books, e-audio books, e-magazines and other services including the LibrariesWest App as part of the public consultation. Somerset Libraries' online offer will continue to form part of our statutory library service whatever the outcome of this consultation.

What do you mean by mobile library services?
Mobile library services are delivered by our mobile library van. The mobile library van is a purpose-built 'travelling library' which stops on a regular schedule, for an allotted period of time, at specified locations in communities that do not have a

library building. Sometimes this includes outside schools, nurseries and residential homes in communities that do have a library building.

Mobile library services are currently delivered at over 152 scheduled stops to 128 communities around the county and the network of stops is regularly reviewed under an agreed policy. For some areas, we are proposing to deliver library services using a mobile library if a library building can't be maintained through a community library partnership. This would involve putting in one or more additional stops.

The duration and frequency of any additional mobile library service 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 and which would continue to guide future changes to the duration, location and frequency of stops.

What services does the mobile library provide?
Our current mobile library service provides access to books, DVDs and other lending stock. We do not provide public computer access terminals or events and activities through the mobile library at this time.