

# Isle of Wight Libraries Public Consultation

The Isle of Wight Council is considering further changes to the way in which it delivers its library service and is seeking the views of the community about the changes and how they may impact the use of the libraries

## Introduction

The Council continues to work hard to offer you the most efficient and effective library service it can. This means that it is constantly reviewing how it manages its budget, and looking at ways to improve efficiency and service delivery. It also has been having regular conversations with the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), the government department with responsibility for libraries, to keep them informed.

The Council has a duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act which it currently operates through its six public libraries and the mobile library service. The Council’s statutory provision was found to meet the requirements of the Act in a letter to the council from the Secretary of State in May 2013.

Since the last review of the service in 2011 the library service has been working much more closely with local communities. We now have friends’ and supporters’ groups in our Cowes, Freshwater, Ryde, Sandown and Ventnor libraries, which has significantly changed the ways libraries are run and increased the number of activities now taking place in our libraries.

## What does the library service provide?

The services offered by the library service are listed below. These have been split into two sections – the statutory provision which enables the council to provide a “comprehensive and efficient service” under the Public Libraries and Museums Act and those that enhance it such, as the five community libraries in Bembridge, Brighstone, East Cowes, Niton and Shanklin.

### Statutory Provision

#### Public Libraries

Our six public libraries in Newport, Ryde, Cowes, Freshwater, Sandown and Ventnor provide:

- A wide-ranging, quality book stock
- High quality children’s and young people’s services including the Summer Reading Challenge
- Free computers with internet access, with learning support
- Well-trained friendly staff
- A wide range of events and activities
- Information to help with life’s challenges
- Space to relax, chat or study
- Self-service kiosks
- Access to stock from other British public, academic and national libraries through a co-operative inter-lending scheme

## **Mobile Libraries**

The council provides a mobile library service through two vehicles.

One is provided to meet the needs of more rural and isolated communities

Services include:

- Books and materials for all ages
- Staff to help find information, with access to the council's resources.
- Access to the library catalogue to order books and other items

The other mobile currently uses one of the vehicles to provide the Home Library Service which delivers books to people in their homes who are unable to get to a library due to a medical condition, whether long or short term.

## **Libraries Online**

The Library Service offers an extensive range of online services, which can be accessed anywhere there is an internet connection. Simply select the library pages on [www.iwight.com/thelibrary](http://www.iwight.com/thelibrary) and follow the links. A number of these services require users to have a library card number and PIN which can be obtained through any of the 11 libraries or mobile libraries.

These services include searching the library catalogue, reserving or renewing books, consulting reference works, eBooks, classical and jazz music streaming service, downloading audio books, accessing online language courses or a range of 500 courses with online tutor support, learner drivers' course, UK citizenship course, an e-newspaper service, an e-magazine service and access to British research periodicals. As well as being accessible from home or on a smart phone these are available in all our public libraries and community libraries.

## **Enhancements to statutory provision**

### **Community Libraries**

The five community libraries are located in Bembridge, Brighstone, East Cowes, Niton and Shanklin. These libraries are supported by stock from the public library service. Library customers can still use their library card in any public library or community library and reserve books from any of the island's 11 libraries. They are also able to reserve and borrow books from mainland libraries. Community libraries have developed to meet the needs of the local communities who are involved in their planning and management.

These libraries include:

- Book stock focused on quick choice and self-study
- Children's activities including the Summer Reading Challenge
- Internet access
- Trained friendly volunteers
- Events and activities to meet local need
- Available for a minimum of 10 hours per week

The community libraries have already proved to be very successful due to the hard work of the volunteers, support of the local community, local town and parish councils'

| service users and the continued support of the public library service.

Although the community libraries operate independently from the public library service, we continue to offer advice, online resources, guidance and training to enable these libraries to become thriving resources within their communities.

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## **Here are some facts about the Council's library service in our six libraries**

In the last year:-

- You visited our libraries over 680,000 times
- You made over 210,000 hits on our website
- You borrowed over 550,000 items
- Over 27,500 of you attended events in our libraries

We support the Island's children:-

- Over 2,500 Bookstart packs were delivered (a book gifting scheme where the packs are funded by the Government and delivered through the library service and its partners)
- Over 2,400 children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge
- Over 10,300 children and parents attended our 350 Rhymetime sessions

We promote literacy and the enjoyment of reading:-

- Over 60 reading groups enjoy access to our book collections, and use our library space to meet
- We organised over 900 reading activities and events last year

We encourage the involvement of volunteers in our libraries:-

- 115 volunteers spent over 3,600 hours helping in libraries last year
- 450 events took place in our libraries supported or organised by volunteers

We help people get online:-

- You used our free computers for over 40,000 hours last year
- Our staff helped people get online with over 21,000 computer queries during the year

We help vulnerable people in the community:-

- We made over 2,300 visits to vulnerable adults through the Home Library Service
- Our libraries have dementia resource collections of 235 books, supported by AgeUK

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## **Why are we making more changes to the library service?**

A significant proportion of the resources the Council use to provide services to the Island's community are received from the government in the form of an annual grant. As a result of the national austerity agenda the amount of grant funding available to the Council is reducing to the extent that it needs save some £28 million over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 in order to stay within its predicted budget in each of these years. Consequently the Council is prioritising its spending to those services which it must provide by law but without going beyond what is required. The council's view is that it could save some 19% of the current spend on the library service (£280,000) whilst still meeting its obligations if it were to change the way it delivers the service.

## **How are we ensuring these changes enable us to meet the statutory duty?**

The council needs to ensure it is still delivering a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. The council must ensure that it has carried out a needs assessment for the service and considered how any altered service would meet these needs. Recent case law has confirmed that the amount of money available to the service can be considered as part of the needs assessment.

### **Needs Assessment**

We carried out a needs assessment in the autumn of 2014 in preparation for potential changes to the library service budget in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

### **What was included in the needs assessment?**

The library service considered a wide range of data whilst preparing for this review. It looked at the demographics of the Isle of Wight (as set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment published on the Council's website), including population data, information regarding ethnicity, educational attainment, areas of deprivation on the Island and data about library usage, including travel times to libraries, costs of bus journeys, how many people use more than one library and data about the costs of every element of the service. We also had to consider the potential budget that would be available to the service in the coming years.

During our last review in 2010/11 we undertook a large number of face to face surveys which were supported by paper and online surveys. Much of this information is still valid as it gave us the reasons why people use our libraries, what they wanted from libraries and what was important to them. Our results were very similar to a national survey which was published later in 2010. Our survey showed that what residents valued was:

- libraries in a convenient location
- with staff to help them
- with a good range of books
- access to computers and the internet

Current usage has shown that this is still the case. The friends' groups that have developed since then help us to focus on what is important to local residents and have helped us to develop our libraries which are valued by the community, and to increase the community use of our library buildings.

Our usage statistics, alongside a range of other data during our previous review, helped us to

gather evidence that there was a need for six libraries. The current needs assessment has shown that there has not been any significant change within the communities we serve and there is still a need for six libraries supported by mobile libraries. The public library service fully acknowledges that within the budget now available we have to reduce the costs of the current six public library model and find different ways of delivering the service.

The library service also regularly compares its performance with other library authorities. This provides valuable information about how well we are doing compared to other library authorities. In comparison to other similar authorities, the number of visits and issues of book stock compare well. The proportion of the budget that we spend on our stock fund has also been relatively high in comparison.

### **What options have the Council considered when reviewing the service that might be the subject of consultation?**

The Council has considered a range of different options to enable the service to meet its savings target during our preparation.

1. Reducing the statutory public library provision to two libraries
2. Increasing the number of community libraries
3. Outsourcing the whole service to a partner
4. Working in partnership with other library authorities
5. Reducing library opening hours
6. Trust models - where a not-for-profit organisation takes over the running, normally being funded mainly by the parent local authority.
7. Library mutuals – this option can potentially give staff greater scope to work with the local community, more say in how services are delivered and the flexibility to earn income. The funding for this type of organisation can come from a range of different sources. Some services get the majority of their funding from the Council and some get funding from the Council and Town and Parish Councils, but they also need to raise income themselves.

Some of the options that were considered were not achievable within the timeframe, such as outsourcing the whole service to a partner, while others, such as the trust model and mutual model, potentially had the significant weakness of there being insufficient income funding in current and future years. Others, such as reducing the number of libraries further and reducing opening hours, would have been inconsistent with the outcomes of the needs analysis. The library service already works in partnership with other authorities and has already had initial discussions to increase this area of work. The service expects this to develop further in future years as all library services will need to continue to reduce expenditure.

### **What changes have taken place?**

The library service made some initial internal changes at the end of March 2015. This

involved changing the layout of Lord Louis Library in Newport by merging the reference library and public access computers into the main library. This enabled the service's HQ function to be moved into the library, which has enabled further savings to be made without impacting significantly on the delivery of the service

The service's book stack comprises a collection of some 15,000 volumes which are no longer on display on the open library shelves for one of a number of reasons, such as their physical condition or the fact that they have not been used for a period of time but can be used for reservations. This collection has been moved to Lord Louis Library which will increase the number of items accessible within the library and speed up reservation times for books currently held in this store.

The amount of resource we are able to allocate to the acquisition of books, DVDs, spoken word CDs, online resources and newspapers is now just over £150,000 but this is less than we have spent in previous years. During the last review we were able to maintain the level of the materials fund but unfortunately this is not possible from April 2015. We will continue to gather and use this evidence to help us to target our spending more effectively to ensure we get the best value out of the stock fund.

### **What is being consulted on?**

There are four elements to the proposed service which we would like to consult on, and each of these is described more fully below. They include:

- a new library model which retains the six public libraries with up to three of these being supported by the community
- potential changes to the mobile library service
- increasing the use of volunteers
- a possible small reduction of opening hours in the three community supported libraries

### **A new library model**

The service is continually looking at other library services to see what learning can be gained and how it can be applied on the Island. Over the past few years we have had a number of library authorities visiting us or speaking to us to see what they can learn from us too. Having considered all of this information the service will be consulting on a new library model.

The new proposed service will consist of a number of elements which will remain part of our statutory service

- a full library service in our three busiest locations (Newport, Ryde and Sandown). The visitor and issue figures of these three libraries form over 77% of the business in our six libraries.
- three Community Supported Libraries in Cowes, Freshwater and Ventnor
- Mobile libraries
- Online library

This service will continue to be enhanced by the five community libraries: Bembridge, Brighstone, East Cowes, Niton (Edward Edwards Library) and Shanklin

The Council has already outlined its intention to consult with the public on these proposals in the budget papers agreed at Full Council on 25 February 2015, including the suggestion that the cost of some libraries would need to be shared with community partners.

### **What is a community supported library?**

This is a library where operational costs are shared between the Isle of Wight Council and the local community.

The Isle of Wight Council will continue to provide:-

- A member of staff
- Book stock
- Library management system (library catalogue and issue system)
- Online services
- Public computers
- Internet connection
- Training for volunteers

Other advantages of remaining part of the Council's statutory service include the full inter library loans system, being able to purchase stock from a large consortium of many other councils, and the provision of training

Local community groups will provide funding for building costs including:

- Rates
- Utilities
- Cleaning
- Maintenance

By taking on the buildings it is possible that these facilities could be used in different ways by the community when the core library service is not operational. In each of these three libraries the shelving is mobile, enabling a large space to be available to the community. It is also possible that a library could be relocated into another building which the community already manages whilst still remaining a service the council provides.

These proposals will greatly increase the community use of and involvement in our libraries, which is something that the Council is keen to develop further. We intend to work closely with local communities to reflect their needs within a service which continues to meet its statutory obligations of being comprehensive and efficient.

It is our intention to increase the use of volunteers to support the remaining staff in Cowes, Freshwater and Ventnor Libraries as well as in our other three libraries.



## **Mobile Library**

During the last year the mobile library routes have changed slightly but there was very little change to the service in the last review of 2011. Many library services have significantly reduced their mobile library service as mobile libraries are very expensive to run in comparison with branch libraries. The Isle of Wight Council fully recognises the value of the mobile library service in large rural area where transport is limited but needs to ensure it is used to the best advantage and there may be a need to revise where the mobile visits. It would be helpful to have your views on how you use this service and whether you also use other libraries too.

## **Reduction in opening hours**

During the last review it was proposed that some of the library opening hours should be 21 hours per week. Following the previous consultation the administration provided funding to allow additional hours. We are considering reducing the opening hours to 21 hours per week in Cowes, (currently 24.5) Freshwater (currently 24.5) and Ventnor libraries (currently 24). We would welcome your views on this matter too.

## **Survey**

To help us plan a more cost effective service which would meet our statutory requirements, it would be helpful if you could complete the following questions which will be analysed and taken into account before decisions are made about the service. It is possible that library services could be available beyond the current opening hours where the community and volunteers could provide additional support.

Your responses to the questions below will help us work through these proposals in a way that will minimise the impact on our customers.

This consultation period will run from the 6<sup>th</sup> July until the 6<sup>th</sup> September. The council recognises that this period includes the school holidays. This is always a busy time in our libraries as many children and their parents visit the library at this time to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge which this year's theme is "Record Breakers". The School Library Service which is paid for by schools and the Prison Library Service, paid for by the prison service are not affected by the proposals of this consultation and therefore not included.