



LIBRARY CONSULTATION

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 69/15

10 AUGUST 2015

The purpose of this paper is to set out the case for maintaining a full Library Service for Ventnor in response to the current consultation proposals for the future of the Island's Libraries.

No. DETAIL

1) BACKGROUND

- a) The *Isle of Wight Libraries Public Consultation* running from 6 July to 6 September 2015 has its roots in the Isle of Wight Council's Budget pressures and, in particular, in the *Medium-Term Budget Strategy 2015/16 to 2016/17* presented to and approved by the Full Council Meeting of 25 February 2015.
- b) The proposals for Budget reductions included a total of £140,000 for 2015/16 and £280,000 a year from 2016/17 with this full year amount representing 19% of the £1,470,000 annual cost of the Service.
- c) The Report's *Saving Options* listings identified a total of £50,000 savings from the 2015/16 Budget rising to £100,000 a year from 2016/17 onwards by relocating the Service headquarters to the Lord Louis Library in Newport: although that required an element of capital investment the savings would be made by *staffing reductions and overheads savings*.
- d) The other component of the £280,000 full year saving was stated as coming from:
A proposal which will seek to work in partnership with local councils to take on the running costs of three existing library sites in exchange for the buildings being made available as community supported venues 24/7. Full year effect of savings could be achieved from April 2016 and it is assumed that changes could begin to be implemented by October 2015.
- e) The Report identified a saving from this proposal of £90,000 in the current financial year and £180,000 a year from 2016/17.
- f) Although not identified in the Report, it has been known for some time that the three Libraries involved are Cowes, Freshwater and Ventnor and it is this proposal that is the subject of the current consultation that opened several months later than the intended March start.

2) THE PROPOSALS

- a) The Budget Strategy sketched the basis for the savings with:
The Library service will move toward single staffing in the community-managed sites, developing and training a flexible pool of volunteers to supplement this single staffing and building on the existing success which the local volunteers are already bringing to their local libraries.
- b) The Consultation document provides the detail for the change to what are now referred to as Community Supported Libraries, described in the Consultation document as:
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 and training for volunteers.
- c) In these Libraries, *local community groups will provide funding for building costs including: Rates, Utilities, Cleaning and Maintenance.*
- d) It adds: *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.*
- e) In summary, the proposal is to downgrade the level of funding for half the six Libraries that the Isle of Wight Council determined in 2011 would constitute its statutory provision: Newport, Ryde, Sandown, Ventnor, Freshwater and Cowes.
- f) For the latter three of these that will mean a reduction to a single member of staff and a 12.5% opening hours cut – in Ventnor's case from the present 24 to 21 – with the Town or Parish Council meeting the building costs.

3) THE CONSULTATION

- a) Against the background of these proposals, the Isle of Wight Council is now specifically consulting on:
- 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
- b) If Ventnor Town Council is to enter a response to the consultation there are two bases on which it can do so:
- i) There are at least four factors that make the case for Ventnor Library to remain as part of the Isle of Wight Council's statutory provision, retaining both staff and with no reduction in opening hours: these are identified in sections 4 to 7 below.
 - ii) The future role for Ventnor Library in combatting the deprivation in the town, supporting the development of skills and becoming a hub of community development is dependent not only on maintaining its current service levels but also on its relocation.
- c) However, the consultation is about the first of these and it is for that reason that the Town Council meeting of 13 July asked for the preparation of a case for Ventnor Library remaining one of the Island's Main Public Libraries along with Newport, Ryde and Sandown.
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4) RESIDENT SUPPORT

- a) The Our Place programme's house-to-house survey provided the Town Council with a unique opportunity to test the level of support for the town's Library.
- b) The survey consisted of a 6-page A4 full colour document delivered to every one of Ventnor's 3,500 homes with 434 (12.4%) being returned through pre-paid envelopes; its facilities section included tick box responses to the question: *how valuable to you think the Library is to Ventnor?*
- c) The graphic shows the responses for the whole town with 65% at 'Very Valuable' and 27% 'Valuable' giving a 92% valuation level.
- d) The coding on the forms allows the responses from each of the town's four Lower Super Output Areas to be identified separately:



LSOA	VERY VALUABLE	VALUABLE	TOTAL VALUED
CENTRAL	69%	24%	93%
UPPER VENTNOR	63%	27%	90%
ST LAWRENCE	57%	34%	91%
BONCHURCH	71%	22%	93%

The survey clearly confirms that the very high value in which the Library is held is as great in the deprived areas of the town (see section 6 below) as in the more affluent areas of the town.

5) USER STATISTICS

- The Isle of Wight Council officers have helpfully supplied on request figures for the numbers of issues, visits and hours of computer use for Ventnor Library over the last five years.
- The computer usage is shown in the tables as both the total number of hours for which they were used and that as a percentage of the total number of hours for which they were available.
- As the current proposals set out in the consultation make clear that Sandown is to be retained as part of the main Library Service with no reductions in staffing or hours, the comparative statistics for that Library were requested and supplied.

VENTNOR LIBRARY					SANDOWN LIBRARY				
YEAR	ISSUES	VISITS	COMPUTERS		YEAR	ISSUES	VISITS	COMPUTERS	
			HOURS	%				HOURS	%
2010-11	45,462	48,569	3,785	27%	2010-11	74,194	97,824	6,023	59%
2011-12	37,026	43,282	3,078	22%	2011-12	59,764	80,248	4,223	40%
2012-13	32,714	43,431	2,516	18%	2012-13	51,260	77,969	3,274	31%
2013-14	30,736	43,092	2,852	20%	2013-14	52,530	75,190	3,714	35%
2014-15	26,598	40,312	2,319	17%	2014-15	52,174	75,465	2,934	28%
CHANGE	-41%	-17%	-39%		CHANGE	-30%	-23%	-51%	

- As the tables clearly show, both Libraries have experienced significant decline in all three areas. However, in spite of Sandown's much more suitable location, the decline in both visits and computer use is much less in Ventnor than in Sandown.
- There is no doubt that the levels of use in absolute terms are very significantly greater in both issues and visits at Sandown's Library than Ventnor's.
- However, as the tables below demonstrate, that is entirely a function of population size: the following two tables show the user statistics per 1,000 population and show a regular consistently greater proportionate usage at Ventnor.

VENTNOR LIBRARY				SANDOWN LIBRARY			
YEAR	ISSUES	VISITS	COMPUTERS	YEAR	ISSUES	VISITS	COMPUTERS
2010-11	7,521	8,035	626	2010-11	6,252	8,243	507
2011-12	6,125	7,160	509	2011-12	5,036	6,762	356
2012-13	5,412	7,185	416	2012-13	4,319	6,569	276
2013-14	5,085	7,129	472	2013-14	4,426	6,336	313
2014-15	4,400	6,669	384	2014-15	4,396	6,359	247

- Clearly, Ventnor Town Council welcomes the fact that Sandown Library will remain as part of the main Public Library Service, the point of this section is that there is just as strong a case on the basis of the evidence of current usage for Ventnor to also retain its current status and staffing.

6) JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- The consultation document refers to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) as one of the sources of information the Isle of Wight Council has drawn on in arriving at the proposals.
- The production of a JSNA is a statutory requirement for every local authority along with the area's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and supported by its NHS and Public Health Service. They are defined as *assessments of the current and future health and social care*

needs of the local community: these are needs that could be met by the local authority, CCGs, or the NHS.

- c) The Isle of Wight's JSNA reveals that Ventnor is one of only three Island Towns to have one of its areas rated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in the most deprived 20% nationally: Newport and Ryde are the other two.
- d) The IMD measures deprivation at small area level known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) with an average of 1,500 population; Ventnor's 6,045 population for these purposes is made up of four LSOAs two of which – the Central area and Upper Ventnor – are ranked in the 25% most deprived nationally and both are within the most 20% deprived on the Island.
- e) The Town Council's involvement in the government's Our Place programme allowed it to commission from Public Health a JSNA for Ventnor itself.
- f) This included the Public Health team's detailed analysis of the deprivation facing the residents of the Central Area and Upper Ventnor: half the town's total population. The following table shows the level of deprivation across the range of usual measures for each of these two areas as percentages of the Island as a whole.

MEASURE	CENTRAL VENTNOR		UPPER VENTNOR	
	MOST DEPRIVED		MOST DEPRIVED	
	20%	20-40%	20%	20-40%
Overall Deprivation	✓		✓	
Income	✓		✓	
Employment	✓			✓
Health & Disability	✓			✓
Education, Skills & Training		✓	✓	
Crime		✓		✓
Living Environment	✓			✓
Children & Young People	✓		✓	
Older People	✓			✓

- g) On the specific measure of Child Poverty, the Ventnor JSNA shows that 38% of the children in Upper Ventnor are in poverty with 28% of those in the central area.
- h) When the Ventnor JSNA analyses the data on the basis of Ventnor as a whole in the context of the Local Health Framework it finds that on nine measures the town is significantly worse than both the Island as a whole and England as a whole: Income, Child Poverty, GCSE Achievement, General Health, Households with Central Heating, Long Term Limiting Illness or Disability, Provision of 1 hour or more unpaid care per week, Provision of 50 hours or more unpaid care per week and Older People in Deprivation
- i) As Ventnor Town Council and the Island's Health and Wellbeing Board seek to respond to these challenges, the Library will be one its critical facilities, particularly if it is relocated (see section 9 below) to a building that allows it to become part of a range of community facilities and activities to which it will both contribute and draw from.

7) OPERATIONAL COSTS

- a) The Town Council has already provided in this year's Budget for the half year running costs of the Library in view of the indication that the changes might start in October.
- b) This action was taken with the full support of the 90 residents that attended the annual consultation meeting in January and it may well be that the Town Council would also find equally strong support for meeting the full running costs of the Library as its recognition of the Isle of Wight Council's budget challenges.
- c) The Isle of Wight Council has now provided full information on its costs for the 2014/15 financial year:

COST ELEMENT	AMOUNT (£)
Building Maintenance	1,024
Planned Maintenance (boiler, lights etc.)	378
Building Security	290
Electricity	833
Gas	1,493
Rates	5,534
Water & sewage	104
Cleaning	3,103
Premises insurance	662
Total	13,421

8) FRESHWATER AND COWES LIBRARIES

- a) Initial discussions have taken place with the Clerks of the other two Councils facing changes to their current level of Library service.
- b) In common with Ventnor Town Council, they face the challenges of being asked to take on buildings with significant maintenance and refurbishment challenges.
- c) Discussions at both are in relatively early stages it has been agreed to share planning and decisions as one of the critical factors for all three Councils is the size of the capital contribution the Isle of Wight Council is prepared to make to secure the Library premises to a level that Town and Parish Councils can reasonably be prepared to take on their running costs.

9) RELOCATION

- a) Ventnor is the only one of the three where relocation is under consideration.
- b) Both the Town Council and the Friends of Ventnor Library are agreed that to secure the Library's future and maximise its potential contribution to the town's development requires its relocation to a more central area with access to parking.
- c) Ventnor Central, subject to the major refurbishment it needs, would provide such a site taken together with the Town Council's management of the Market Street and Pound Lane car parks.
- d) As both organisations are aware, discussions with Isle of Wight Council officers on the possible relocation of the Library to Ventnor Central for some months but not decision yet having been arrived at.
- e) The fact is that the case for the town retaining its current place within the Island's mainstream Library Service remains strong whatever than decision turns out to be.
- f) As location is not part of the current Isle of Wight Consultation on the future of the Service, the Town Council needs to consider whether it is more appropriate that negotiations about possible relocation should continue outside of this particular consultation.

10) RECOMMENDATION

The Town Council is recommended to consider whether:

- a) it wishes to make a formal corporate response to the current Isle of Wight Council consultation on the future of the Library Service based on the case set out in sections 4-7 of this Report; and
- b) if so, whether that should or should not include the issue of premises relocation.