

Library service Q&A

Thank you to the 3,600 people who responded to the library consultation, attended meetings, met with library staff and submitted letters and emails. In response to your feedback, we've made a number of significant changes to the proposals for delivering savings to our library services and these are included within the report that will be submitted to the South Gloucestershire Environment and Community Services (ECS) Committee on 7 September.

The detailed proposals for the library service can be accessed [here](#). The following frequently asked questions provide some more detail on the proposed plans for the library service.

General questions

Q: How much will the library budget be reduced by?

A: It is proposed that the current budget of £2.6million is reduced by £500,000.

(Originally the budget reduction was proposed to be £650,000 but following feedback from the public consultation it is being recommended the level of savings is reduced by £150,000).

Q: Why is the libraries budget being reduced?

A: The Council Savings Programme is our response to national austerity measures and the sharp fall in the amount of grant funding from central government. The council has already saved £56million mainly through efficiency measures but we are now planning to save £22million by 2019-20. All areas of the council have been given outline savings targets on this journey towards 2020.

The library service has already achieved £350,000 savings through introducing self-serve facilities in libraries.

Q: How will you save money and what will you do to mitigate the impact of changes?

A: It is proposed to make the savings through:

- Reducing the number of hours libraries are open and staffed. However through the proposed *Open Plus* project we will increase the time libraries are open by 100% by allowing access to the library when staff are not working
- Stopping the mobile library service and replacing it with community centre based services.

- Reducing the amount we spend on stock but introducing a system to manage the stock movement around branches to maximise use of stock
- Continuing to support the costs of maintaining the Library building in Chipping Sodbury but enabling the community to operate the service

Q: I completed the consultation form, where can I see the responses?

A: Thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation; we had over 3,600 responses. The summary of the comments and analysis by library can be viewed [here](#).

Q: When will the service change?

A: The service will operate as it does now until the new arrangements take effect at the beginning of October 2017.

Opening hours

Q: When will I be able to use my library?

A: Subject to receiving approval to introducing Open Plus, all libraries will be available from 9am until 8pm 7 days a week. This doubles the current hours libraries are accessible for use.

Q: When will the libraries be staffed?

A: Libraries will be staffed each week but in order to deliver the savings the number of staffed hours will be reduced in line with current usage.

We will consult with the public during the autumn on how staffed hours will be allocated throughout the week.

Q: Will there be a reduction in services provided?

A: When the library is open and staffed we will provide the full range of services. We will continue to review the activities we provide to ensure we have the staff capacity to support all services.

Q: Will any libraries close?

A: If we get agreement to proposals from the Townlands Trust (who own Chipping Sodbury Library), and sufficient commitment from local volunteers to provide some staffed hours, no library will be closed.

Q: Will my group be able to continue to use the library?

A: We will continue to make libraries available for groups to use at times they are open to the public in order to make full use of buildings. We will meet with groups in the next few months to discuss future use post October 2017.

Unstaffed open doors access

The service is proposing to introduce a system commonly known as Open Plus. This will allow users to access the library building and use all the services including borrowing / returning items and accessing the IT facilities.

Q: How does Open Plus work?

A: Members who have been given the Privilege Access status swipe their library card and enter a PIN. This will release the door lock and the door will open. All the services – lights, heating, and computers are remotely controlled.

The library will be covered by CCTV and each person entering will be recorded.

At closing time an announcement will warn people in the library that the building is closing, these announcements will commence 15 minutes before the actual close time.

Once closed if someone has not left the building an alarm will be activated and the security services alerted.

Q: What services can I use in Open Plus hours?

A: Everything you can do when staff are present – use the quiet space to meet or study, borrow or return books and other items through the self-service kiosks, use the computers and Wi-Fi, or use the printer/photocopier.

Q: Can anyone use the library during Open Plus hours?

A: Any library member over the age of 16 can register to use Open Plus. Those under the age of 16 are welcome to use the library during Open Plus hours when accompanied by a responsible, registered user.

During registration staff will explain how it works and what to do if there are any problems.

Q: How will you stop unauthorised people entering the building?

A: The system will be able to detect when more than one person has entered the building. A picture of that individual will be taken using the CCTV cameras in order that appropriate action can be taken.

Q: What if something doesn't work?

A: We will provide a fault reporting book on the library counter. If you leave a note about something not working – or a comment about any aspect of the Open Doors service – we will attend to it as soon as possible.

Q: Could I get locked in?

A: There will be automatic announcements warning people that the library will be closing. The closure procedure will be explained to users when they register so they are aware of closure procedures. If anyone is still in the library after closure an alarm will trigger and our key holding service will attend.

Volunteers

Q: Will the service be using volunteers to run libraries?

A: The service will continue to use volunteers as it currently does to provide added value services such as supporting people to use IT, visiting home library users and as members of the Library User Groups.

As it is proposed to cease the mobile library service, we will work with community groups to establish community based libraries. These will be operated by volunteers who will be trained by the library service.

If appropriate arrangements can be agreed for Chipping Sodbury Library, the Council will continue to support building costs and the service will be operated by volunteers.

Q: How can I volunteer?

A: We welcome offers of help from our community. All you need to do is complete and submit an application form. We will discuss with you the opportunities available and carry out an informal interview.

Mobile library

Q: How long will the mobile service be available for?

A: The service is likely to continue until around October 2017.

Q: What will replace the service?

A: It is proposed that we work with local communities to establish community 'centre' based services. These will provide collections of books for local people that can be borrowed by library members. Collections will be supported by the library service but the service will be delivered by volunteers in the centres.

Books could be reserved locally and we will work with communities on options for having these supplied to the centres within a reasonable timescale.

Q: How can my community express an interest in offering a community centre library?

A: We will be contacting local communities through the parish and town councils during the autumn to invite expressions of interest in the scheme.

Q: I have difficulty getting to any library, how can I access services?

A: The service will continue to deliver books using volunteers to people who are physically unable to visit a library and have no other means of receiving books (for example with help from family or friends).