

Somerset Library Services Consultation 2018 Summary Proposal

Tell us your views on how we are proposing to deliver future library services in Western Somerset (Area 1) – Dulverton, Minehead, Porlock, Watchet and Williton 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 provides **options** for the libraries in this area exploring 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 five proposed options 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 (now ending on 10 June) have been fully analysed and reviewed.

More detailed information is available online (www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries_consultation). 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 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 1: Western Somerset Area profile

The map below shows the five existing library buildings (green pins) in Dulverton, Minehead, Porlock, Watchet and Williton and the existing mobile library stops (green dots) – 25 stops in this area per month.



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- The area includes most of West Somerset District, including Exmoor, the coast and hinterland from Porlock to Kilve, and the rural areas to the north of the Brendon Hills and north-west of the Quantock Hills.
- It is generally sparsely populated (total pop. 32,014), with Minehead (pop. 11,291), Williton (pop. 2,644) and Watchet (pop. 3,581) being the main built up areas.
- Current library catchments have relatively small populations, and commutes to Taunton or Bridgwater are an approximate 30 minute drive from Williton and 45 minutes from Minehead.
- Commercial bus service 28 provides relatively good public transport between Minehead and Taunton, linking Watchet, Williton and other communities along the A39. There are public bus services from Dulverton to Taunton (via Wiveliscombe), Tiverton and Minehead. Community transport (including a parish-council funded scheduled bus service from Porlock) generally serves Minehead.

- Levels of deprivation are relatively high in this area compared to the rest of Somerset, particularly in Watchet and Williton, and it is known for having very low levels of social mobility. Employment and income levels are lower than elsewhere in Somerset, and educational attainment is lower; only 63% of 5 year olds reaching the expected level of school readiness compared to 72% for Somerset as a whole.
- There has been considerable investment in improving broadband infrastructure in the area. Evidence shows, however, residents are more likely to be digitally excluded than people living in Somerset as a whole, particularly in the more deprived communities of Minehead, Watchet and Williton.
- Social isolation is variable across the area, with people living in the coastal towns more likely to be socially isolated than those in the more rural areas. The area has a high proportion of people over 65, and for all current library catchments the proportion of disabled people is higher than for Somerset as a whole.

	Dulverton Library	Minehead Library	Porlock Community Library	Watchet Library	Williton Library
Catchment population	3,840	26,977	2,044	5,719	12,853
Opening Hours per week	19	37.5	17.5	17.5	28
Active borrowers*	545	2,763	267	491	1,202
Annual footfall	22,109	70,486	5,593	7,563	32,765

**For definition of an active borrower, please see FAQ*

Further evidence of need (including deprivation and usage), access to alternative libraries and value for money, which we have used to develop our proposals can be found online at www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation.

The detailed impact assessments can also be found here. We are seeking your views on all of this information, and would encourage you to look at this further detail.

Proposal options

The following options demonstrate 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 **option proposals** and complete the questionnaire, basing your answers on the library you visit most often.

DULVERTON LIBRARY	PROPOSALS
Option A	No change to existing library services.
Option B	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Dulverton (supported by some funding from the County Council).
Option C	Provide library services through an additional mobile library stop in Dulverton (at least once a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building.

MINEHEAD LIBRARY	PROPOSAL
Option A	No change to existing library services.

PORLOCK LIBRARY	PROPOSAL
Option A	<p>There is already a partnership in place with the local Porlock community, supported by Somerset County Council. We hope library services will continue to be delivered in this way at Porlock Community Library going forward, and propose to support this community partnership with some funding from the County Council.</p> <p>However, if this arrangement ever changes in future, we propose that an additional mobile library stop in Porlock (at least once a month) would provide an alternative way of delivering statutory library services within this community. This would mean the closure of the current library building.</p>

WATCHET LIBRARY	PROPOSALS
Option A	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Watchet (supported by some funding from the County Council).
Option B	Provide library services by delivering Library Outreach Services (events and activities for young children and health, wellbeing and reading activities for adults) and an additional mobile library stop in Watchet (at least once a month). This would mean the closure of the current library.

WILLITON LIBRARY	PROPOSAL
Option A	No change to existing library services.

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