

Somerset Library Services Consultation 2018 Summary Proposal

Tell us your views on how we are proposing to deliver future library services in Area 2: Taunton, Wellington and Surrounds – Bishops Lydeard, Taunton town centre, Taunton Priorswood, Wellington and Wiveliscombe 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.

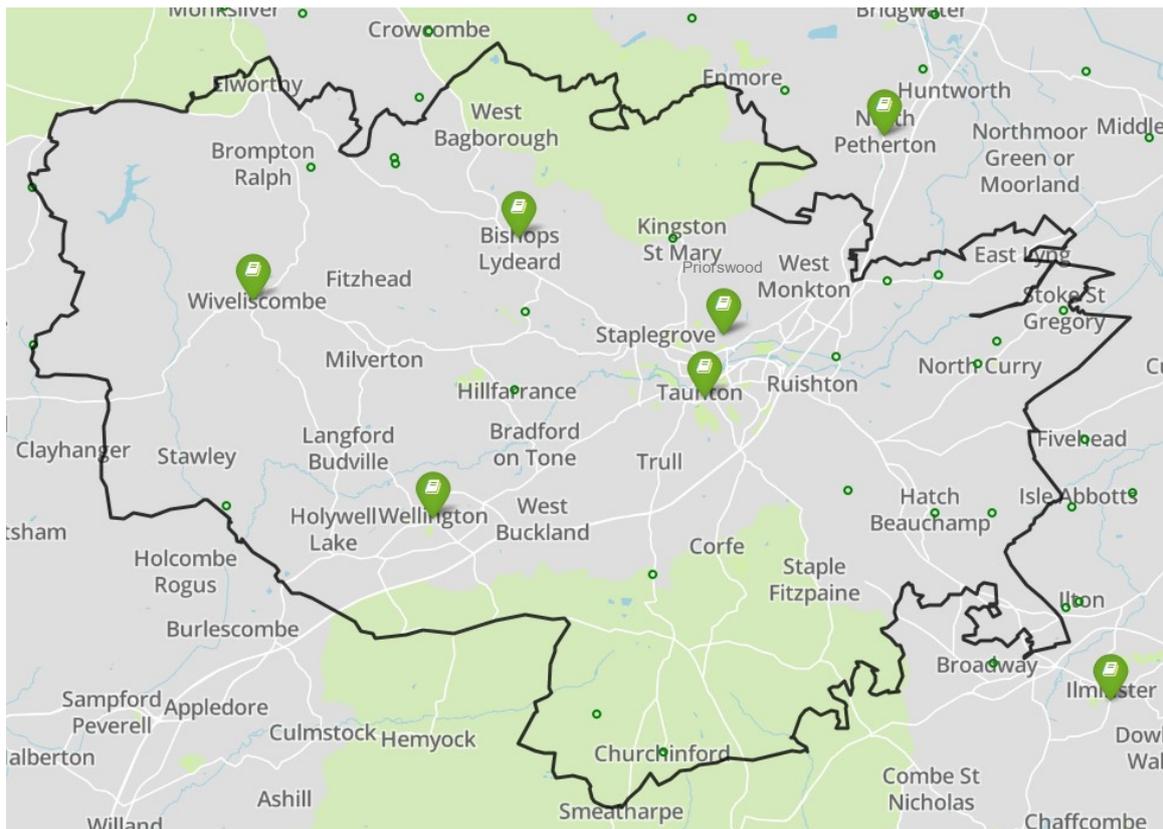
What are library services?

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 2: Taunton, Wellington and surroundings

The map below shows the five existing library buildings (green pins) in Bishops Lydeard, Taunton town centre, Taunton Priorswood, Wellington and Wiveliscombe and the existing mobile library stops (green dots) – 18 stops in this area per month.



© Mapbox

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- This includes much of the Taunton Deane District Council area, from the Devon border across to the Quantock Hills, to the North-West of Taunton and the Blackdown Hills, and Western part of the Somerset Levels extending to Stoke St Gregory in the East.
- This area has the highest population of the 9 areas (total pop. 115,545) because of the major towns of Taunton (pop. 64,621, the main built up area) and Wellington (pop. 13,822). Other sizable communities include Wiveliscombe (pop. 2,178), Cotford St Luke (pop. 2,309) and Bishops Lydeard (pop. 2,040). The rural areas around the major towns are densely populated.
- Taunton and Wellington library catchments have large populations, with Taunton's catchment extending well beyond the boundaries of the town.
- Commercial bus services 28, 25 and 21 provide relatively good public transport links to Taunton along the main roads. Other less frequent public

bus services serve the rural villages to the south and east of Taunton. Community Transport has good coverage across the area, centred on Taunton, which has a number of urban bus routes serving the urban areas around the town. Relatively good road links mean that driving times into Taunton from rural areas are convenient for those with vehicle access. Most of the area (including Wellington, Cotford St Luke, Bishop’s Lydeard and the Creech St. Michael/Ruishton communities) is 15 minutes’ drive or less from Taunton. Wiveliscombe and some of the rural areas in the Blackdown, Brendon and Quantock hills are around 20 minutes, or more, from Taunton. Roads into Taunton, however, can become congested and parking charges may not be affordable for those on low incomes.

- Much of the population of Taunton live within walking or cycling distance of the town centre; even more so in Wellington.
- Some of the rural areas are relatively wealthy, as are some parts of the major towns. Some urban areas are more deprived. Taunton has 3 neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived nationally; Wellington has 1 neighbourhood in the 20% most deprived nationally. The percentage of under 5s reaching the expected level school readiness is much lower than the Somerset average in some of the urban neighbourhoods. Income and employment levels, health and educational attainment are also very low in the most deprived parts of Taunton.
- Social isolation and digital exclusion vary across the area, and tend to align with areas of deprivation. As with other parts of Somerset, there has been considerable investment in improving rural broadband infrastructure. However, there are some rural areas where digital exclusion is higher than the Somerset average.

	Bishops Lydeard Library	Taunton Priorswood Library	Taunton (town centre) Library	Wellington Library	Wiveliscombe Library
Catchment population	4,643	20,954	175,703	27,860	6,909
Opening Hours per week	11	29	47.5	37	17.5
Active borrowers	275	879	14,267	1,671	737
Annual footfall	3,317	14,008	311,400	68,531	22,961

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.

BISHOPS LYDEARD LIBRARY	PROPOSALS
Option A	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Bishops Lydeard.
Option B	Provide library services through an additional mobile library stop in Bishops Lydeard (at least once a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building.

PRIORSWOOD LIBRARY (TAUNTON)	PROPOSALS
Option A	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Priorswood.
Option B	Provide library services by delivering Library Outreach Services (events and activities for children and technology activities for adults). We will work with our Family Support service, and other partners, to do this. This could include maintaining some library resources (such as small book collections or public computer terminals) at the current library site, or it may mean the closure of the current library

TAUNTON LIBRARY	PROPOSAL
Option A	<p>No change to existing library services in Taunton town centre.</p> <p>We propose to provide additional Library Outreach Services (events and activities for children, and technology activities for adults) in the Halcon area of Taunton, where these are needed most. We will work with other partners, including our Family Support service, to do this. As noted above, under Option B for Priorswood Library, we would provide Library Outreach Services (events and activities for children, and technology activities for adults) in this part of Taunton too.</p>

WELLINGTON LIBRARY	PROPOSALS
Option A	No change to existing library services. Under this option, the library in Wellington could relocate to a different suitable building in the town centre, but it could also remain in the current building.
Option B	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Wellington (supported by some funding from the County Council).
Option C	Provide library services by delivering Library Outreach Services (events and activities for children and adults, and public internet access) and providing an additional mobile library stop in Wellington (at least twice a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building.

WIVELISCOMBE LIBRARY	PROPOSALS
Option A	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Wiveliscombe (supported by some funding from the County Council).
Option B	Provide library services through an additional mobile library stop in Wiveliscombe (at least once a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building.

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