

## **Somerset Library Services Consultation 2018 Summary Proposal**

**Tell us your views on how we are proposing to deliver future library services in Bridgwater and Burnham and Surrounding Area 3 - Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Nether Stowey and North Petherton 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](http://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.



North Petherton (pop. 3,142), Cannington (pop. 2,002) and Woolavington (pop. 2,115). To the West of Bridgwater, the rural area is sparsely populated. The area also extends inland from the coast into the Somerset Levels.

- Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea library catchments between them cover the entire area. Nether Stowey, North Petherton and Highbridge library catchments cover much smaller areas..
- Commercial bus service 21 provides relatively good public transport along the A38 linking much of the area's population to the two major towns. Other less frequent services link Cannington to Bridgwater. Communities to the East of Bridgwater are served by Somerset County Council subsidised bus services, also running into Bridgwater. The rural area to the north and East of Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge also has public transport centred around the main town of Burnham-on-Sea. Community transport is available across the area, but is more limited in the west around Nether Stowey.
- Road transport links are good across much of the area, and the majority of people in the area live within a 10 to 15 minute drive to either Bridgwater or Burnham-on-Sea. The area around Nether Stowey is around a 20 minute drive to Bridgwater. Congestion at some times of the day can increase journey time in Bridgwater, and parking charges may be difficult to afford for some people. Most residents who live in the urban area of Bridgwater are within walking or cycling distance from the town centre, alternatively there are some town bus services.
- The proportion of older people and disabled people living in and around Burnham-on-Sea is notably higher than the proportion for Somerset as whole.
- Levels of deprivation are relatively high in some parts of Highbridge and Bridgwater. 1 neighbourhood in Highbridge and 2 neighbourhoods in Bridgwater are in the 10% most deprived nationally. Across the area as a whole, levels of deprivation are slightly lower than the Somerset average. There is evidence of some deprivation in the rural areas around Stogursey and East Huntspill.
- Employment, income and educational attainment levels are all slightly lower than the average for Somerset across the area as whole, there are also pockets of significant income and employment deprivation in parts of Bridgwater and Highbridge. School readiness levels are significantly lower in some parts of Bridgwater.
- Social isolation and digital exclusion rates vary across the area, and tend to align with areas of deprivation, with digital exclusion also being very high in Burnham-on-Sea and part of North Petherton. As with other parts of Somerset, there has been considerable investment in improving rural broadband infrastructure. However, there are a number of rural areas where digital exclusion is higher than the Somerset average.

	<b>Bridgwater Library</b>	<b>Burnham-on-Sea Library</b>	<b>Highbridge Library</b>	<b>Nether Stowey Library</b>	<b>North Petherton Library</b>
Catchment population	78,980	37,078	6,786	4,717	8,264
Opening Hours per week	41	34	9.5	20	21
Active borrowers*	6,143	3,270	288	410	452
Annual footfall	127,083	67,745	3,786	8,349	6,495

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](http://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.

## Proposals

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.

<b>BRIDGWATER LIBRARY</b>	<b>PROPOSAL</b>
Option A	<p>Library services broadly comparable to the existing service will continue to be provided at Bridgwater Library. We will continue to explore the potential to share space with other organisations and/or partners, in order to save money, and this could result in a reduction in space available for library services.</p> <p>We propose to provide additional Library Outreach Services (events and activities for children, and technology activities for adults) in the Sydenham and Hamp areas of Bridgwater, where these are needed most. We will work with other partners, including our Family Support service, to do this.</p>

<b>BURNHAM-ON-SEA LIBRARY</b>	<b>PROPOSAL</b>
Option A	Library services broadly comparable to the existing service will continue to be provided at Burnham-on-Sea Library. We will continue to explore the potential to share space with other organisations and/or partners, in order to save money, and this could result in a reduction in space available for library services.

<b>HIGHBRIDGE LIBRARY</b>	<b>PROPOSALS</b>
Option A	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Highbridge.
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 would mean the closure of the current library building.

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

<b>NORTH PETHERTON LIBRARY</b>	<b>PROPOSALS</b>
Option A	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in North Petherton.
Option B	Provide library services through an additional mobile library stop in North Petherton (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](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/librariesconsultation)**