

Somerset Library Services Consultation 2018 Summary Proposal

Tell us your views on how we are proposing to deliver future library services in Wells, Shepton and Mendip Hills Area 9 - Cheddar, Shepton Mallet and Wells 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 three 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).

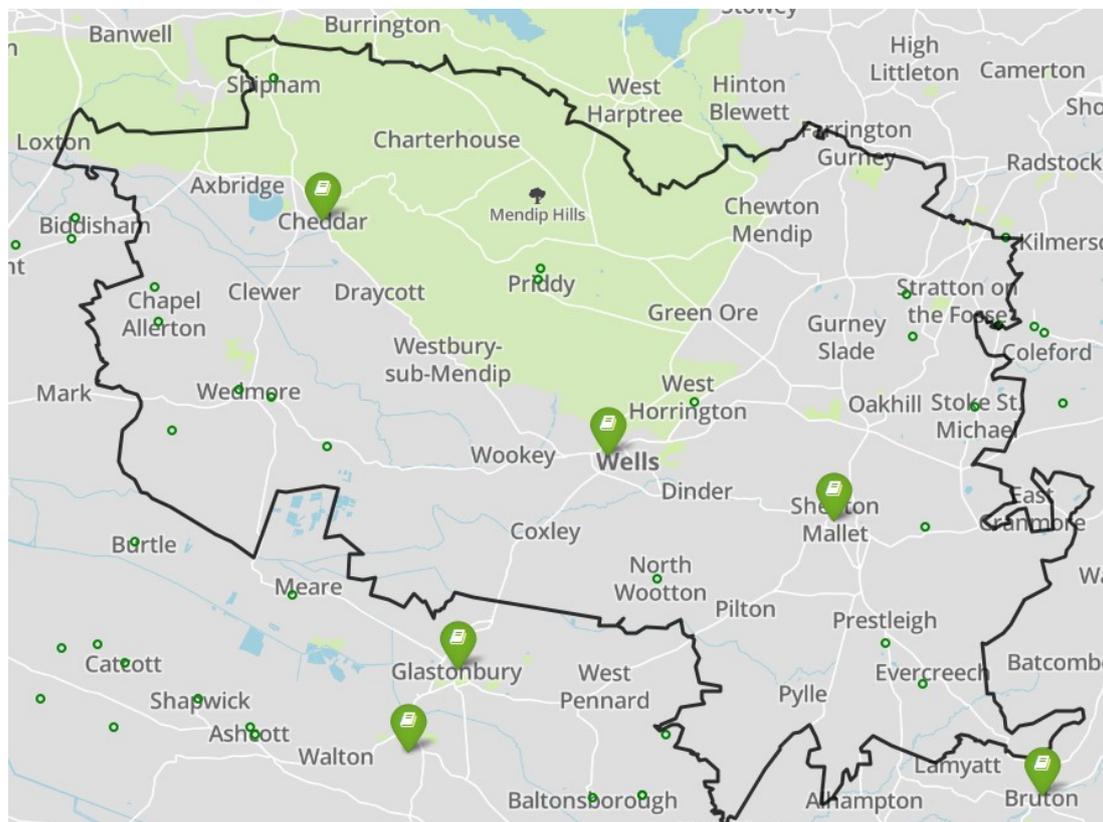
What are library services?

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 9: Wells, Shepton and Mendip Hills Area profile

The map below shows the existing three library buildings (green pins) in Cheddar, Wells and Shepton Mallet and the existing mobile library stops (green dots) – 20 stops in this area per month.



- This includes much of the Mendip District Council area and the north eastern part of Sedgemoor District Council area, from the Mendip Hills in the north to the Somerset Levels in the south, extending to Stratton-on-the-Fosse and Evercreech in the east.
- Around half of the population of 57,450 live in the towns of Wells (pop. 11,343), Shepton Mallet (pop. 10,369) and the major villages of Cheddar (pop. 5,199), Axbridge (2,057) and Chilcompton (pop. 2,062). Other sizable communities include Evercreech (pop. 1,843), and Wedmore (pop. 1,409). The northern half of the area is covered by the Mendip Hills and is sparsely populated;
- Wells and Shepton library catchments have large populations, with the Wells catchment covering much of the area and beyond.
- Scheduled bus services link Axbridge, Cheddar, Wedmore, and other villages to the west of the area to Wells. Commercial services 173 and 174 provide links between Wells and Shepton and the villages to the north east (Chilcompton and Stratton-on-the-Fosse); the villages of Evercreech, Stoke St. Michael and Pilton are linked to Shepton Mallet. Community Transport has

good coverage across the area, serving Wells and Shepton in most of the area, with links to Bridgwater and Burnham from the area around Cheddar and Wedmore in the west.

- Road links between the major villages and towns are generally good – either Shepton or Wells can be reached in 15 minutes’ drive from most of the area; the area around Axbridge and Cheddar is slightly more distant (15-20 minutes’ drive) from Wells. Shepton and Wells have reasonable walking or cycling access into town centres. Distances to other major towns in Somerset are longer – around half an hour to Bridgwater from the western end of the Mendip Hills, and a similar distance to Frome from Chewton Mendip at the eastern end of the range.
- Some of the rural areas are relatively wealthy, particularly to the west around Wedmore and Cheddar, as are some parts of the major towns. Although the towns do not have the levels of deprivation experienced in other parts of Somerset, both Wells and Shepton each have one neighbourhood in the 30% most deprived nationally. Educational attainment is slightly higher than the Somerset average across the area as a whole, with parts of Shepton Mallet having lower levels of school readiness and educational attainment. Income and employment levels are generally higher than the Somerset average (again, with the exception of some parts of Wells and Shepton).
- Social isolation and digital exclusion vary across the area, and tend to align with areas of deprivation, with the exception of a notable area of social isolation in Cheddar. Digital exclusion is highest in Wells, Cheddar and in the rural district around Evercreech in the south east of the area.

	Cheddar Library	Shepton Mallet Library	Wells Library
Catchment population	15,139	23,719	67,297
Opening Hours per week	24	32.5	47.5
Active borrowers*	1,310	1,830	4,068
Annual footfall	31,541	43,917	117,297

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.

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.

CHEDDAR 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 Cheddar (supported by some funding from the County Council).
Option C	Provide library services through an additional mobile library stop in Cheddar (at least once a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building.

SHEPTON MALLET LIBRARY	PROPOSALS
Option A	Library services broadly comparable to the existing service would continue to be provided in a library building, although we are looking to relocate the library to suitable alternative premises. This is likely to be the Shape Mendip hub.
Option B	Provide library services through a partnership with the local community to maintain a library building in Shepton Mallet (supported by some funding from the County Council).
Option C	Provide library services by delivering outreach library services (events and activities for children and adults, and public internet access), and providing an additional mobile library stop in Shepton Mallet (at least twice a month). This would mean the closure of the current library building (and no replacement building).

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

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