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**Environment and Communities
Committee**

27 July 2023

**MTFS 93 Libraries Service Review –
Implementation Update**

Report of: Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director - Place

Report Reference No: EC/06/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All Cheshire East Wards

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on the progress of the implementation of the Cheshire East Libraries Service Review following the approval of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 (MTFS) at Full Council on 22 February 2023.
2. To update the Committee, in relation to the outcome of the MTFS budget consultation process, on how the Libraries Service Review proposal was amended to reflect that feedback and results of a further public consultation on the developed detail, undertaken during June 2023.
3. It seeks Committee approval to the implementation details associated with the revised library service whilst having considered and taken due regard to the output of the consultation process.
4. It asks Members to note the impact on each individual library of the final proposal in respect to opening hours and the overall staffing impact.

Executive Summary

5. This report is seeking approval to the implementation details related to the revised Library Service, to go live from 1st November, or as soon as possible following that date. The approved MTFS initiative recommends a reduction in the current opening hours, resulting in all libraries closing

for at least 1.5 days during the week, where they are not already closed for longer than this, and to reduce funding for the purchase of new books and newspapers.

6. This meant that libraries that are:
 - **Currently not closed during the working week** (defined as Monday to Friday) would close for a day and a half. Sites included in this category being – Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach & Wilmslow
 - **Currently closed for 0.5 days in the working week** would close for an additional full day. Sites included in this category being – Holmes Chapel & Knutsford
 - **Currently closed for 1 day in the working week** would close for an additional half day. Sites included in this category being – Bollington, Handforth & Middlewich
 - **Currently closed for 1.5 days or more in the working week** will see no further reduction in opening hours. Sites included in this category are – Alderley Edge, Disley, Prestbury
7. If these proposals are not delivered that would result in an overspend within Library Services for this year (2023/24). This overspend would have a material impact of the Council's MTFS.
8. Between 9th June and 9th July 2023 the Council conducted further public consultation on the detail of the revised opening hours proposals, summarised at Table 1, and asked the following three key questions:
 - To provide feedback on the proposed opening hours for each library site, where these are proposed to change.
 - How library provision should be delivered in local areas?
 - How income might be generated to help keep these libraries open for longer?
9. The output of the consultation can be found in summary at section 8 Consultation and Engagement, and in full at Appendix A.
10. There were 3,200 engagements with the consultation from a wide variety of stakeholders with the key response themes contained at paragraph 41 of this report.

11. In parallel with the formal consultation period engagement was undertaken with Town and Parish Councils in relation to the potential for funding 'top up' library services. To date 6 councils have formally expressed an interest in this with meetings held with each setting out the key details of how a scheme would work. Any confirmed top up funding will positively impact the position set out within this report.
12. Further data analysis has been undertaken around site usage across the hours of each weekday to inform opening hours, presented as heat maps and included at Appendix E.
13. An assessment matrix has been produced which has informed the proposed reinstatement of opening hours across all sites. This is summarised at Table 2 and included in detail at Appendix D.
14. The final proposed weekday opening hours for all library sites are summarised at Table 3 and included in detail at Appendix C. This includes narrative as to any impacts the final opening hours have on regular events and activities held within libraries.

The Environment and Communities Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made to date in implementing the Libraries Service Review included as a specific proposal within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 as approved at Council on 22 February 2023, including the feedback from the recent public consultation exercise.
2. Agree the final details of the changes to library opening hours, as included at Appendix C and the implementation programme.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director - Place to take all necessary steps to implement the Libraries Service Review, and to make all consequent changes to service provision including the necessary staff restructure and consultations.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director – Place to enter into funding agreements related to the 'top up' service offer.

Background

15. As one part of the development of options for the Council's MTFS 2023-27 Environment and Neighbourhood Services were asked to consider opportunities to undertake a review of the operation of the Cheshire East Library Service, in the context of a very challenging financial climate for the wider organisation.
16. As a result a series of high level scenarios were developed, leading to those set out within the original MTFS consultation, summarised as follows;
 - A reduction in weekday opening of 1.5 days, with no impact on any sites which are already closed for a longer duration than this.
 - No evening opening
 - No Saturday opening
 - Removal of the mobile library service
 - A 25% reduction in the book fund budget
 - To proactively move forward with exploring new opportunities for additional income generation from community based functions, which would be based within the library sites.
17. The Council did not at that stage and has not subsequently proposed any full library closures, but developed options to ensure ongoing affordability of library services across the borough, whilst exploring opportunities to make the service financially more self sufficient.
18. Proposals put forward at that time would also consider options to work with Town and Parish Councils to mitigate impacts where viable and would consider 'top up' payments from these organisations for increased levels of service above those which the Council can afford.
19. At a later date post the implementation of the formal service review options could also be explored related to volunteering opportunities. This however comes with limitations and as such is not a core consideration for this report.
20. The Council has statutory duty under the 'Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964' to deliver library services. The act outlines that "It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof".

21. The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and councils may also offer wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities, or providing access to Wi-Fi and computers).

In providing this service, Councils must, among other things:

- encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service;
- lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

22. The Act also states that it is up to each local area to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service.

This must however be done:

- in consultation with their communities;
- through analysis of evidence around local needs; and,
- in accordance with their statutory duties.

23. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) have also stated that Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.

24. Councils can design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs and there are no longer prescribed national standards.

25. It should be noted that prior to the implementation of any recommendations that the council is required to notify DCMS of the proposal with 'such information as the Secretary of State may require for carrying out their duties'.

26. They also strongly advise that councils considering changing their library service inform the DCMS Libraries team about their proposals before public engagement or consultation begins.

27. DCMS stipulate that when proposals are being considered that Library authorities should be able to demonstrate:

- plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including any projections of need);

- consideration of a range of options (including alternative financing, governance, or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area; and,
 - a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposal.
28. It should also be noted that the Act also provides the Secretary of State with the statutory power to intervene and call a local inquiry when a library authority fails (or is suspected of failing) to provide the required standards of service.
29. The following should be considered as the high level timeline for the next stages of implementation of the service review;
- Report to E&C Committee to update on implementation – 27th July
 - Staff consultation launch – September (duration of 30 days)
 - Entry in to top up funding agreements – October 2023 (for 2024/25 onwards)
 - Service restructure implemented / revised opening hours go live - 1st week in November (target)

Consultation and Engagement

Initial Proposal

30. At a meeting of Full Council on 22 February 2023, Cheshire East Councillors voted in favour of adopting the council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023 - 2027. This included approving the Library Service Review proposal, as amended from the feedback received through the Budget consultation.
31. The Council received a large amount of feedback during this Budget consultation, with 1,313 responses received in total specific to the Libraries Service Review.
32. The council listened to the feedback offered, and as a result made the following changes to the original MTFS Library Service proposal:
- It reduced the amount of money to be saved from the Library Service budget by 16% - with **£170,000** of savings to be found elsewhere;
 - It reversed the proposal to close all Libraries in Cheshire East on Saturdays, as this is the only time of the week some customers are able to visit;

- It reversed the proposal to close all Libraries in Cheshire East in the evenings, as this is the only time of the week some customers are able to visit; and,
- It reversed the proposal to cease the Mobile Library Service, as this is considered a vital community resource for rural communities particularly for residents who are unable to travel.

Proposal for Consultation

33. Following the approval of the MTFs further work was undertaken in preparation for a public consultation on the proposed detail of revised opening hours.
34. As part of this subsequent development work Officers engaged with DCMS in-line with the requirement set-out within paragraph 25. DCMS provided a number of areas for consideration. Where appropriate, these were factored into the public consultation materials.
35. The consultation undertaken in June 2023 set out the following proposed opening times for each library. Groupings A – F were developed to ensure that residents will always have an alternative provision on any closure days of their nearest site and clusters of sites are comparable in scale from a service management perspective.

Library	Proposed opening hours change (consultation)	Total proposed reduction in hours (per week)
Group A		
Crewe Library	Close Wednesday and half day Thursday	14 hours
Nantwich Library	Close Friday and half day Monday	12 hours
Group B		
Alsager Library	Close Thursday and half day Wednesday	12 hours
Congleton Library	Close Friday and half day Wednesday	12 hours
Group C		
Holmes Chapel Library	Close Wednesday and half day Friday	7.5 hours
Knutsford Library	Close Thursday	10 hours
Middlewich Library	Close half day Monday	4 hours
Sandbach Library	Close Thursday and half day Friday	12 hours
Group D		
Alderley Edge Library	Proposing to close on a Thursday but open all day Friday	0 hours
Handforth Library	Close half day Monday	4 hours
Wilmslow Library	Close Friday and half day Tuesday	12 hours

Group E		
Disley Library	No changes being proposed.	0 hours
Poynton Library	Close Thursday and half day Friday	12 hours
Group F		
Bollington Library	Close half day Thursday	4 hours
Macclesfield Library	Close Friday and half day Wednesday	16 hours
Prestbury Library	No change	0 hours

Table 1: summary of proposed weekday closures (as per consultation)

36. The proposed changes to opening hours are based on key library usage data for each site, including daily visitor numbers, book issues and returns data, and computer usage stats, alongside other local considerations.
37. In general, the days proposed for closure were recommended on the quietest days for each library although local management arrangements and key bookings have also been factored in to ensure an appropriate balance.
38. The consultation was widely promoted and received a total of 3,200 consultation engagements, including 2,770 survey responses, 255 event attendees, 128 email / letter responses and 16 event attendees. In addition, there was an Alsager Library 'read-in' protest attended by 179 people, and a House of Commons spoken contribution.
39. Consultation responses were invited from anyone who wished to respond, with the consultation being heavily promoted within the Cheshire East libraries that the proposals would potentially impact. The consultation was not run as a referendum nor as a statistically robust random sample survey borne out by the fact that 98% of survey responses were from library users, with 2% being from library non-users.
40. Overall, 23% of respondents supported the proposed new opening hours, 10% neither supported nor opposed them, and 65% opposed them. This gave overall net opposition to the proposed new opening hours of -44%.
41. The output of the June 2023 public consultation can be summarised as follows, with the full post consultation report contained at Appendix A:
 - General appreciation that CEC can't now afford the service it currently delivers and needs to make changes

- **User Impacts** - highlighted various impacts on services offered by or delivered within libraries, including specific activities and events;
- **Keep libraries open each day** - The Council should be looking at alternative ways of delivering either a half day or full day opening saving – opening later, closing earlier or having a closure during the day;
- **Keep the larger libraries open for longer** - consistent 1.5 days reduction disproportionately impacts on larger sites in key towns which see most users.
- **Site geographical groupings** - need to be considered further in a few specific cases to ensure residents have access to an alternative site, considering transport links and activities taking place within the town on those days.
- **Alternative service delivery models** – a number of suggestions around how library services could be delivered differently, including working with Town and Parish Councils more closely.

42. More detailed feedback was offered relating to specific sites around retaining opening on Fridays, market days and also the impact on events and activities.

Final Proposal – Revised Opening Hours & Groupings

43. In considering the significant feedback received, the following recommendations are proposed for approval by the committee in terms of revised opening hours:

- The half day closure would be delivered by opening later or closing earlier across 4 days each week instead of closing for a full half day.
- 0.5 days reinstated at each of the 5 top ranked sites (Crewe, Nantwich, Congleton, Wilmslow, Macclesfield) these five sites have been arrived at by looking at following and the percentage stated is in relation to the overall library service:
 - **Visitors (59%)** with Congleton (9%), Crewe (15%), Macclesfield (15%), Nantwich (12%) & Wilmslow (8%);
 - **Issues (53%)** with Congleton (8%), Crewe (11%), Macclesfield (15%), Nantwich (10%) & Wilmslow (9%);

- **Registered Library Members (57%)** with Congleton (8%), Crewe (14%), Macclesfield (17%), Nantwich (10%) & Wilmslow (8%);
 - Additional smaller amounts of time reinstated across all sites which are lower ranked, but targeted at busier periods of usage.
44. In total the effect of the above changes is that 31 hours of time has been reinstated per week across all sites where hours are proposed to change. This means that those sites which are currently open for 5 days per week will continue to be, with one of those being a half day opening until 1pm. This time should also be considered to be more targeted to the hours which see the largest amount of use.
45. There remains no impact on Saturday opening hours which are proposed to remain as is across all sites. The mobile library service again is unaffected by these proposals.
46. In support of the ranking of each of the library sites a detailed scoring matrix has been developed which includes key site usage metrics alongside public health considerations. This is contained at Appendix D and summarised at Table 2.

Library	Sub Total Usage Score (A)	Sub Total Health Score (B)	Total Score (A + B)	Site Rank
Group A				
Crewe	34	19	53	1
Nantwich	33	11	44	3
Group B				
Alsager	23	8	31	7
Congleton	31	11	42	4
Group C				
Holmes Chapel	17	5	22	12
Middlewich	15	9	24	9
Sandbach	21	11	32	6
Group D				
Alderley Edge	7	5	12	15
Handforth	14	10	24	9
Knutsford *	23	7	30	8
Wilmslow	26	9	35	5
Group E				
Disley	10	5	15	14
Poynton	18	6	24	9
Group F				
Bollington	12	5	17	13
Macclesfield	35	16	51	2
Prestbury	Not in scope of review			

*Knutsford moved from Group C to D

Table 2: Assessment scores for each library site

47. In support of amending the opening hours to adopt an approach of opening later and in some instances reducing opening hours into the evening a mapping exercise has been undertaken for average site usage in 2022/23, contained at Appendix E.
48. It can be seen from the heat mapping contained at Appendix E that generally across the majority of sites on weekdays the following applies;
- (a) The first hour of opening particularly where this is from 9am tends to see lower visitor numbers than 10am – 5pm. It is considered that a large proportion of these visitors would shift their attendance to a 10am opening time.
- (b) 10am to 1pm is the busiest time of day, in particular for those visitors between the ages of 60 – 89.
- (c) This is followed by 2pm – 5pm where the age of visitors tends to shift towards children across different types of education later in the afternoon.
- (d) After 5pm there is a noticeable downturn in visitor numbers but these tend to be people more of a typical working age and those attending evening classes.
49. As part of the consultation feedback there were several references to the potential to close libraries during the day across an extended lunchtime period. Based on the data contained at Appendix E and summarised above this has been discounted and from a management perspective would also have an adverse impact on staffing.
50. Table 3 highlights the changes to the proposed opening hours and site groupings under the final proposal put forward for committee approval.

Library	Final Proposed opening hours change	Total proposed reduction in hours (per week)
Group A		
Crewe Library	Close Wednesday PM, open at 10am all other weekdays	10 hours (+4 hours)
Nantwich Library	Close Friday PM, open at 10am all other weekdays	9 hours (+ 3 hours)
Group B		
Alsager Library	Open 10am weekdays, Thursday until 1pm, one evening until 6pm	10 hours (+2 hours)
Congleton Library	Close Friday PM, open at 10am all other weekdays	9 hours (+3 hours)

Group C		
Holmes Chapel Library	Close Wednesday, open 10am all other weekdays	6.5 hours (+1 hour)
Middlewich Library	Thursday late opening moved to 6pm, open 10am all other days (already closed on Weds)	3 hours (+1 hour)
Sandbach Library	Open 10am weekdays, Thursday until 1pm, one evening until 6pm	10 hours (+2 hours)
Group D		
Alderley Edge Library	Proposing to close on a Thursday but open all day Friday	0 hours (no change)
Handforth Library	Tuesdays late opening moved to 6pm, open 10am all other days (already closed on Weds)	3 hours (+1 hour)
Knutsford Library	Open 10am weekdays, Thursday until 1pm, one evening until 6pm	8 hours (+2 hours)
Wilmslow Library	Close Friday PM, open at 10am all other weekdays	9 hours (+3 hours)
Group E		
Disley Library	No changes being proposed.	0 hours
Poynton Library	Open 10am weekdays, Wednesday until 1pm, one evening until 6pm	10 hours (+2 hours)
Group F		
Bollington Library	Tuesdays late opening moved to 6pm, open 10am all other days (already closed on Mondays)	3 hours (+1 hour)
Macclesfield Library	Close Friday PM, open at 10am all other weekdays, retain 2 evenings @ 7pm	10 hours (+6 hours)
Prestbury Library	No change	0 hours (no change)

Table 3: Final Proposed opening hours summary

51. How these changes affect each site's opening hours is set out within the schedules contained at Appendix C, which also includes a comparison of current opening hours and those proposed during the consultation.
52. One change has been made to the original site groupings moving Knutsford Library from Group C to D. Whilst the sites have continued to be grouped from an opening hours perspective this is now considered less relevant in the context of the final proposal.
53. A follow up meeting on the final opening hours proposals was held with DCMS on 13 July, to ensure that they continue to be sighted on how this has changed through the various stages of development.

Town and Parish Council Engagement

54. During the public consultation proactive engagement has been undertaken with Town and Parish Councils including a specific briefing on the proposals delivered on 20th June.

55. The ability for Town and Parish Councils to fund 'top up' services has also been explored in parallel with the consultation period. To date six expressions of interest have been received and Officers are working with those interested parties to provide the relevant details and form of funding agreement.
56. If all current expressions of interest are converted to formal funding agreements this would reinstate around 3 full days of library services per week across 6 sites. It is envisaged that any such arrangements would go live as of 1st April 2024 in order that those organisations can include any financial commitments in their future years budget setting.

Staff Engagement

57. Due to the scale of the changes proposed to the structure of the libraries service, formal consultation will need to be entered into with both staff and the Trade Unions.
58. As part of the staff engagement already undertaken in developing the proposals three all staff briefings have been held on the following dates; 4th and 5th January, 13th February and 5th June.
59. These briefings were also used to update staff on the current position with the service review and to give advance notice of planned next steps. Informal briefings have also been held with the Trade Unions in advance of the formal engagement processes.
60. A further staff engagement session is planned for week commencing 31 July, subject to Committee decision.

The Medium to Long Term

61. The purpose of this initial review is to ensure that the library service in Cheshire East continues to be affordable for its residents, as well as introducing new delivery models through the likes of working with Town and Parish Councils through top up.
62. Following the conclusion of the current review and to support and secure future investment in the medium to long term there is a need to develop a Libraries Strategy. This will need to be aligned to any new Corporate Plan which is currently under development and hence the commencement of this work would be from 2024/25, post the full implementation of this review.
63. Any such strategy would be a key document in relation to securing further income opportunities and additional investment from the likes of Government grant funding.

64. There are however limitations to this in the fact that the funding previously made available from the arts council has been in the form of a capital grant, hence cannot be used to support increased opening hours or other day to day operating costs for instance.
65. We understand that future grant funding opportunities are likely to be of a similar nature.

Reasons for Recommendations

66. The proposal supports Open and enabling objective of the Corporate Plan, delivering the priority set out to:
 - a. Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation.

Other Options Considered

67. As set out at paragraph 16 of this report a series of other high level options were considered as part of the initial service review, undertaken in advance of the MTFS consultation in January 2023.
68. Feedback on these was gathered through the budget setting process, with a number of those elements subsequently reversed out of any proposal to be taken forward for approval at Full Council, as per paragraph 32.
69. The option of a consistent one and a half days closure across all sites not already closed for longer than this during the week, has been then further refined to give the final proposals.
70. As always there is an option to decide to make no changes however this would have an adverse impact on the MTFS and this budget would need to be found from another similar service review initiative within the remit of Environment and Communities.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

71. The requirement for public consultation is highlighted within this report and consultation has taken place as part of the MTFS budget consultation and also on the initial proposals formulated following the Council budget decision. It is noted that DCMS have been engaged pre consultation and more recently notified of the proposed final changes to

opening hours arrived at post consultation. Staff engagement has begun.

72. Ongoing regard must be had to the public sector equality duty and any mitigations around perceived breaches. Evidence will be required to substantiate changes and the process in reaching any final decisions should be accurately recorded so the Council can defend its position in the event of a legal challenge.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

Service Review – Financial Implications

73. Within the MTFS the Libraries Service Review has a combined savings target of £719k, split as follows;
- 2023/24 - £519k (savings of £686k, plus growth of £167k – see paragraph 43 for explanation)
 - 2024/25 - £200k
74. It should be noted that the above figures do not include the implications of any potential staff redundancy costs which would reduce the savings made as a one off cost. It is estimated that these could be in the range of £200k - £400k, however this will be heavily impacted by the following considerations;
- The positive impact to the service of take up of any ‘top up’ services by Town and Parish Councils;
 - The positive impact to the service of any additional income generation opportunities, utilising our library sites to greater effect by bringing in third parties for wider community use benefits, for instance banking hubs and;
 - The positive impact of the proposed reinstatement of half a day opening time at the 5 top ranked library sites which places their total weekly opening hours above a standard 37 hour working week.

Progress to date

75. In terms of the position to date in 2023/24 relating to permanent base budget reductions the following can be advised;
- A detailed review led by the service management team of all ancillary budget lines has secured a £71,823 saving;

- The removal of 25% of the book fund value as a result of the approved MTFS - £87,500 and;
 - Proactive vacancy management across all library sites has secured £263,500k of in year savings with the proposal to remove all of these vacancies within the service re-design. This further reduces the impacts on staff.
76. Therefore, it can be seen that without any material impact on service delivery **a total of £423k saving has already been secured against the service review target.**
77. In addition to the above the service has also seen income grow by circa £45,000 across the same period, with a high probability that this will increase further to around £80,000 over the coming municipal year.
78. The re-design of the service has been developed to ensure that the full savings target is achieved across 2023/24 and 2024/25 noting that due to the duration of the implementation programme there is a high probability that the savings associated directly with the re-design will need to be reprofiled broadly as follows;
- 2023/24 - £ 488k (compared to MTFS of £686k)
 - 2024/25 - £ 324k (compared to MTFS of £200k)
79. Therefore, in summary the position is an under recovery against the current MTFS target in 2023/24 but a forecast balanced position from 2024/25 onwards, with any deficit in savings from the re-design balanced by additional income.
80. The impacts of any investment in the service from the likes of the 'top up' scheme will be considered on a site by site basis, with the financial impacts to be reflected in the 2024/25 position.

Growth

81. Members should also note that included as part of the MTFS was a growth item to the value of £167k. This was to balance a historical under recovery against income targets for the service, principally due to a shift in how people use the service e.g. significant reduction in income received from DVD and CD rentals.
82. Previously this under recovery of income would have been funded in year via vacancy management, however this is unlikely to be viable moving forward hence the need to re-balance the service's core budget.

83. This growth allocation is separate from the savings proposals noted above and has already been applied as a permanent adjustment to the service budget for 2023/24.

Policy

84. The proposal primarily supports the following priorities from the Corporate Plan 2021-25 as show in the table overleaf.

An open and enabling organisation	A council which empowers and cares about people	A thriving and sustainable place
<p><i>Priority: Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents</i></p>	<p><i>Priority: Work together with our residents and our partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient.</i></p>	<p><i>Priority: A great place for people to live, work and visit</i></p>
<p>Residents and staff to be aware of the council and the services we provide</p>	<p>All services to be developed together with our residents and communities, so they are based on what works for people in Cheshire East.</p>	<p>A high-quality accessible library service, that remains relevant to the changing needs of Cheshire East residents and delivers value for money</p>

85. The proposal to reduce opening hours of libraries during the week will potentially negatively impact the wider customer experience, as set out in the Customer Experience Strategy (2021-24), for residents that access council services via library sites.
86. Whilst for the majority, digital media is accessible from home or work for some residents the libraries are a key resource in enabling them to access digital and therefore support the delivery of the Council’s Digital Strategy (2022-24).
87. As referenced previously, the Council has a statutory duty under the ‘Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964’ to deliver library services.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

88. Closures during the working week would reduce access to a wide range of services and activities dependent on the day could make other days busier with additional staffing required for Customer Service Point

appointments. The proposal would result in a reduction in access for residents to wider variety of events such as:

- Events & activities for pre-school children & parents/carers e.g. Baby Bounce, Rhyme times, Stories & Songs
- Events & activities for school age children e.g. Class visits, STEM skill activities, Lego clubs, Craft groups, Summer Reading Challenge events
- Events for adults e.g. social inclusion activities, informal learning, IT taster sessions, reading groups

89. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and updated with the feedback from the public consultation. This is contained at Appendix B to this report.

Human Resources

90. The option proposed will require a reduction in staffing levels and the costs associated with this i.e. redundancy pay, statutory notice and pension strain will have a negative impact on savings, as described at paragraph 74.

91. During the period of change and subsequent adjustment to the new ways of working, as this is viewed by many staff that the change is detrimental to the service and our residents, there is a risk the Service could suffer from the loss of morale, goodwill, and elevated levels of sickness absence.

Risk Management

92. Table 4 sets out the key risks to the implementation of the service review and ongoing mitigating actions taken;

Risk	Mitigating Actions
Budget savings attached to review proposal do not include redundancy costs	Paused recruitment and vacancy management within service to minimise potential for redundancies
Impact on staff, increased sickness levels, objections from Trade Unions to proposals	Commenced service re-design work and seeking of approvals at earliest opportunity, developed and now delivering a clear communications and engagement strategy with staff and Trade Unions
Proposals are not considered appropriate by DCMS [statutory consultee] leading to delay for all stakeholders and impact on Council finances.	Early engagement undertaken with DCMS on proposals. Input given to public consultation materials with further briefing held post consultation close.

External challenge to decision to implement service review	Ensure processes followed in implementing service review are robust. Ensure adequate oversight by Committee on proposals and how public consultation and other engagement activities have helped to shape.
Requirement to re-profile MTFS budget savings across 2023/24 and 2024/25 due to implementation programme constraints	Identify risks to service budget early, highlighting probability through the appropriate governance and oversight channels.

Table 4: summary of key service review risks and proposed mitigations

Rural Communities

93. The councils' rural committees are serviced to a greater extent by the Mobile Library service which has a total of 93 stopping points across a 3 week period, servicing some of the most remote communities in the borough. There are no plans as part of these proposal to change that part of the library service offer.
94. As the changes to the proposed open hours have been applied consistently across each site it is not considered that there would be an adverse impact on rural communities as a result.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

95. The proposal would mean reduced access during the working week for activities such Children & Families contact visits, tutoring of excluded pupils, Cheshire East Chatters - Speech & Language Therapists and After school and holiday activities, therefore having a negative impact.

Public Health

96. This proposal is likely to have a negative impact on the wellbeing of residents, Closures during the working week would reduce access to a wide range of services and activities dependent on the day, and for all the reasons outlined within this report, the introduction of half a day within the 5 largest libraires and various amounts of time elsewhere is positive and will result in some of the council's most deprived areas maintaining a significant proportion of the current access to these services.
97. In particular the Library Service, as part of its role providing Customer Contact Centres, supports vulnerable residents who are digitally excluded to access online services, information and advice, both of the

Council but also national government departments (for example driving licence renewal applications, NHS Patient Choice, benefit claims etc). Reduced opening hours will impact upon these people's ability to access the support they need when they need it.

98. Additionally, the Library Service stocks collections of health related books and these are available for people to access when they need information, advice and guidance. Reducing the opening hours will reduce access to such information.

Climate Change

99. This proposal will not have a material impact on the council's carbon agenda, although the buildings will open less, advice received states that the impact will be a marginal reduction in utility costs.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	<p>Appendix A1 – Libraries Service Review – Consultation Report</p> <p>Appendix A2 – Libraries Service Review – Consultation email responses</p> <p>Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (updated post consultation)</p> <p>Appendix C – Proposed Opening Hours</p> <p>Appendix D – Site Assessment Matrix</p> <p>Appendix E – Opening Hours Mapping</p>
Background Papers:	<p>MTFS 2023-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2027 (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p> <p>MTFS 2023-27 consultation report CE Budget Engagement 2023 - 2027 - Full report (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p>