

All emails received in reply to Cheshire East Council's

Library Service Consultation 2023



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Report produced 13 July 2023 by Ben Buckley of the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council. Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

The protest pictures used on the front and back covers of this report were supplied by the organiser of an “Alsager Library read-in” event which took place on 4 July 2023, in protest at the proposed reductions in opening hours at Alsager Library (see email response #105 for more detail). The supplier of these photos consented to them being published within this report and had sought consent from all those in the photos for them to be made public.

Introduction

Background to the consultation

In January 2023 Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy during its Budget Consultation. The draft MTFS put forward in January 2023 was an extremely challenging one, given the impact of the cost of living crisis and inflation on council finances.

This draft MTFS included proposals to revise library service provision to deliver **£1,056,000** worth of savings over the next 4 years.

[The council received a large amount of feedback during this Budget Consultation](#), with over 2,300+ responses received in total. Much of this feedback opposed the proposed savings to be made from Library Services.

The council listened to this feedback, 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 by **£170,000**, with these savings to be found elsewhere
- It reversed its proposal to close all Libraries in Cheshire East on Saturdays, as this is the only time of the week some customers can visit
- It reversed its proposal to close all Libraries in Cheshire East in the evenings, as this is the only time of the week some customers can visit
- It reversed its proposal to close the Mobile Library Service, as this is vital for rural customers who are unable to travel

Consultation on the revised Library Service proposals

Between 9 June and 9 July 2023 Cheshire East Council consulted on the revised Library Service proposals. These proposals were to reduce the opening hours of Cheshire East libraries, and to reduce funding for the purchase of new books and newspapers. The full material that was consulted on is outlined in Appendix 1.

Consultation methodology

The consultation was promoted to a wide range of stakeholders including local residents, Cheshire East visitors, Cheshire East Council staff, library users, local businesses, local Councillors and local Town and Parish Councils.

The consultation was promoted through the following mediums:

- The Digital Influence Panel
- [Media releases](#)

- [Social media](#)
- Paper consultation packs and posters distributed in all libraries
- Library staff briefings
- The Town and Parish Council network
- Council Members Briefings
- 1 to 1 conversations with local Councillors and Town and Parish Councils

Consultation response

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.

In total there were 3,200 consultation engagements, including:

- 2,470 online survey responses
- 306 paper survey responses (from 1,140 distributed in total)
- 255 event attendees
- 125 email responses
- 41 social media engagements
- 3 letter responses

Further to these engagements there were 2 other key events that took place in relation to the consultation:

- An Alsager Library 'read-in' protest attended by 179 people
- [A House of Commons spoken contribution relating to the consultation from Fiona Bruce MP](#)

Reading this report

This supplementary report contains all 125 emails received as part of the Library Service Consultation 2023. These have been printed separately from the main report given the large number of emails received during the consultation.

Summary of all email feedback

In total 125 emails were received during the consultation, including from the following Councillors and organisations:

- Councillor Jos Saunders (email #32)
- Cranage Parish Council (email #73)
- Congleton Town Council (email #90)
- Sandbach Town Council (email #94)
- Alderley Edge Parish Council (email #99)
- Disley Parish Council (email #103)
- Crewe Town Council (#107)
- Poynton Town Council (email #108)
- Bollington Town Council (email #110)
- Knutsford Town Council (email #111)
- Macclesfield Literary and Philosophical Society (email #113)
- Nantwich Town Council (email #119)
- Councillor Mary Brooks (email #120)
- Councillor Sue Adams (email 125)

A summary of the contents of these emails is provided below.

Email topic / comment	No. of email references
Opposition to the proposals, including specifically at the largest libraries	105
Income ideas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening bank and post office desks in libraries • Local Town & Parish Council funding • Lottery funding • Cafes in libraries • Auctions to raise funds • Charging users to use services such as computer use or book borrowing, or for admin services • Renting out library space / rooms, including to Town & Parish Councils or Citizens Advice Bureau • Getting sponsorship from local businesses • Paid for courses • PC games evenings • Book sales 	14
Savings ideas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop paying council staff over £100,000 • Use volunteers in libraries • Reduce libraries staff numbers • Review library staffing roles and levels • Reduce the size of the libraries 	10
Support for the proposals	9
Keep libraries open by:	9

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening them later in the day • Closing them sooner in the day • Having half day closing only • Opening without staff • Opening outside school hours only 	
<p>Suggests improving library efficiency by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a 3-week rolling rota • Increasing book loan times / lending periods • Allowing book borrowing across all libraries • Handing libraries over to local councils to run • Adopting an alternative service delivery model such as those used in Staffordshire County Council, CW&C, Midlothian, and Llandaff 	6
Town Councils exploring ways of keeping the library open, particularly through top-up funding	6
Suggests proposals will prevent charity fund raising initiatives, and local organisations using libraries to deliver events / groups	5
<p>Library Groupings comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knutsford should be grouped with Wilmslow and Macclesfield • Congleton should be grouped with Macclesfield and Sandbach 	3
Opposition to the book fund reduction	2
Concern this will set a precedent for future cuts	2
Asks what other options have been considered by the council?	1
Alderley Edge – Specific issues around the library receiving less funding from CEC as compared other libraries, its use of volunteers to support the service, and a request that hours are amended to enable late night opening once a week. Supports the change to Friday opening.	1
Suggests alternative opening days	1
Asks where the long-term strategy for the Library Service is	1
Suggests ideas to ensure their group can still meet	1
Suggests public transport is not good enough to enable efficient travel between different libraries	1

A summary of the number of emails that referenced each library is provided below.

Individual library	No. of email references
Alderley Edge library	1
Alsager library	8
Bollington library	2
Congleton library	3
Crewe library	6
Disley library (support for hours)	3
Holmes Chapel library	2
Knutsford library	5
Macclesfield library	15
Nantwich library	6
Poynton library	8
Sandbach library	4
Wilmslow library	3

All email responses

All emails have been published verbatim below in the date order they were received and have been anonymised to protect the identity of the individual sending the response, unless the individual is a Member of Parliament or local Councillor. Brief summaries of the content of each email have also been provided.

Email response #1

Date email received: 9 June 2023

Summary of content:

Library employee. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at the larger libraries which serve more people. Specifically Crewe.

Full email text:

I work at Crewe Library. I am appalled at the proposals to reduce hours at Cheshire East libraries. This is on behalf of both the staff affected and the public who use our services.

I am shocked that there is proposed a blanket treatment of all libraries, regardless of their usage. Why is a small village library losing the same number of hours (or no hours in some cases) as a larger library with higher footfall? Why isn't each library being considered on its own merit?

Libraries in deprived areas are naturally busier and have more needs than those in more affluent areas. Often customers have complex needs and need extra time and attention. They don't necessarily have anywhere else they can ask for advice and support. These customers will have nowhere to ask for help if we are closed.

Libraries in more deprived areas support the vulnerable. We have a variety of people who use our services every day. Older people, those with Special Needs and the Homeless or vulnerably housed all use our services. We are a very cost-efficient service who provide many services that cater for our customer's needs all under one roof. We are a warm space in the winter, vital in our current financial climate in a deprived area. People don't need to admit they are here for a warm space, their needs can remain anonymous unless they choose to voice them.

Case Study 1: R is an adult with Special Educational Needs. They have a carer who attends the library with them each day. They use the computers and thrive on the social interactions and routine that the library provides for them.

Case Study 2: E is an adult with Special Educational Needs, they do not have a carer. They come into the library daily to use the computers and the hublets, they use the

library as a safe and warm space where they don't need to spend money. E feels comfortable enough with most of the staff to ask for help if they need it. On a recent Bank Holiday Monday I have seen E sat on a wall on the street, during the hours that they would usually use the library.

Case Study 3: P is an older person who is retired. They do not own a phone or computer. They come into the library daily to use computers. Library staff provide well needed social interaction, a warm space and for advice on various matters.

Case Study 4: H is a young teen who has struggled with school. He has used the library daily with his tutor. His behaviour wasn't great when he first started but we have supported them both with finding resources and H has been helping us to set up and tidy away for Baby Bounce. He will soon be going back to school. He now sees the library as a safe space and would come to us in the future if he needed support.

I could provide thousands of these case studies, but these are some that stand out in my mind, they are also unlikely to have ever completed library feedback forms due to the nature of their needs.

Crewe Library is within a building that is already open. Building running costs won't really be saved if we are closed.

After working throughout covid as a vital front-line service (key worker status), when many council staff were working from home, we now seem to be considered dispensable.

Library staff have other responsibilities. Suggesting that they simply move hours to a day that we are open isn't going to be possible for many staff due to parenting and care commitments that they have. Many of us have built our responsibilities around the hours that we work and we don't all have the support systems in place to be that flexible. Therefore, if closures fall on our days of work we are likely to lose income. This puts parents and carers at an unfair disadvantage.

Email response #2

Date email received: 9 June 2023

Full email text:

To save money stop paying staff over £100,000 should never earn more than the PM for running a council and not the country

Email response #3

Date email received: 9 June 2023

Full email text:

I disagree with the proposed changes to library opening hours. They should stay as they are.

Email response #4

Date email received: 10 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

Morning

Whilst I appreciate a need to make savings in these difficult economic times, I think this proposed action should be reconsidered.

The library is a hub in our community. It provides a meeting place for many local groups. For some members of our community it provides an opportunity to meet and interact with others and, in some cases, it is their only Internet access.

Macclesfield Town centre is declining before our very eyes. The shopping centre is not what it was 12 months ago. It is important to retain a focal point in the town.

The library is obviously a superb lending centre but it is far more than this.

It would be a great shame if this course of action was followed.

Regards

Email response #5

Date email received: 10 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

Libraries are a great asset for the community, providing a service which cannot be found elsewhere. My local library at Macclesfield is an essential service and reducing hours there would be detrimental to the whole community.

Email response #6

Date email received: 11 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Suggests opening bank and post office desks in libraries.

Full email text:

Dear RandC

I am extremely concerned at the proposed plans for library closures across Cheshire East. I want to see Cheshire East come up with ideas to avoid the day and a half closure proposed.

1. Many banks are closing in towns and villages across the county. Have banks been approached to open a desk in libraries. Has the Council thought about setting up its own community bank/society
2. Post offices are also closing, for example in Crewe. Has the Council approached Post Office Services about setting up in libraries
3. To close all libraires is a blunt instrument. Surely busy libraries should have longer opening hours than those that aren't used as much.
4. What happens to folk who walk into a library having been made homeless? Libraries provide a vital service and those most in need are the ones who will bear the greatest burden. People in desperate circumstances don't have the luxury of choice when they will need to draw on the services of the library, whether this is picking up an emergency food parcel or finding a bed for the night.

Email response #7

Date email received: 11 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Nantwich.

Full email text:

I am a member of Cheshire Libraries using Nantwich every week. This library caters for Children singing day. Lonely people day and of course a lending library. I have been a member of Cheshire Libraries for [redacted]. It gives me great pleasure to use.

Email response #8

Date email received: 11 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the proposals.

Full email text:

Fantastic idea to cut opening hours of libraries, they are a parasite to public funding. Underused and overstaffed. An outdated concept in modern society.

Email response #9

Date email received: 12 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggestions for:

- Different library groupings
- A 3 week rolling rota
- Increasing book loan times
- Allowing book borrowing across all libraries

Full email text:

I offer my suggestion for libraries' opening times:

1. Group Town Libraries together in threes, based on their proximity to each other, thus giving some consideration to those who have to use public transport;

for example: Macclesfield , Poynton, Wilmslow.

2. Have a three week rolling period where each of the libraries is open for half a day four times per week, 8.00am – 1.00pm and 1.00pm – 6.00pm. In every three week

period every library will have been open from 8.00 am until 6.00 pm for one whole day on every day, Monday to Saturday.

3. Increase the loan time for books to four weeks, so that someone who can only access Macclesfield library and only on a Tuesday afternoon, for example, can still exchange books without any problems.

4. Permit the borrowing and returning of books at any library (if not already so).

Example Rota:

Week One	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8.00 1.00	- Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow
1.00 6.00	- Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton

Week Two	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8.00 1.00	- Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc
1.00 6.00	- Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow

Week Three	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8.00 1.00	- Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton
1.00 6.00	- Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc

Wk Four/One	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8.00 1.00	- Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow
1.00 6.00	- Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton	Wilmslow	Macc	Poynton

Advantages:

Longer opening times, so more people have the opportunity to use libraries.

All libraries can remain open to serve their communities.

Staff can share roles between libraries, mitigating the threat of redundancy.

Disadvantages:

This would need careful advance planning, involving staff members.

It would be necessary to publish a timetable and distribute it widely.

Email response #10

Date email received: 12 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I believe that you are currently seeking consultation from the public on cuts to the Library services.

We need the library. It is a vital resource for the community and any thoughts of reducing services by reducing the budget should be cancelled immediately.

The idea that there are insufficient funds in this country is a lie. That our government has misappropriated public money does not excuse cutting public services. We need the library. We do not need to pay for an ex prime minister's legal fees. We do not need to pay for fake PPE contracts, ferry companies that don't actually own boats or the countless other 'government contracts' handed out to our corrupt ruling elite.

Do not cut public services. Use public money to pay for them.

Email response #11

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Please don't defund our libraries. They are source of cultural and social quality in our county and defunding them will reduce the quality of life of residents and affect people who might wish to move to the area.

There are plenty of very expensive houses and cars in the Macclesfield area. Surely the money can be found to keep the libraries funded?

Email response #12

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Poynton.

Full email text:

The library is a mainstay for the Poynton area providing a vital service for young and old alike.

It is a community service that offers facilities not only to borrow books, but allows those less fortunate to use its computers, provides a printing facility and a vital source of information and a hub for all.

Reducing its hours may seem a 'cost saving' but for some it reduces access that connects people, clubs, providing material that may otherwise not be otherwise be available, a quiet area, access to internet and resources and make available information services making a difference for people.

It's a vital service so closing them reduces access to literacy especially children and being a mainstay for knowledge and education, storytelling, developing their literacy skills. It's vital to keep availability- in the same way as schools do.

Let's not deny our children a place to learn and develop early learning skills, for the old a sanctuary for reading material if they have no friends or are isolated for no fault of their own or for the casual reader who hasn't got access to internet or electronic devices - it's a community service and should be kept as such. Access is all important for the many, primarily books but also a place where information can be got, what's going on locally etc.

Email response #13

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Having visited the library this morning, I discovered , to my dismay, that the opening hours are to be reduced , without consultation with the local people publicly.

This may be a cost cutting exercise, but the move would affect the young, elderly and disable people who need the services for their well being.

The library offers community service to people who need help and advice as well as the staff having a good knowledge of the area, to point people in the 'right direction'

The opening hours should be , at least everyday, to give those who have busy lives, whether caring, working, and basically 'juggling' with limited hours in the week.

This decision should need careful consideration, as in the long run, the effect will make a huge dent on the local community long term.

Email response #14

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the proposals.

Full email text:

I have no problem with the revised Library closing days.

I am sure every library has at least a day in any week it could nominate where it was "least busy".

The only condition that I would put on that agreement is that the revised opening times/days are extremely well publicised, in order to prevent unnecessary travel.

Email response #15

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

It is a shame that the libraries in this area are not fully supported by council. Especially as these libraries have become so much more than a book lending facility. Loyal staff are daily supporting members of the public with advice, information, support and encouragement, which saves the council so much, and enriches the communities that they serve.

Think again please

Email response #16

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

I am sorry to here of another down grade in council services. As council tax rises services are cut. Libraries offer amazing places to read and study. I often call at Macclesfield to read and spend time. Cutting services to 4 days effectively reduces a positive community. God knows Macclesfield is dead as a town centre. It is further ironic, that the council was promoting itself as a warm space for those unable to afford heating. I guess that was an in the moment issue. I know this will not have the slightest impact.

Email response #17

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at the larger libraries.

Full email text:

My feedback from the revised proposals:

I understand the need to save money against the Library budget however I think the changes to Libraries in the 2 major town in the council Macclesfield & Crewe are excessive especially when these will receive the largest reduction in hours.

Particularly Macclesfield which I feel gets less funding for services and investment (yet the old Borough contributes the most) - Footfall is key to town centres and closing Libraries will have a further detrimental affect.

A closure of 1 half day would be fare.

Perhaps on another half day have the reference section open and return book drop off service only if that would save staff with perhaps with a volunteer support service with one member of staff for one half day ?

Email response #18

Date email received: 13 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

Dear Council,

I read the proposed revised hours of Macclesfield Library to produce cost-savings over the next 4 years – with dismay.

Our town centre library is the jewel in the crown for me and my family and must not be tampered with either in hours, days or staffing.

The library and it's staff are outstanding as is the incredible facilities and literature and other selections.

If necessary why not utilise the spare space for the use of other council and even central government agencies, an income could be then generated from their rents and rates to offset.

I am definitely dead against any reduction of opening days and hours.

Email response #19

Date email received: 14 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Suggests using volunteers in libraries.

Full email text:

I am horrified that the council is continuing to contemplate reducing the library opening hours. Not only that but also reducing the budget for new book purchases.

You already make use of volunteers on occasion, and surely this could be expanded?

I know from experience that Knutsford library arranges and hosts many events - with a literary focus and without - which are widely attended and much appreciated by the local community. Have you considered introducing a small charge for these events?

Come on Council, the library service is much too important to waste away!! No more reduced services.

Email response #20

Date email received: 14 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Having submitted a completed survey in respect of the above, there are further comments I wish to make.

The libraries in Cheshire East are at the heart of our communities. They are the hub, a safe space and a warm space for everyone. They are a comfortable space for groups and activities for everybody. The staff in the libraries perform a vital service to all, giving help and advice with patience, a smile and a cheery word. The well-being of our communities is very important in these unpredictable times, people can't afford to buy books because of financial difficulties and therefore the libraries are central to our well-being. Many clubs and groups are held in our libraries bringing people together, helping with isolation and loneliness, in fact I believe more use could be made of using libraries to enhance peoples lives. People are being encouraged to read more these days and therefore I don't think the opening hours should be cut at all. If opening hours are cut it would diminish yet another great facility in our communities. Our libraries are for everyone.

Email response #21

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggestion to train volunteers to run libraries instead of cutting hours.

Full email text:

I am a grateful member of Knutsford Library. Library card [redacted].

I would love early openings rather than anything else. I know there are so many people who use the library who are retired able and would love to volunteer. Can you not have an employee from your end and train up some volunteers on a timetable who I know would love to feel valued and would run the place like clockwork. You could train them on all the other aspects of the library like the photo stuff for docs etc. There are many very clever retired people who would love to give their time and would appreciate feeling valued.

Regards

Email response #22

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

WHY....? Should be open longer and later in evening for senior citizens.

Email response #23

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Nantwich.

Full email text:

I have just completed the online survey about the proposals to reduce library opening hours. I am emailing to make some additional points:

1. It was very disappointing, and frustrating, that having completed the survey I was not able to keep a record of my response
2. I found the questions to be somewhat one sided in their wording and overall design
3. Over recent years we have seen a number of local services retrench to the local library in Nantwich: the CAB, various council functions in particular many which are probably relatively more important to people who have poor internet skills or access (elderly blue badge holders for example) and here in Nantwich the library's role as a hub for the local Foodbank.
4. Reduced opening hours will mean reduced access to these services even allowing for the proposal to target quieter periods in Option B. Who knows that the fewer visitors in these hours are not coming at one of the few times they can make it into town for various reasons, particularly given the large rural hinterland of Nantwich library.
5. Reduced opening hours for any essential service in a town or community also adds to the gradual leaching of community energy - reduced service hours in the library, closed shops, withdrawal of various services from the town can and do all lead to a sad cycle of decline in which there is less and less reason to visit the town, less money is spent here and so more businesses and services withdraw.
6. In my view the council should be doing everything it can to keep the libraries open. In my survey response I have suggested an extensive list of revenue generating ideas and one or two cost saving measures and I think it should be an absolute priority to explore these very fully before any decision to reduce service hours is taken or implemented.

Email response #24

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Nantwich. Suggests that Nantwich Town Council helps cover costs.

Full email text:

The survey was difficult to complete, esp the first page. The box was not big enough and didn't expand.

Without stats for library visits and books borrowed at each library it is difficult to suggest improvements.

Our library (nantwich) has a lot going on and closures are bound to impact something and upset somebody. I would rather things carried on as now, but with the addition of small charges for borrowing books and attending activities. Otherwise I would hope that our town council would help cover the 1.5 days lost, or maybe provide some of these activities in the civic hall.

Email response #25

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I object strongly to further closing of the library. this will effect the. Service that is given very badly.

Email response #26

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield and Bollington.

Full email text:

Good afternoon

Whenever I have been in my local Library (Bollington) or come over to Macclesfield Central, I have always found them to be a hive of activity. There have been people browsing and reading books, researchers looking through archives or better still young children learning first hand the value of public space where they can learn to value of reading/researching.

I understand the need for fiscal constraint, but the simple truth is, we need our libraries. I do understand that the systematic reduction in government funds over a long period of time to local authorities has mostly created this mess.

They are valuable for:

- 1) Learning
- 2) Inspiring
- 3) Community Communication
- 4) Warm spaces - especially at these times

Reducing the opening hours would be a huge disservice to our Macclesfield community - on many levels, and the council must find a way to maintain the service as it stands by:

- 1) Finding Government grants
- 2) Collaboration with other community organisations - shared spaces
- 3) Creating a community lottery

I am therefore opposed to any reduction in service, but also the way in which it will likely affect the staff who work there - reducing their income.

Email response #27

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the reduction in opening hours, opposition to the cut to the book fund.

Full email text:

Hi research and consultation team,

I'm emailing because the feedback form only seems to cover collecting ideas for income generation. My observation is that the reduction in funding for the libraries is described as reduced opening hours and also reduced funding for purchase of books, but the actual amount applied to each of these is not detailed, nor is the amended strategy around the purchase of new books. I see no issue with reduced opening hours, but I am concerned about the reduced budget for book purchases. If the quality of the service is reduced then the use of the service will decline and it is a slippery slope to closure. Libraries as we all know are an essential resource for a number of reasons and primarily for educational purposes. To adequately review the proposal this detail should be made available to the public.

Email response #28

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Wilmslow.

Full email text:

Wilmslow library is an essential service for the area. To close it for one and a half days a week is shocking for the social, educational and cultural life of the town.

It must not be thought that Wilmslow folk are all rich – the town is home to all sorts of people who cannot all go to other towns easily for services especially as the bus service has been cut to the bone.

Many older people go into the library not just for the library services but for human contact and a social aspect to their lives.

For children and young families the library is a lifeline. The story times on Mondays and Thursdays are very well attended with lots of children from toddlers to pre schoolers getting essential contact with other children and the parents and grandparents having social interaction with their peers. The leaders of these sessions are fantastic and really get those present to engage and enjoy the sessions.

The children get used to the library from an early age, get an understanding of “how books work” and how amazing reading is. They learn to appreciate the library and will make good use of it in the future.

It will be sad to see cuts in the service.

I trust whatever money is saved is put to good use and not wasted on mere frippery.

Email response #29

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggestion to reduce council employee pay instead.

Full email text:

Stop paying some staff over £100,000.

Email response #30

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I very strongly want Library hours to remain unchanged. This quite the wrong place to make a cut. Thanks.

Email response #31

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the proposals.

Full email text:

I prioritise library as a public service. I am one of those who visits and has a M-F job.

I support closing for a day and half during the week in order to preserve libraries and to ensure access on evenings and Saturdays – that's obviously when the majority can access them.

Thanks for the continued work.

Email response #32

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Poynton. Opposition to Poynton Library closing on a Thursday – Monday would be preferred day for closure. Suggests opening libraries later in the day.

Full email text:

I am very disappointed to find that Poynton Library will now be closed for 1 and ½ days/week.

I have spoken to the library staff and they are very concerned that their views were not listened to.

For example it is proposed that the library should be closed all day on Thursday. It was stated by the staff that this is their busiest day. We have up to 90 toddlers attending on a Thursday morning. Parents and carers have organised nursery/play group attendance around this Thursday session. Instead it would be much more preferable for the library to close on a Monday when the shops are closed in Poynton.

In terms of a ½ day closing, why not just open one hour later? This would mean that the library is far more accessible.

Email response #33

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Questions whether the reduced timetable is aligned with local bus timetables.

Full email text:

Please keep the Library open as usual as its a vital service for so many residents.

Particularly for distribution of foodbank parcels for Nantwich foodbank.

It's a well used service for residents of all ages and a safe space to meet people reducing isolation and loneliness and improving mental health.

What would the cost to other services be, in particular the overstretched NHS service and services who look after the elderly and disabled if the library was withdrawn.

Consultation is an opportunity to consider and reflect on everyone's views and ensure the decisions are based on the majority, rather than a short term reaction that appears to deliver on savings just to adhere to a strategic policy.

Where is the evidence that the savings will be cost effective for all those users in the long term if the hours are reduced?

Conversely has anyone completed a business Consultation with the other government services that will likely be bearing the cost if the library has its hours reduced?

Does the reduction in hours fit in with the bus timetable or other local transport services?

Please consider all the options and provide transparency on any decision that is made.

Email response #34

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Knutsford.

Full email text:

Dear Sir/Madam

I frequently utilise Knutsford library and benefit from the books available and scheduled discussion groups held on the premises. The library service is a high value resource, which you undervalue at Knutsford's peril, particularly considering its rapidly growing population.

My views on your plans

Any reduction in services damages the learning facility available to all age groups, particularly the young. Your library staff are helpful, knowledgeable and provide a huge support in directing the public to their specific areas of interest and relevant resources.

I would suggest there are other areas of significant waste within council services which could be targeted with a view to addressing the shortfall in council finances. I would propose you review the roles, salaries and benefits of senior management and bring in measurements as to each individual's effectiveness with a view to reducing their hours, or ultimately making their role redundant, if appropriate. The current management appears complacent, detached and asleep on the job.

As a financial management consultant I would be happy to assist you in assessing the cost effectiveness of the current management, with a view to establishing where savings can be made. It strikes me you are targeting libraries as an easy option, just because it's easy. Shame on you!

Your proposals are nothing short of scandalous.

Email response #36

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, especially as it could set a precedent for future library closures.

Full email text:

This will set a very dangerous precedent which could result in closing some libraries in the future. We have had an excellent system which should not be interfered with. It is the sign of a civilised and cultured town to have a thriving and active library.

Email response #37

Date email received: 16 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

Dear Research and Consultation Team,

I am writing this email to express my opinion on the proposal of closing Macclesfield library for 1.5 days/week.

I understand that the council (as everyone else) is facing hard times in finances, and some measures need to be taken to save money.

Saving money in education and culture is not the way forward in my opinion.

I am a frequent user of Macclesfield library, and so is my child.

I would like to request the Council, to please, reconsider this proposal, or, at least, consider the option of closing for 1.5 days during term time, but remain open 6 days a week during half terms and summer holidays.

Email response #38

Date email received: 16 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Good morning... Im sorry to hear the financial issues concerning the library.. As a regular to our wonderful library I can't praise your facilities more. The children's story telling... Singing and general communication is a pleasure to listen to whilst I am choosing my books..the enthusiasm of the children really is a pleasure.. I do hope you can resolve the issues.. Even shorter opening is a option.. Hope we never lose it...

Email response #39

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the proposals, but hopes there are no further cuts to the service.

Full email text:

Unfortunately I have no suggestions as to how The Library can cope with the advance of technology. What you plan will I'm sure provide a reduced but efficient service. As a customer of many years I now have access to online services and whereas I enjoyed my visits to Macclesfield Library I now enjoy BorrowBox and your email updates.

Every business is having to adjust to modern technology. It is not as enjoyable as before but what else can you do but go with the flow?

Thank you for all the wonderful services the staff and librarians provided..., it is now part of history....what else can you do but move on.

Wishing you all success in creating a modern service. I do hope the library service does not disappear completely that really would be so sad.

Thanks to you all.

Email response #40

Date email received: 16 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Hello,

I understand that councils are under immense pressure to save money. However, I would like to offer my opinion in favour of keeping the libraries open and accessible to all without further closures. Libraries are a fundamental requirement to a properly functioning society: they provide essential information to all, aid the elderly who can't access online services, and offer a much needed and invaluable book lending service. Their diminished services would be difficult, but closure would be intolerable.

Thank you.

Email response #41

Date email received: 16 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggests opening libraries without staff, or with the use of volunteers. Suggests a Monday closure would be better at Crewe.

Full email text:

Hi, fully understand the conclusions drawn from the process considering cutbacks.

I visited a library in the midlands, admittedly a city, where the library was open without staff for periods of the evening. This might be worth thinking about in terms of how best to do safely and securely. Perhaps volunteer use might be considered.

Also, if a full day is to be lost at Crewe, I think it best to close on Mondays and return to an early closure on Wednesday.

Email response #42

Date email received: 15 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Crewe.

Full email text:

Don't reduce the hours of crewe library or indeed any libraries. You should have left crewe library where it was it was excellent.

Email response #43

Date email received: 16 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Hello

I was just in the library when I heard the news!

You're going to restrict the hours?

No, don't do it!

What will all the poor people do in the winter?

It's sunny now. But you forget.

It will get cold!

No, keep it open!

Lots of love.

Email response #44

Date email received: 17 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Congleton.

Full email text:

Dear Sir/Madam

I was disappointed to read there is a plan to reduce library provision in Congleton. Libraries are an essential part of town infrastructure, proving opportunities for social engagement, as well as learning. They disproportionately support lower income families favourably and, in a time of cost of living and greater social economic divisions, this service should not be reduced further, adding to disadvantages.

Like your initial consultation, I would prefer to see greater evening and weekend provision and would access the library more if this was available.

I am unsure of the additional provision the library offers so apologies if these suggestions are already in place. However, I feel more could be done in the following areas

- better advertising of library services to attract customers
- use of the centre as a community hub - linking with local business for coffee mornings, baby support mornings, book clubs, special interest clubs
- writer events with public speakers/novelists/community figures (paid events)
- school integration with dedicated school sessions where children register to increase engagement (primary and secondary)
- specialist tutoring and education opportunities, young people and adults
- primary prevention services such as cardiovascular support or blood pressure monitoring
- better kindle integration to expand the ability to rent books via e platforms

I appreciate some of these are non income generating but I believe that, if communities see the library as a community hub, it will generate interest, footfall and consequently income.

Email response #45

Date email received: 17 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to proposals. Suggest using volunteers to keep libraries open, possibly through lottery funding.

Full email text:

Dear Sir/Madam,

Could volunteers be used to maintain or extend opening hours ? Libraries often have a core of dedicated and loyal users. If they were prepared to volunteer for 4 hours at a time with support, this might be a good way to avoid closing libraries.

It might even allow for more flexible hours eg. evening opening, which would allow a more diverse user group. Existing full time staff might be able to work more flexibly with training and organising volunteers.

Lottery funding might pump-prime such a community involvement project.

Why not put up the attached flyer up to get a feel for likely response ?

You might get dedicated volunteers by offering library premises as venues for local Meetup groups.

Email response #46

Date email received: 17 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield. Do not close Macclesfield Library on a Friday.

Full email text:

To Whom it may concern.

I am against any reduction in library services at all. Founders of the national library service would be turning in their graves at the thought of the great disadvantage this, yet again, gives the poorer and older members of our society. Libraries and librarians help instil a love of reading in generations of children. Visit Macclesfield library most days of the week and you will see whole classes of school children, toddlers and babies singing songs, older people using the IT equipment and you seem keen to risk losing all this.

I well appreciate that council funding has been cut to the bone by our nasty vindictive government and that therefore the need to save money is not entirely the councils fault. However, I feel you have no leg to stand on when savings could be made in other places. The recent £50,000 waste of money is a matter in point, I'm sure somewhere cheaper without all the extra expense could have been used. Things like that are bound to get peoples backs up. I also note the huge salaries many council workers, even on relatively lowly grades, earn each year, no doubt many of them with bonuses and expenses adding to their stash.

I'm all for people being well paid but as an ex nurse and ex teaching assistant I had a lower annual wage than most council workers and never any bonus or even perks, not even a cup of coffee!

If there have to be reductions in opening times it is probably the lesser of many other evils and therefore I'm in support of this but it goes very much against my gut feelings. I do not agree for Macclesfield to be closed all day Friday, it seems a very odd decision. Why not Wednesday which always used to be half day closing? More people are around on a Friday. It seems to me someone sat down with a list of libraries and said oh well, the first on the list can close all day Monday etc etc. Not a sensible way to make policy.

Anyway, I hope someone bothers to read this entry of my thoughts on Macclesfield Library.

I have already sent info to you re this but having visited Macclesfield Library yesterday I think it is madness to think of closing it on a Friday. It is market day and the town is busier than most other days. Someone in an office with a list of libraries has obviously not taken this into consideration. Lots of people and young children in there, loads of services. I vehemently oppose the closure on any day. Central government cuts since 2010 have decimated council money but libraries are essential hubs of all sorts of services. Education, support, warm spaces, information, groups, clubs, IT support, exhibitions, archives. Where else could you get such value for money.

Please rethink and encourage more people to use the library.

Email response #47

Date email received: 19 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Crewe. Suggest alternative reduced opening hours.

Full email text:

Dear Sir,

Please find below a copy of the email I sent to my local councillor regarding the proposed cuts to Library Services in Cheshire East. My suggestions were made with specific reference to Crewe library, but I am sure they could probably apply to others in Cheshire East.

I would like to reiterate my strongly held view that the library budget has already been pared to the bone, and that it appears to be seen as a 'soft target', with any further budget cuts negatively impacting those who need the facilities most, particularly those on a severely restricted budget. Also, I feel that any further reduction of the budget for books and newspapers would be severely detrimental to the quality of library stock. However, I know that the council has to balance its budget and appreciate that the previous proposals have now been amended slightly due to public feedback: with those amendments in mind, I would like to alter my suggestion regarding opening hours. Whilst I still feel any fewer hours would be regrettable, perhaps the following could be considered:

1. Opening hours to be 10:00 to 18:00 every day except Wednesday.
2. Wednesday opening hours to be 10:00 to 13:00.

These amended hours would save 11 hours per week, but would still maximise availability of library services to the general public.

As indicated in my original email (following), it is my sincere hope that the council will reconsider its proposals.

Email response #48

Date email received: 19 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to proposals. Suggest opening coffee shops in libraries to raise revenue.

Full email text:

As it is so well used I don't think it should be closed at all Mon to Saturday. Why don't you open a coffee shop in there to raise revenue?

Email response #49

Date email received: 19 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the continuation of current hours at Disley.

Full email text:

Feel we are fortunate in Disley that our library opening hours will remain unchanged in these very challenging times. hopefully will remain so long term.

Email response #50

Date email received: 20 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the reduced hours at Alsager Library, as a someone who puts on classes there.

Full email text:

To whom it may concern :-

Following the information received by Alsager Library, I am hereby writing to yourselves via email, as instructed.

I have been renting the room at Alsager Library for around *[redacted]* now and someone else rented for years before I took over this class.

I am a and hold a class every week, for retired people, on a *[redacted]*. I feel it extremely important to continue to look after ourselves physically and mentally, especially in advancing years. We have a solid group that attend regularly and to close the Alsager Library on a *[redacted]* would be detrimental to their wellbeing!

I am asking therefore, to please consider either another day on which to close. Or to allow access to this room on *[redacted]* if the Library had to be closed.

It is not possible to change to another day or time and it would be so sad if we were made to stop our classes.

On the flip side of this, your loss in income from rent from myself and others who use the room on a [redacted], would surely not warrant closing ?!

Trusting this observation and request will be considered.

Holding out for a positive result, I would struggle letting my lovely people down.

Please keep [redacted] open !!

Email response #51

Date email received: 20 June 2023

Summary of content:

Consider full time workers within any proposals.

Full email text:

Dear Sirs

Whilst I understand that you have to save money - the library is a popular hub for the local community and is more than just borrowing books for many people.

When you are considering opening hours of local libraries can you please bear in mind keeping access of the facility for those people that work full time - a change to the opening hours to open later/close later would mean that more people could access the library after work.

Email response #52

Date email received: 20 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggests half day opening on Wednesdays, and opening later in the mornings.

Full email text:

I suggest that we revert to the original half day opening on Wednesday and also delay opening by 2 1/2 hours on two other days that will be fair.

Email response #53

Date email received: 20 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Sandbach.

Full email text:

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is [redacted] and I was informed of the sad news that the library in Sandbach where I reside, will be closing 1.5 days per week due to Government funding cuts.

As a, I have found the library to be a great resource for my little girl as we have been attending the free baby classes on [redacted].

I cannot find the link to complete an online survey about this so I am emailing instead.

If you would like to send me a link to complete the survey then I would happily do this online.

I would like the library to stay open on a [redacted] as these days have been beneficial for me and my daughter in helping her development and for my social wellbeing.

I regularly spread the word at other baby groups I attend in the area, of how much we enjoy the classes at Sandbach Library and the lady that runs the group is great and very patient!

Email response #54

Date email received: 21 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for the proposals.

Full email text:

Dear To whom it may concern,

Proposals agreed.

Email response #55

Date email received: 20 June 2023

Summary of content:

On behalf of Combined Charities Christmas Shops – Proposals will have a negative impact on the charities ability to raise funds

Full email text:

On behalf of Combined Charities Christmas Shops

We have held our Wilmslow, Macclesfield, and Knutsford Shops in these Libraries for 41 years in Wilmslow, 30 years in Macclesfield and 1 year in Knutsford, (though for 30 years elsewhere in Knutsford).

The proposed cuts will have a huge impact on the Charities involved. The Christmas shops are often the largest money raiser of the year to the local committees.

Our 6 weeks in Wilmslow, 36 days, gets reduced to 4 weeks. In Macclesfield, 5 weeks becomes about 3 weeks. A similar loss in Knutsford.

Our costs are considerable. Rent to you, currently *[redacted]* in Wilmslow, *[redacted]* in Macclesfield, *[redacted]* in Knutsford. Insurance, Publicity, hire of Card machines, equipment, etc.

We don't charge Charities to participate. We return 100% of their sales to them.

So we have to earn every penny ourselves while the shops are open by selling gifts.

With so few days to do that, it would be desperately difficult.

Cutting late nights, and in line with Government advice, reducing heating would help with local government costs.

We think it important to stress the value of Libraries to the Community at all levels.

This year, our 52nd, we will be celebrating £6m raised for all our Charities.

Over the years we have hosted over 120.

Email response #56

Date email received: 21 June 2023

Summary of content:

Rainow Parish Council opposition to proposals.

Full email text:

I have filled in the application on behalf of the Parish Council however, the questions are probably more relevant to individuals.

On their behalf I wanted to reiterate the following:

My Members have real concerns regarding any change in the library service and feel it is an important resource for children, a place for people to meet, keep warm, make use of broadband and have access to photocopying, mapping and toilets.

Regards.

Email response #58

Date email received: 21 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to proposals, particularly at Knutsford.

Full email text:

Dear Sir /Madam

I am disturbed to read of the proposed cutbacks at libraries particularly at Knutsford which I use regularly.

Libraries are an essential aspect of our society and we should be encouraging young people to use them and extend their education and development

There should be a complete review of where other areas of the Council can save money. From experience I feel management is over bloated and significant cutbacks could be made in reducing headcount particularly in planning and traffic/ highways departments.

Email response #59

Date email received: 21 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to proposals. Opposition to closures on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Full email text:

If it has to shut at all it shouldn't be shut on Wednesday or Thursday as this is Story and Rhyme time . It's usually full and well used and is invaluable I feel . It's such a shame that this is a discussion that has to be had at all as I see all the time just how well used it is , it's a wonderful space! . I wonder if you realise how many people come on the above days unfortunately they all don't take books out (myself included) so you're computers don't tell the full story and can't correlate just how many people are there. It is such a social hub and the staff are so lovely I really hope that it doesn't have to shut for any days but i do understand that this may be wishful thinking. Fingers crossed tho that it's not as I say on those days . Thank you x

Email response #60

Date email received: 22 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Hello

We hope that this finds you well.

We are objecting to the change in service at our local libraries. We spend hours in there with our children and great nieces/nephews who have also enjoyed the annual read 6 books challenge and presentation. It put a smile on their faces regularly throughout the summer holidays.

My parents use the local libraries not only to collect books but as a place to enjoy visiting, have a brief chat with librarians and spend an hour or two browsing.

We have now reached a time where we too can use the libraries more frequently and love investigating our family tree, for which members of the local teams have been invaluable.

We disagree entirely with the proposals to reduce hours, which will also have a negative impact on retail due to reduction in footfall in town centres on those closure days in local towns.

It's a no from us.

Email response #61

Date email received: 22 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Poynton.

Full email text:

I wish to record my strong objection to the proposed closure of Poynton Library on Thursdays and half day Fridays. The Library is an important and valuable resource and should remain open throughout the week

Email response #62

Date email received: 22 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Hello,

I personally feel every child and adult should have more access to libraries being open. I am a single parent and can often not afford books for my daughter.

Email response #63

Date email received: 22 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggests extending the lending period for books as a result of proposals.

Full email text:

Dear Cheshire East,

If the new opening time are to go ahead, could you consider reinstating the extending lending period, before which the customer needs to visit the library to extend the renewal.

This has recently been shortened after being extended for Covid.

This would help people working full time who can not get to the library before 5.00pm.

Additionally I can't find on the Library or the Cheshire East website what the proposed changes are. I only know about them from visiting the library,

Email response #64

Date email received: 22 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I find this a very valuable service. I would be lost without it.

Email response #65

Date email received: 22 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager. Suggests volunteers are used to keep libraries open. Suggests auctions to raise money. Suggests a small fee to use libraries.

Full email text:

Hi,

As a regular user of the library for the last *[redacted]* years I find this very disappointing news. Especially when warm places have become necessary and will continue to be needed for some time. Alsager has recently revamped the children's area and I feel this is so useful a resource to encourage reading at an early age and is why Britain is I believe has the highest scores for reading in Europe recently.

Alsager library is a delight with professional, friendly, helpful staff and it's a shame they are to loose salaries for days not worked.

I would like the local people to attempt to look after the library, on a volunteer basis for a day in the week to continue the service, if this would be acceptable.

Books, magazines etc which are no longer essential or now downloaded to be sold.

Auction for local people to donate for a sale for proceeds to go towards the library.

There are lots of groups who use the library, maybe a small rise in price to use the library might help.

Alsager library is an important central hub and being open gives the town centre an attractive atmosphere especially since the closure of Bank corner and the boarding up of the premises. I really hope that ways can be made to keep the building open for all to use.

Email response #66

Date email received: 23 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the Friday closure at Holmes Chapel Library – close another day instead.

Full email text:

I'm writing with regards to the proposed changes to the library opening hours at Holmes Chapel. It is very common for mums to work 4 day weeks and take Fridays off with their little ones. We often use the library on a Friday for my little boy to choose new books and I know other mums in the area do the same.

If you do need to cut the hours I'd strongly suggest you don't make Friday one of the days you close so that the library can remain accessible and a place for parents to take their children on a day that they commonly have off together.

Saturday mornings are helpful too - however, that's also when a lot of kids activities such as swimming and football are on so having the library open a Friday is really valuable.

Email response #67

Date email received: 24 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

It seems to me that whenever councils are short of money, it's libraries that come up in their sights. Do they recognize the wonderful work done by libraries? – so much more than lending books, valuable service though that is. Do they visit libraries like Macclesfield, where they can see children's sessions, people using the computers, writers meetings, and above all youngsters getting interested in reading instead of viewing social media all day long?

Compare this wonderful service with the millions wasted on traffic lights at Broken Cross, a disastrous and ill-designed project that disabled traffic for six months and has ended up much worse than the original roundabout in terms of traffic queues and hazards.

My message is: get the priorities right.

Email response #68

Date email received: 24 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I want to put on record my strong opposition to the decision to cut library opening hours by one and a half days. Libraries are an essential service. They provide warmth in the winter, cool in the summer. They are a social service for the lonely and depressed, for parents with young children, for the elderly.

Library staff help people to cope with online issues and mental health issues by being there, a reliable, friendly, non-judgmental face. Alongside all of this, they encourage literacy in children and young people. Cutting library hours will inevitably mean more social problems.

Is cutting library hours really the best the Council could do? It's a short sighted approach. I would pay more council tax to keep the status quo and I am not affluent.

Email response #69

Date email received: 24 June 2023

Summary of content:

Library employee. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

Hello,

I have filled in the library survey online but I'm not sure if all my comments fitted in the box as when I viewed the form afterwards it seems to have cut off the end. I have included them again below here for consideration.

Many thanks,

I work at Macclesfield Library and have been shocked by the proposed cuts to library opening hours. In a time when libraries are needed by so many people for a variety of different reasons, the plan to cut the opening hours of one of the busiest libraries in the county by almost a third is very worrying.

My first concerns are with the misleading wording used in this survey. On the opening page it says that 'after the budget consultation, it reversed its 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'. Well, the proposed hours actually mean we ARE closing two of our late nights at Macclesfield. Many customers we have spoken to have not realised this as they have read the initial statement and assumed all our late nights are protected. It is only when the link of the full opening hours is clicked on and opened separately that you can see this and not everyone has noticed that.

My second concern is that it says the proposed closures are "data driven". While this may be the case on an individual library by library basis with which days are deemed quieter – why is the data not being looked at and considered for the whole of Cheshire East Libraries?! For example, in 2022/23 Macclesfield Library had 151,905 visits and 257,818 book issues and Crewe Library had 152,637 visits and 179,709 book issues. These two libraries are the busiest yet are facing the largest percentage of cuts to hours. If you compare this to some of the smaller libraries – for example Handforth Library had 28,742 visits and 44,620 book issues but their reduction in opening hours is a third of Macclesfield's. Another example is Alderley Edge Library which had 8249 visits and 6311 book issues and they are facing no reduction in hours at all. I appreciate that bigger savings can be made by closing the biggest libraries because of staffing but this all goes against the data that is available. There will be a far higher percentage of Cheshire East residents that will be impacted if these proposed changes go ahead.

Cheshire East Libraries have always been a library authority to admire. In a survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in 2019, Cheshire East was the top unitary authority for the number of library books loaned per 1,000 population, number one in the North West and fifth in the whole of the UK. In the same survey, Macclesfield was recognised as the busiest library in the borough. We should be celebrated rather than reduced down.

Of course, I am looking at this from the perspective of a member of staff and have concerns about my job going forward. However, I am also extremely saddened for Libraries in general and all they mean to everyone. You only have to look on the gov.uk website to find what they say about public libraries, I have included a quote below:

'Libraries change lives for the better. They not only provide access to books and other literature but also help people to help themselves and improve their opportunities, bring people together, and provide practical support and guidance. As a locally accountable service, they are well-placed to respond to local needs and issues.'

It does not feel very forward thinking to close such an essential service by this much. What other public building can anybody access for free and find shelter, warmth, the means to educate themselves, free computer access, a face to face service for Cheshire East, social interaction, a safe space, a place for new parents to come and at the moment, the only public toilet in town!

The Reading Agency did a survey of libraries and have some interesting findings <https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/001-library-facts/>

The stand out fact was that '72% of people in England think that libraries are an essential or very important service to the community, with a further 22% regarding them as fairly important.' This is why you are getting so many responses from the public to this survey, the number of responses and amount of support should be taken into account as part of it – it is demonstrating how many people in the county are concerned about what is proposed for libraries.

Also in the report it says that 'being a regular library user is associated with a 1.4% increase in the likelihood of reporting good general health, valued at a medical cost saving associated with library engagement at £1.32 per person per year. The aggregate NHS cost savings across the library-using English population is £27.5 million per year.' While we do not make a massive amount of income as a service, the amount of money we are saving other national services and council departments should definitely be taken into account.

I understand that the council have cuts to make and libraries are just one part of that. If there does have to be a reduction in hours, then it would be a lot fairer to make it proportionate across all libraries and to take the data in to account when looking at them as a whole. If Macclesfield library does still end up having to close 16 hours a week then I really think it needs to be looked at so we can have the library open for some part of every day Monday to Saturday. Whether this means closing three afternoons instead, opening an hour later every morning or closing earlier. I think in a town the size of Macclesfield with the population it has, then having the library closed for one whole day a week would cause a lot of problems.

Thank you for reading my comments, I really hope our views are listened to and adjustments made to these proposals.

Email response #70

Date email received: 25 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Suggests handing libraries over to local organisations to run, running libraries on a smaller skeleton staff, opening libraries without staff, renting out space, getting sponsorship from local businesses, dispensing services on sites, and ultimately changing the model of what libraries become in future.

Full email text:

Libraries not only provide a recreational reading source but are pointed at by Council as information points and internet access points for those without home computers or smartphones. They fulfil statutory consultation functions too (local town plans etc.). The council should establish how many should be using this service and how many could access it on the proposed opening days.

They often provide locations for gatherings of local groups on various days. One alternate to consider is handing the library service over to local organisations or a focused group to run the library supervised by a current skeleton staff on 2-3 days per week – actually increasing opening days and access and achieving staff savings.

The library format for operation within the building could also be revisited to be more self-managing and siloed in function enabling functional elements to be closed rather than whole buildings. It could offer revenue space too that offers rental or revenue sharing opportunity. Having appropriate areas/days and times where talking is encouraged and allowed offers more usage opportunities.

If this was done local organisations could have a base and resource and generate additional footfall and some functions of the library operation could remain.

It may be in some locations larger business organisations with community outreach programmes as part of their own HR process would be willing to sponsor and/or assist in operating the buildings as part of staff development and retention. Perhaps with a community interaction point to them. e.g. pharmaceutical company promoting a well being clinic and information? Even team building activities with their suppliers or customers?

Increasingly the library service will be a neutral informational and educational space (in an accessible location) essential for communicating and a space for interacting with residents on the coming challenges of climate change and the local reorganisation of our lives that this will involve in the coming decades.

The council really need to look at libraries not as just a book lending service and change the model of what a library is going to become in its design and function.

We do not want to start down what is a path to further library closures.

Dispensing of a wide range of products (greeting cards stationary etc..) or services could also be considered .

I suggest you search you tube for ' Narcan vending machine ' and imagine other applications and revenue from other organisations and individuals.in libraries in a self manged and contained format

Email response #71

Date email received: 25 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

We would like to oppose the proposed library changes for the following reasons.

Libraries are a community hub/help for local residents and more should be encouraged and perhaps generate income.

Encourages social contact for a variety of people, especially older people.

Vital library staff will lose income which does not seem fair.

Purchasing new books will be reduced which may affect visitor numbers.

People on low incomes/ pensioners especially those with children it is vital for helping literacy and social activities which is another reason why if hours are to be cut perhaps it would be better to open later and stay open longer in the afternoon/evening to allow working people and school children the opportunity to visit a library.

We know councils are under financial stress but we are paying over £2600 and seem to be paying more for less.

Email response #72

Date email received: 26 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Poynton.

Full email text:

On behalf of myself and my residents at [redacted], Poynton, please know that we are very much saddened to hear our library may close on Thursday and Friday for half a day.

Email response #73

Date email received: 26 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Response on behalf of Cranage Parish Council.

Full email text:

Dear Consultation Team,

Cranage Parish Council, Dane Valley ward

At the recent meeting of the Parish Council in Cranage, on 20 June 2023, the Council RESOLVED to submit the following comment in response to this consultation on library services, with particular reference to the Holmes Chapel library.

Cranage Parish Council oppose any reduction in opening hours as the Holmes Chapel library is one of few community buildings in the centre of Holmes Chapel, with a wide catchment of outlying rural parishes. It is a busy library which serves these residents well, including additional services to those of a traditional library. It also contains the only public toilets in Holmes Chapel. Cranage Parish Council strongly feel that the opening hours should remain as they are.

Email response #74

Date email received: 27 June 2023

Summary of content:

Sandbach and Holmes Chapel should remain open on Mondays and Thursdays.

Full email text:

Both Holmes Chapel & Sandbach libraries should remain open on Mondays and Thursdays to coincide with the days the 319 D&G bus operates between Goostrey and Sandbach.

Email response #75

Date email received: 28 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Nantwich. Suggests reducing Councillors wages or having fund raising events.

Full email text:

To whom it concerns.

I am appealing against the proposed closures of the library at Nantwich. I find it ludicrous and a insult that the council is crying poverty yet again. The library is a lifeline and a social hub for many of all different backgrounds. This includes many who need it to study and as a place to go for help.

The staff are amazing and to close a public library due to budget is a absolute cheek considering the amount of budget that is wasted. I also would like to point out that if the council is that short of money then how comes the councillors wages have not decreased? Also how about doing a fundraiser so it can remain open?

This is another bad decision made and I can only surmise that whoever made this decision is not for the people of Nantwich because if it was me in the council I would be proposing we all donate a percentage of earnings to keep it open.

Thank you for your time.

Email response #76

Date email received: 29 June 2023

Summary of content:

Support for late night opening.

Full email text:

Late opening hours are essential for people in gainful employment.

Email response #77

Date email received: 29 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to Macclesfield Library closing on a Friday, would prefer it to close on a Monday, Wednesday or Saturday.

Full email text:

Dear Sirs

I am not happy to have the Library closed on a Friday as this is the day my sister brings me into town to do my shopping and when we both visit the Library to choose and return books. We also use the Library on that date to do things like Blue Badge, Bus Pass etc.

If you have to close for a day and a half why not Wednesday (full day), as there are still plenty of shops closed on a Wednesday in Macclesfield. And close early on a Saturday or a Monday.

I always feel that Cheshire East Council favour people with children or retired of which we are neither and always seem to be penalised for it.

Look forward to your feedback.

Email response #78

Date email received: 29 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I use the library most days because I get lonely, closing any amount would make such an impact on my life.

Email response #79

Date email received: 30 June 2023

Summary of content:

Suggests:

1. Reducing the size and facilities of libraries, rather than opening times.
2. Opening libraries later and closing them sooner to save hours
3. Using library space for other services like Wilmslow Town Council or CAB

Full email text:

I submitted a response over the internet to this consultation. I also wanted to add a few further comments and felt an email would be ok for these further focused points



1. I think this is the case from reading your revised proposals, but wanted to reiterate that I and many, feel all libraries should be open the same hours to enable the service to be accessible to all demographics. If costs are an issue, then it would seem that the size and facilities of a library should be flexed, rather than opening hours. So all communities have equal access and treatment as regards total opening hours.

2. It might be worth taking some of the savings by opening the libraries later in the day. I understand that in the earlier hours user footfall is generally lower than as the day progresses. This might also help employees avoid rush hour traffic.

3. I did mention about using any free space for other council services in my web based response to help defray costs. For Wilmslow I understand there is consideration of the local Wilmslow Council making use of library space. One additional thought was the possibility of Citizens Advice Bureau possibly being a good candidate. There may be other organisations too 😊.

Good luck in your deliberations. I have appreciated this consultation opportunity.

Email response #80

Date email received: 30 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

The library is needed. It should not be downsized and less days, it is vital to those of us who are not able to work. It is also required for those of us who have had brain injury to help with memory and rereading again and learning how to get back reading skills even if we use children's books. Find the money else where. Also the brain needs it as you get older. Reading is vital.

GITA I have a brain injury this is my support.

Email response #81

Date email received: 1 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Poynton.

Full email text:

I am writing regarding the Poynton library proposal to close for an additional 1.5 days each week. I understand fully the need to reduce costs in the Cheshire East budget but it always seems that savings are made in areas which will impact directly on the Council Tax payers.

The danger, as I see it from long experience, is that the 1.5 days reduction will be a toe in the door and before long will be the excuse to close Poynton library as it is no longer viable.

The library, even in these days of electronic books, provides a valuable service for several areas of the community. To lose access to books would be a retrograde step.

It is interesting that in Poynton a scheme to destroy many healthy trees around Poynton Pool for a one in 10,000 chance event, may go ahead against the wishes of the village. That is an area where the local authority could save money.

Email response #82

Date email received: 1 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I just wanted to give feedback about the changes to library services proposed. As a busy mum of 2 and GP I just need to know that I am 100% against any scaling back of library services or hours. The library is a vital source of community, information and equality. I could not feel stronger that resources to all libraries should be increased not decreased and I totally reject the changes brought about by the lack of support from this truly, truly terrible government.

Email response #83

Date email received: 2 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, suggests having later opening times instead.

Full email text:

I would like to object to wilmslow library closing for a day and a half. The library is an essential resource utilised by a wide breadth of users. It is an essential service, well placed, with multi purpose use. I can appreciate costs need to be made, maybe a slightly later opening time? This could save 5/6 hours a week.

Email response #84

Date email received: 2 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Knutsford.

Full email text:

We are a household of two retired adults currently paying approximately £60 per week in council taxes for services provided by CEC, and while year on year our Council Taxes have risen, services have declined.

Of course I understand that CEC has the burden of providing Social Care which takes up a great deal of its income, but surely this is something which needs to be reviewed with Westminster, and not something which should drain the provision of other community services?

Knutsford has already lost a much appreciated asset in the shape of The Knutsford War Memorial Hospital building, and we have recently heard that 13 year plans for a long promised Health and Wellbeing Centre have been scuppered, and the Stanley Centre is under threat of closure and now cuts to Library services are proposed.

So a breakdown of the savings to be made by closing down the Knutsford Library on Thursdays will be appreciated. and if they are mostly `savings` on staff wages ideas will be welcomed as to how those affected will be able to pay their ever increasing bills on less income .

Furthermore are the proposed reductions in the hours libraries will be open be a temporary or permanent measure ?

I ask as these proposals are of vital interest to Knutsford residents as the Library is literally the hub for Knutsford as while not only issuing library books the Library hosts many other different activities, including computer lessons, children`s activities, student revision facilities and the staff oversee community services such as tourist information , issuing of blue badges , bus passes and rail cards etc.

Furthermore it is the only free place left in the town where clubs and groups can meet, residents can browse newspapers and sit in a safe environment and relax. Bear in mind too that last winter the library was designated as a warm place, so should we face another cold weather coupled with high energy costs where should people should go to keep warm if the Library is closed on Thursdays ?.

In summation as it is obvious that any reduction in Library opening hours will have both a direct and indirect impact on the lives of Knutsford residents, the proposals to reduce library opening hours in Knutsford must be rejected out of hand .

Email response #85

Date email received: 2 July 2023

Summary of content:

Suggests libraries should not open during school hours, that they should open 3 – 7 during the week, and all day at weekends.

Full email text:

What is the purpose of libraries in Cheshire East? How is performance measured? In this digital age (and with the Libby app), I believe the library service's primary focus needs to be to provide books (etc) for those without income to buy books and without access to digital books, PLUS improving equality of education for all children.

This means that library opening hours can be significantly changed. There is no need to be open during school hours in term times. Opening hours in school holidays should be increased. Weekend opening hours should be extended. My recommendation is that - except for Macc Library plus 2/3 others across Cheshire East - library opening hours should be: 3-7pm Mon, Weds, Fri and 9-5 Sat and Sun. Plus 9-5 every day during school holidays. Libraries without school catchment areas (if any) can be closed. If this does not make the required savings, then some libraries should close - those in the most affluent areas - with an increase in the Mobile Library service.

Cheshire East can be much more inspirationally radical than it has been to date - think about desired outcomes first, and work back.

Email response #86

Date email received: 9 June 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the closure of Wilmslow Library on a Friday.

Full email text:

I have just been reading about the need to potentially close the library in wilmslow for one day a week and would like to ask that it please please please isn't a Friday. Friday is a day we frequent the library with many other friends as it is the only day off work in the week and we value our time there with our little ones very much. We enjoy visiting on a Friday, reading book and taking childrens books out. My daughter and son really love visiting the library and we'd be so sad if this had to stop.

Please consider another day Mon-Thu if need for a day closure.

Another week day would have much less impact on part time working parents as many have Fridays off.

Email response #87

Date email received: 3 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the closure of Macclesfield Library on a Friday, and to the reduction in late night opening.

Full email text:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I feel I must comment on the proposals being put forward by Cheshire East Council on opening and closing hours of the Libraries mentioned in the consultation document.

As Friday is one of the busiest times of the week for people to come into Macclesfield it is madness to close the Macclesfield Library all day on a Friday. One late night is not sufficient for people who work in the week and can only get to the Library in the evening either on their own or with children, there needs to be more late evening openings NOT less. We are as a society trying to get more young people reading books and this proposal seems to be going against what popular opinion in the area wants.

Also these proposals have a huge impact on all charities when the Library is open to sell all the Charity Christmas Cards in November and December. Many smaller charities rely heavily on this income from the sale of cards as their primary fund raising activity of the year.

The action of these measures would create a lot of unnecessary stress for a lot of people and discourage them from bothering to try to get the books out of the Library and again return them in good time.

I urge you to think again on the impact this would have on the Community in Macclesfield when we have already and are losing other facilities in the Town.

I look forward to your reply on my comments.

Email response #88

Date email received: 4 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Sandbach & District u3a. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Sandbach. Represents a local charity which currently uses the library significantly, and who would be affected by proposals.

Full email text:

Reference: Sandbach Library – Proposed one and half day Closure

I am writing to you on behalf of Sandbach & District u3a. We are a thriving organisation with 1300 members and offer many varied activities to our members.

We use Sandbach library as a base for many of our activities and every two weeks on a Wednesday throughout the year, we provide a face to face service for our members to see us with any queries. Your proposed changes would affect several of our groups who would have to find alternative venues that are likely to be more expensive.

At our recent Committee meeting we discussed Cheshire East's recommendations that Sandbach library should be closed for a day and a half each week. Whilst we recognise the pressure on Cheshire East finances as a result of central government policy, we would like to convey our concerns at this proposal. As well as being a focal point for our organisation, the library offers an invaluable service to our community. It is a place for people of all ages to come to, and apart from its main function of offering books, people come to the library for many reasons. Amongst these are the events the library offers to young and old alike. It is a place of information and learning. We would also point out that many of our members are older, and in these difficult economic times the library offers a warm and welcoming sanctuary.

We feel very strongly that it is important that the library offers a full daily service to the community, and we hope that alternative solutions can be found instead of the proposed changes to the library opening hours.

We would ask you to pass on our views to your committee on your proposed change to library hours.

Email response #90

Date email received: 4 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Congleton Town Council. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Congleton. Exploring ways with partners to keep the library fully functional. Would rather Congleton Library was grouped with Macclesfield and Sandbach.

Full email text:

Congleton Town Council considered its response to the current Cheshire East Library consultation at an Emergency Council Meeting held on the 29th June 2023.

The resolution of the Town Council was:

Congleton Town Council rejects the need for Congleton's library to be closed for 1.5 days per week based upon the vital support this service provides for our growing community, as stated within the information that Cheshire East Council has provided.

With Cheshire East Council and other potential partners, Congleton Town Council wishes to explore mutually beneficial ways in which we can keep Congleton Library fully functioning across the 6 days per week. Our ambition is to protect the benefits for our community but also support the CEC officers who work within the library service in Congleton.

Our Councillors were extremely concerned that Cheshire East is considering reducing the town's library operating hours from 46 hours to 34 hours. Congleton Library is the face of Cheshire East in Congleton. The library represents so much more than a place to loan books. It is an essential warm space and safe place in the town. It has almost 100,000 visits per year, issues 133,823 books, has almost 9,000 active members and last year dealt with 2,863 enquiries (including bus passes, blue badges, welfare checks, homeless, benefits queries.) Congleton had almost as many enquires as Crewe library and there is clear evidence that the one-stop shop solutions provided in the libraries of Cheshire's large service centre towns are providing a valued and needed service. These are all figures supplied by Cheshire East.

Congleton library has some of the largest numbers of children and adults attending events and 3,344 hours of computer usage – which is essential for those without computers at home to carry out many routine tasks in today's digital age. Staff at the library report that many residents come into the library to use the computers to search and apply for jobs, to complete online forms, book appointments etc. With the cost of living crisis, Wi-Fi is something that some families can no longer afford and

the library offer a safe and accepting place to seek help. The Town Council is very concerned that all these functions cannot be condensed into 75% of the time and are concerned about the impact on the town centre and the long term viability of the building if this key service is reduced to 34 hours per week.

Although we don't want to get into discussions about the best times and days to close, we are surprised to see that we have been 'grouped' with Alsager library and the mobile library to ensure that there is always a library in our 'group' to visit. The most frequent bus services from Congleton are to Macclesfield or Sandbach – these two libraries are also recommended to close all day on Friday which we believe would make life very difficult for our residents.

Congleton not only has a busy library per head of population, but also has one of the fastest growing communities – with around 4,000 new households soon to be using facilities in the town. The Town Council also believes and will be happy to be involved with seeking some more inventive ways to bring finance into Congleton library.

- Ideally we would like CEC to reverse this proposal and maintain the status quo.
- We have also agreed to work with Cheshire East Council and other partners to look for a way to keep Congleton library open for all 46 hours.

Please can you acknowledge receipt of this email.

Email response #91

Date email received: 4 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager.

Full email text:

I am emailing in response to the threat of partial closure of Alsager library. I am a young mother to two children and the granddaughter of a man in his 90's with dementia all of whom use the library regularly. We are upset at the prospect of partial closure, it has been a safe, warm, friendly place to go and will be a real loss to our community should it be shut.

Email response #92

Date email received: 4 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager.

Full email text:

This afternoon I attended a meeting at Alsager library concerning the proposed changes to library opening hours in East Cheshire. I was heartened to see the turn out of people opposing change.

I have been a library member for some 70 years in various parts of the country. I moved around with my husband's job and a library was always first port of call in a new area. When my daughter was born in Sutton Coldfield in 1983, a walk to the local branch library with the pram several times a week was a life saver for me as a very nervous new mum. Libraries have offered me the ability to open up new avenues with all the books available to borrow. My grand children are now keen users of libraries, always finding several books to borrow and enjoy each visit. To deny these opportunities to the next generation is unthinkable.

I know costs have to be trimmed in all walks of life with councils having difficult choices but please remember libraries are a much needed resource for everyone and to reduce hours will be the thin end of the wedge with permanent closures very much on the horizon.

There must be other areas where savings could be made, I know I could certainly find some given the opportunity, I hope you can too.

Email response #93

Date email received: 4 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield.

Full email text:

As a regular user of the Library in Macclesfield both as a borrower and a user of the facility I wish to put on record my displeasure regarding the proposed cut-backs to Macclesfield Library.

The library is used by young and old alike. At a time when we all ought to be urging children to spend less time watching the television or playing on X-Boxes, a

reduction of the Library opening hours is the last thing we should expect to see. I have particularly enjoyed classes of really young children being held in the Library which is a fantastic way of gently introducing our younger ones to the wonders a library holds, contained between the covers of thousands of books.

Email response #94

Date email received: 5 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Sandbach Town Council. Top-up funding is being considered by the Town Council. The Town Council also suggests a shortening of hours rather than daily closure, and asks that as much of the service is retained as possible.

Full email text:

Please find below consultation comments from Sandbach Town Council's Planning and Consultation Committee:

Sandbach Library Consultation

Resolved: that top-up funding request is referred to Council and that a consultation response is returned confirming the Committee's support of the review process and requests that:-

- consideration is given to shortening hours of opening, rather than suggested 1.5 day of closure.
- as much of the current hours of opening and service can be retained as possible.
- next steps of consultation are made clear

Email response #95

Date email received: 5 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager.

Full email text:

I have received details of the proposed changes to the opening hours for Cheshire Libraries, as a resident of Alsager I and my family have used and continue to use the library not only for the borrowing of books but the many community focal point activities provided.

Toddler/mums groups, visiting authors, internet access, local group information, foreign language classes to name but a few.

Add to this the need for a focal point for Cheshire East Council in the town which ratepayers can get to without having to travel outside the town (environmentally Friendly) In summary there is an ongoing need to maintain this service on a full week basis and the council should look to utilising this resource more fully.

Email response #96

Date email received: 5 July 2023

Summary of content:

Closure of Macclesfield Library on Wednesday morning will impact a hoarding support group.

Full email text:

In response to the proposal to reduce library opening hours by at least 1.5 days per week, Care and Repair Housing and Wellbeing service operates a hoarding support group every Wednesday between 10 and 12 at Macclesfield Library, supporting very vulnerable clients. This very valuable support group may have to stop if closure goes ahead.

Email response #97

Date email received: 5 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I believe closing the libraries in the week would be detrimental and quite possibly a false saving for Cheshire East. A lot of vulnerable people use the library - tuition students (primary and secondary aged) unable to cope in mainstream school - Pre schoolers, baby/toddler and parent groups - a safe place to meet, educate, discuss problems before they escalate- a safe place to use the internet and sort out problems that have escalated - speak and train with associations such as springboard to get CSCS cards, ..., to get back into employment and pay tax - a safe place for people with mental health issues - hidden or not - a warm place for homeless people young and old to read, sit in a comfortable seat, think and find a way forward - the library is a dignified safety net for some of our most vulnerable members of society and I truly believe you will spend more on the consequences of this valuable safety net being pulled.

Email response #98

Date email received: 6 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Wilmslow. Asks a number of questions regarding the consultation.

Full email text:

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to respond to the library consultation 2023 for which I have just read the proposals. I am a regular user of Wilmslow library and find it particularly useful in borrowing books for my three children.

I would firstly like to ask why specifically library services have been targeted? What percentage are they of the overall local authority spend and what plans are being drawn up to cut funding in other major spend areas? I notice that on my council tax bill there has been a significant increase in local authority spending on police services. Is the cutting of library funding one of the ways in which you will fund this rise in police funding? This does raise questions of equality if so - for many reasons libraries benefit the whole of society whereas increased police funding largely assists those who are potential burglary targets - those with more expensive homes and cars.

On the matter of libraries please could I ask if you have actively engaged school leaders and educational experts in understanding the impact of reducing both access to libraries and the provision within them? There is an increasing wealth of evidence regarding the benefits of reading, particularly with regard to children. Quite simply children who enjoy reading and can access books perform at a higher level at school, both behaviourally and academically. What consideration has been given to this clear benefit to society in your proposals to reduce access to and provision within libraries?

With regard the question of reducing opening hours for libraries I would like to ask whether you have considered the impact on the existing employees? Will those on full time contracts be offered full time roles after the part- closures? If not it is likely they will leave to secure full time roles elsewhere, a sorry loss to the overall service.

On the matter of reducing spend for new books may I please ask what percentage reduction you are proposing? I find this very worrying as children in particular need to be able to access new titles - firstly because the range is smaller to begin with than adults and secondly because books are a window to what is going on in the world / society at any given time. Accessing new books (both fiction and non-fiction)

is crucial in helping children understand the complexities of the changing world around them.

I note that from the Libraries Act you are required to provide a comprehensive service. By cutting funding for new books, depending on the amounts involved, I would argue that you are failing to do this.

I look forward to hearing from you with regard my concerns as detailed above.

Email response #99

Date email received: 6 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Alderley Edge Parish Council. Feels it is unfair the library receives 1 day less funding from Cheshire East Council as compared other libraries, and that it uses volunteers to maintain hours. Asks that hours are amended to enable late night opening once a week. Supports the change to Friday opening from Thursday.

Full email text:

Alderley Edge Parish Council would like to make the following points:

- Although the service reductions do not affect Alderley Edge, the Parish Council notes that our Library is still open one half-day less per week than other libraries across the borough, which we feel is unfair given that Alderley Edge Library is already staffed by volunteers one half-day per week (in effect we are staffed a whole day less per week than other libraries);
- Unlike other libraries across the borough, Alderley Edge does not have any evening opening, which means it doesn't serve those who have to work during the day. We would ask that the hours are amended to enable late opening at least one day during the week, in addition to Saturday mornings.
- The Parish Council supports the change to Friday opening (from Thursdays, during the daytime), but notes that it is the only library across the borough that currently offers volunteer-led sessions.

Email response #100

Date email received: 6 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Congleton.

Full email text:

The reduction of opening times at Congleton Library would be a severe detriment to the local community. The library in Congleton is very much a social hub in the town. Its value cannot be measured by bald statistics.

The desk staff are already employed supplying support services which were curtailed by the council. It provides a place for various groups to meet, especially parents with young children, the elderly and the education seekers. During the preceding winter it provided a “warm safe space” for people struggling with bills at home, a situation which seems to show no signs of abating. For people who are infirm or without transport, its location next to the bus station is a bonus. Its availability and friendly staff have brought vulnerable people out into society after the isolation of Covid. To reduce the times that this facility is available would be a human tragedy.

Libraries are not only about book loans, their position in the lives of communities have far surpassed that original concept. I believe that if you look at other services charged to the council’s budget you will find that libraries are cheap to run in comparison and for the rewards gained. What value can be placed on the elderly’s health, what value can be placed on people’s mental health, what value can be placed on children’s education? All these are impacted by the reduced availability of the library facility, maybe it is time to look elsewhere for “belt tightening”.

Email response #101

Date email received: 6 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager.

Full email text:

The proposal to restrict opening hours for Alsager library will result in a reduction of community activities such as the chess club meeting on Wednesday morning. This and other activities are important events for the Alsager community and should not be curtailed by reduced opening times. I would request that the council look for other opportunities to save funds.

Email response #102

Date email received: 6 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager. Suggests increasing income by renting out library rooms and charging customers for admin services.

Full email text:

Rather than close the Alsager Library for a further 1.5 days, I recommend that:

- (a) New books purchased should be reduced in number and the new books circulated around all C.E. libraries in turn
- (b) Upper room be hired at an economic rent when library open, to be available for the following:
 - Child care, training sessions eg green technology, people new to Alsager who wish to find out what organisations are available, lonely people who just wish to come in for a chat with other people eg bereavement group . All led by suitable community volunteers
- (c) A small charge be made for processing rail cards, etc.at a preferential price

Email response #103

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Disley Parish Council. Supportive of the proposal as they keep Disley Library as is. Otherwise they express concern about potential future car parking charges, and the lack of bus services to Poynton.

Full email text:

I am writing on behalf of Disley Parish Council to express our full support for maintaining the current opening hours of Disley Library. As representatives of the local community, we understand the immense value this library brings to our residents, and we firmly believe that preserving its accessibility is crucial for the well-being and development of our community.

Disley Library is not just a repository of books but a vital institution that enriches the lives of our residents, young and old. It serves as an educational hub, offering a diverse range of resources and learning opportunities to people of all ages. The current opening hours ensure that students, researchers, and individuals seeking knowledge can access the library's invaluable resources at their convenience. By maintaining these opening hours, we can support academic excellence, encourage lifelong learning, and promote intellectual growth within our community.

In addition to its educational role, Disley Library acts as a social and cultural centre, fostering community engagement and cohesion. The library hosts various events, workshops, and group activities that encourage interaction, dialogue, and the sharing of ideas. These opportunities for social connection and personal growth are invaluable for our community members, particularly those who may be isolated or have limited access to other communal spaces. By maintaining the library's opening

hours, we can ensure that all residents have an equal chance to participate in and benefit from these community-building initiatives.

Furthermore, Disley Library plays a pivotal role in promoting inclusivity and bridging the digital divide. Not everyone has easy access to the internet or can afford personal book collections. The library serves as a vital resource for those seeking information, entertainment, and personal development. By preserving the current opening hours, we can guarantee that individuals from all walks of life, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal access to the wealth of resources and opportunities provided by the library.

We are also very concerned about proposed car parking charges being brought into Disley by the current administration at Cheshire East. The effects on traders would be devastating. Whilst we would oppose such penalties being forced upon the most disadvantaged in our community, we are mindful that whatever happens we need to ensure that the village centre remains as attractive as possible, and amenities such as the library are preserved.

Councillors and residents also observe that the Library is the only presence Cheshire East has in the village, and with no bus service to Poynton, our nearest shared service centre, any further cuts would undoubtedly impact residents' access not just to the library but to wider Cheshire East services.

It should be noted that Disley Parish Council (DPC) shares the site and works in partnership with the Disley Library Team to facilitate joint ventures and promote a wide range of community initiatives. We value the team there greatly. Parish Councillors are meeting with the Senior Librarian shortly to explore how the Parish Council can offer further non-financial support to the service.

Finally, we understand that budgetary considerations are a significant factor in determining the opening hours of public facilities. However, we are grateful that Cheshire East recognises the positive impact Disley Library has on our community's well-being and development. We hope that this support continues well into the future.

Email response #105

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Alsager.

Full email text:

Please accept this as feedback on the planned changes to the library hours in Alsager. The consultation ending on 9th only allows for certain responses that don't fit what I want to say.

On Tuesday 4th July, I held a Read-In protest at Alsager Library from 3-4pm. This was attended by around 100 people, over the hour. The pictures attached were taken at the beginning. Everyone who attended was angry, disappointed or worried about the impact that the changes would have on their lives. During the week before, I had walked round Alsager giving out flyers and many people I spoke to were not able to make the protest but felt equally strongly.

The people in attendance ranged from toddlers to a 91 year old. Everyone spoke about why they love the library- carers are worried they will lose their coffee morning on a Wednesday (for lots this was their one outing a week), the chess club were concerned they would not have a place to meet anymore, some people were worried about their loss of access to a warm space in winter and talked about rising heating costs, others talked about how friendly the library staff are and how they come in just for a chat. One lady told me how she has been educating herself for years at the library and sits all morning reading the heavy books that she can't carry home. A local headteacher also spoke to the crowd about the importance of access to the library for her families.

I think the importance of the library to the community here in Alsager has been drastically underestimated. It is a community hub. The functions it performs- of a warm space, a safe space, a friendly face to chat with, a much needed weekly outing, a social centre- these are the things that save money from the social care budget. We all know the effects of isolation and loneliness, particularly on an elderly population. The library is allowing many people to avoid recourse to social care by playing that role in many people's lives.

And this is before we even consider the effects of restricting people's access to books, the internet, education and information.

Many elderly people I spoke to did not have internet access and were concerned about filling in the consultation online. There were no paper copies available so I do feel that access to this consultation has been also somewhat limited for the older generation.

I would urge you to reconsider the planned opening hours. Some people felt that the evening hours are not necessary and the librarians themselves say the evening is always very quiet. But the opening of the library, every week day, for the day, is essential- this is the message that those 100 people, and everyone who couldn't be there, wants you to hear loud and clear.





Email response #106

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at the larger libraries which serve more people. Specifically at Macclesfield, Crewe and Nantwich.

Full email text:

I have already submitted a written response to this consultation.

However, I have just managed to acquire some library usage data which enables me to respond further but by e mail as it is too late to submit by post

The attached word document and excel spreadsheet provide further information which I would wish I consider are fundamental to the whole library reduction programme..

PLese can you ensure that they are drawn to Members' attention.

Please also acknowledge receipt of this e mail.

Analysis of Proposed Reductions in Library Services - Cheshire East July 2023

The usage data set out in the attached spreadsheet, only became available to me on 5th July and there has not been time to submit a further postal response to the consultation.

The analysis shows that Macclesfield Library is the busiest, or the second busiest, in every category of usage quoted.

Together with Crewe, and Nantwich libraries, Macclesfield account for between 32% and 50% of all library usage.

Yet, Macclesfield library is proposed to receive bigger cuts (16hrs) in opening hours than any other library and Macclesfield, Crewe and Nantwich together face 32% of total hours cut.

This strategy is surely flawed. It seems to be driven by the notion that (save for the very small libraries) the pain should be shared equally by all Cheshire East residents.

However, residents are not library users and the approach adopted so far, has the effect of hitting the most users hardest.

While it might seem egalitarian to have the same service availability to all, it hits those who actually use the libraries most.

In times of constrained finance, policy should be directed towards protecting the highest number of service users, not towards providing fair shares for all.

After all, the Council doesn't fund its bus services on this basis.

What is the difference between bus and library service funding allocation?

CHESHIRE EAST LIBRARY USAGE STATISTICS																
library	visitor nos	% vis nos	issues	% issues	members	% members	Comp hrs	% comp hrs	Council Enq	% Co Enq	Adult Event	% AE	Child Event	%CE	HRS RED	% of all RED
alderley edge	9559	0.90	10904	0.63	1553	1.43	89	0.26	119	0.52	187	1.03	1980	1.85	0	0.00
alsager	64368	6.07	111375	6.46	5950	5.46	1281	3.81	2663	11.73	1109	6.09	6671	6.22	12	9.13
bollington	23069	2.17	66392	3.85	3258	2.99	515	1.53	339	1.49	981	5.38	5490	5.12	4	3.04
congleton	97262	9.17	133823	7.76	8970	8.23	3344	9.95	2863	12.61	2184	11.98	9201	8.59	12	9.13
crewe	154399	14.55	184620	10.70	15592	14.31	7942	23.64	2968	13.07	1924	10.56	16046	14.97	14	10.65
disley	30530	2.88	25119	1.46	1697	1.56	469	1.40	219	0.96	409	2.24	4141	3.86	0	0.00
handforth	29092	2.74	45849	2.66	4000	3.67	1084	3.23	629	2.77	588	3.23	3541	3.30	4	3.04
holmes chapel	59926	5.65	92830	5.38	4415	4.05	1221	3.63	496	2.18	1362	7.47	4508	4.21	7.5	5.70
knutsford	60051	5.66	112382	6.52	6355	5.83	1588	4.73	2297	10.12	1984	10.89	7939	7.41	10	7.60
macclesfield	154960	14.61	264863	15.36	18338	16.83	6634	19.75	3229	14.22	2117	11.62	9485	8.85	16	12.17
middlewich	36556	3.45	53693	3.11	3993	3.66	1332	3.96	476	2.10	761	4.18	6216	5.80	4	3.04
nantwich	127614	12.03	170710	9.90	10678	9.80	2355	7.01	2729	12.02	3008	16.51	8660	8.08	12	9.13
poynton	48486	4.57	135924	7.88	6782	6.22	1139	3.39	708	3.12	421	2.31	7601	7.09	12	9.13
prestbury	1233	0.12	3068	0.18	119	0.11	18	0.05	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
sandbach	69219	6.52	119084	6.90	7660	7.03	2137	6.36	1320	5.81	394	2.16	6428	6.00	12	9.13
wilmslow	89981	8.48	155352	9.01	9067	8.32	2449	7.29	1653	7.28	795	4.36	9264	8.64	12	9.13
mobile library	4685	0.44	38836	2.25	533	0.49	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
total	1060990	100.00	1724824	100.00	108960	100.00	33597	100.00	22708	100.00	18224	100.00	107171	100.00	131.5	100.00
per month	106099		143735				2800		2271		1822		10717			
macclesfield		1st		1st		2nd		2nd		1st		2nd		2nd		1st
macc + crewe + nantwich %		41.19		35.96		40.94		50.39		39.31		38.68		31.90		31.94

Email response #107

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Crewe Town Council. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at the larger libraries which serve more people. Specifically at Crewe. Opposition to the reduction in new book funding.

Full email text:

With regard to the above in relation to Crewe Library

Whilst it is recognised that CEC is facing financial pressures and savings are required the following observations and considerations are submitted in relation to the proposals being consulted on.

1. Crewe Library provides one of the busiest services in the borough, providing access to library service users from a broad area.
2. Crewe Library serves the most deprived areas in the borough, which are also listed within the indices of deprivation as amongst the most deprived areas in England
3. Crewe Library serves a diverse community in greatest need, particularly when compared with other areas of Cheshire East
4. Crewe Library provides the most accessible and integrated service in the borough due to its location and local services.
5. With the above in consideration, the greater need is evidenced to ensure diverse accessibility to services. Reduction in services will impact those in greatest need disproportionately more than in other settings. This is contrary to policy and statute associated with diversity and inclusion and does not meet the aims of CEC (or other local councils) associated with ensuring that those with the greatest need aren't further disadvantaged due to lack of access to services, such as library services.
6. Crewe Library serves a community beyond Crewe town boundary which is not being asked to support the service financially. This is potentially a financial discrimination against those with the greatest need.
7. The lack of proportionality displayed in the consultation proposals does not take in to consideration the above references to diversity, deprivation, surrounding areas accessing services and does not compare the social need on an even basis against the sites around the borough which are being considered on a linear basis.

8. There is no consideration for devolution of assets and services
9. The proposals for parish top up funding do not provide details or data to support the sustainable position, for example, what is the annual cost on an ongoing basis; will the proposals demonstrate a final sustainable position or will there be an annual request for additional funding; is this death by a thousand cuts?
10. Means of sustainable income generation are not expanded, eg:
 - Meeting rooms being hired out on varying terms such as longer term commitments and incomes
 - Banking hubs – existing provision elsewhere but not explored within the consultation and proposed funding solutions
 - Commissioned via public or private contracts
 - Direct trading and retail
 - Funding from charities, trusts, foundations or philanthropy
 - Fundraising and crowdfunding
 - Community infrastructure levy – currently rated zero by CEC but this requires urgent review
 - Social investment
 - Joint commissioning services and hub locations, eg health outreach to build local stretched capacity and associated funding
11. There are consequences to reducing the levels of book stock and/or the range and quality of the new items purchased:
12. User frustration in the event that they are unable to:
 - a. Find relevant items they require
 - b. Access items due to availability issues
 - c. Pursue interests/study beyond a limited scope e.g. the library not purchasing further titles in a series or new editions (and the resultant issue of relying upon outdated information)

User perception that the service is not fit for purpose – can result in disengagement and reduced use of the service

It imposes limits on users and their discoveries through the available book stock.

There is a danger that instead of being relevant and up-to-date houses of knowledge and information that libraries could become repositories of outdated material. A library should be a source of continuous knowledge development and exploration, not an archive.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) states that: “regular access to a quality library service led and developed by professional

librarians has a positive impact on learning, literacy, wellbeing, social mobility and skills.”

13. To ensure that book stock cuts on a linear approach does not impact Crewe residents adversely, it would be important to understand which areas of the collection are used and allocate cuts proportionally rather than a straight 25% reduction on all stock. It would therefore be important to see if this data is routinely collected and interrogated.

14. Any reduction in hours, which is entirely not supported by Crewe Town Council, should consider timings and usage data to target the times of day when access is least and look to reduce opening hours at the extremities of working days rather than closing for whole days. However, as Crewe Library is widely used throughout its opening hours, it remains that reducing the service in any aspect will adversely affect those with the greatest need most and does not reflect proportionality, inclusion, accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

15. Crewe is a growing town and demand for services is increasing. Decreasing services is not representative of CEC’s anticipated urban growth as identified within the Local Plan and subsequent policy documents

16. Crewe is the centre for local regeneration projects. Investment in the town centre would be undermined by a reduction in a core service, reducing potential footfall and visitors to the town centre and there by negating aspects of the regeneration strategy and associated work

Crewe Town Council is clear that the Library service in Crewe is essential for the community, providing broad scope services to the town and the need is demonstrated in the figures associated with usage (<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/Council-and-democracy/Consultations/Cheshire-East-Library-Statistics-June-2023-vFINAL.pdf>).

The council will consider the final proposals in detail at its meetings in September but seeks that no reduction in service is delivered; that the skilled and engaged staff at Crewe Library are valued and retained; that the surrounding parishes that access the service are charged with the commitment to support the service; and that innovative and sustainable solutions are considered for the library to ensure its continued presence as a full time resource for the many thousands of residents who access it on a regular basis.

Crewe Town Council will consider in detail any final proposals that result from the consultation

Email response #108

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Poynton Town Council. Suggests Thursdays are busy days for Poynton Library, and that Mondays are quieter. Suggests rather than closing for a full day, for the library to open later in the day to save hours. Considering top-up funding.

Full email text:

The Town Council is extremely concerned about the proposed closure of Poynton library for additional one and a half days each week. We do not support the closure and we would encourage Cheshire East to rethink the reduction of hours for this valuable, well used community asset.

As a Cheshire East information point, the library is the face of Cheshire East for many people, and a considerable number of vulnerable residents will attend asking for support with a variety of issues. People are not moved on from the library, they are welcomed and allowed to sit in the library for as long as they want and need. The library is used by people who are socially isolated, and the staff provide much needed social contact for residents who may not have anyone else to talk to. This winter the library was used as a warm space, with the economic climate remaining difficult it is likely that such facilities will be required next year.

In making any decisions to close the library we would ask that the usage of the library is taken into account. We understand that Mondays are the quietest days, whilst Thursdays are busy with up to 90 toddlers attending "Rhyme Time". Having considered this matter carefully, the Town Council would ask Cheshire East to consider opening later or closing earlier which we believe would eradicate the need to close for a full day and a half each week.

The Town Council is still considering whether it is in a position to "top up the service". The amount involved is considerable and would result in a significant increase in the precept. The Town Council is also concerned that the ongoing costs (year 2 and 3) are unknown, but we are being asked to commit to a three year agreement. The Town Council's Finance & General Purposes Committee needs to consider this matter carefully and the financial implication for the Town Council. A further Town Council meeting will be required to discuss this issue. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to give a definitive answer at this stage as the consultation period has been too short.

Email response #109

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Questions what other options have been considered by the council other than the one put forward, and gives examples of alternative library service delivery from across the UK. Suggests a significant review of staffing is required, and puts forward a proposal for such a staff review.

Full email text:

I write to say I am astounded that CEC councillors along with CEC senior management have considered closing community libraries before seriously considering other options, such as a full review of staffing (as has been successfully carried out by other local authorities.)

Personally speaking, I find the proposal to close all CEC library branches for 1.5 days per week rather heavy handed, unsophisticated and a blunt instrument to tackle a serious financial shortfall in CEC finances.

I have worked for four library services, across the UK, before coming to work for CEC. I know, first hand, that many services have undergone a review of staffing and have adapted to the changing needs of customers, in the face of financial challenges. For example:

Staffordshire County Council - Community Partnerships

Staffordshire County Council have successfully entered into community partnerships to run library services (please see link below). I wonder if this was something CEC explored and gave serious consideration to?

Examples of community libraries in Staffordshire - Staffordshire County Council

As mentioned, having worked for several library services prior to working for CEC, I know that other authorities have undertaken a full service review or reform. This has seen a 'shakeup' of many aspects of the library service, often brought about by developments in technology for example, to better fit the changing needs and demands of its customers. In these circumstances, some job roles have been merged, whilst other roles have been found to be surplus to requirement.

Chester & Cheshire West Council - Full Service review

Chester & Cheshire West Council undertook a full review of staffing within the library service, sometime after its creation. Having shed some staff roles, such as branch managers and librarians, and merged roles, they have saved cash, but have not experienced the wide scale changes to library opening hours being proposed

currently by CEC. Equally, they have not experienced a reduction in customer service satisfaction.

Midlothian Council - Full Service Reform

One of the library services I worked for previously was Midlothian Council Library Service in Scotland. This service is of a similar size to that of CEC Library Service (in terms of book issues and footfall.) After a full review of staffing, Midlothian Libraries dispensed with the services of librarians and branch library managers who were made redundant.

Each library is now run by a senior library assistant. There are no branch managers and no librarians across the whole of the service. Each branch library has a small permanent core team. Temporary bank staff are used to help cover special events, annual leave and illness as required. All these changes have saved a significant amount of cash, but with no detrimental impact upon service standards or customer satisfaction. The entire service is now managed by three Library Development Officers. No library opening hours were lost as a result of the review.

If the recent pandemic has taught us anything, it has shown us that we can work differently and smarter. A local authority under severe financial pressure such as CEC should learn to embrace change and be proactive rather than reactive to make changes.

As an employee of CEC library service, I would argue that it is time for an open, honest and frank discussion between staff and senior management, where tough choices and bold decisions are discussed and made.

A review of staffing level is long overdue. The needs of customers using library services has changed significantly. The demographic of the customer base has changed. Technology has developed and brought about changes (to help library services operate more effectively with less staff).

CEC Library Staffing - An overdue review required

Branch Managers - The requirement to have a librarian qualification to manage a community branch library is no longer relevant. This has been demonstrated by various local authority library services who have made this post redundant (see examples given earlier). Consequently, and importantly, there is no longer a need to pay such high professional salaries.

Many library branches countrywide operate very successfully without an in-situ branch manager on duty each day. Branch Managers at CEC receive £37,500 per annum (approx). This figure is similar to the salary CEC pay to deputy Head teachers at Primary Schools. The responsibility attached to both jobs is incomparable. Damaging or losing a book is unfortunate. Damaging or losing a child is a very serious matter and is likely to conclude in a court case.

To help, I'll do some maths. Currently I calculate that there are 30 hours per week of time attributed across the CEC library service to branch management.

Branch Manager annual salary (for 5 days work per week) = £37,500 (approx)

Branch Manager annual salary (for 1 day of work per week) = £7,500 (approx)

Therefore, 30 days per week across the service (30 x £7500) = £ 225,000 (two hundred and twenty five thousand pounds).

This would be a year on year saving and doesn't include a saving on pension contributions to CEC.

Library Assistants - The skill set of library assistants has changed significantly. Many library assistants are university educated and often come to the post from other professions. They often bring a plethora of skills and offer a wealth of knowledge about literature from their studies and interests. They also bring to the role a wealth of life experience and are able to deliver games clubs, children's singing sessions, craft activities, computer skills classes, poetry and creative writing classes, foreign language classes along with shelving books and carrying out administrative tasks, to ensure the smooth running of the library. These skills should be fully harnessed by CEC and developed and encouraged as they are at Chester & Cheshire West Library Service & Midlothian Library Service, where, for the most part, library assistants make up the staffing 'on the ground', each day, ensuring the customer experience is smooth, enjoyable and positive.

Librarians - The requirement to have librarians in situ in branch, when so much information is widely available on line, has changed. The post is no longer relevant in small community libraries as has been demonstrated (see earlier examples). Particularly, in CEC's current dire financial circumstances, the post is not affordable. Librarian's salary is enhancement (from that of library assistants) to cover the responsibility of stock management. Having myself done this, I know that stock management is a relatively straightforward process. This work could be shared & woven into the duties of library assistants as happens at Midlothian Council Library Service.

To help, I'll do some maths. Currently I calculate that there are two days per week of librarian time attributed to each of the 17 CEC libraries (including the mobile library).

Librarian annual salary (for 5 days work per week) = £26,500 (approx)

Librarian annual salary (1 day of work per week) = £5,300 (approx)

Therefore, 34 days per week across the service (34 x £5,300) = £ 180,200

This would be a saving of £180,000+ (approx) year on year. This would be a year on year saving and doesn't include the saving made by CEC on pension contributions.

If my suggestions were adopted (branch manager saving added to the librarian saving = £405,000+ (approx)savings per year on going year on year) over four years, this would yield a financial saving of over one and a half millions pounds.

As, in many places, Senior library Assistants would step up and be in charge of the daily operations of each branch. I do not envisage a reduction in customer satisfaction.

It is time the structure of the CEC library service changed, as has already happened in many other towns and cities across the U.K. I strongly believe the service should be subject to a top to tail independent external staff review.

There are many ways in which local authority library services, across the UK, have:

(a) changed and adapted to different and ever changing customer needs.

(b) reduced staffing

and yet have continued to offer a high quality of service to its customers

I write to ask if CEC Library Service has explored any other options, including the option of a full review of its staffing levels?

For reference, the Australian Library and Information Service recommend an internal review every 3-5 years and an independent assessment to be carried out every 5-7 years.

<https://read.alia.org.au/file/949/download?token=q0C0cf5i>

The part closure of CEC libraries should be an absolute last resort!

Thank you for your time to read this letter

[redacted]

Email response #110

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Bollington Town Council. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Bollington. The Town Council is unable to contribute towards top-up funding. Questions the lack of long term strategy for the Library Service.

Full email text:

BOLLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Response to Cheshire East Council Library Service Consultation 2023

1. Bollington Town Council notes and wishes to respond to this consultation on the Library Service. As a town with over 8,000 residents, 4 primary schools and a lively business sector, this is a community with a strong interest in its Branch Library.
2. We note that Cheshire East Council, in response to a high level of feedback, reduced the savings required of the Library Service in the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy.
3. However, we are dismayed to see the proposal to reduce Bollington Library's opening hours by half a day. While there is a limited impact of losing 4 hours per week, that would still reduce the Branch Library's hours to 3 days and 2 half day, an 11.2% reduction.
4. A wide range of users would be affected, including borrowers, reading groups, Storytime and Rhymetime sessions, users of the internet workstations, adults and school children wanting to study, people wanting to take out or renew bus passes, Blue Badges, rail-cards and election ID applications.
5. The role of the Library in this town as a social hub is particularly important; it acts as a centre for young parents and their children to meet and, also, as a place for the elderly and those of limited means to find a welcoming space. Bollington Library participated in the recent Warm Spaces initiative which was important for so many residents.
6. Bollington is also one of the most heavily used Cheshire East libraries for children's activities, with an exceptionally high level of book loans to children. This is a function of the number of young families in the town and the seven local primary schools in the town and neighbouring areas, as well as easy access from the green flag open space Recreation Ground nearby.
7. The Council has considered the possibility of funding the lost half-day but, given the pressures on its budget, is not able to take on this commitment at this time.
8. The Consultation invites comments on possible ideas for income generation. Any income raised by a Branch Library must remain in its own account for spending in that Branch; arrangements need to be made to handle such income streams. Some local organisations and charities may wish to donate funds to for purchase of reading materials or other aspects of Branch expenditure - there should be no disincentive put in the way of the receipt of such donations.
9. The serious reductions proposed in the opening hours of our two nearest large libraries, Macclesfield (32%) and Poynton (26%) will affect Bollington residents, who would visit these for access to the larger collections and better hours.
10. The effect of the 25% cut in the book and journal purchase budget is certain to be significant – it is highly unsatisfactory that there is no information in the Consultation document on the impact of this reduction.

11. While acknowledging the high level of uncertainty on future local authority funding, we are concerned that the proposed erosion of services casts doubt on the Borough Council's commitment to one of our most valued community resources.

12. In particular, we note the lack of any published longer-term strategy for our public Library Service; such a strategy should include information-sharing and provision for closer co-operation with town and parish councils. This will help to ensure that our public libraries, while facing many challenges, will always remain a vital resource in our communities.

13. Accordingly, Bollington Town Council wishes to record its opposition to these proposals.

Email response #111

Date email received: 7 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response on behalf of Knutsford Town Council. Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Knutsford. The Town Council is unable to contribute towards top-up funding. Asks for commitment that revenue generated by libraries will be shared across the whole service. Suggests income generation ideas. Opposed to Knutsford Library being in Group C, suggest it should be grouped with Wilmslow and Macclesfield instead.

Full email text:

PROPOSED REDUCTION TO LIBRARY SERVICES

Knutsford Town Council recognises the council is under significant financial pressures to deliver a balance budget, however it strongly objects to the proposed reduction in library opening hours. Libraries present substantial benefits to local communities, providing vital community hubs where, regardless of means, people can access the internet, undertake research or just get a book for the enjoyment of reading.

Additionally, Cheshire East Council uses the library to deliver a range of its services and customer contact. In Knutsford, the library is now the only customer contact point for Cheshire East Council, where residents can access some advice, guidance and direction. The recent (excellent) example was how you used libraries to support those who needed to apply for the free voter ID. The Town Council therefore urges the council to find alternative savings that enable library access to remain unaffected.

Notwithstanding the Town Council's objections, the council requests you consider the following points:

1) The Town Council was reassured to hear in the town and parish council briefing that the intention is that revenue generated by one library would support the full library service. Knutsford Library presents limited revenue generation opportunities compared to larger buildings as it lacks private meeting space. The Town Council therefore seeks express commitment in any formal decisions that this will be the council's policy moving forward and that libraries which do not generate income will not be treated unfavourably in terms of opening hours, book stock etc.

2) The Town Council believes that alternatives to a full day closure should be explored. For example, by amending opening hours to fall slightly later, implementing two half-day closures in place of the existing one half-day closure or implementing a mid-day break when libraries are quieter. Examples of how this could be achieved are below, and the Town Council would welcome further discussion on this.

	Example A	Example B	Example C
Monday	1000-1700	0900-1300 1500-1700	0900-1700
Tuesday	1000-1900	0900-1230 1530-1900	1400-1900
Wednesday	1000-1300	0900-1300	0900-1300
Thursday	1300-1900	0900-1230 1530-1900	1400-1900
Friday	1000-1700	0900-1300 1500-1700	0900-1700
Saturday	0900-1300	0900-1300	0900-1300

3) Ideas for generating revenue at the library which could be explored are:

- a) Expanding the sale of books
- b) Running paid for courses, training and workshops
- c) Provision of PC gaming evenings
- d) Improved promotion of paid-for services e.g printing

4) The current proposals for library 'groups' place Knutsford with Sandbach, Middlewich and Holmes Chapel. These are towns that Knutsford has no public transport links with. If a groups proposal is being taken forward, Knutsford should be with Wilmslow and Macclesfield as the two towns with which it has a regular bus service.

The Town Council will not be looking to contribute to Cheshire East Council's costs in operating libraries through the 'top up' service.

Email response #112

Date email received: 8 July 2023

Summary of content:

Provides link to a study which shows English Libraries generate £34 billion each year.

Full email text:

I hope the study discussed here makes its way to your desks and proves itself useful in your decision-making about cutting library hours.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/jul/07/study-finds-english-libraries-generate-at-least-34bn-in-yearly-value>

Email response #113

Date email received: 8 July 2023

Summary of content:

Reply on behalf of the Macclesfield Literary and Philosophical Society. Suggests ways of ensuring the group can still meet at Macclesfield Library on Monday evenings once a month.

Full email text:

This reply to the consultation is made on behalf of the Macclesfield Literary and Philosophical Society.

In common with a number of other civil society bodies in Macclesfield, we rely on Macclesfield public library for the provision of meeting space, and for many years we have met in one of the library meeting rooms once a month from September to May (except for December), always in the evening, from 7.30 to 9.30 pm, on a Tuesday or a Thursday. We meet on days when at present the library is open until 7.0 pm, and the caretaker stays on to open up for us, having already prepared the room. The caretaker's wages for the extra two and a half hours are presumably covered by the hire charge for the room.

Under the proposals, the library will be open until 7.0 pm only on Mondays. It is possible, but doubtfully practical, to meet on a Monday every month.

We would suggest :

Either that the library should remain open until 7.0 pm on at least one further day per week, and the extra time compensated for by later opening in the morning. (This

would have the further advantage of giving more time for the use of the library by readers after standard work hours.)

Or that allowance should be made for separate evening opening of the meeting rooms on several days a month for bodies that needed it, the cost being covered at least partially by the hire charge.

Email response #114

Date email received: July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I think that the proposed new closures are completely out of order.

Email response #115

Date email received: 8 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Knutsford. Suggests opening for longer more efficiently, like they do in Llandaff in North Wales which has a library / community hub open 6 days a week. Says the proposals will impact charity collecting.

Full email text:

I am writing to oppose the changes Cheshire East Council is proposing for the Cheshire East Libraries for very evidence based reasons. Your reasons are purely about cost cutting for the council. I suggest you look closely at your budgets again. I do appreciate as a council we don't get all the extras that come with deprivation and being inclusive , this is an ongoing problem and very evident within education , Social care and the NHS . However the amount of money spent at the top end of staff positions is nothing short of scandalous , given the restructures, suspensions and interim appointments.

Cheshire East should be looking at how it can utilize the libraries more efficiently , not reduce opening hours. Llandaff North in Wales have a library/ Community hub open six full days a week , they have a fantastic café , independently run , offer a hot meal at lunchtime , and a wide range of groups and activities. They support many volunteers. They advertise in the community widely .

Cheshire East and particularly Knutsford has one of the highest social isolation/loneliness issues in the Country (ONS survey), much higher than Crewe. The impact of this on health and social care (social care being a huge spend for Cheshire East) Reducing hours in Knutsford is not the answer to service provision. It will only increase the isolation issue and the social care budget even more. Can I suggest ask Knutsford together to have a presence in the library, advertise more widely all the events. I never see Knutsford library events on any other notice boards or linked to other businesses, community groups, churches, etc.

I am also a volunteer with the [redacted] shop and are very grateful to Knutsford library for having us last year, it was very successful and brought footfall into the library due to our wide spread advertising /circulation. Do I ever see what the libraries offer on social media??? No

On behalf of the shops in Macclesfield, Wilmslow and Knutsford libraries, reducing opening hours between 9.30-4.30 would be nothing short of punishing all the charities that sell [redacted] through our shop. We don't charge, the charity gets 100% back for all cards sold, please can I ask you to talk to your library staff about the shop. I'm sure they will be keen to discuss the impact it has on them, why not encourage more pop up shops in the library ???

Think expansion not reduction of service, always the easy option to save money at costs to human health.

Email response #116

Date email received: 8 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Please don't cut back library access. The service is vital to the preservation of our quality of life and amenity.

Email response #117

Date email received: 8 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

To whom it may concern

Reading your library proposals I'm struck by two things.

1) after covid it is more important than ever to encourage children to engage with socialised learning free from pressure, libraries are one of the ways this can be achieved.

2) libraries increasingly provide support for our most economically disadvantaged children and adults your proposed cuts would seem to treat all areas as equal, and don't take into account the demands of each area's demographic.

I strongly object to any reduction in public services, but I recognise that some choices have to be made if funds are not available from central gov (or the conservative councillors aren't sitting on funds for some bizarre desire to impress them). But here choice's don't seem to be taken your simply instituting a cut of 1.5 days regardless of need or demand.

Email response #118

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Provides link to a study which shows English Libraries generate £34 billion each year. Opposition to the proposals, suggests having later opening times instead.

Full email text:

I would like to draw attention to the report below. This shows how libraries are a vital part of communities. Cutting access to the library will have a huge impact on so many vulnerable people.

Having worked for Cheshire Libraries for over 30 years I have first hand experience of how we have adapted to meet different needs within our community. From the families who attend Rhymetime each week to the ex-serviceman who spends hours each day working on our jigsaw puzzle it is a safe non judgemental and free resource.

Surely it would make far more sense to reduce opening hours of each day by a little rather than taking a whole day. For some people library staff are the only human contact they have and for the homeless it is a place where they can spend a few hours each day in a dry, warm place.

Of course libraries promote reading and literacy but they are so much more.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/jul/07/study-finds-english-libraries-generate-at-least-34bn-in-yearly-value>

Email response #119

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Nantwich.

Full email text:

The Town Council has considered its response to your consultation on the proposals to amend the library services in Nantwich and would like the following to be taken into consideration:

1. In response to the options available of either having all libraries closed on the same day each week, or at least one library to be open in each group every day of the week the town council would wish for Nantwich library to remain open six days per week, and so would not choose either of the two options.
2. The town council strongly oppose the proposed new opening hours.

Supporting argument for the above responses – Nantwich library is the third busiest library in Cheshire East, and since covid the services delivered from the library have diversified. As well as working with local social prescribers and putting on free events for adults and children and helping combat social isolation and aiding maternal mental health, the library issue books in all formats, LP, audio and e books and E zines for those that need them.

In addition to putting on its own events it houses other groups such as the Family History Society and Morrison's Nutty Knitters. The library also provides a safe, welcoming workplace for tutors to work with excluded pupils as well as being a place where students can revise in relative quiet.

The library is a designated Warm Space, a welcoming hub for any enquiry. There is a Council Enquiry desk where the local community can obtain a blue badge, a bus pass, a discounted rail card etc. Enquiries range from reporting a street light, submitting evidence for a benefit claim to helping those that are homeless. Although some of these queries could be solved online, many in the community haven't got access to a PC, printer or have the knowledge or confidence to be able to complete such forms themselves. The public see the library as a place to get information regardless of its origin.

Staff at the library enable the digitally excluded to access the information themselves or book them in with a free IT buddy session of which there are currently three. The library has worked alongside the Good things Foundation to provide some residents with free tablets.

The library run many class visits during the year as well as visiting all the local primary schools, staff work alongside the high schools and Reaseheath College. Last Summer 600 children took part in the Summer Reading challenge at Nantwich Library and ensured that children's literacy didn't dip during the School Summer Holidays. Staff work alongside speech and language therapists to ensure that the story times and rhyme times encourage better communication and ensure school readiness.

The library has a collection of winter warm supplies which can be given to vulnerable residents when the weather gets colder, staff have also helped people receive funding and free school meal vouchers. Nantwich Library is the only CE library that issues Food Bank vouchers as it works closely with Damien at the Nantwich Food Bank. The library also holds a supply of Emergency Food boxes which are frequently asked for. Staff work with local charities such as Motherwell and collect Winter coats and school uniform to give to those unable to purchase their own.

Staff initiate DBS checks for anyone who has requested a DBS check via CE, so staff were instrumental in setting up hosts with Ukrainian guests. Nantwich Library has also worked closely with one Ukrainian lady who has been successful in obtaining a set of books written in Ukrainian, Nantwich Library will be the holding library of the books which we hope will promote Ukrainian culture and preserve the identity of our guests. The library also houses a selection of stationery and back packs, toiletries and free bus tickets for Ukrainian guests.

During Covid and the first lockdown, staff made roughly 700 calls to vulnerable residents to give advice, to help secure food parcels, arrange for prescription collection or in many cases, have someone to chat to. During the second lockdown staff made more calls and worked in the library in separate bubbles, operating a click and collect facility which was a lifeline for many. When the library reopened it saw an upturn in use by homeworkers who couldn't return to the office but were also unable to work at home.

Staff have the skills to help those children with reading difficulties to choose books which will interest and engage them.

Staff have the skills to communicate with and therefore help customers suffering from long term conditions such as dementia and mental health issues.

Staff have the skills to recognise those in the community that need more help and to find that help for them.

A reduction in opening hours in the library would have a detrimental effect on the community, with the potential of increasing costs for other Cheshire East service areas. The services currently provided by the library help to reduce the burden on services such as Adult and Childrens Social Services and the NHS.

Email response #120

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response from Councillor Mary Brooks, Macclesfield West & Ivy Ward. Asks a number of questions about the consultation.

Full email text:

I have filled an online response form but have additional concerns I wish to raise.

- 1) How will the proposals impact on the council's key objective of tackling health inequalities given the proposed reduction hours disproportionately impact on Crewe & Macclesfield Library in particular. These areas serve wards which are the most disadvantaged in the borough.
- 2) I am perplexed as to how the usage data informed the proposed opening hours -Crewe & Macclesfield library have by far the greatest visitors/members/council enquiries/computer use yet number of proposed hours of the libraries open is similar to Poynton and Wilmslow.
- 3) It is suggested that library users can continue to access other libraries when a specific library is closed but by and large it is admitted that public transport provision (the main way the most vulnerable and elderly would travel) is generally poor across the borough. This will further negatively impact on vulnerable, groups women and children accessing council services. Cost for bus fares. Widely varying opening times will be confusing and not easily remembered by the public
- 4) Assuming that demand for council advice services will continue at the same or higher level particularly in Crewe and Macc how will the demand on library staff be managed over 4 days?
- 5) Why is a proper strategic review not being conducted to ensure any restructured service meets other council objectives as improving health and wellbeing and the delivery of the Council's digital strategy (which according to the strategy states libraries will "be heavily" involved in. It seems these proposals are being rushed through without due consideration of the impact on the digital strategy and Health and wellbeing strategy. What's the point of doing a full customer survey in 2024 AFTER the reduction of opening hours have taken affect. The last survey was undertaken over 3 years ago pre -pandemic. Wouldn't it be better to do this now so that the public are truly co creators of any remodelled service have genuine in input and that we have accurate information to inform this redesign.

The forthcoming strategic leisure review could possible identify cross working and opportunities to use library spaces for eg Yoga, Mindfulness and bring some of

ESAR services closer to communities who may not be able to access ESAR leisure facilities due to lack of transport .

6) How has the wider impact on community groups been quantified and potential negative impacts on NHS poorer mental health and isolation . I also I note that the NHS work force plan aims to triple social prescribing link workers from 3000 to 9000 and H&W being coaches from 1000 to 6000 by 2036/7 . The obvious place for these workers to meet with groups and clients would be libraries.

7) Book Stock How will the cuts in book stock be determined- will it be cut across the board ? Would it be more desirable to protect childrens books for example given early learning is key to tackling inequality?

8) What will be the impact on the shared services with CWAC Bibliographic services, library management system, stock (reservable across both boroughs- Interlibrary loans)and education library service.

9) Has the wider financial impacts on Health being considered eg the impact on residents who use the libraries as Warms Spaces or safe spaces?

10) Why has the idea of volunteers supporting the service been dismissed the officer has stated that “there are no proposals as part of this review to consider the use of volunteers to maintain opening times.”

11) It is suggested that a mitigation measure around excluded or home schooled pupils who are tutored in libraries is that “grouping the library sites in geographical terms so that a site is always available for this and other similar purposes” I do not believe this is practical as my response in point 3. Does the councils have any data on how many such children may be educated in libraries. Negative impact on educational attainment will have wider costs.

12) Saving assumptions -are 75% of the costs reductions in this financial year and 25% in year 2 – could these cost reductions be staggered later over the lifetime of the budget so a proper redesign of service and consideration of wider impacts can be done rather than a rushed /arbitrary cutting of hours.

13) Why are building running costs not being considered here surely they should be part of this not just separately considered by another committee.

14) I think conversations with other agencies as to the potential of co location should have been conducted before specific opening times were proposed. Barclays already operate from Macc Library on a Monday , Weds and Friday yet the consultation proposes closing Macc a ½ day on a weds and 1 full day on a Friday! Perhaps there is also potential for CAB to relocate....

15) Finally will there be consideration of this recently published report as part of this process <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/jul/07/study-finds-english-libraries-generate-at-least-34bn-in-yearly-value>

Cllr Mary Brooks (Macclesfield West & Ivy Ward)

Email response #121

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Emphasises that closing libraries goes against the council's priority of being "open".

Full email text:

I write this as both a Cheshire East resident and a member of library staff.

If libraries were just about books then the proposed drastic reduction in opening hours would be bad enough. Libraries are more than books.

CEC professes to be open - well not if libraries are closed, as so many of our residents welcome that face-to-face contact the libraries offer. Staff aren't hiding in a featureless office or working at home. Travelling to Crewe or Macclesfield only to be turned away because they haven't made an appointment is not the service customers expect and unfair.

Libraries are very green as the books we all share in are read by many people.

Libraries are open to everyone and I suspect they are the one statutory service, free at point of delivery that people choose to use.

These proposals would mean the lowest paid staff in the service would be unable to work full time. This could mean an additional cost to CEC if the affected staff have to claim benefits because of loss of income. So, no real saving there. Or maybe they're expected to try and find a bus or train or use a car to travel to a library that is open and needing staff so they can make their hours up. That would cost money and not really help the CEC green agenda.

Libraries support so many other CEC services, providing free meeting rooms and helpdesks and distributing various consultations and other printed matter . We've delivered hundreds of boxes of Winter Wellbeing supplies, that would have cost a great deal of money if done commercially.

So what else do libraries do?

- We support early years language, literacy and social skills to under-fives in our numerous activities
- Offer class visits to school age children to foster a love of reading and library instruction
- Provide free STEM activities to support digital inclusion
- Provide school holiday activities, for example, the Summer Reading Challenge that helps children maintain literacy during the long Summer holiday
- Access to a wide range of e-resources to support life-long learning, leisure and education
- Provide a Home Library Services to housebound residents
- Offer adult social, educational and leisure sessions
- Have meeting rooms for hire for local groups
- Provide after school activities
- Offer a welcoming safe space
- Support for local reading groups
- Free computer use for library members
- A neutral space for Social Care colleagues to meet clients
- A place for informal meetings
- Somewhere excluded students can receive education
- Provide a "working at home" space
- Access to Local and Family History research
- Customer Service Points, giving residents links to other CEC departments, help with DBS, Blue Badge and bus pass applications, assisting residents with links to benefit and Council Tax claims, directing homeless people to the help they need etc.
- Somewhere anyone can visit just to avoid being alone

There are probably more that I could name, but these are the most obvious.

I'm guessing there has been a huge response to this consultation, and whether it will make a difference I couldn't say.

Email response #122

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals. Suggests proposals will have a negative impact on the charities ability to raise funds.

Full email text:

I am dismayed to learn that Cheshire East is proposing to reduce the opening hours of its libraries by 1.5 days a week, something which is most regrettable.

Wilmslow and Macclesfield libraries are vital locations for the Combined Charities Christmas Shops which have taken place annually for 41 and 30 years respectively, so far raising approx. £6M over some 50 years. These cuts would have a huge impact on the many charities involved as the shops provide their main source of income. Last year Cancer Research, the charity with which I was concerned, was able to raise just over £4,000. In addition during the weeks the shops are open I think more people than usual visit these libraries, thus becoming more aware of the facilities on offer.

Otherwise the libraries provide a valuable service in the community through the loan of books to the public of all ages, ie children as well as adults.

Computers are available for public use and invaluable for those of us who do not own one and I often use the ones in Wilmslow, Alderley Edge or Prestbury. In addition I do question whether it is necessary to update these computers so regularly and whether savings could be made so far as these items are concerned?

The libraries also provide ideal places for school children and students to work, to research projects and/or use reference books. During the six years I was studying for a degree through the OU I used Wilmslow library on an almost daily basis and found it invaluable.

Photocopying facilities are available too and a great asset for the public.

Returning to the proposed cuts I think the idea of closing for one day a week could be confusing and result in the public not being sure which day is involved - is it today or tomorrow or was it yesterday?!

Email response #123

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Poynton.

Full email text:

Please can you add my support to maintain library services at Poynton. I hope opening hours to include Saturday mornings will continue to be beneficial for the Poynton community. The council can hopefully look at cost savings in other areas.

Email response #124

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

Further to the consultation information on line. Cuts, cuts and more cuts. Austerity 2023! No cuts in public services can be supported, but it would seem have to be endured due to the constant reductions in budgets from central government.

During the pandemic the library services were amazing. When they could be open and help they were there to serve the public. Such an important service for old and young alike.

Email response #125

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Response from Councillor Sue Adams. Opposition to the proposals. Supportive of maintaining hours at Disley. Suggests public transport is not good enough to travel between different libraries efficiently. Suggests the parish council will look at extra funding for Disley Library.

Full email text:

I am fully supportive of maintaining the current opening hours of Disley Library. The current opening pattern works well and fits in with other activities in the Disley Community Hub which support footfall in the library such as Saturday coffee mornings and the Cuppa an' a Chat Group on Wednesday mornings. Disley Library is a key partner for Disley Parish Council in the delivery of its Health and Wellbeing strategy and is vital to the mental and physical health of many Disley residents. It provides low level social contact for those who are isolated. The library computers are vital for supporting Cheshire East Council's policy of digital inclusion. The library is particularly important to children, parents of young children, and older people. Disley library is the only face to face point of contact with CEC services. There is no direct transport link from Disley to Poynton, so without the library residents without access to a car cannot access CEC services. Disley library helped to deliver Warm Places in the winter of 2022/23 working with Disley Parish Council. Parish Councillors are meeting with a senior member of library staff shortly to look at how the Parish Council can offer further non-financial support to Disley library.

I am sure that the points I have made above apply equally to other libraries across Cheshire East. Protecting library opening hours should be a high priority for the council. Customer needs have changed considerably in recent years and will continue to change in the future. I suggest that CEC needs to carry out a review of staffing and look at how the service can adapt to the changing needs of customers in the face of financial challenges. The role of today's library includes the provision of a range of services and activities and includes acting as a customer service centre for Cheshire East Council. Perhaps we need to think about working in a different way but reducing library opening hours needs to be avoided as service to library users should be the first priority.

When looking at the data for individual libraries, it would be useful to have analysis of performance which takes account of the number of people living in each library's catchment area, hours open and costs split between staff and accommodation.

Email response #126

Date email received: 9 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals.

Full email text:

I would like to submit the following personal input related to the above topic:

- Falling in love with books can be life changing. Quite often, it happens at a young age whilst visiting the public library. In a way, a library is a very powerful (and cost effective way) of levelling up society.
- A library is so much more than just books, it is a true Community Hub with a very broad range of essential services. As we recover from the pandemic, the Community Hub function is critical for a town like Nantwich.
- I don't blame Cheshire East for the hard budget choices they are faced with. The root cause of the current situation are the funding cuts from Central Government.
- I would like our local MP to personally get involved and support INCREASING the opening hours rather than DECREASING them.

Email response #127

Date email received: 10 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposals, particularly at Macclesfield, and particularly at the larger libraries.

Full email text:

I write to express my opposition to the proposed reduction in the number of days per week for which Macclesfield Library is open and the proposed reduction in spending on new books.

The library service in Macclesfield serves a very substantial population, which has previously been recognised by the fact that, while many other libraries within the authority's area had been closed for between ½ and 1 ½ days per week, the library in Macclesfield has not been closed mid-week. The current proposals make no differentiation between those libraries serving smaller populations and those serving larger populations. Hence, the proposed very substantial reduction in the hours of the Macclesfield service.

Email response #128

Date email received: 10 July 2023

Summary of content:

Opposition to the proposal, particularly at Poynton.

Full email text:

The library in Poynton is very important for the community, especially for the young and old. A lot of activities including Books on Wheels occur on Thursdays and on Friday morning so I strongly oppose closure of the Poynton branch. I realise that the consultation is now closed and it is unfortunate that it came to my attention at this late stage but please take account of my very strong feelings on the topic.

