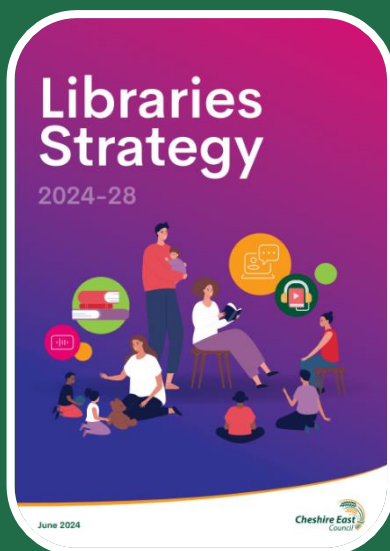# Full report of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Library Strategy Consultation 2024

Executive Summary

Introduction

During 2024, Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft Libraries Strategy for 2024 to 2028. The purpose of the strategy was to consider the medium and long-term future of the Library Service, in particular how it becomes more financially self-sustainable through income generation.

The consultation consisted of 2 stages:

1) Pre-consultation engagement – 17 to 22 June 2024

   Prior to formal consultation on a draft Libraries Strategy, Cheshire East Council conducted pre-consultation engagement with 11 local Town and Parish Councils.

   The purpose of this pre-consultation engagement was to involve Town and Parish Councils in the development of the draft strategy before it was formally consulted on, so that consultation proposals were co-designed. [Read a full summary of this pre-consultation engagement here (PDF,496KB)](.).

2) Formal consultation – 5 August to 15 September 2024

   Pre-consultation engagement was followed up with formal consultation, which was widely publicised, with responses invited from anyone who wished to respond – the consultation was not run as a referendum nor as a statistically robust sample survey.

   In total there were 3,596 formal consultation responses, including 3,534 survey responses, 39 lots of written feedback, and 23 event attendees.

   Alongside these consultation responses, Alderley Edge Parish Council and Handforth Town Council conducted their own surveys to support the consultation. 6 newspaper articles were also published about the consultation.

About survey respondents

94% of survey respondents use a Cheshire East library, while 83% are residents of Cheshire East.

More survey responses were received from some towns in Cheshire East than expected, when compared to the number of households in each town, including Bollington (received 3.7 times more responses than expected), Disley (received 3.6 times more responses than expected), and Handforth (received 3.4 times more responses than expected).

Overall views of the strategy and its objectives

81% of survey respondents supported the proposed strategy objectives, 14% opposed them. Support for the strategy included that:

- It makes sense, respondents agree with the objectives
- Libraries are vital, the hub and heart of communities
- Libraries provide education, learning, and safe spaces
- Libraries offer free resources for those unable them
- Libraries are important for good mental health

Respondents generally felt the strategy could be improved by:

- Not proposing further cuts to library opening hours
- Promoting an equal library service in all towns
- Emphasising the overall importance of libraries and librarians more
- Having more long-term focus, and not only focusing on cost cutting
- Promoting the service more to increase usage of it
- Including more detail, particularly around opening hours for Tier 2 libraries

Overall views on the proposed Tier System

49% of survey respondents supported the proposed Tier System, 37% opposed it. Those supportive of the Tier System were so:

- If it helps keep libraries open
- As it seems sensible
- As long as the tiers are regularly reviewed, that they are meeting needs, and libraries can be moved between tiers according to needs and finances

General improvements for the proposed Tier System included:

- Strong opposition to proposed service reductions for the Tier 3 libraries. Some felt the Tier System will result in closure of the lower Tier libraries in time
- Concern that there should be equal library provision across all towns, and that reductions in library services in smaller towns is unfair, and that it deprives, isolates, and marginalises smaller, rural areas

Level of support for each Tier

The level of survey respondent support for each proposed Tier varied significantly:

- 63% supported the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs", 23% were opposed
- 58% supported the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries", 25% were opposed

- 36% supported the proposed Tier 3 "Community Libraries", 41% were opposed

General feedback on the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries" included concern about the proposed review of opening times – respondents felt hours should be maintained, and not reduced. Some felt that some Tier 2 libraries should be in Tier 1.

General feedback on the proposed Tier 3 "Community Libraries" included:

- Opposition to a reduction in Tier 3 opening hours and service reductions
- That 1.5. days of Cheshire East Council funding for Tier 3 libraries is not enough
- That it's a slippery slope towards further cuts and then full closure of Tier 3 libraries; that they need to be protected

Levels of support for proposals for each of the Tier 3 libraries varied depending on which Tier 3 library respondents used. For example, 40% of Bollington Library users supported proposals, while just 13% of Handforth Library users supported proposals.

Views on the site assessment matrix

Libraries have been assigned to Tiers 1 to 3 through the use of a site assessment matrix. Survey respondent views on the assessment matrix were fairly mixed:

- 51% agreed the correct metrics have been used in the assessment matrix, 26% disagreed
- 45% agreed libraries have been assigned to the correct tiers, 33% disagreed

Suggestions as to how the assessment matrix could be further improved included:

- It should measure the proportion of the local population using each library, instead of the total number of library users, as this favours the larger towns
- It fails to assess how isolated local areas are that libraries serve, and how easily local residents could access alternative libraries if needed
- It fails to assess future demand for local libraries, based on projected population figures as set out in the Local Plan

Views on delivering library services differently

49% of survey respondents agreed it is appropriate that Local Authorities look for alternative ways of operating libraries, 35% disagreed.

Alternative service delivery models

The level of agreement on which alternative service delivery models the council should explore for use varied significantly among survey respondents:

- Community Managed Libraries (45% agree, 37% disagree)
- Shared Services Models (31% agree, 40% disagree)
- Trusts & Charitable Incorporated Organisations (28% agree, 43% disagree)
- Social Enterprises (27% agree, 44% disagree)
- Public Service Mutuals (24% agree, 44% disagree)
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) (11% agree, 69% disagree)
- Outsourcing to external providers (8% agree, 80% disagree)

Unstaffed libraries

38% of survey respondents agreed the council should explore extending opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology, while 48% disagreed.

Reasons for opposition to unstaffed libraries included:

- Safety concerns – Worry about safety in an unstaffed building, with 84% of respondents with this concern being female
- Anti-Social Behaviour concerns – Worry that unstaffed libraries would attract anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, gangs, drinkers and the homeless
- Concerns around the importance of librarians and human contact
- Concerns that the costs to administer this system would outweigh the benefits

Using volunteers in libraries

Throughout the survey respondents stressed the importance of professional library staff, and expressed concern about the use of volunteers, including that:

- Libraries need paid professional staff that are experienced
- Volunteers would not be able to answer queries
- Using volunteers could lead to data protection issues
- There aren't enough volunteers in some areas to make this viable

Town and Parish Council feedback

Throughout the consultation there was extensive engagement conducted with local Town and Parish Councils, including individual meetings as well as formal email responses received from them.

In summary of all Town and Parish Council feedback:

- Most were strongly opposed to any further reductions in opening hours
- Several were pleased to be assigned to Tiers 1 or 2. Some felt proposals were positive, and were generally supportive of them
- Some were supportive of the assessment matrix, though some were concerned that it favours the larger sites unfairly

- Some were supportive of libraries being used as community / family hubs
- Clarification was sought over how other services would be incorporated into libraries, and were keen to understand Cheshire East Council's long term policies on library services, Family Hubs, Leisure Services, and car parking as a whole – they felt these need to be connected together as much as possible
- Some expressed an interest in top-up funding, and were keen to understand exactly what was being asked of Town and Parish Councils in relation to this
- Some were open to exploring the use of volunteer arrangements and unstaffed libraries, though there were also concerns raised
- Some were supportive of the "Community Managed Libraries" concept
- Tier 2 libraries – Concern expressed about the proposed opening hours review and what this means. Town and Parish Councils were keen to understand proposals for opening hours as soon as possible
- Tier 3 libraries – Felt the 1.5 days CEC funding was not enough, some wondered if it was negotiable. Others challenged the assessment matrix, and sought clarity over length of arrangements
- Some enquired whether Town and Parish Councils could ask surrounding local councils to contribute to funding, given their residents also use their libraries
- Some enquired about other possible arrangements e.g. having access to / renting the top floor or ground floors of libraries for their own use, and even taking over the running of libraries completely

Furthermore, during the consultation 2 Town and Parish Councils conducted their own surveys to support the consultation. Alderley Edge Parish Council received 133 responses, and Handforth Town Council received 758 responses. In both cases the vast majority of respondents:

- Agreed with the Town or Parish Council providing top-up funding
- Disagreed with the CE proposals to reduce opening hours at these libraries

Other email feedback

A further 30 emails were received during the consultation from other stakeholders, including Councillor Braithwaite, Chester West and Chester Council, and local residents. A significant proportion of these emails were opposed to library closures or reductions in hours.

Brief summaries of other key responses are provided below:

- Councillor Braithwaite – Feels the Tier system is pre-determined and should be revisited. Feels the strategy should include more detail about what the Key Performance Indicators will be. Feels library usage by postcode needs assessing to clarify the areas that libraries serve

- Cheshire West and Chester Council, Communities Department – Concerned about the risk that different levels of service across the authority will result in a "postcode lottery" service delivery. Felt a clarity of language may be helpful
- Suggestion for a review of the management structure, a review of the pay scale of CEC library management, and a reduction in management hours of the CEC Library Service
- Suggestion that the draft strategy does not align with the council's Local Plan, and does not take into account future demand from new housing development already committed to
- Typo – Compliment/complement is misspelled on pages 5 & 8 of the strategy

Conclusions

Transformation of Library Services

It is important to note the amount of effort that has gone into conducting this consultation. Any transformation of how library services are delivered is always going to be a complex and controversial process, given how important libraries are to local communities.

That the council has been able to put forward co-designed proposals in partnership with Town and Parish Councils is testament to the hard work of the Library Services management team, and to the willingness of Town and Parish Council colleagues to engage. Hopefully as a result of these efforts the amount of service disruption felt by library users is minimised as far as possible, while the service continues to move towards being financially sustainable.

It is also positive to note such a large response to the consultation, despite the consultation survey being extremely lengthy and complex – people remain passionate about libraries.

Overall support for the strategy

On the whole, large proportions of survey respondents and Town and Parish Councils were supportive of the overall strategy. We saw strong support for the strategy objectives, overall support for the proposed Tier System, and overall support for many aspects of the assessment matrix.

This is most likely because the large and medium sized libraries are not negatively impacted by the proposals, and so most are pleased to keep service provision as is.

Opposition to proposals for Tier 3 libraries

However, it is noted that proposals for the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly opposed. There is concern that Tier 3 libraries may become neglected and slip

toward eventual closure as a result of the Tier System; Cheshire East Council and local communities must work hard to ensure this does not happen.

It is interesting to note that proposals for some of the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly supported than others. For example, Bollington Library users were more like to support proposals for their library, and this is likely as a result of the Town Council stepping in to provide top-up funding, to ensure the library hours are maintained. Handforth library users were least likely to support the proposals, and this library is seeing the biggest potential loss in opening hours of all the Tier 3 libraires.

The strategy favours larger towns unfairly

There are concerns that the strategy and assessment matrix favour the largest towns too heavily, and that this is unfair on the residents in the smaller towns who pay the same amount of Council Tax as everyone else.

Respondents point out that the assessment matrix does not measure the proportion of a town's population that uses a library, and therefore the importance of the library for those towns. Furthermore, these are towns that have fewer services than larger towns as it is, and poorer public transport networks, and so reducing the library provision in these areas may have a larger overall impact on those residents.

How the council might manage local services in future

Concerns have been raised that having different management approaches and different levels of service provision at different libraries will lead to a "postcode lottery" for library service provision – the council will need to manage this carefully to ensure library service provision does not become disparate and confusing across the borough.

Concern was also raised as to how library services would be delivered in harmony with other council services, such as Family Hubs, Leisure Services, and car parking, to ensure services that compliment each other at a local level. Again, this will need careful management by the council, especially if each town is going to have its own unique service delivery model for all these services.

Alternative service delivery models to be considered

It is noted that the only alternative service delivery model which received net overall support by respondents was "Community Managed Libraries", and it may be that this becomes the preferred service delivery model in future. Respondents do seem open to the council exploring different ways of delivering libraries.

Unstaffed libraries are marginally disliked, though some Town and Parish Councils were keen to trial the use of such a system, as long as it was not at the expense of staffed library hours, and only used to extend opening hours. There were many

concerns around safety and anti-social behaviour of using such a system, particularly from female respondents, and these concerns would need allaying through trials before being widely adopted.

Some Town and Parish Councils were enthusiastic about embracing different ways of delivering the service, with several already embracing top-up funding, and others open to exploring the use of volunteers in libraries, though again this would need trialling before being rolled out widely. Others were open to exploring other ways of managing the library too, including hiring our floors, and even possibly taking over the running of individual libraries entirely.

Further engagement

Although much progress has been made, the transformation of libraries services is not wholly complete at this point. Continued engagement will be required with local communities and Town and Parish Councils to complete this process.

Executive Summary produced 27 September 2024 by Ben Buckley of the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council. Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

Contents

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

In February 2024, Cheshire East Council approved its medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) for 2024 to 2028 at Full Council. This approved MTFS included proposal 73: "Libraries Strategy", which set out the ambition to develop a Libraries Strategy to consider the medium and long-term future of the Library Service, in particular how it becomes more financially self-sustainable through income generation. This proposal set a further savings target of £615,000 for the Library Service.

To deliver this MTFS proposal Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft Libraries Strategy for 2024 to 2028. This draft strategy was developed based on feedback from past Library Service Consultations and in collaboration with key council services including Adults, Childrens, Communities, Customer Services, Public Health, and Leisure Services. Additionally, Cheshire East Ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils were engaged in the co-design of the draft strategy.

The final Libraries Strategy will revised to incorporate consultation feedback, with Environment and Communities Committee making the final decision on adoption later in 2024.

Consultation methodology

The consultation consisted of 2 key stages:

- Pre-consultation engagement, conducted between 17 and 22 June 2024
- Formal consultation, conducted between 5 August and 15 September 2024

Pre-consultation engagement

Prior to formal consultation on a draft Libraries Strategy, Cheshire East Council conducted pre-consultation engagement with 11 local Town and Parish Councils.

The purpose of this pre-consultation engagement was to involve Town and Parish Councils in the development of the draft strategy before it was formally consulted on. In particular, Town and Parish Councils were to be asked to consider whether they wished to submit an "expression of interest" as to how local communities might take on the management of local libraries in some capacity. Read a full summary of this pre-consultation engagement here (PDF,496KB).

Formal consultation

Formal consultation was conducted between 5 August and 15 September 2024, and was widely publicised, with responses invited from anyone who wished to respond – the consultation was not run as a referendum nor as a statistically robust sample survey. The consultation was widely publicised via:

- Council press releases
- Council website promotion
- Council social media promotion (X and Facebook)
- Members bulletin
- Town and parish council newsletter
- Computer screensavers and receipts in all libraries
- Posters at all libraries
- Paper consultation packs available in all libraries
- Libraries enewsletter
- Schools bulletin, particularly from 2 September 2024 after the new school term began
- Council staff news feeds
- The council's Digital Influence Panel

Number of consultation responses

In total there were 3,596 consultation responses, including:

- 3,424 online survey responses
- 110 paper survey responses
- 32 emails
- 23 event attendees
- 3 letters
- 2 complaints
- 2 Customer Services feedback

Alongside these consultation responses, Alderley Edge Parish Council and Handforth Town Council conducted their own surveys to support the consultation, which received 891 responses in total (see Appendix 3). 6 newspaper articles were also published in relation to the consultation (see appendix 5).

Reading this report

The main sections of this report contain an analysis of the survey responses received during the consultation. A summary of feedback received via other means is provided in the appendices.

About survey respondents

Respondent type

94% of survey respondents use a Cheshire East library, while 83% are residents of Cheshire East.

How are you responding to this survey?

As someone who uses a library in Cheshire East	94%
As a resident of Cheshire East	83%
As a Cheshire East Council or Library Service employee	3%
On behalf of a group, organisation, club or local business	2%
As a Cheshire East Councillor	1%
Other	2%

Number of responses = 3,520
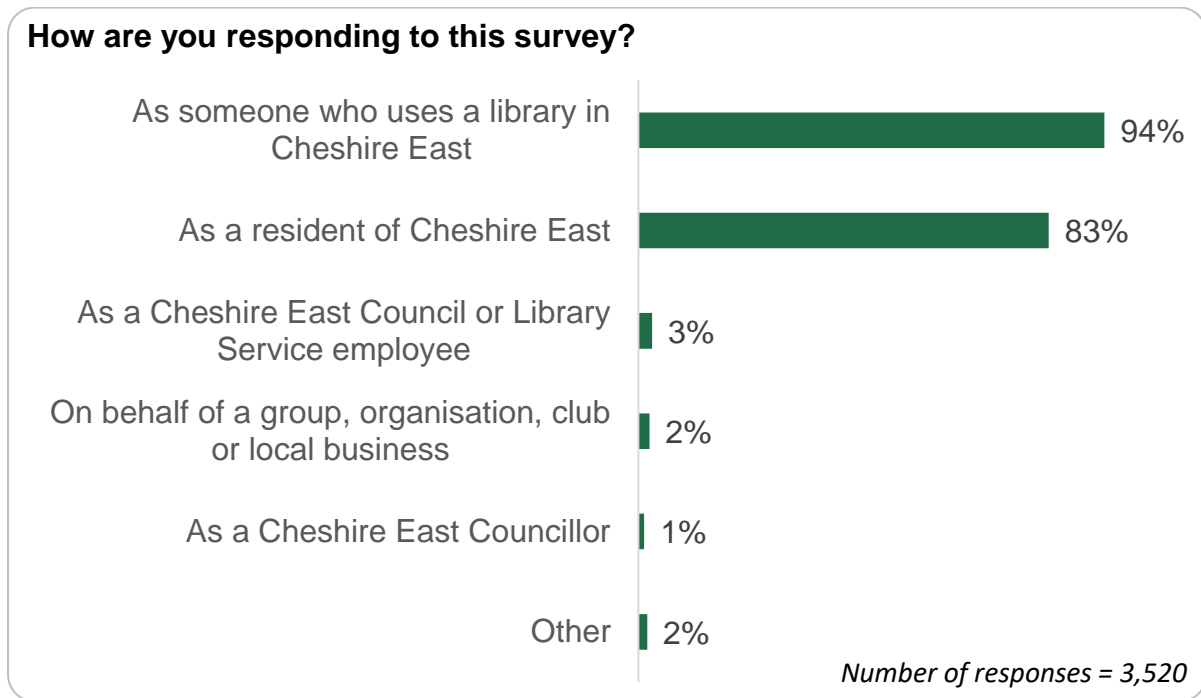
Respondent over / under representation

60% of those completing the survey provided a postcode which matched an address inside Cheshire East.

Analysis of this postcode data shows that more responses than expected were received from some places than others, when compared by the total number of households in each area.

The table below includes data for all Cheshire East postal towns which received 20 or more responses. It shows how many responses were received in each of these postal towns, as compared to the number of households in each area.

The postal towns which received more responses than expected when compared to the number of households in each town included:

- Bollington (received 3.7 times more responses than expected)
- Disley (received 3.6 times more responses than expected)
- Handforth (received 3.4 times more responses than expected)

- Holmes Chapel (received 2.4 times more responses than expected)
- Poynton (received 2.0 times more responses than expected)
- Alderley Edge (received 1.8 times more responses than expected)

Post Town	No. CE households	No. survey responses	Survey response over / under representation
Bollington	3,615	151	3.7
Disley	2,280	92	3.6
Handforth	3,486	134	3.4
Holmes Chapel	3,257	87	2.4
Poynton	6,604	149	2.0
Alderley Edge	2,906	57	1.8
Sandbach	12,678	179	1.3
Macclesfield surrounding area	6,720	84	1.1
Alsager	10,596	130	1.1
Wilmslow	12,206	142	1.0
Congleton	16,095	162	0.9
Knutsford	10,348	101	0.9
Macclesfield	25,872	223	0.8
Nantwich	16,032	131	0.7
Middlewich	6,705	52	0.7
Crewe surrounding area	18,041	133	0.7
Crewe	27,001	81	0.3
All other areas	4,806	28	0.5
Valid total	**189,248**	**2,116**	

Library activities

The most popular activities when visiting libraries were:

- Borrowing a book, downloading an e-book, e-audio or e-magazine (90% selected this option)
- Renewing, returning or reserving an item, paying a fine, buying an ex-library book (77% selected this option)
- Seeking help from library staff (49% selected this option)
- Browsed and relaxed (45% selected this option)

For the library you use the most, which of the following activities did you do last time you were there?

| Activity	Percentage
Borrowed a book, downloaded an e-book, e-audio or e-magazine	90%
Renewed, returned or reserved an item, paid a fine, bought an ex-library book	77%
Sought help from library staff	49%
Browsed and relaxed	45%
Found out information	38%
Attended an event or activity	32%
Met people and chatted to them	29%
Used the toilet	27%
Used a computer or the Wi-Fi	18%
Read magazines / periodicals / newspapers	17%
Used the library to work or study	15%
Applied for a Blue badge, rail card, bus pass or made a council payment	10%

Number of responses = 3,295

The strategy objectives

Support for the strategy objectives

Generally speaking, 81% of respondents supported the proposed strategy objectives, with 14% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the strategy objectives varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 86% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 9% were opposed
- 80% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 13% were opposed
- 71% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 23% were opposed

Number of responses in brackets
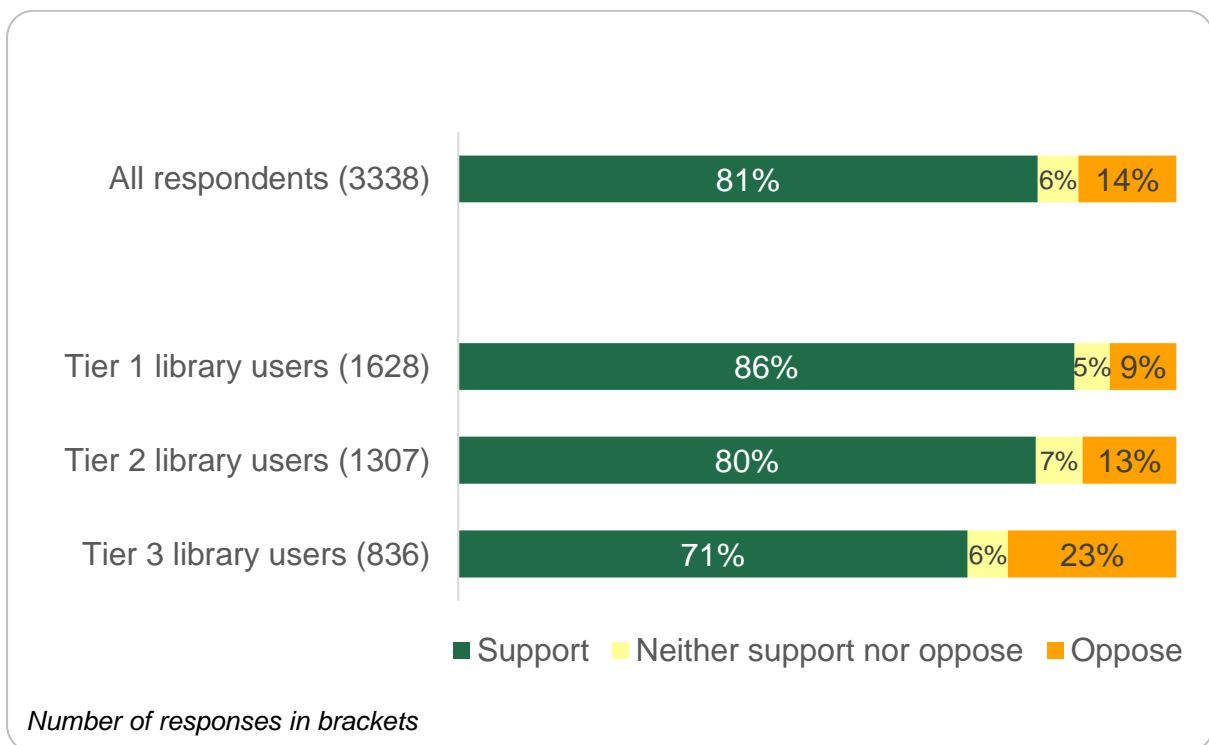
Comments about the strategy objectives

Survey respondents were asked if they "had any comments to make about the proposed strategy objectives".

In total, 2,524 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Comments on the strategy	270
The strategy is ambiguous, vague, unclear	77
There is a lack of information and detail - what technology, which hours?	69

Suspicious of some of the wording used in the strategy. Suspicious of the word "affordable" ("Ensure that the service continues to be affordable for the residents of Cheshire East") - what does that mean, eventual closure?	53
Support for the strategy, it makes sense, agree with objectives	33
Support the objectives but have concerns particularly with the execution and implementation of it	24
Answering the survey doesn't mean agreeing	6
The strategy is conflicting - services for all yet reduce operating hours / days	5
The tiers are the wrong way round, Tier 1 areas already have services and infrastructure, it's the smaller towns that need these services	3

The strategy misses the overall importance of libraries	781
Libraries are vital, the hub and heart of communities	295
Libraries including the physical space must be kept open, do not close libraries	126
Libraries provide education, learning, power, heritage, wealth	89
Libraries are a safe, warm, reliable space	88
This strategy misses the point of what libraries are all about	66
Libraries offer free resource, for those unable to afford books, and lower incomes	47
Libraries are useful to those without access to computer, printers or Wi-Fi, these should be provided	39
Libraries are important for good mental health	31

The strategy misses the value of libraries for specific user groups	458
Children and young people use the libraries, this should be encouraged and promoted	114
There are lots of clubs, groups, and activities at libraries. We should not lose these and more should be encouraged	101
Libraries are well used and enjoyed by parents / grandparents with children and babies, they are a lifeline, promote this more	77
Libraries are important and well-used by the elderly, we must not take them away from the elderly	58
Libraries are important for the future of children and young people - essential they read and learn, for future generations	54
Libraries are important and well-used by the vulnerable, we must not take them away from the vulnerable	38
Libraries must remain accessible for the disabled	16

The strategy misses the importance of library staff and services	254
The staff are part of the library, they are helpful, friendly, welcoming	75
(Some) libraries include essential services e.g. blue badge which we should not lose, indeed more should be included e.g. CAB, banks, tourist info etc	61

Do not replace staff with volunteers or technology, their knowledge cannot be replaced	55
Core library services and activities must not be diluted (esp. if additional services included)	53
Technology is difficult to use for some	10

Opposed to further cuts in library opening hours	**236**
Do not cut opening hours further, they need to be open more not cut	127
Libraries need to be open evenings, weekends and after school, not just in the day times	60
Cutting hours / services will eventually lead to closure	27
1.5 days funding for Tier 3 libraries is not enough	22

Suggestions	**99**
This proposal is shortsighted and needs more thought. Be innovative, think outside the box	43
Libraries need more promotion, linking in with groups, stronger partnerships, businesses, raise awareness and usage	42
Agree with volunteering, how can others get involved, volunteer, partner?	14

Locality related comments	**320**
Promote equality for all areas and access for all. The council should not be favouring one area over another, wealthier or larger areas	78
It would not be possible to travel to another library if ours was closed as there is poor or no public transport and we do not drive / cannot afford to drive	61
Do not close or impact Handforth, well used, deprived area, needed, ever growing	38
Do not close or impact Bollington, well used	29
Do not close or impact Disley, there is no easy way to another library	28
Do not close or impact Poynton, well used	15
Do not close or impact Holmes Chapel, well used	13
Do not close or impact Alsager, well used	13
Do not close or impact Knutsford, well used	10
Do not close or impact Alderley Edge, well used	8
Do not close or impact Sandbach, well used	7
Do not close or impact Macclesfield	7
Do not close or impact Nantwich, well used	6
Do not close or impact Congleton, well used	6
Do not close or impact Middlewich, well used	1

Finance comments	**76**
Spend budgets more wisely, save money elsewhere, stop wasting money	43

We pay for this, we pay Council Tax	26
CEC should fund libraries	7

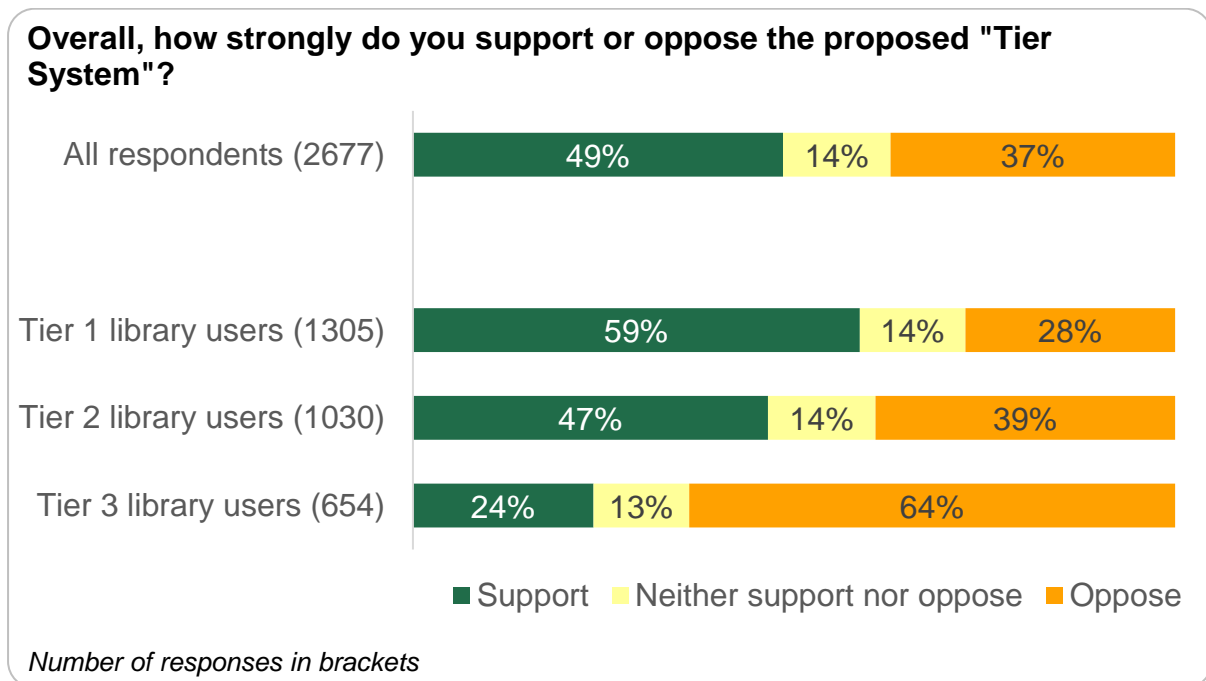| **Other comments**	**30**
Only recently became aware of the consultation	8
Close libraries, most read online now, money is better spent elsewhere	8
Have more mobile library use	7
Criticism of the consultation, survey or questions	7

Overall views on the Tier System

Support for the Tier System

Overall, 49% of respondents supported the proposed Tier System, while 37% opposed it.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier System varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 59% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 28% were opposed
- 47% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 39% were opposed
- 24% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 64% were opposed

Overall, how strongly do you support or oppose the proposed "Tier System"?

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose
All respondents (2677)	49%	14%	37%
Tier 1 library users (1305)	59%	14%	28%
Tier 2 library users (1030)	47%	14%	39%
Tier 3 library users (654)	24%	13%	64%

Number of responses in brackets

Comments about the proposed Tier System

Survey respondents were asked if they "have any final comments to make about the proposed "Tier System".

In total, 1,187 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Opposition to service reductions and the Tier System	519
Libraries are vital to the community, they should not be closed	115
Do not cut hours, hours have already been cut, library hours need to be extended. Cuts will diminish services, leading to less footfall and eventually	98

closure. So many cuts to services, always cuts, there'll be no services left if we carry on.	
General opposition to the Tier System	60
Transport and accessibility to other towns needs to be considered if there are reductions in services, is there any available? Some are unable to travel to another library. Forcing people to travel also causes more traffic and pollution.	50
Cuts to services could isolate people, including the most vulnerable. Cuts to services would impact those on low incomes, those unable to buy books. Lots of groups could miss out if services are cut.	41
Libraries are important for children and young people, for their education, and should be encouraged to read	31
Libraries are places for learning, they enrich knowledge, and help educate	31
The elderly rely on the libraries, they would be impacted if services cut	19
Libraries provide a safe and warm place	16
Lots of parents with babies and children use and rely on the library, they would be impacted if services and groups cut	15
Focus on core library service, not ancillary services	12
This is about cuts and saving money	12
Libraries are important for mental health and well-being	11
Disappointed and sad it has come to this	8

Town-specific comments	**206**
There should be equal library provision across all towns, regardless	130
Tier 3 libraries will have inadequate hours, insufficient	27
Handforth: vital, relied upon, is expanding, services a wide demographic	16
Bollington: very popular, community hub, largest proportion of users	13
Disley: not supported enough, too many service cuts for Disley	5
Alsager: busy, should be a Tier 1 library	4
Knutsford: should be a Tier 1 library	4
Macclesfield: what are the plans?	2
Poynton: overlooked	2
Holmes Chapel: there should be no further cuts	2
Sandbach: an important resource for the community	1

Suggestions for keeping libraries open	**117**
Utilise space more, collaborate, rent out, increase income, more groups	38
See which benefit the communities most, where the most need is	34
Should promote more use: collaboration, revenue generation, more groups, clubs	21
Should be open an evening, weekends, to all working people and school children to visit	16
Tier 1 and Tier 2 libraries could adjust hours and lend staff to help out Tier 3 libraries (in order to keep them open more)	5
Self-service works well elsewhere e.g. Manchester	3

Support for the Tier System	111
Supportive if this Tier System keeps libraries open, if it is a last resort, if this is the only way	75
Seems sensible, in agreement	26
Supportive as long as the tiers are regularly reviewed, that they are meeting needs, and libraries can be moved according to needs and finances	10

Comments on the use of volunteers and library staff	82
Libraries need qualified, experience, paid library staff	35
Opposed to the use of volunteers - they are inexperienced, unqualified, unreliable and can lead to data protection and safeguarding issues	21
Seems like too much pressure and reliance on volunteers and parish councils	8
Staff are helpful, they make the library	7
Have paid staff supported by volunteers	4
Use volunteers for all tiers	4
Some areas may not have volunteers available, depending on the area	3

Budgets, council tax comments	79
Save money elsewhere, stop wasting money on salaries, vanity projects	45
We all pay council tax, you have a statutory obligation to provide a library service	31
Would rather libraries didn't move to Parish Councils; wouldn't want to pay an extra precept	3

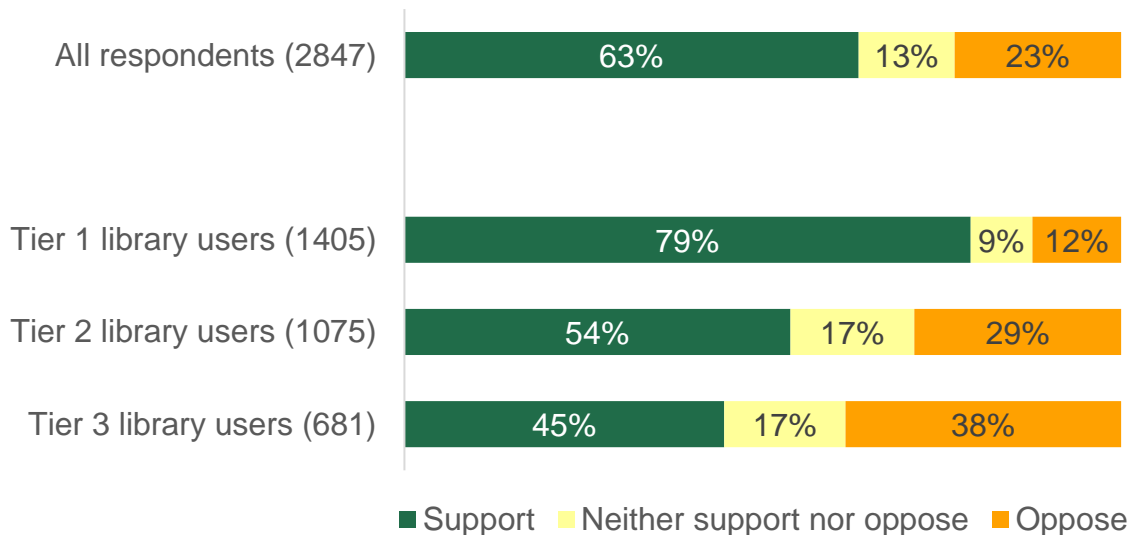| Comments on the consultation and proposals	73
This proposal needs more thought	21
How did you come to this decision, based on what? Where is the evidence to back it up?	19
The proposal needs more information e.g. proposed opening hours	15
Listen, don't just run box ticking exercises. A decision has probably already been made	13
The questionnaire is lengthy and off-putting	5

Tier 1 "Library Hubs" feedback

Overall support for Tier 1 "Library Hubs"

Generally speaking, 63% of respondents supported the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs", with 23% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier 1 "Library Hubs" varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 79% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 12% were opposed
- 54% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 29% were opposed
- 45% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 38% were opposed

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs"?

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose
All respondents (2847)	63%	13%	23%
Tier 1 library users (1405)	79%	9%	12%
Tier 2 library users (1075)	54%	17%	29%
Tier 3 library users (681)	45%	17%	38%

Number of responses in brackets

Comments about Tier 1 "Library Hubs"

Survey respondents were asked if they "have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs"".

In total, 907 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

General Tier 1 comments	160
The Tier System could result in closure of the lower tier libraries in time; supportive as long as this is not to the detriment of the smaller libraries	63

All libraries should be Tier 1	48
Disagree, dislike the Tier System, it is flawed and needs revision	36
Increasing population will mean more demand, Tier 2 will soon need to be Tier 1	8
Disagree with Wilmslow in Tier 1	3
Some libraries might be too small to house all of these services	2

Equality is needed across all towns	**105**
Should be equal provision across all towns: this is unfair, it deprives, isolates, and marginalises the smaller, rural areas	102
The smaller towns are the ones without banks and other amenities - they're the ones that would need them most	3

Libraries that should be in Tier 1, as they are well used and an important part of the community	**59**
Sandbach	16
Handforth	13
Poynton	11
Alsager	8
Knutsford	7
Holmes Chapel	4

Supportive of the Tier 1 proposal	**102**
Good idea, good concept, makes use of the space	59
Good idea in principle, fine if you live there	29
Supportive if this is the only option, if this is what finances dictate	9
Agree with town(s) in T1 category	5

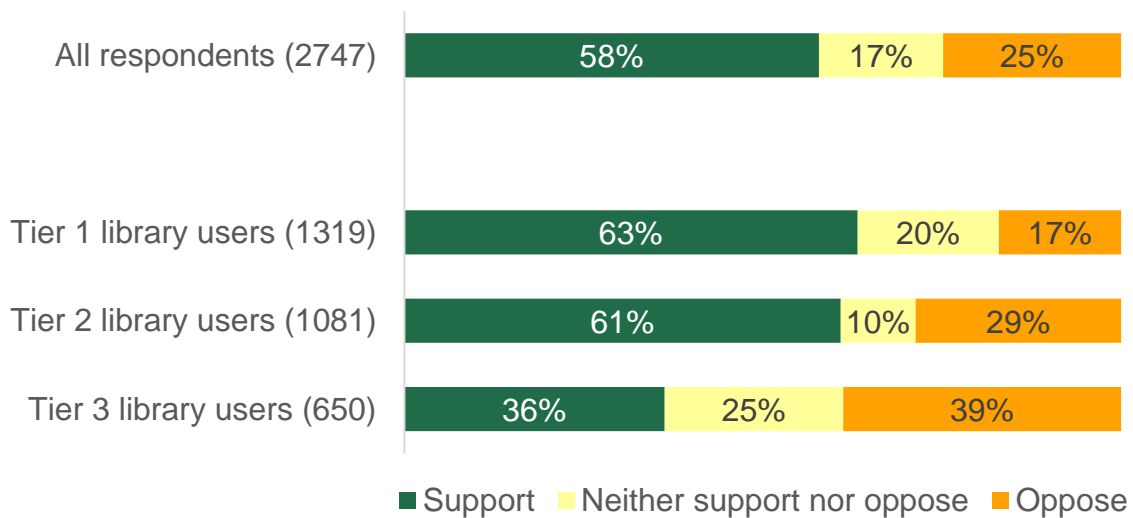| **Other general comments**	**481**
Importance of libraries and librarians	165
Cuts and closures would impact on different users	149
General suggestions	63
Criticisms of the consultation and survey	104

Tier 2 "Local Libraries" feedback

Overall support for Tier 2 "Local Libraries"

Generally speaking, 58% of respondents supported the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries", with 25% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier 2 "Local Libraries" varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 63% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 17% were opposed
- 61% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 29% were opposed
- 36% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 39% were opposed

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries"?

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose
All respondents (2747)	58%	17%	25%
Tier 1 library users (1319)	63%	20%	17%
Tier 2 library users (1081)	61%	10%	29%
Tier 3 library users (650)	36%	25%	39%

Number of responses in brackets

Comments about Tier 2 "Local Libraries"

Survey respondents were asked if they "have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries"".

In total, 1,018 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Comments about opening times	170
Opening times should include evenings, after school, weekends	49
Depends on what the opening times would be	36

Unclear what 'times of highest demand' means, how do you measure this? Current or future demand?	35
Limiting opening is the first step to closure	24
Opening times should be to reflect the needs of the whole community	23
Adjust hours but keep all open, rotate across libraries	3

General Tier 2 comments	**126**
Increasing populations mean more demand, Tier 2 will soon need to be T1	30
The Tier System is flawed, needs revision, some Tier 2 libraries need to be in Tier 1	37
Disagree, dislike the Tier System	25
All libraries should be Tier 1	16
Tier 2 libraries will be second rate libraries	13
Middlewich: excellent library, vital, should be open longer	3
Status would need to be guaranteed for set period, and then reviewed	2

Equality is needed across all towns	**69**
Should be equal across all towns: unfair, deprives, isolates, and marginalises the smaller, rural areas	69

Libraries that should be in Tier 1	**55**
Poynton: should be in Tier 1, it needs a fully functioning library	14
Sandbach: should be in Tier 1	12
Knutsford: should be in Tier 1	11
Alsager: should be in Tier 1, it's busy, growing, and important part of the community	9
Holmes Chapel: is well used and important part of the community	9

Libraries that should be in Tier 2	**57**
Bollington: should be in Tier 2	25
Handforth: should be included, is well used and important part of the community	15
Disley: isolated, no public transport from Disley, library is relied upon	13
Alderley Edge: should be in Tier 2	4

Supportive of the Tier 2 proposal	**18**
Good idea, good concept, makes use of the space	8
Supportive if this is the only option, if this is what finances dictate	6
Good idea in principle, fine if you live there	4

Other general comments	**523**
Importance of libraries and librarians	151
Cuts and closures would impact on different users	115
General suggestions	144
Criticisms of the consultation and survey	113

Tier 2 library opening times

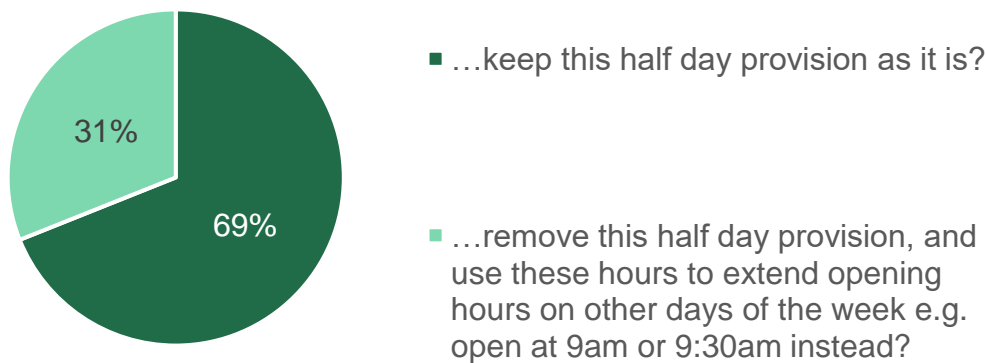## Number of Tier 2 library users

In total, 1,328 survey respondents used one of the Tier 2 libraries most regularly:

- Poynton library (356 survey responses)
- Sandbach library (310 survey responses)
- Holmes Chapel library (212 survey responses)
- Knutsford library (195 survey responses)
- Alsager library (182 survey responses)
- Middlewich library (73 survey responses)

How best to use half day library provision

69% of Tier 2 library users felt that libraries with a half day provision during the week would be better to keep this provision as it is. 31% felt it would be better to remove this provision and use these hours to extend opening hours on other days of the week.

For those Tier 2 libraries that currently have a half day provision during the week (10am to 1pm), do you think it would be better to…

- …keep this half day provision as it is?
- …remove this half day provision, and use these hours to extend opening hours on other days of the week e.g. open at 9am or 9:30am instead?

Number of responses = 1,182

The most popular half day slots to maintain

The most popular half day slots that users of Tier 2 libraries felt were most important to maintain were:

- Saturday morning (66% of Tier 2 respondents selected this time slot)
- Tuesday afternoon/evening (41%)
- Thursday afternoon/evening (40%)

The least popular half day slots that users of Tier 2 libraries felt were most important to maintain were:

- Monday afternoon (28% of Tier 2 respondents selected this time slot)
- Wednesday afternoon/evening (30%)
- Wednesday morning (30%)

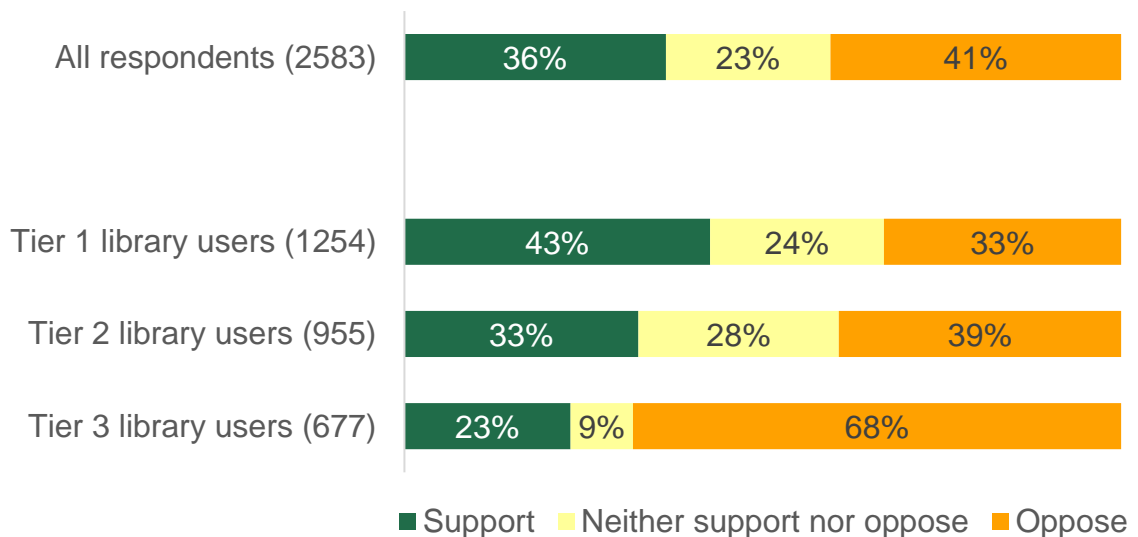| Thinking about the Tier 2 library you use most frequently and its respective opening hours, which 6 of the following half day slots are most important for you to maintain?	Count	Percent of valid responses	Rank
Monday morning	432	33%	5
Monday afternoon	369	28%	11
Tuesday morning	403	30%	8
Tuesday afternoon/evening	542	41%	2
Wednesday morning	394	30%	9
Wednesday afternoon/evening	393	30%	10
Thursday morning	417	31%	6
Thursday afternoon/evening	526	40%	3
Friday morning	496	37%	4
Friday afternoon	408	31%	7
Saturday morning	878	66%	1
Total valid responses	**1,328**		

Tier 3 "Community Libraries" feedback

Overall support for Tier 3 "Community Libraries"

Generally speaking, 36% of respondents supported the proposed Tier 3 "Community Libraries", with 41% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier 3 "Community Libraries" varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 43% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 33% were opposed
- 33% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 39% were opposed
- 23% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 68% were opposed

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the proposed Tier 3 "Community Managed Libraries"?

	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose
All respondents (2583)	36%	23%	41%
Tier 1 library users (1254)	43%	24%	33%
Tier 2 library users (955)	33%	28%	39%
Tier 3 library users (677)	23%	9%	68%

Number of responses in brackets

Comments about Tier 3 "Community Libraries"

Survey respondents were asked if they "have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 3 "Community Libraries"".

In total, 1,451 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Opposition to a reduction in Tier 3 opening hours and service reductions	319
1.5 days CEC funding for Tier 3 libraries is not enough	109

It's a slippery slope to more cuts then closure	79
Opening hours must be regular, and longer	75
Libraries should be open evenings and weekends for those who work and for children	45
Self-service should only be used if the technology is operational, and people know how to use it	11

The importance of professional library staff, and opposition to the use of volunteers	**299**
Libraries need paid professional staff that are experienced	112
Volunteers would not be able to answer queries, they lack of knowledge and this would lead to data protection issues	69
Volunteers are unreliable	47
There aren't many / enough volunteers available to make this viable	40
The staff are great, friendly, welcoming, helpful	18
Volunteers would not work - There would be clashes with regular library staff, they are different people	10
Larger towns have more potential volunteers, so use that approach there and give smaller towns paid for staff	3

Libraries that should not be Tier 3	**134**
Handforth: is in a deprived area, it serves a more dependent population	54
Bollington: serves a wide area proportionally, it is well used	39
Disley: should not be in Tier 3, it's remote, it is very much relied upon by the residents	28
Alderley Edge: is a vital community asset, should not be Tier 3	4
Every library should be at least a Tier 2 library	5
Tier 3 libraries don't work from experience, they are pointless	4

Finance and budget comments	**107**
We pay for this through Council Tax, we shouldn't be relying on volunteers for something we pay for	39
CEC should be funding this	26
Disagree with Parish Councils funding libraries, residents would be paying twice (double taxation)	22
Stop wasting money	11
This will cost more in the long run	7
This is about saving money	2

Equality is needed across all towns	**80**
Equal library access and provision is needed for all towns, why should smaller, rural towns be deprived	80

General opposition to the Tier 3 proposal	**146**
Disagree with this proposal, it is unfair	68
How would this work?	55

This doesn't affect me, but it is a shame for those it does impact	16
How have you come to this decision?	7

Supportive of the Tier 3 proposal	**67**
Supportive, if it means they're not closed	48
Agree, proposal sounds sensible	14
Expand the services offered, more of a community centre	3
Happy to volunteer	2

Other general comments	**299**
Importance of libraries and librarians	185
Cuts and closures would impact on different users	76
General suggestions	38

Support for specific library proposals

Within the consultation material proposals for each of the Tier 3 libraries, including proposed opening hours, were provided (PDF, 189KB).

Levels of support and opposition for the Tier 3 library proposals by users of these libraries varied:

- 40% of Bollington Library users supported proposals, 55% opposed them
- 32% of Alderley Edge Library users supported proposals, 62% opposed them
- 30% of Disley Library users supported proposals, 64% opposed them
- 13% of Handforth Library users supported proposals, 84% opposed them

**Generally speaking, how strongly do you support or oppose the specific proposals for…**
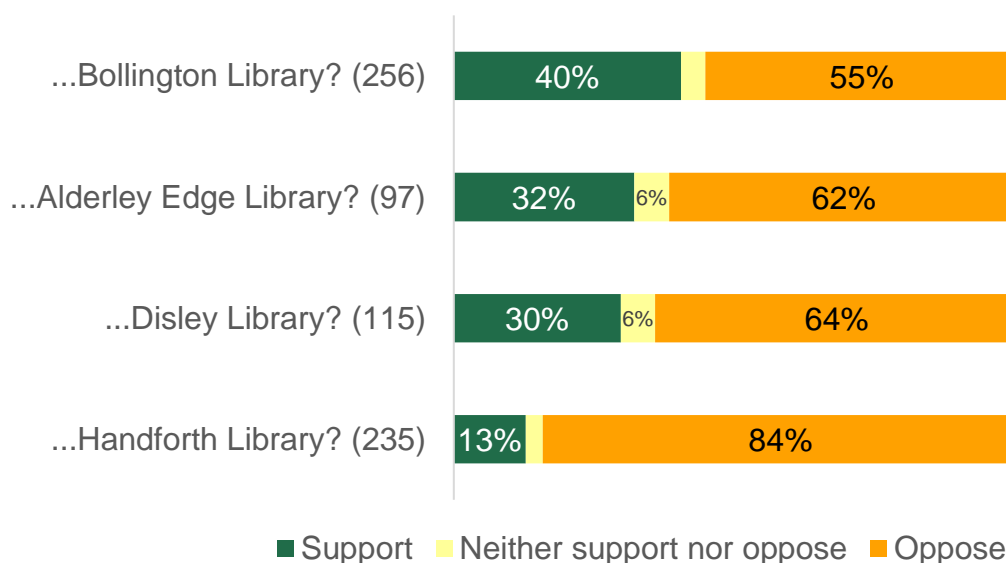
...Bollington Library? (256)   40%   55%

...Alderley Edge Library? (97)   32%   6%   62%

...Disley Library? (115)   30%   6%   64%

...Handforth Library? (235)   13%   84%

■ Support   ■ Neither support nor oppose   ■ Oppose

Number of responses in brackets

31

The site assessment matrix

Libraries have been assigned to Tiers 1 to 3 through the use of a site assessment matrix. Views on the assessment matrix were fairly split:

- 51% agreed the correct metrics have been used in the assessment matrix, 26% disagreed
- 45% agreed libraries have been assigned to the correct tiers, 33% disagreed
- 41% agreed the assessment matrix assess libraries fairly, 29% disagreed
- 39% agreed the weightings used in the assessment matrix are appropriate, 34% disagreed

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree that…

Question	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
...the correct metrics have been used in the assessment matrix?	51%	23%	26%
...libraries have been assigned to the correct tiers?	45%	22%	33%
...the weightings used in the assessment matrix are appropriate?	41%	29%	29%
...the assessment matrix assesses libraries fairly?	39%	27%	34%

■ Agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree   ■ Disagree
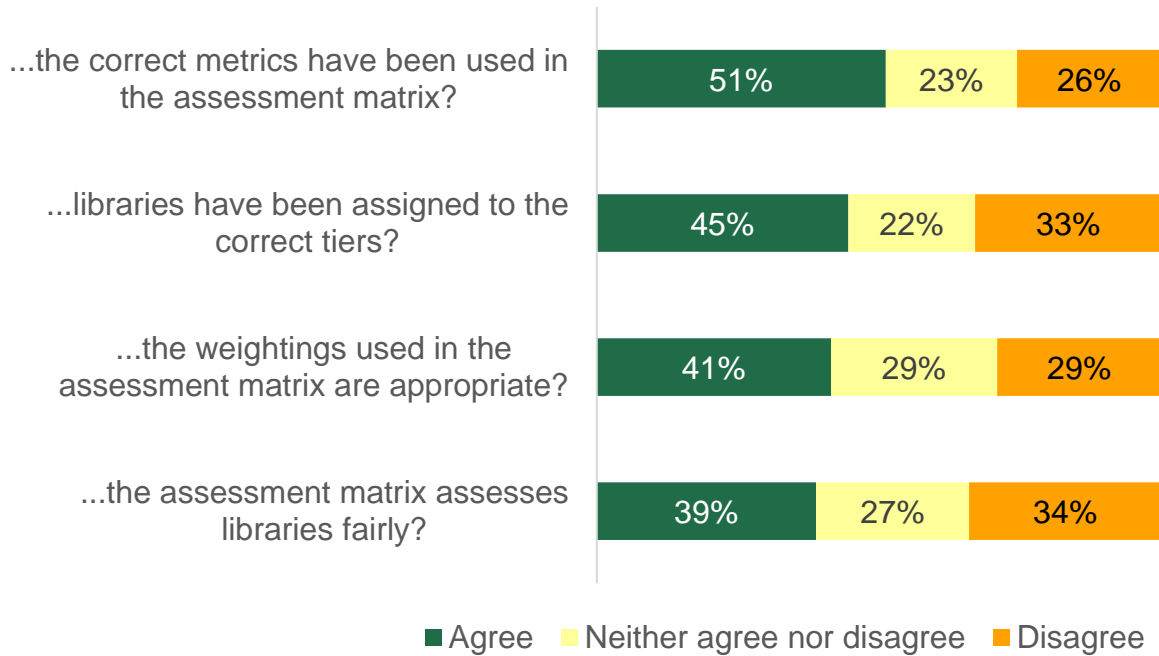
Number of responses between 2,527 and 2,672

Comments on the assessment matrix

Survey respondents were asked if they "had any comments to make about the site assessment matrix".

In total, 1,390 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Metrics missing from the Site Assessment Matrix	380
Library provision should be available in all towns, all locations are equally important to those that use them, smaller towns are suffering	110

Has accessibility to other libraries been accounted for? What about public transport provision to and from each library? Many people will be unable to travel elsewhere. Parking is expensive or difficult, if forced to drive elsewhere	106
It should be the proportion of the population in a town using the library, not the total number per town using a library. Total number favours the larger towns, whereas demand may be greater per capita in smaller towns.	78
What about the impact of it not being there, what it takes away e.g. on children being able to access books and read?	30
Has future demand been taken into account? Projected demand? Does this link to the Local Plan projections?	25
Have all demographics been accounted for when measuring library usage?	17
What about counting casual users, groups, and those attending activities, not just loaning a book?	14

Criticisms of the data used in the Site Assessment Matrix	**134**
Need evidence as to how these numbers have been calculated, the matrix lacks information and detail	68
The numbers are flawed, incorrect, the tiers are not correct	30
Libraries shouldn't be being assessed when services have already been reduced, this is a biased assessment	22
Tartan Rug - This is out of date, difficult to understand, and shouldn't be used	9
The user numbers aren't a true reflection of use, they don't account for several family members using the same card for example	5

Town specific comments	**247**
Bollington: should be Tier 2. Serves wide community, thriving usage, strong social hub, for children, considerable sized town, plays an important role	57
Handforth: crucial, busy, easier to get to, lots of vulnerable, deprived people, on the cusp, growing population	54
Tier 2 towns do not have places to go to for support, they need those services included, not forced out of town	29
Disley: no public transport to elsewhere, important and well used, hub of the community	23
Sandbach: should be Tier 1, it's always busy, growing town, new builds	20
Knutsford: should be Tier 1. Always busy, lots of events, well used	12
Holmes Chapel: is an important and well used library	10
Alsager: should be Tier 1, it's a well used community hub	10
Wilmslow: has higher priority than it should, has plenty of funding already	10
Poynton: should be a hub, vital and well used community asset	7
Alderley Edge: should be in Tier 2, needs longer hours	6
Middlewich: is well-attended, but needs more resources, will be deprived of services	4
Prestbury not mentioned	3
Tier 3 resource allocations are insufficient	2

Support for the Site Assessment Matrix	45
Ok for me, wouldn't want to be in a lower tier	23
If that's how it has to be, seems sensible	19
Needs monitoring and reviewing to ensure meeting needs	3

Comments on the importance of libraries	274
It's not just about numbers: the contribution and value of the library to the community is more important	182
Libraries are warm, safe places, impacts the vulnerable	50
Elderly rely on their local libraries, impacts them if removed, may not be able to travel elsewhere	19
Children and young people, and school use should be considered, important they have access	15
Focus should be on library services, not additional non core services	8

| Make savings elsewhere	189
Volunteers are not qualified, not experienced, not reliable. Libraries need qualified paid staff	49
Save money elsewhere, what exactly do our taxes pay for?	42
Promote the service more, rather than reduce it. Advertise, collaborate, encourage more use	34
No more cuts to hours, current hours are insufficient and need increasing, they are already restrictive	30
Cuts to services, days and hours will eventually lead to closure	28
Proposals are shortsighted	6

Criticisms of the consultation and survey	121
Don't understand the Site Assessment Matrix - matrix, metrics, tiers, this is jargon. Ask a simple question, do we want to keep our libraries?	105
Public opinion won't matter, this has already been decided, this survey is designed to make it look like residents agree	16

Delivering library services differently

Should councils deliver libraries in different ways

49% of survey respondents agreed it is appropriate that Local Authorities look for alternative ways of operating libraries, 35% disagreed.

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree it is appropriate that Local Authorities look for alternative ways of operating libraries to help maintain the service?
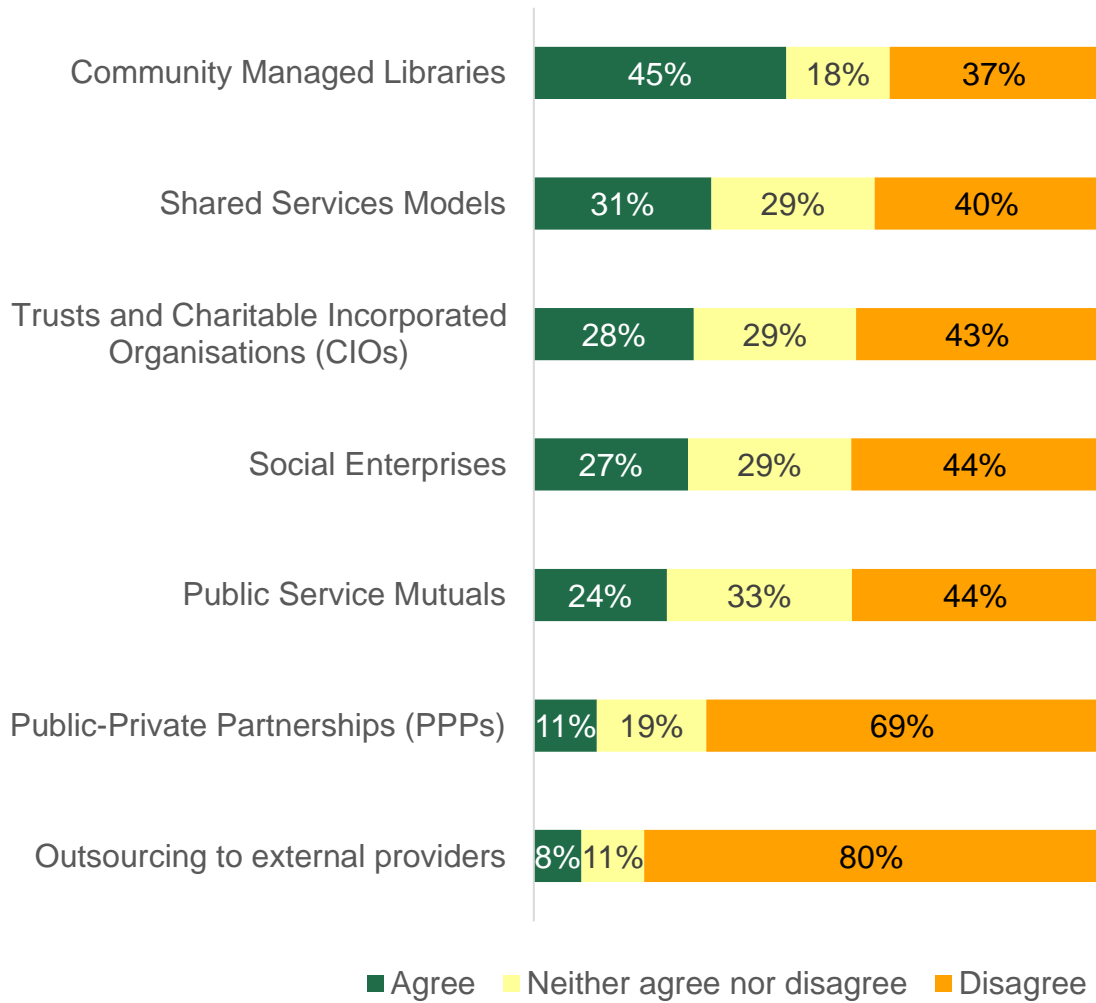
49%	16%	35%

■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree
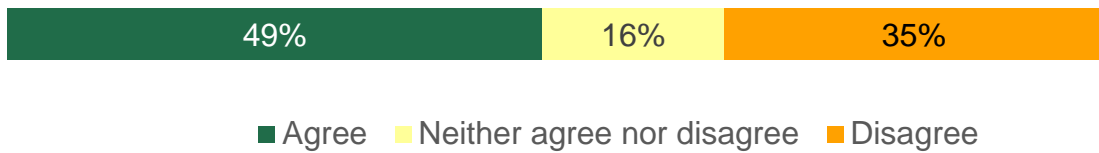
Number of responses = 3,202

Alternative Delivery Models to consider

Within the consultation, 7 Alternative Service Delivery Models which the council could potentially consider using to deliver its libraries were briefly set out (PDF, 179KB) – see the original consultation material here (PDF,179KB).

Agreement on whether the council should explore using different alternative service delivery models to deliver libraries varied significantly:

- Community Managed Libraries (8% net agreement)
- Shared Services Models (-8% net disagreement)
- Trusts and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (-15% net disagreement)
- Social Enterprises (-17% net disagreement)
- Public Service Mutuals (-20% net disagreement)
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) (-58% net disagreement)
- Outsourcing to external providers (-72% net disagreement)

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Cheshire East Council should explore using the following Alternative Service Delivery Models to deliver Cheshire East libraries?

Model	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Community Managed Libraries	45%	18%	37%
Shared Services Models	31%	29%	40%
Trusts and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)	28%	29%	43%
Social Enterprises	27%	29%	44%
Public Service Mutuals	24%	33%	44%
Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)	11%	19%	69%
Outsourcing to external providers	8%	11%	80%

■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree

Number of responses between 1,954 and 2,351

Unstaffed libraries

Split opinion on unstaffed libraries

38% of survey respondents agreed the council should explore extending opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology, while 48% disagreed – This gave net disagreement of -10%.

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Cheshire East Council should explore extending library opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology?

38%	13%	48%

■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree
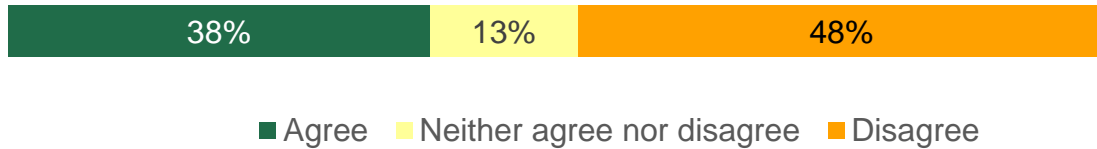
Number of responses = 2,523

Comments about unstaffed libraries

Survey respondents were asked if they "had any comments to make about extending library opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology".

In total, 1,126 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Concerns around safety and security	408
Safety concerns - Would be worried about safety, being in an unmanned building (84% of respondents with this concern were female)	196
Anti-Social Behaviour concerns - This could attract antisocial behaviour, vandalism, gangs, drunks, homeless	124
Book thefts - People could take advantage and steal books	48
Libraries would need security (guards) in place	40

Concerns around the importance of librarians and human contact	300
The staff are an asset, they are irreplaceable and are what make a library. Opposed to this if it means losing the staff	125
It's about community - Visiting the library is a lifeline for some, and the only time they see people	78
Face to face service would still be needed - Access to staff / expertise is essential, and would still be needed	74
This would make libraries meaningless and remove the point of them	23

Concerns unstaffed libraries would not be inclusive	114
What about those who struggle with technology, including the elderly?	107
Children would lose out - They wouldn't be able to visit, or join their clubs	7

Other concerns	151
Concerns about a reliance on technology - What if the technology fails?	48

Concerns that the costs to administer the unstaffed system would outweigh the benefits/savings, including costs such as technology investment, maintenance, insurance, surveillance	42
This has not been thought out, ridiculous, keep the libraries open, this is the thin end of the wedge	61

Support for the proposal	**153**
This could be useful to enable people to pick up and drop off items outside of opening hours. In support if it keeps the library open. This works in Stockport.	82
This would be ok as an additional service, ok for days when the library is not open, and would need to be open outside of core manned hours	62
Use volunteers to keep libraries open	9

Final comments on the strategy

Survey respondents were asked if they "had any final comments to make about the draft Library Strategy for 2024 to 2028".

In total, 723 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Importance of libraries and librarians	204
Libraries are the heart of communities: they are vital, a lifeline, for everyone, all ages, genders, including the vulnerable, those on low incomes	102
Libraries are essential for education, knowledge, and learning, they are treasured wealth, and for our future generations	42
Do not get rid of the librarians, they are essential, helpful, friendly, knowledgeable. Consider the librarians and their livelihoods	19
Libraries are important for children; a safe place, a quiet place away from home, a place to study, for those whose families cannot afford books	15
There are many groups that meet up and use the library space e.g. dementia groups. Rhyme time, reading groups, support groups, activity	14
Libraries are important for good mental health	12

Strategy specific comments	192
Disagree with the strategy: do not close any libraries	82
There is a lack of evidence, information, and detail in the proposal, what are the proposed hours?	34
The strategy is confusing, complicated, do not fully understand what is being proposed	31
The strategy has missed the point of the libraries, the Tier System is based on numbers and not what libraries are all about	21
This is too short term and should be looking more long term	14
The strategy is not about efficiency it's about cost cutting	10

Cuts and finance comments	118
Stop wasting money - make cuts elsewhere, reduce management salaries, stop spending money on non-core services e.g. festivals	53
Yet more services being cut, there'll be none left, once they're gone they're gone	46
Comments about central government funding cuts, lobbying for more funding, awaiting the new government	11
The Tier System could end up costing more than the proposed savings	8

Locality comments	72

There should be equal provision for all and all towns, everyone pays Council Tax	35
Smaller communities get the raw deal, these proposals are unfair on smaller communities	12
Disagree with the Handforth proposal	7
Disagree with the Bollington proposal	7
Disagree with the Sandbach proposal	6
Disagree with the Alderley Edge proposal	2
Where is Prestbury in the proposals?	2
Disagree with the Disley proposal	1

Suggestions	**56**
Raise awareness and usage of libraries, have more marketing, linking in with schools, groups	23
Look at ways to generate revenue: charge nominal fees for activities, look at sponsorship, charge non library services to rent the space	21
Use volunteers to keep libraries open, I would be interested in volunteering	6
Get rid of the mobile libraries	3
Have more satellite libraries	2
Do not reduce the hours even more, do not close on Saturdays, ensure hours suit those who work, after school, revert to the opening hours before they were cut	1

Agreement with proposals	**50**
Appreciate you trying to save our libraries, whatever we can do to save the libraries	28
Agree with a more modern approach e.g. self service, lockers, shared space	14
Support a mobile service	8

Comments on the consultation and survey	**31**
This consultation is a waste of time, the council has already made a decision, this is just a tick box exercise, we do not trust CEC, you do not listen (for example the car parking charges introduced)	18
There is a lack of proper consultation: visit the libraries, speak to the users, the librarians, conduct more of a qualitative consultation	11
Comments on survey design and errors in survey	2

Conclusions

Transformation of Library Services

It is important to note the amount of effort that has gone into conducting this consultation. Any transformation of how library services are delivered is always going to be a complex and controversial process, given how important libraries are to local communities.

That the council has been able to put forward co-designed proposals in partnership with Town and Parish Councils is testament to the hard work of the Library Services management team, and to the willingness of Town and Parish Council colleagues to engage. Hopefully as a result of these efforts the amount of service disruption felt by library users is minimised as far as possible, while the service continues to move towards being financially sustainable.

It is also positive to note such a large response to the consultation, despite the consultation survey being extremely lengthy and complex – people remain passionate about libraries.

Overall support for the strategy

On the whole, large proportions of survey respondents and Town and Parish Councils were supportive of the overall strategy. We saw strong support for the strategy objectives, overall support for the proposed Tier System, and overall support for many aspects of the assessment matrix.

This is most likely because the large and medium sized libraries are not negatively impacted by the proposals, and so most are pleased to keep service provision as is.

Opposition to proposals for Tier 3 libraries

However, it is noted that proposals for the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly opposed. There is concern that Tier 3 libraries may become neglected and slip toward eventual closure as a result of the Tier System; Cheshire East Council and local communities must work hard to ensure this does not happen.

It is interesting to note that proposals for some of the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly supported than others. For example, Bollington Library users were more like to support proposals for their library, and this is likely as a result of the Town Council stepping in to provide top-up funding, to ensure the library hours are maintained. Handforth library users were least likely to support the proposals, and this library is seeing the biggest potential loss in opening hours of all the Tier 3 libraires.

The strategy favours larger towns unfairly

There are concerns that the strategy and assessment matrix favour the largest towns too heavily, and that this is unfair on the residents in the smaller towns who pay the same amount of Council Tax as everyone else.

Respondents point out that the assessment matrix does not measure the proportion of a town's population that uses a library, and therefore the importance of the library for those towns. Furthermore, these are towns that have fewer services than larger towns as it is, and poorer public transport networks, and so reducing the library provision in these areas may have a larger overall impact on those residents.

How the council might manage local services in future

Concerns have been raised that having different management approaches and different levels of service provision at different libraries will lead to a "postcode lottery" for library service provision – the council will need to manage this carefully to ensure library service provision does not become disparate and confusing across the borough.

Concern was also raised as to how library services would be delivered in harmony with other council services, such as Family Hubs, Leisure Services, and car parking, to ensure services that compliment each other at a local level. Again, this will need careful management by the council, especially if each town is going to have its own unique service delivery model for all these services.

Alternative service delivery models to be considered

It is noted that the only alternative service delivery model which received net overall support by respondents was "Community Managed Libraries", and it may be that this becomes the preferred service delivery model in future. Respondents do seem open to the council exploring different ways of delivering libraries.

Unstaffed libraries are marginally disliked, though some Town and Parish Councils were keen to trial the use of such a system, as long as it was not at the expense of staffed library hours, and only used to extend opening hours. There were many concerns around safety and anti-social behaviour of using such a system, particularly from female respondents, and these concerns would need allaying through trials before being widely adopted.

Some Town and Parish Councils were enthusiastic about embracing different ways of delivering the service, with several already embracing top-up funding, and others open to exploring the use of volunteers in libraries, though again this would need trialling before being rolled out widely. Others were open to exploring other ways of managing the library too, including hiring our floors, and even possibly taking over the running of individual libraries entirely.

Further engagement

Although much progress has been made, the transformation of libraries services is not wholly complete at this point. Continued engagement will be required with local communities and Town and Parish Councils to complete this process.

Appendix 1 – Meeting summaries

Introduction

During the formal consultation, officers from Cheshire East Council met with 5 Town and Parish Councils via Microsoft Teams meetings.

These meetings consisted of officers from Cheshire East Council running through a short presentation at the start of the meeting, before opening the floor up for discussion.

In total there were 23 attendees across the 4 meetings that took place. Details of the 5 meetings are provided in the following table.

Town or Parish Council	Date	Number of Town or Parish Council attendees
Holmes Chapel Parish Council	02/09/2024	5
Alsager Town Council	05/06/2024	4
Poynton Town Council	09/09/2024	6
Knutsford Town Council	10/09/2024	7
Sandbach Town Council	23/09/2024	1

Summary of the meetings

The following section includes a brief summary of the feedback received during the 4 meetings.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

- Enquired whether the Parish Council could ask surrounding local councils to contribute to funding via their precepts, given their residents also use their library
- Enquired whether their library hours were going to be reduced, and when that information would become available

Alsager Town Council

- Keen to understand what is being asked of Alsager Town Council in terms of top-up funding
- Town Council interested in having use of the upstairs of the library
- Keen to understand Cheshire East Council long term policies on library services, leisure services, and car parking as a whole
- Enquired about the possibility of the Town Council taking over the library completely

Poynton Town Council

- Library opening hours need to be dovetailed with Family Hub opening hours
- Expressed interest in the new clinician's room being built at Poynton Library
- Need to see more definite detail before being able to comment
- Keen to understand what is being asked of Poynton Town Council in terms of top-up funding

Knutsford Town Council

- Felt Tier 1 libraries should not be located close together e.g. Crewe and Nantwich
- All the various services need to be connected together
- Curious as to how the Family Hub would work
- Keen to understand how the opening hours review would occur, and what that potentially meant for Knutsford Library
- Curious about how unstaffed library technology would work
- Curious about the booking system for customer services
- Felt that the Tiers should be reviewed regularly
- Keen to understand what is being asked of Poynton Town Council in terms of top-up funding

Sandbach Town Council

- The appointments system for Customer Services will apply to all libraries
- The review of opening hours for all Tier 2 libraries will take place this Autumn
- The Family Hub model makes sense and sounds quite positive, if libraries are used to deliver more core services it helps keep them relevant
- It may be possible for Tier 2 Town and Parish Councils to top-up library hours

Full meeting notes

The following section includes full notes taken from the 4 meetings.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

Date/time: 02/09/2024 13:30.

Number of attendees: 8, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

A few comments:

- We've got a very good public room for meetings in the library, which I think is reasonably well used. I don't know what the figures are, but I like to think that whatever changes are made, it's not going to reduce the use of that room.
- The local history group of the U3A were recently in discussions with Cheshire East Council. We think this is very important for Holmes Chapel and we hope that whatever changes that impact that service will improve the service.
- Re. costings for an additional half day – for a librarian and two assistants for half a day. Whether we take that up or not will be subject to some discussion this week, and might depend on whether there were significant changes to the current hours.
- Also, we're a band B meeting room, which is a £20 an hour cost and it is well used, partly by Barclays Bank. It is a good facility, our library for toddler groups, for reading groups.

Comment 1 – Response

Thanks for those comments – noted.

Comment 2

If there is a request to for us to increase funding or to provide funding for the library hours, are there any opportunities for us to have the surrounding councils contribute towards that? We have a reasonable level of precept, but we don't have a huge precept. So is it possible to seek support from surrounding councils as well?

Comment 2 – Response

Yes. We have had this raised by a number of Town Councils in relation to neighbouring parishes, because for the library service, which is obviously a free service, people may come to use it from outside of your parish boundary.

What we have said is simply on the basis that we don't have the capacity or resource to engage in those types of discussions, that that is very much over to the individual Town or Parish Council to lead on and go out and have those conversations with their neighbours to ask if they would be willing to contribute. With hundreds of different local councils Cheshire East Council simply doesn't have the capacity to conduct those conversations. Plus, you'll probably have better overall relations with those neighbouring organisations than Cheshire East Council which doesn't have a direct link with them.

Comment 3

Are our library hours going to be reduced? That information is not in the consultation and when are we likely to know whether the hours will be reduced and what by?

Comment 3 – Response

Yes that's an ongoing process.

In terms of the customer service offering, moving to an appointments based system would allow allows us to free up staff, an appointments system allows us to manage staff time better. But in terms of the opening hours, we'll be reviewing those over the next few weeks and then presenting something back to committee in November for a final decision.

Comment 4

Just to follow on from that – for example, if in that report that you present committee we notice that you're reducing the hours by quite a lot, would you be wanting an answer from the Parish Council before January if they were minded to kind of try and keep hours at the current level? Because at the moment we don't know how much you'll reduce hours by.

Comment 4 – Response

Yes we will be looking to give you a bit of a heads up around what that would look like, and then we would be looking to get a response from local councils as to whether they have an interest in maintaining more hours as we've done with the Tier 3 sites, exactly the same process.

Alsager Town Council

Date/time: 05/09/2024 13:30.

Number of attendees: 7, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

The average contribution so far is £20k from the four Tier 3 sites. What is the ask of Alsager Town Council? Give us a number.

Comment 1 – Response

We have provided this number back in June and can provide it again. We reduced hours last December, we put forward a proposal for you to maintain hours, which you didn't take up. We have a similar offer to put forward now.

£21,973 is the number to maintain current staffing levels. Topping up guards against any future changes to opening hours, through legally binding funding agreements. Same for the Tier 1 and Tier 3 sites that are topping up funding.

Comment 2

If we say no to topping up hours, what is the impact on the library going to be?

You also mentioned a lot of other things in the presentation, around appointments, periods of highest demand open, staff free libraries etc. If we pay the top up for hours, will those things take place anyway?

Comment 2 – response

We haven't done the full assessment yet in terms of what it would mean, that's a process that's ongoing and it's the question there would be, would it close or would it be open with through the use of technology for example. That's a question in the consultation.

Comment 2

This is unprofessional, you should have the information available for us today so we can make decisions. How can we make decisions without the facts and figures?

Comment 2 – Response

We can provide all the information you need, the purpose of this conversation is not a one off conversation, it's to understand the Town Council's appetite for further dialogue. We don't need final decisions today.

Different Town Councils approach this differently, some proactively engage, some don't want to engage at all. This is simply an open discussion.

Comment 3

We've got a number of high level options that we want to discuss. Obviously we have to have an eye on what the precept will be in Alsager in future.

If we were to consider the top up funding that you're asking for, we would like a quid pro quo please. And that quid pro quo would be that we would like free use of the upstairs of the library, because we have a plan for it. So if we topped up the library funding, we would like free use of the top floor of the library given to Alsager Town Council annually free of charge.

Comment 3 – Response

We can consider that. We would need to take a steer from our Estates colleagues.

It is possible there is something we can do here. There are some things we'd have to consider because it would impact on the family hub connect offer because they are intending to use some of that space for some of the activities that have been identified.

And as you are aware we host the Dementia Cafe in there on the Friday and there's a few things like that. But you are quite right that there are things I think that jointly we could do together because we struggle with caretaking and the space doesn't get used as much as it could be in an evening. So there are a lot of possibilities.

Comment 4

Another important factor in this is a separate conversation regarding the Leisure Centre contribution. We pay a contribution toward the Leisure Centre for about £25,000, so collectively this would be a contribution of £50,000.

We also want to gauge what the effect is going to be of the car parking charges, and how they will impact on the Civic. The Civic relies heavily on people using the car park.

What we're saying to you is that within all of this, we need to understand the leisure Centre, library and car parking costs collectively, as far as finance is concerned and preparation of budgets is concerned. If we're going to have to make tough decisions we'd like some detailed information so that we can look at and make some decisions. I don't think if I'm honest with you that we could add £50,000 to our precept.

Comment 4 – Response

Yes we appreciate this needs to be a joint conversation with you as a Town Council on both these services. We will provide the information that we can do to support these discussions.

Comment 5

There was one other idea – What would you pay us if we took over the library completely? We're not strangers to this idea given we have taken over the running of the Civic, which has a similar annual budget. It might be for example that you keep the asset and you outsource the operation.

Comment 5 – Response

We can provide you some overarching figures as to what it costs to run the library. If we were transferring services there would be implications for staff. If the Town Council were to operate the library you would have to take on managing and paying the staff.

This is something that is being considered within the scope of this consultation, in the consultation we have a section that relates to alternative service delivery models, so that is something that Cheshire East Council is already actively exploring. I expect it won't be a one-size-fits-all approach too.

But that's a conversation we're happy to have.

Poynton Town Council

Date/time: 09/09/2024 11:00.

Number of attendees: 9, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

With the proposal to open Family Hub services at 09:30 in the morning, will the library opening times dovetail with those?

If the library does not open at the same time as the Family Hub we will get complaints that they don't open at the same time, and that people are waiting outside the library for half an hour with their toddlers etc.

Comment 1 – Response

This is something we will have to look at, there are several options on the table, including opening libraries through the use of technology.

Comment 2

It seems surprising the council is planning on building and extra counselling room in the library. What is it you're anticipating for Poynton library?

Comment 2 – Response

Sorry no that should have been clinician's room, not an extra counselling room. We're looking at how different sites can be used to "sweat the assets" on a site-by-site basis, at the moment we're not able to say exactly what is being proposed. We're trying to run as many services as we can from single sites, to make services as accessible to residents as possible.

Comment 3

What sort of percentage of the current library area will this clinician's room take up?

Comment 3 – Response

It will measure 9 foot by 10 foot. The bookshelves will go round the external walls. The shelving will run from where it is to the local studies PC area. We're keeping that as a separate entity. But the shelving will fit around the walls that they're building, so we won't actually lose any bookshelf space. We are in effect partitioning a new room off in the existing building.

Moving forward, we're going to send you emails next week in relation to what things might look like for the Tier 2 sites moving forward. That might include changes to how we approach customer services, the review of opening hours, and the potential use of technology. If you feel that a follow-on meeting would be a benefit after that please do get in touch.

Comment 4

We just want more detail as to how the library is going to be used. The library space just is not big enough, so I would be more reassured knowing that there was not going to be a change.

The devil is in the detail, and we need to see that before being able to comment. It's ok to want to "sweat the asset", but we need to be sure that that asset is suitable to be sweated.

Comment 4 – Response

Understood. We are working alongside colleague in Children's Services, as they are the provider for these services. This is a conversation Cheshire East Council needs to have internally.

Our understanding its that people will need to have appointments for Family Hub services. They are also looking at a free phone service which available during all of our opening hours to go directly through to a family worker.

In the library there is the option to switch on self-serve machines so that people can issue and return stock and use the Children's library, and that's why in addition to the clinician they are looking to have a family worker in the library from 9:30. Unless we were to open our amend our opening hours we wouldn't have somebody there doing the customer service appointments, doing the other sort of extended library service offer, it would just be a basic issue and return and choosing books unless we changed our offer or opening times.

Comment 5

So the e-mail that's coming to us next week, we have a Town Council meeting on the 23rd (September), and so if there is going to be a financial ask, then we could do to

have that next week. As well as understanding what it will cost financially, we will need to know what we'll get in return too.

Comment 5 – Response

Yes once these current conversations have finished we will provide detail on what is being proposed which you can feed into your own decision making processes.

There are two elements to that conversation – there's the customer services part, and then the opening times element as well. Using technology is something that we're working through and that may also be part of that consideration. So where we don't have necessarily staffed time, we might be able to used enhanced technology to maintain provision. We will be in contact soon.

Knutsford Town Council

Date/time: 10/09/2024 11:00.

Number of attendees: 10, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

Just a query about the wisdom of having two Tier 1 libraries close together geographically, such as Crewe and Nantwich, would it not be better if one was a Tier 2 library instead?

Comment 1 – Response

The site assessment process has been a consistent approach taken towards assessing libraries, that rates each library based on a variety of metrics such as usage, digital inclusion and public health factors etc. It isn't necessarily about the geographical location, it's about the amount of demand and need in that particular area.

We're not disenfranchising anyone on the basis that they're too close to their nearest neighbour. We've looked at the demand and needs so that it is a fair and equitable process.

Comment 2

One thing that struck me was about value for money and not having a duplication of services. In Knutsford we have a service provided by Citizens Advice and also the DWP which does a session a week at the Welcome Community Cafe on Longridge, which is also a Cheshire hub, so maybe something to bear in mind.

Comment 2 – Response

Discussions are ongoing around that, and again that's done in a targeted needs basis. So it's not necessarily that all libraries will provide all services, it will be a case of if there is a need in a certain area that's not currently being serviced, and if the library is an appropriate location for residents to easily access those services.

Comment 3

As long as the local communities are consulted about proposals.

Comment 3 – Response

Yes the council does consult on proposals, but if it's an external agency like DWP, that would be over to them to consult with communities.

Comment 4

What I was thinking about is connected up thinking and connected up working which is effective and value for money.

Comment 4 – Response

Yes we are looking at bringing more services into a smaller number of locations as appropriate. We're trying to "sweat the assets" rather than having multiple locations in the same close proximity. Joining those things up wherever possible makes sense from that service synergy perspective.

Comment 5

In your meeting on 21st June, you said that the family hub in the library would work with the Children's Centre on Manor Park, but this morning did I understand correctly that you said the library wouldn't have children's services?

Comment 5 – Response

We are looking at some aspects of the family Hub Connect offer at Knutsford Library and a couple of those things are some pop up sessions, such as toilet training, because we still get significant numbers of parents and carers with young children attending our pre-school events in libraries and they tell us that would be handy to have some advice where they're already coming regularly to meet.

So we are looking at having an offer and we're also looking at having a free phone telephone service, so somebody who is coming into the library can access a family support worker at any time that the library is open via the telephone link as well. So some pop up sessions and a telephone link but not the full blown family hub connect offer.

Comment 6

Re. reviewing the opening hours – Have you looked specifically at what changes you're initially thinking of for Knutsford Library? Do you have an idea of how many hours we might lose like half a day, a full day, etc?

Comment 6 – Response

We're in the process of doing that across the Tier 2 sites and the intention is that we will communicate that following this round of conversations.

But we're probably looking at half a day. That's the general sort of approach as it as it currently stands. We will look at where we've made changes last year and understanding the effectiveness of those changes to those opening hours and whether we've seen a shift in demand to different days of the week, different times of the day. That's something that the Library Service is currently working through and we will provide that information for you soon.

Comment 7

How would the unstaffed technology thing work? What technological investment is required to make it work, and how has it worked in other areas? The main concern around that is the risk to the library and its assets of vandalism and social behaviour.

Comment 7 – Response

Similar systems are used in Stockport.

The way it works is that when people join the library they are issued with library cards which can be used to access the buildings. People have to be 18 plus to get this access. You can swipe the door, you can come in, and you can use the self-service kiosk to issue and return books, you can use the public Wi-Fi and you can use the public access PCs. Toilets will not be open and obviously there are no staff, and no activities.

The technology comes with a CCTV internally to the building, but there is some monitoring required of the external CCTV.

Comment 8

Re. looking at additional services, are those things you're looking at specifically for Knutsford or are they just general across the different tiers?

Comment 8 – Response

Some of those are more general conversations, the need will be defined by the end provider. That's not for us to define where those services will be provided.

So let's say DWP comes on board as an example, if DWP already have a presence in Knutsford in a particular location and that works for them, then clearly they're probably going to say we don't need another presence in the library. But they may want more greater presence in other libraries because they don't currently have a geographical base in that area.

There are no specifics yet for Knutsford beyond what we've just suggested around the family hub provisions. But we are working through some of those details. This will be an evolution. There will be an evolving process over the course of the lifetime of strategy to try and derive some of those other things out.

But it will be done on a needs basis and demand basis rather than a blanket approach for all sites.

Comment 9

When you mention about customer services requiring appointments, what sort of things would be covered by that? Have you measured the impact of added inconvenience of booking? A lot of the people that use those services are generally older people that perhaps have a greater proclivity to just dropping in and doing things.

Comment 9 – Response

It will be for things like Blue badges, concessionary travel e.g. elderly persons bus passes, DBS checks, licencing, that type of thing.

It's just about managing our time really and being able to utilise the staffing more effectively. There would need to be a lot of comms around it to try and mitigate the impact of the changes.

Comment 10

So you'd be able to reduce the staffing hours because you can plan when and where they are going to be, so you can keep the library open but reduce staffing costs effectively? And if people call in and they haven't got an appointment, but you can service them at that time, would you be able to see if someone calls in and there is the person there and it's quiet?

Comment 10 – Response

Yes. We're not going be precious about this if we've got the staff who aren't busy at that time that would be fine. But it would enable us by managing this to stretch the staffing over those hours.

Comment 11

In terms of the general strategy, is there something built in there of reviewing the tiers periodically so that if in five years time the metrics behind it have changed, perhaps Knutsford's got more visitors than other libraries, then would the tiers change?

Comment 11 – Response

The intention is things would be as we've done with other services such as green spaces maintenance. There will be a review process set out in the strategy. There will be a continual review process but obviously the strategy itself is time bound.

Comment 12

In the consultation it talks around exploring alternate alternative delivery models. What work has been done on that and is there any emerging thinking on options that are likely to be favoured or explored further?

Comment 12 – Response

There's no definitive answer to that at this point. The most supported approach at the moment seems to be a similar approach to what we've adopted with the Tier 3 libraries – the community managed approach.

Comment 13

Re. the registrar service – currently people have to go to Macclesfield to access any kind of registrar service. So could that be looked at perhaps?

Comment 13 – Response

That's something we can explore, it's not something that we'd previously considered. That's something we can ask the question of, but it's not within our power to be able to answer yes or no at this point.

Comment 14

If you were going to close the library for another half day and we came back and said the community and town councillors were prepared to cover library services, how would that work?

Comment 14 – Response

So there are different ways of looking at this, and this probably forms part of the follow up dialogue. We have a current staffing commitment at Knutsford, and I think I sent some half day costs to you back in June. Different approaches are being taken

in different libraries, for example Bollington and Alderley Edge are using slightly different models. So it's just picking out some of the different things that are already happening and seeing how they might be applicable to Knutsford. But that's subject to more follow-on dialogue if that's how the town council wants to move forward.

Sandbach Town Council

Comment 1

Note our formal consultation response has been submitted.

Comment 2

The following points were summarised:

- The appointments system for Customer Services will apply to all libraries
- The review of opening hours for all Tier 2 libraries will take place this Autumn
- The Family Hub model makes sense and sounds quite positive, if libraries are used to deliver more core services it helps keep them relevant
- The timescale for this is that we'll get an email detailing specifics in the next week or so
- It may be possible for Tier 2 Town and Parish Councils to top-up library hours

Appendix 2 – Emails, letters and other responses

In total 39 emails, letters, complaints and feedback via Customer Services were received in response to the consultation, with all comments made in this feedback summarised in the table below.

Formal and detailed responses from Town or Parish Councils, Councillors and members of the public have been published verbatim further below.

Opposition to library closures or reductions in hours	24
Opposed to any general reduction of the Library Service.	5
Alsager Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	2
Disley Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours. Public transport from Disley to other libraries in Cheshire East is not practical as a suitable alternative. There is no direct public transport route to Poynton, Wilmslow or Macclesfield. All journeys to these areas would require at least 2 or 3 changes on trains or buses. Opposed to the closure of Disley Library on Saturdays. The council has failed to take into account the unique characteristics of Disley within its proposals.	4
Handforth Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	4
Holmes Chapel Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours. Provides the only public toilets in the village.	2
Knutsford Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	2
Poynton Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	2
Poynton Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	1
Sandbach Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours. Opposed to it becoming a "Tier 2" Library.	2
Formal responses from Town and Parish Councils, Councillors and organisations (see full responses published further below)	**11**
Congleton Town Council - Formal response. Welcomes the CEC evaluation of library services, and CEC's commitment to providing library services across the borough. Supports Congleton being a tier 1 library and approves the core principles for tier-one libraries. Interested in renting the ground floor of the library from CEC, to make better use of the public toilets. Opposed to volunteers being used in place of professional librarians. Believes the assessment matrix is fair, but felt library accessibility (in terms of transport) should also be included in it.	1
Cranage Parish Council formal response: RESOLVED to respond that the parish council would like the Barclays banking service, which operates for 3 days in the Holmes Chapel library, to be retained as this is an essential service for our residents.	1
Crewe Town Council - Formal response. Supportive of proposals for Crewe Library. Opposed to any reduction in service at Crewe Library. Crewe Library severs a large area, and one which is significantly deprived, hence requires a full library service.	1

Knutsford Town Council - Formal response. Supportive of strategy objectives. Supportive of the concept of community managed libraries. Supportive of the site assessment matrix, and the vision for Tier 2 libraries. Opposed to further reductions in opening hours. Opposed to "outsourcing to external providers" and "public-private partnerships" alternative delivery models. Suggests a charity could be part of a community managed library delivery model. Supports the exploration of unstaffed extensions to library hours through the use of technology, but not at a reduction in current staffed hours. Open to exploring the use of volunteers to maintain library opening hours.	1
Macclesfield Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	1
Moston Parish Council - Formal response. Opposed to a reduction in library services particularly at Sandbach and Middlewich. Libraries are vital for providing internet access, warm places and social areas.	1
Nether Alderley Parish Council - Formal response. Opposed to the closure of Alderley Edge Library.	1
Poynton Town Council - Formal response. Supportive of strategy objectives. Surprised CEC is adding a room in the library for a clinicians space, when there are rooms in the Civic Hall which could be used instead. Concerned about the site assessment matrix, and that it favours large sites, the assessment matrix needs weighting more appropriately. Unclear how some scores in the matrix have been arrived at, and it lacks source detail. Requests clarification on some scores. Suggests that through collaboration with the Civic Hall, and through the delivery of services between the library and Civic Hall, that Poynton could become a Tier 1 Library. Opposed to any further reduction in opening hours. Wants clarity on what the Town Council is being asked to contribute.	1
Sandbach Town Council - Formal response. Opposed to any further reduction of service and feel that volunteers should not form part of any revised model on the grounds this may diminish the quality / professional quality of the service.	1
Detailed response from Councillor Braithwaite. Suggests the Tier System is pre-determined, as not other options presented. Feels the Tier System should be revisited. Consideration to be given to what "value for money" constitutes. Weightings used require a better explanation. The draft strategy includes reference to Key Performance Indicators but no detail of what they are. This does not meet the Gunning principle of providing sufficient information. Library usage by postcode also needs assessment to clarify the areas that libraries actually serve. There does not appear to be a plan for engaging with those who do not currently use Library Services - as a council we must make the effort to ensure that no one is left behind. Asking Town Councils that comprise of some of the most deprived wards in the Borough to provide 'top-up' funding via their precept means that the least well-off would be subsidising surrounding affluent areas, which is not promoting equality.	1
Detailed response from the Communities Department, Cheshire West and Chester Council. It would be helpful to understand approach to the consistency of services - Risk that different levels of service across the authority result in a 'postcode lottery' effect. Also need to consider data access risks as CWC library customers are included on same systems. Some clarity on language may be helpful - Community implies not delivered by the Council, Hub is a very generic word. Also interesting to see the use of the	1

word "community" in relation to the largest sites and to these, some clarity of the concept may be helpful. The word "Tier" could intimate higher and lower offers and levels of service. It's not fully clear how the £615k savings are being made, all from reduced staffing, rates reductions or other?	
Other responses	**20**
Criticism of the survey - The survey is too long and confusing and makes no sense.	5
Income generation ideas: Sell sponsorship to businesses, charge to borrow books, rent space to organisations such as the post office, banks etc, sell tea and coffee,	4
Opposed to libraries opening without staff, as they are the core of what libraries are. Unstaffed libraries would present a security and vandalism risk.	2
Detailed response suggesting a review of the management structure, a review of the pay scale of CEC library management and a reduction in management hours of the CEC Library Service.	1
Complaint about council financial mis-management.	1
Criticism of the consultation - The council does what it wants anyway for example green bin collection and closure of Bollington HWRC.	1
Cuts in hours lead to reductions in footfall, which is measured in the assessment matrix.	1
Detailed response requesting further information about the consultation proposals.	1
The draft Library Strategy does not align with the council's Local Plan. The Local Plan Strategy defines three types of urban areas as follows: Principal Towns - Crewe and Macclesfield; Key Service Centres - Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow; Local Service Centres - Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Shavington and Wrenbury. However, the Libraries Strategy defines four tiers of library service. These four tiers are only based on current usage. They do not take onto account future demand from new housing development already committed to in the local plan.	1
The strategy does not take account for where library need is. You cannot emphasise the community value of libraries and potential Hub services and at the same time severely curtail services in the areas where they are most need.	1
There should be more events at libraires, particularly for those aged 20-40 who don't have children.	1
Typo - Compliment/complement is misspelled on pages 5 and 8 of the strategy.	1

Cranage Parish Council – Email response

Cranage Parish Council considered the Library Strategy and RESOLVED (129/24) to make the following comment in response to the consultation:

RESOLVED to respond that the parish council would like the Barclays banking service, which operates for 3 days in the Holmes Chapel library, to be retained as this is an essential service for our residents.

Congleton Town Council – Email response

Comments from Congleton Town Council Community Committee

Congleton Town Council's Community Committee welcomes the work that Cheshire East Library service has carried out in evaluating the services and CEC's commitment to providing library services across the borough. It is regrettable that the Borough Council is in a position where it has to make drastic cuts that will deprive many towns across the borough of essential library services.

The Community Committee approves the core principles for tier-one libraries . That Cheshire East aims to:

- Maintain the service offer for all and enhance it through the introduction of other complimentary council services focussed on enabling customers and public health and well-being - in locations where it is needed the most
- Actively promote the service, increasing visitors and becoming more accessible to residents through the use of new technologies
- Offer a library service delivered in partnership with local councils, communities and organisations with similar aims
- Ensure that the service continues to be affordable for the residents of Cheshire East

Congleton Town Council has made contact with the Head of Service about the potential of CTC renting the ground floor of the library from CEC. This would include the toilet facilities which could, with some modifications, become formal public toilets under the control of the town council. There has been no response to this proposal which would require some feasibility work. The basic principle is that Congleton Town Council would pay rent for the whole of the ground floor, which would be additional income for CEC rather than contributing a sum of money with no additional benefit to the town.

Congleton Town Councillors felt strongly that volunteers should only be used to staff partnership style activities to enhance the library, and that the professional role of a librarian should always be paid.

We thought the assessment scoring matrix seemed a fair way to make a difficult decision, but would have like to have seen the accessibility of the libraries in terms of transport networks, parking and physical accessibility taken into account.

Based on our knowledge of Congleton Library we wholeheartedly agree that Congleton Library should be a tier-one library. We are not aware of how the other libraries are used by their communities so would not want to comment on the suitability of their tier.

Congleton Town Council's Community Committee views Congleton Library and the activities and services provided out of the library as fundamental for the vitality of the town centre. Congleton is a rapidly growing key service centre, with the population in its immediate surrounds set to grow by almost 10,000. It is important to plan for the future and keep services local.

If you require clarification about any of the issued raised in this response, please do not hesitate to contact [redacted].

Crewe Town Council – Email response

On behalf of Crewe Town Council and in direct relation to services in Crewe

The strategy identifies Crewe library as Tier 1, as such to be the first priority for investment, which is supported. Additionally, the strategy identifies that the library services in Crewe are under no threat of reduction in terms of service scope or access, which is supported.

Crewe remains the most deprived town in Cheshire East with all 6 wards represented in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England. On that basis, the need to retain and enhance services in Crewe supports the communities with the greatest need, providing multiple opportunities for engagement and interventions that may work to address health and social inequalities, reflected in the Cheshire East Corporate Strategy. The need to support communities with the greatest need must remain a corporate priority for Cheshire East Council.

Crewe Library supports a large geographical area and as such should be considered as a strategic central site for library services as well as opportunities for complimentary augmented services.

Crewe Town Council supports the prioritisation of Crewe Library as a Tier 1 library site and is strongly opposed to any potential reduction in its operation capacity or breadth of services.

Knutsford Town Council – Email response

Knutsford Town Council supports the stated strategy objectives of enhancing libraries through the introduction of complimentary services and greater promotion of the service. The Town Council considers it should remain an objective that all

residents of Cheshire East have easy access to a library through comprehensive provision across the borough's towns.

The Town Council does not object to the concept of community managed libraries.

The Town Council does not disagree with the scoring mechanism employed to determine the Tier System and understands why Knutsford is placed in Tier 2. The Town Council supports the concept that Tier 2 libraries deliver core library services alongside a customer service offer.

With specific regard to Knutsford library and potential changes to opening hours, the Town Council considers it preferable to retain the half day provision rather than introduce a day where the library is closed. However, the Town Council does not support further reductions to library opening hours beyond those introduced following the last consultation.

With regard to alternative delivery models, the Town Council would not support outsourcing to external providers nor public-private partnerships which introduces a profit motive into the delivery of core services and reduces local accountability. The Town Council is uncertain how a staff mutual, the establishment of a charity or transferring to a social enterprise would radically deliver the savings the borough council is required to make and, in particular for charities, would increase competition for funding amongst other local charities; however, a charity could be part of delivering a community manged library.

The Town Council supports the exploration of unstaffed extensions to library hours through the use of technology but this should not be used to warrant further reductions in staffed hours. It should instead expand opening hours, particularly at times when users who would not require support would be more likely to visit. It would need to have appropriate safeguarding measures in place to ensure the council's asset was not put at risk (i.e. through vandalism).

The Town Council is not presently minded to fund staffing of the library to prevent reductions in hours. However, it is open to exploring the development of a Town Council led scheme to introduce volunteer led sessions where this can safeguard and expand the service and ensure visitors have the support they need when visiting the library.

Moston Parish Council – Email response

At last night's meeting of Moston Parish Council, Members resolved that the following comments be submitted in relation to the Consultation on Library Services:-

Moston Parish Council opposes the proposed reduction in library services, particularly as it affects the two libraries closest to Moston, namely Sandbach and Middlewich.

Many of the homes in Moston do not have access to high speed broadband, making these local libraries key for reliably accessing online services including those provided by Cheshire East council such as waste management (e.g. subscription to the garden waste collection service).

Furthermore, with the recently announced reduction in winter fuel payments, libraries will become more important in their role as heated indoor public spaces which are free to access. Having to travel long distances to access these warm spaces (particularly if travelling by public transport, which is infrequent and unreliable in Moston) would incur significant time and travel costs, negating the benefits. For residents of rural areas such as Moston, libraries also provide a social space and a feeling of community which is key to combatting loneliness.

I trust these comments will be taken into consideration during your decision making process.

Nether Alderley Parish Council – Email response

Nether Alderley Parish Council is extremely unhappy at the prospect of Alderley Edge and other libraries in Cheshire East being faced with closure.

These establishments particularly in small towns provide a vital service to their communities and the schools within them, and as such are worthy of investing in and preserving. They provide our children with a space and a resource to explore their new world on their own terms, developing and following their own interests as they grow and are helped to grow. School projects, would have been impossible without reference libraries when a lot of us were children and magical avenues of interest would have been closed without free access to books.

Libraries give children a space where they can learn to read for fun – not reading from school lists or making do with what's in the home, but hunting out books, stories, pictures, facts and ideas that feed their own unique imaginations, making their own connections and developing their own interests.

In this internet age, libraries are becoming local hubs for communities. Not just places where books can be borrowed, but safe communal places, where people can gather for community groups, internet access, adult learning. A town without a library is stealing something from its own community.

We fully understand the argument that the internet can provide some of this, but it is a tool not a replacement. The library is a space, designated for learning, where

everyone has access to the same resources. Staff on hand to help and guide and make suggestions. It is not sufficient to claim that the internet can do some of this and that therefore the Council has the right to withdraw funding. Not everyone has access to the internet.

It is extremely sad that libraries are usually seen by local authority finance officers as low hanging fruit which can be removed to help balance the books. There has to be another way for smaller libraries where perhaps Cheshire East could fund the premises and provide administrative services, training and manage and provide the book supply to willing community library volunteers.

We would of course like to keep our librarians at our current libraries because of their knowledge and helpfulness and losing them would be equally sad.

I hope you can find a way to keep Alderley Edge Library open.

Poynton Town Council – Email response

Response to library consultation

Strategy objectives

The Town Council broadly supports the strategic objectives to maintain the service offer for all and working in partnership with local councils. The co-location of the library and Town Council in the Civic Centre offers excellent opportunities to allow the Town Council and library to work together to not only maintain the current service but to provide complimentary services. As a Connected Community, the Civic Hall already offers services focussed on health and wellbeing which the library would not be able to offer because of a lack of space. The Town Council was surprised to learn that CEC are planning to undertake building works to add a new clinician's room to the library when there are potentially rooms available in the Civic Hall and an agreement could have potentially reached to adapt and make use of an available room.

The Town Council has a Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator who has a focus on health and wellbeing. We are also a key stakeholder of Bollington, Disley and Poynton's Care Community so would welcome early discussions on working together with a view to looking at how we can best support local health and wellbeing priorities and offering enhanced services to the community.

The Tier System

The Town Council is extremely concerned as to how the site assessment matrix has been used to score sites, the same flawed methodology was used during the draft proposals for the Leisure Centre and which was criticised by some members of the

Environment and Communities Committee. The site assessment matrix favours large sites. Visitors, issues and active memberships are not weighted based on the size of the community they serve, the sites are merely ranked as to size.

Looking at active numbers based on the 2021 census figures approximately 25% of Poynton residents are active members of the library this compares with 9.3% in Crewe, 15% in Congleton, 14% in Macclesfield, 30% in Nantwich and18% in Wilmslow. Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield and Wilmslow all score a 10 but Poynton despite high usage figures only scores an 8 because the figures are not weighted for large and small populations. We would ask that the site assessment matrix is reviewed and that it is weighted more appropriately.

No information has been provided in relation to source date for digital inclusion or the majority of the health data so the figures set out in the matrix cannot be verified.

In relation to public health factors, no additional information as to how the scores have been calculated or evidence from source material referenced. It is unclear how these figures have been arrived at. Taking Older People as an example, Poynton has been allocated a score of 2, however, we are aware that Poynton has one of the oldest populations in Cheshire East. Looking at the 2021 tartan rug data for age and comparing it to the scores given in the matrix there appears to be significant discrepancies between population age and how sites have been scored. Please provide detailed explanations.

In order of oldest population - Population aged 65 and over (Tartan Rug)

Town	Tartan Rug Score (average for all wards)	Site Assessment Score
Poynton	30.1	2
Knutsford	26.8	2
Congleton	26.5	2
Nantwich	24.7	4
Sandbach	22.3	2
Macclesfield	21.7	3
Wilmslow	21.32	3
Handforth	20	3
Middlewich	19.1	2
Crewe	16.9	3

The Town Council is concerned that the site assessment matrix is flawed as it uses outdated data without reference so cannot be verified. We believe that the site assessment data does not use the correct metrics, that the weightings only favour larger libraries and that it does not assess the libraries fairly.

Assessment of Poynton Library as Tier 2

As a co-located library with the Town Council, in the Civic Hall the individual services in the building already provide additional services and support including CAB, counselling, health and wellbeing sessions, support groups, exercise and special interest classes. The site could with collaboration and joint working become a tier 1 location.

Tier 2 Opening Hours

Poynton library is currently closed on a Wednesday afternoon, from usage figures and anecdotal evidence closure for half day on a Wednesday was preferable to extending hours earlier in the mornings which were traditionally a quieter time. The Town Council would not support any additional reduction in hours. Thursday morning (Rhyme Time) and Saturday mornings and Tuesday evenings which allow working residents to visit the library should be maintained.

Tier 2 – Ask of Town and Parish Council

The Town Council is aware that we are likely to be asked to contribute financially to support the library in the coming year. We are disappointed that despite the current consultation we have not been told what will be the "ask" of the Town Council and what this will support. We have had to respond to the consultation despite this lack of information. The Town Council believes that whist discussions and negotiations should form part of any strategy, it is concerning that the final library strategy will be based on a consultation where much of the information that Towns and Parishes need is not available before the consultation ends meaning that the decision made will not be informed or meaningful.

Towns and parishes will shortly begin budget setting, if financial commitments are required to support libraries it is essential that these are communicated as swiftly as possible so they can be factored into the financial decisions that councils will shortly have to make.

Sandbach Town Council – Email response

Please see below the resolution from Council ref libraries

1.   CEC LIBRARY CONSULTATION RESPONSE (agenda item 10)

Lead: Chair

[Redacted] explained that Sandbach library had been designated as a Tier 2 library and therefore was not considered to be a 'community hub' by CEC. All members who spoke expressed complete opposition to the proposed reduction in opening hours, but differing views existed on whether the consultation response should

express a willingness to explore the role of volunteers at the library. A motion proposed in favour of this consideration being included in the consultation response was defeated with 7 votes in favour and 8 against.

Resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Chief Officer to submit the Council's consultation response on the basis that it should not include an expression of willingness to explore the use of volunteers at Sandbach Library.

The main position was to NOT support any further reduction of service and that volunteers should not form part of any revised model on the grounds this may diminish the quality / professional quality of the service.

Councillor Liz Braithwaite – Email response

The report to the Environment and Communities Committee on 18 July 2024 titled "MTFS EC24-28/73 Libraries Strategy – Initial Proposals Report of: Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director Environment and Neighbourhoods".

Para 63. states that

"If a public consultation exercise is to be commenced, the Council should ensure that it follows the Gunning Principles and to ensure that the following are met;

- The proposals are still at a formative stage and no formal decision has been made or predetermined by the decision makers;
- That sufficient information is provided to the consultees this needs to be available accessible and easily interpretable by the consultees to provide an informed response;
- Sufficient opportunity should be given to consultees to participate in the consultation, the length of time given for the consultee to respond should depend upon the subject and the extent of the impact on the consultation and;
- Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made."

The proposal to introduce a Tier system appears to be predetermined as other detailed options are not presented. I feel that the Tier System is fundamentally and should be revisited. By putting all borough libraries into one of 4 tiers it appears that the commitment to deliver 'value for money' and to 'maintain this valued offer where it is most needed across the borough' is not being met. For example, Alderley Edge Library delivered just over 100 visitors, 1167 book issues and 16 computer visits per month (annual figures provided / 12). The other libraries placed in Tier 3 (Bollington, Disley, Handforth) deliver between 2 and 2.5 times the number of visitors; 1.9 to 4.5 times the number of book issues; and 2.4 to 5 times the number of computer visits.

Consideration should be given on what constitutes 'value for money' in a more focussed way, with cost/benefit analyses including modelling scenarios for each library. The weightings used in the proposal have no explanation that I could see, and are inconsistent – some are '2, 4, 6, 8, 10'; others '1, 2, 3, 4, 5'; '0, 2, 3, 6'; '0, 2, 3, 5'.

The Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 contains includes reference to Key Performance Indicators but no detail of what they are; and to incorporating delivery of the Library Strategy into the annual Neighbourhood Services Plan, which I'm unable to find on the CEC website. This does not meet the Gunning principle of providing sufficient information.

Library usage by postcode also needs assessment to clarify the areas that libraries actually serve e.g. Macclesfield Library has users with postcodes from a much wider area including (but not restricted to) Bollington, Nether Alderley, Alderley Edge, Poynton, Congleton etc. Are these duplicates? Can someone be registered at more than one library?

With regard to connecting communities, improving wellbeing and promoting equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity, there does not appear to be a plan for engaging with those who do not currently use Library Services. As a council we must make the effort to ensure that no one is left behind. It seems that analysis of evidence around local needs does not identify gaps in provision.

Finally, it should be noted that asking Town Councils that comprise of some of the most deprived wards in the Borough to provide 'top-up' funding via their precept means that the least well-off would be subsidising surrounding affluent areas. This is not promoting equality.

Communities Department, Cheshire West and Chester Council – Email response

As key partners please find below a summary of feedback/ reflections from [redacted] in response to the current Library Strategy Consultation 2024, I trust its helpful and as ever happy to discuss if appropriate.

Do you have any comments to make about these proposed strategy objectives?

Would be helpful to understand approach to the consistency and sustainability of services supported by other organisations. Risk that different levels of service across the authority result in a 'postcode lottery' effect. Could services be led by other organisations agendas and therefore impact on other priorities and involvement with Libraries Shared Services and current significant shared stock and system

arrangements. Also need to consider data access risks as CWC library customers are included on same systems.

Do you have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs"?

Some clarity on language may be helpful. Community implies not delivered by the Council, Hub is a very generic word that may benefit from further definition. Might be helpful to explain that these are Council run services, invested in, co-located in modern fit for purpose buildings, to show their value.

Do you have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries"?

Again clarity of language may be helpful, perhaps Neighbourhood libraries?

Do you have any comments to make about proposed Tier 3 "Community Managed Libraries"?

Interesting to use the use the word community in relation to the largest sites and to these. Some clarity of the concept may be helpful. If outlined as staffed by CE staff sometimes but managed by the community should it be managed by CE and some funding is added by the community? Or volunteer time added by the community? Risk of inconsistency and communities where the offer is more needed not having the capacity to support the offer whereas more affluent communities will have the resource to support. Some clarity over decision making and responsibilities may also be helpful.

Do you have any final comments to make about the proposed "Tier System"?

Tier could intimate higher and lower offers and levels of service. Could it reference different and area appropriate levels of service? Concept of community managed could have more clarity. If leads to inconsistency, reduced sustainability and significantly different service levels to customers could feed decline in use.

Do you have any final comments to make about the draft Library Strategy for 2024 to 2028 (PDF, 4.9MB)?

Not fully clear how the 615k saving being made, all from reduced staffing, rates reductions or other?

Do you have any comments to make about extending library opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology?

As with others who have taken this route considerations of; safety of users and resources, no staff support for those who need, access discrimination for young people and vulnerable users.

Queries/concerns

Whether any proposed changed will affect the level of support required from Libraries Shared Services.

The liability for CWC shared book stock if other organisations are managing? staffing? libraries.

The liability of CWC data if other organisations are managing? staffing? libraries.

The impact of savings on the book fund and therefore the shared stock approach across CE and CWC.

Examples are given of authorities who deliver in different ways, it would be helpful to understand what difference this has made to the performance of these authorities or whether these alternative approaches are successful.

Member of the public #1 – Email response

To whom it my concern

I write again in response to your request for comment about Cheshire East Library Service consultation.

You state, Cheshire East Council has been experiencing unprecedented financial pressures and is required to put forward proposals showing how it can balance its budget.

The MTFS for 2024 to 2028 includes the proposal 73: "Libraries Strategy". This proposal set out the intention to develop a Libraries Strategy to consider the medium and long term future of this service. I write in particular about the delivery and operation of library services in Cheshire East.

I think the current proposals are rather limited in scope and ambition.

Cheshire East Council is, as you state, "experiencing unprecedented financial pressures". Sadly, I do not believe the current proposals will deliver the financial savings necessary.

I again write to suggest that Cheshire East Council look closely and in detail, at the ways in which other authorities deliver library services, such as Derbyshire County Council & Staffordshire County Council, when also faced with challenging financial pressures. There are many links on the internet about how innovative and creative thinking has helped both Staffordshire County Council and Derbyshire Country council save money without reducing the quality of service (see links below). Sone links are listed below.

[Community managed libraries - Staffordshire County Council](#)

[Unique community managed libraries partnership to expand :: Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (mpft.nhs.uk)](#)

There is also an online toolkit produced by the U.K. Government to help local authorities such as Cheshire East Council change.

[Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit](#)

I would also strongly encourage Cheshire East Council to give serious consideration to the following:

(1) a significant reduction in 'management hours' of the CEC Library Service

Reduce the work hours attributed to the running and operation of what is, a relatively small library service as has happened in neighbouring councils, such as Cheshire West & Chester.

(2) initiate a review of the pay scale of CEC library management.

Managing a library is not a professional role. I professional role requires a professional qualification essential. At CEC the post of library manager considers a librarian qualification as only desirable.

The salary scale paid to library managers at CEC is scale 9.

This is higher than the pay scale offered by Cheshire East Council to experienced social workers. Experienced social workers st CEC are usually paid at scale 7 or in some cases, with a higher degree of responsibility, scale 8.

A Social Worker is a professional role. To be employed as a social worker requires a professional qualification as essential. There appears to be a disparity in CEC pay scales.

I would also like to add that at Cheshire East Council, library managers are paid more (per hour) than junior doctors, working for the NHS. Considering the amount of responsibility held by a junior doctor, surely this is wrong?

(3) Review Management restructure

[Redacted].

This provides a perfect opportunity to reorganise CEC library management in line with current finances & budgets. [Redacted]. CEC need to do what many, many organisations, both private and public, are required to in times of severe financial pressures, which is innovate. This requires a close look at the existing skills pool, and reorganise and distribute responsibilities accordingly. Not employ more staff.

To summarise my comments, I suggest:

(a) Cheshire East Council give serious thoughts & consideration to the ways in which other local authorities have adapted, changed to work within current budgets & better prepared for the future.

(b) Initiate a review of salaries paid to the management team and the number of hours spent on 'management' by the service as a whole

(c) Review and reduce staff hours within the CEC library management structure

One definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results. The CEC library service desperately needs to change and innovate. A head to toe review of the CEC is long overdue. Employing more managers is not!

As a Sandbach resident & Cheshire East council taxpayer, I would be pleased to receive an acknowledgement of my email.

Appendix 3 – Town and Parish Council surveys

During the consultation, two Town and Parish Councils conducted their own surveys to support the consultation – the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they agreed with a series of statements about their local library or not.

Surveys were distributed by the Town and Parish Councils in paper format, collected and analysed by the Town and Parish Councils, with the final results being passed onto Cheshire East Council for inclusion in this report.

A summary of the results from these surveys is provided below.

Alderley Edge Parish Council

133 respondents in total. Large proportions of respondents:

- Agree with the Parish Council providing top-up funding
- Disagree with the CE proposals to reduce open hours at Alderley Edge library
- Believe the CE proposals must include a commitment to open Alderley Edge library between 10am and 1pm on Saturdays

Survey statement - Tick all that apply:	Count
I agree with the Alderley Edge Parish Council proposal to fund a top-up to the opening hours at Alderley Edge library	131
I disagree with the Alderley Edge Parish Council proposal to fund a top-up to the opening hours at Alderley Edge library	1
I agree with the CE proposals to reduce opening hours at Alderley Edge library	3
I disagree with the CE proposals to reduce open hours at Alderley Edge library	127
I believe the CE proposals must include a commitment to open Alderley Edge library between 10am and 1pm on Saturdays	127
Total responses	**133**

Handforth Town Council

758 respondents in total. Large proportions of respondents:

- Agree with the Town Council providing top-up funding
- Disagree with the CE proposal to reduce opening hours at Handforth Library
- Disagree with the proposed consultation opening hours for Handforth library

Survey statement - Tick all that apply:	Count

I agree with the town council providing top up funding	146
I disagree with the town council providing top up funding	26
I agree with the CE proposal to reduce Handforth library opening hours	4
I am not sure about the CE proposals to reduce Handforth library opening hours	7
I disagree with the CE proposal to reduce Handforth Library opening hours	706
I agree with the proposed opening hours for Handforth library as above	20
I disagree with the proposed opening hours for Handforth library as above	140
Total responses	**758**

Appendix 4 – Newspaper Articles

6 newspaper articles were published throughout the duration of the consultation – these are listed below.

Date	Source	Article link
19/07/2024	Northwich Guardian	Cheshire East to consult on plan which could see library hours slashed
05/08/2024	Cheshire East Council	Consultation launches on Cheshire East's libraries
05/08/2024	Silk 1069	Consultation launches on Cheshire East's libraries
06/08/2024	Wilmslow.co.uk	Have your say on future running of Cheshire East's libraries
06/08/2024	BBC	Cheshire East: Town councils set to top up library opening hours
07/08/2024	BBC	Cheshire East: Ex-deputy leader criticises library cuts plan

Appendix 5 – Respondent demographics

Gender

67% of survey respondents were female, 29% male.

What is your gender identity?	Count	Percent
Female	1,745	67%
Male	760	29%
Prefer not to say	92	4%
Prefer to self-describe	13	0%
Valid responses	**2,610**	**100%**

Those that answered "prefer to self-describe" gave the following answers:

- Bixexual
- Female is my sex, not my gender identity.
- Female sex
- I don't have a 'gender identity'; I have a biological sex
- I don't have a gender identity. I'm an adult human female i.e. a woman.
- I don't have a 'gender identity'. This is an entirely made up concept, I was born female and will die female.
- I'm a woman.
- Library lover.
- Male and female couple!
- My sex is female.
- None of your business
- What has this to do with the survey?

Age group

Survey respondent numbers by age group were as follows:

Age Group	Count	Percent
16-24	14	1%
25-34	127	5%
35-44	332	13%
45-54	326	12%
55-64	510	19%
65-74	680	26%
75-84	447	17%
85 and over	65	2%

Prefer not to say	120	5%
Total valid responses	**2,621**	**100%**

Health or disability status

Survey respondent numbers by health or disability status were as follows:

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This includes problems related to old age.	**Count**	**Percent**
Yes	390	15%
No	2,056	79%
Prefer not to say	159	6%
Total valid responses	**2,605**	**100%**