

OFFICER DECISION RECORD (ODR2)

This form records an officer decision but is not required to be published.

Decision to Implement the Restructure of the Libraries Service with effect from 7th July 2025

Date of Decision	27.06.25
Decision Taker (including Job Title)	Chris Allman – Director of Planning & Environment In consultation with Councillor David Jefferay – Chair of Environment and Communities Committee Councillor Heather Seddon – Vice-Chair of Environment and Communities Committee Councillor Tony Dean – Opposition Spokesperson of Environment and Communities Committee
Specific Delegation	This is an officer decision taken under a delegation by the Environment and Communities Committee who on 27 th November 2024 [link] at minute 7.4 delegated authority to the Interim Director of Planning and Environment, in consultation with the committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson to: a. take all necessary steps to implement the Libraries Strategy, and, to make all consequent changes to service provision including staff restructure and consultations
Brief Description of Decision	To implement the restructure of the libraries service with effect from 7 th July. Following on from a staffing consultation, in support of the delivery of the Cheshire East Libraries Strategy 2024-28 and the funding agreements with individual Town and Parish Councils, this will include the following changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The appointment of 22 individuals to a total of 23 vacant and/or permanent roles;• Agreed changes to contracts of employment including the buyout of hours for 16 people;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed changes to contracts of employment, at the request of individual existing members of staff, for reduced hours without the need for a buyout for 7 people; and, • Agreed changes to contracts of employment, at the request of individual existing members of staff, for increased hours for 10 people.
<p>Reasons for the Decision and alternatives considered</p>	<p>The decision is needed to formally adopt a revised operating model for the Library Service in accordance with the decision of the Environment and Communities Committee on 27th November 2024 [link] at minute 7 that resolved the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the feedback from the recent public consultation exercise 2. Approve the Cheshire East Libraries Strategy 2024-28, as contained at Appendix C 3. Approve the final details of the changes to library opening hours, as included at Appendix E 4. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Planning and Environment, in consultation with the committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) take all necessary steps to implement the Libraries Strategy, and, to make all consequent changes to service provision including staff restructure and consultations b) take all necessary steps to enter into top up funding agreements with Town and Parish Councils <p>The implementation of the Library Strategy 2024-28 is crucial in order to deliver the savings detailed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-28.</p> <p><u>Library Strategy 2024-28</u></p> <p>As part of the implementation of the Cheshire East Libraries Strategy 2024-28, formal consultation was undertaken with 11 local Town and Parish Councils.</p> <p>In addition, public consultation was undertaken on the Library Strategy for six weeks between 5 August and 15 September 2024. It was widely promoted and received a total of 3,596 consultation engagements,</p>

including 3,534 survey responses, 39 lots of written feedback, and 23 event attendees.

Formal consultation followed pre-consultation engagement with 11 local Town and Parish Councils. The formal consultation material was co-designed with these Town and Parish Councils during the pre-consultation engagement.

The Library Strategy 2024-28 arranges the libraries into four distinct tiers:

- Tier 1 – Library Hubs

This group covers the following sites:

- Crewe Library
- Congleton Library
- Macclesfield Library
- Nantwich Library
- Wilmslow Library

- Tier 2 – Local Libraries

This group covers the following sites:

- Alsager Library
- Holmes Chapel Library
- Knutsford Library
- Middlewich Library
- Poynton Library
- Sandbach Library

- Tier 3 – Community Libraries (Community managed libraries)

This group covers the following sites:

- Alderley Edge Library
- Bollington Library
- Disley Library
- Handforth Library
- Prestbury Library

- Tier 4 – Libraries Direct

This group covers the Mobile Library.

Top Up Funding from Town and Parish Councils

During the public consultation proactive engagement has been undertaken with Town and Parish Councils including arranging specific meetings to discuss the proposals and seek opportunities to work together to

ensure continued library service provision for their area.

The ability for Town and Parish Councils to fund 'top up' services is well established with both Crewe and Nantwich Town Councils already having three year funding agreements in place for their respective local sites.

As a result of the entire engagement process Town and Parish Councils, the following additional funding has been agreed – all are subject to the respective formal agreements being finalised:

- Alderley Edge Parish Council – equating to an additional 7.5 hours per week
- Bollington Town Council – equating to an additional 16.5 hours per week
- Disley Parish Council – equating to an additional 3.5 hours per week
- Handforth Town Council – equating to an additional 3.5 hours per week
- Macclesfield Town Council – this grant agreement covers relocation of the Visitor Information Centre facilities from Macclesfield Town Hall to Macclesfield Library from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2028.
- Poynton Town Council – equating to an additional 3 hours per week

In advance of the Commencement Date the Council has maintained these hours at the respective Libraries.

Upon the signing of the respective Grant Agreements, the associated cost will be invoiced to the respective Town or Parish Council.

Changes to Library Opening Hours

The final proposal is based on the alteration to the opening times as follows:

- Alderley Edge Library – Reduction of 5.5 hours per week
- Alsager Library – Reduction of 3 hours per week
- Bollington Library – No change
- Congleton Library – No change

- Crewe Library – No change
- Disley Library – Reduction of 5.5 hours per week
- Handforth Library – Reduction of 18 hours per week
- Holmes Chapel Library – No change
- Knutsford Library – Reduction of 3 hours per week
- Macclesfield Library – Addition of 4 hours per week
- Middlewich Library – Reduction of 4 hours per week
- Mobile Library – No change
- Nantwich Library – No change
- Poynton Library – No change
- Prestbury Library – No change
- Sandbach Library – Reduction of 3 hours per week
- Wilmslow Library – No change

Staff Engagement

A formal staff consultation was launched on 20th May and closed on the 19th June 2025.

On 20th May, Chris Allman, Cath Rowley (Interim Library Services Manager) and Ruth O'Brien (HR Business Partner) held a briefing at the following Libraries – all staff were invited to attend:

- Holmes Chapel Library;
- Macclesfield Library; and,
- Nantwich Library.

The Trade Unions have been briefed and consulted at various points including:

- Prior to the start of the staff consultation;
- Representatives were invited to attend the staff briefing meetings; and,
- Following the conclusion of the staff consultation but ahead of the implementation.

Final Proposal

To mitigate the need for any compulsory redundancies, the proposed changes are to the rotas and contracted weekly hours.

Some Libraries are/were carrying vacancies and proposals to fill these positions were outlined in the consultation including sharing job descriptions and the application process. During the consultation period, 22

	<p>individuals were appointed to a total of 23 vacant roles.</p> <p>However, at the end of the consultation period, a number of vacancies still existed.</p> <p>In addition, the role of the Library Services Manager is a vacant post.</p> <p>As part of the final proposal, a number of contracts of employment are to be altered via agreement including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The buyout of hours for 16 individuals; • At their request, 7 individuals have requested to reduce the number of hours worked; and, • As a result of new opening patterns and some colleagues changing their working patterns, it has resulted in 10 individuals increasing the number of hours that they work resulting to an alteration to their respective contracts of employment. <p>For the individuals that are to be bought out of hours from their existing contracts, the impact on these individuals is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 1 Hour Lost = 9 Staff • More or equal to 1 but less than 2 Hours Lost = 4 Staff • More or equal to 2 but less than 3 Hours Lost = 3 Staff <p>In addition, as part of the restructure, two individuals will have their work base altered as they will work more from an alternative library than they do within their existing arrangements.</p> <p>In total, 69 individuals from within the Library Service were unaffected by the proposals.</p>
<p>Member consultation and interests declared</p>	<p>In accordance with the delegation, the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of the Environment and Communities Committee have been consulted on the decision.</p> <p>In accordance with Local Ward member protocol local ward members have been informed.</p>
<p>Significant Decision</p>	<p>YES/NO</p>
<p>Legal Implications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full consultation with staff and unions has taken place on the proposals and the Council has followed its organisational change procedure in this regard. No redundancies are proposed and

	<p>all proposed changes to employment contracts are being agreed with staff. In any restructure, there is always the risk of potential legal challenge including breach of contract and constructive dismissal. However, based on the consultation processes that have been carried out, the rationale for the proposals and the agreed contractual changes, including a buy-out of hours payment, the risk of legal challenge is considered to be low.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naomi Clarkson, Senior Lawyer, Employment, 27/06/2025
<p>Financial Implications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposal is necessary to deliver the current MTFS item “Libraries Strategy – Stage 1 -£100k in 2025/26”. • The buy-out of hours will cost £4.6k and be funded from vacancy savings already made in year. • The restructure takes effect on 1st July 2025 and 16 posts have been held vacant for the first three months of 2025/26. Some of which have been covered by overtime and casual staff. • Spend to date vs profiled budget for April to June reflects a £127k underspend. • It is expected this restructure will deliver £66k of the budgeted saving and leave £34k still to be found in year – potentially from increasing income. • The legal agreement with T&PC’s specifies posts that have to be filled and these are picked up in the latest plans. • <p>Previous MTFS savings from 2024/25 have been fully delivered.</p> <p><i>Steve Reading, Finance, 24/6/2025</i></p>
<p>Confidential/Exempt Information</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	<p>None</p>

Christopher Allman

Signed:

Dated: 27.06.25

Christopher Allman, Director of Planning & Environment