

## **Draft Library Strategy – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why are you consulting on this strategy for the library service?**

We are using this consultation to find out what a modern library service that suits customer needs should look like. We will be seeking your opinions on what our priorities should be, what you value and use most, and what additional activities you would like to see. We are keen to understand how we can work with other community organisations to better meet your needs. This is your library service and your chance to help us shape the future of it for the coming 5 years.

### **Does the review of library locations mean that my library could be moved?**

The location of each library service will be assessed to ensure that each one is best placed within the community that it serves, and that locations are cost-effective in the longer term. Opportunities for co-location with other teams, services or organisations will be given particular consideration where there are benefits to doing so. Any change to library service location would be subject to separate community consultation and engagement.

### **The strategy mentions installing self-service machines in all libraries. Does this mean that library staffing will be reduced?**

Several of our libraries already have self-service facilities enabling customers to issue and discharge their own books if they wish. This is alongside a counter service operated by library staff. Extending these facilities across all libraries will enable staff to give better support to those who need it or to be involved in other activities. The self-service machines should free up staff time rather than replace staff.

### **If opening hours are to be reviewed are the opening times for my library likely to be cut?**

Library opening times will be reviewed based on patterns of use to ensure that libraries are accessible to those who need them. This could result in different opening times across the week but the aim is not to reduce opening hours overall. It is possible that co-location of services could result in increased opening times.

### **How will the consultation take place?**

The 12-week consultation will take place online with available paper copies available at your local library, giving communities a chance to have their say on proposed changes. When the consultation has ended the responses will be considered and recommendations will be made about the future of the library.

### **What happens if people disagree with the proposals in the strategy or suggest alternatives?**

The Council is keen to find ways to protect the library service as much as possible. We will actively consider all proposals from the consultation and use these to inform plans that are aligned with findings from the consultation and can be delivered within the resources available.

### **Public libraries are a statutory service; don't your strategy proposals contravene the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964?**

As well as the legal requirements for us to provide public library services, we know that library services are an important part of communities in Shropshire and an important part of the service we provide. We will still have a good network of libraries across Shropshire which will meet our statutory requirements. In addition, we have an increasing virtual library delivering services such as e-books, e-audiobooks, information and e-magazines. This is in addition to enabling people to reserve and renew items online.

### **Are you planning to close any libraries?**

There are no current plans to close libraries and this is not something that the strategy or consultation will cover. This consultation is about getting a clearer picture of the priorities of local communities and aligning them with the existing and future libraries service.

### **Are there further cuts to the library service budget?**

Further budget savings are proposed in the 2022-23 budget for the library service but this could change in the future. We know that running costs are steadily rising and it is our intention to develop plans that best use the resources we and other organisations have, to match the needs of our local communities. We want to understand what our communities value so we can work more collaboratively to meet those needs. However, council budgets continue to be under pressure and this could affect the library service in the future.

### **Can my community take on more of a role to help with a local library?**

There are many examples of communities taking on roles in libraries, varying from volunteer support or library Friends groups organising events and fundraising, though to community partners operating libraries themselves in partnership with Shropshire Council. Eight of our libraries are run in this way by local councils or other community organisations. Other local councils and partners contribute to running costs for their local library services. Elsewhere we are co-located with Parish or Town Councils, the police or other community groups. This is a model that works well and we are keen to hear from communities who are interested in working with us through this consultation.

### **What is Shropshire Local?**

Shropshire Local is a new approach to how Shropshire Council will deliver services in a modern and digitally supported space. We want to engage with our communities to understand their changing priorities and support their needs. This will enable us to create better access for everyone to Council and partner services. This is a journey and because we do not want anyone to be left behind, we will also be delivering digital training for customers in how to access and resolve queries using the online services.

### **How are you helping in the recovery of Shropshire?**

Libraries are trusted spaces, free to enter and open to all. We can use our experienced staff and digital resources to expand online access, provide free access to job skills, training and business information, as well as offering spaces for work and study. Library services help to mitigate the impact of isolation and loneliness, support people's mental health and well-being, and enable to school pupils to make up for lost ground in their learning.

