



Appendix D

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the Plan for Libraries?

The Plan for Libraries sets out proposals for the future of the library service in Plymouth from 2017 to 2020, taking into account the changing needs of users and opportunities to use our resources in better and different ways.

Why are you planning to make changes to our library service?

The way people use libraries is changing. Nationally, visitor and lending figures are falling and it's the same in Plymouth. We currently have 17 libraries spread across a relatively small geographical area and many are under-used, with little or no scope for improvements.

We need to think differently about how library services are delivered. Changes in technology mean we don't need to be constrained by our buildings; quality services can be delivered online or in the community.

Our proposals will allow us to:

- Keep open our busiest libraries, with an even spread across the city
- Redevelop and modernise buildings where needed (including the redevelopment of the St Budeaux site)
- Enhance our online services, acknowledging that users do not necessarily need to visit a physical building
- Create a broad outreach offer, providing a wide range of services in settings within the community (including 'pop-up' libraries)

Are you planning to close libraries?

We are proposing to close 10 libraries and invest in and improve the remaining seven. This proposal allows us to make effective use of our buildings to deliver the full range of library activities in key areas of the city.

Which libraries are you proposing to close?

- Efford Library
- Egguckland Library
- Ernesettle Library
- Estover Library
- Laira Library
- North Prospect Library
- Peverell Library
- Stoke Library
- Tothill Library
- West Park Library

Which libraries are you proposing to keep open?

- Central Library
- Crownhill Library
- Devonport Library
- Plympton Library
- Plymstock Library
- St Budeaux Library
- Southway Library

When are these changes going to happen?

Changes will be implemented between 2017 and 2020, with timescales depending on the outcome of the consultation.

How have you developed these proposals?

An assessment has been carried out, focussing on the needs of our communities, along with usage figures, the sustainability of library buildings and a number of other factors. The results of the Library Conversation that ran during the summer of 2016 were also taken into account.

Is this just about saving money?

No. The proposed plan is about making better use of the resources we have and a commitment to reinvest any savings back into the library service. We estimate that to redevelop the St Budeaux site is likely to cost in excess of £1.3 million. In addition investment in remaining library buildings is likely to be approx. £100,000.

What improvements are you making?

All of our remaining libraries will be clean, modern and welcoming, with free computer access and Wi-Fi and meeting spaces. We will invest in those libraries that don't currently have these facilities to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Our online services are accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing an online library catalogue, eBooks, audiobooks and magazines plus a range of premium online resources. We're committed to improving this online offer based around the changing needs of customers, which could include streaming films and music and online resources for learning.

Our outreach offer will also increase. Investment in technology will mean we are able to take library services into communities, providing 'pop-up' libraries that include book lending and activities for all ages. We'll also expand our Home Library Service to suit the needs of our housebound users.

You're closing my library. What am I supposed to do?

We may be closing the library building, but you will still be able to access our services. Most people will be able to visit an alternative library but we're also committed to providing an extensive outreach service, which means we'll deliver library services to suit the needs of individual communities.

Customers will also benefit from even more services being available online.

How will this affect library staff?

We're proposing a minimal reduction in staffing hours. Staff will have opportunities to work as part of larger teams in quality libraries and engage with customers out in the community. We will invest in our staff by providing relevant training and they will benefit from development opportunities. There will also be no more lone working for staff.

Would you consider community run libraries?

Yes. If communities wish to take on responsibility for a library building we would be happy to discuss and explore ways this could work.

Are these proposals a done deal?

No. This is a proposed Plan for Libraries and we want to know what you think. The statutory consultation will run for 12 weeks and we will consider all feedback and responses.

How can I get involved or have my say?

We are encouraging everyone to have their say. You can:

- Complete our online questionnaire at www.plymouth.gov.uk/planforlibraries
- Fill in a paper copy of the questionnaire at a library or the 1st Stop Shop in the city centre
- Visit our Facebook page – PlymouthLibraries
- Visit our Twitter page – @PlymLibraries
- Attend one of our public meetings or drop in sessions at a library

Haven't you just done a consultation?

The Library Conversation, which ran during the summer of 2016, was an open discussion about the Library Service and what changes need to be made to make it fit for the future. The results of the Library Conversation have been used to develop the Plan for Libraries.

How can I find more information on the Plan for Libraries?

You can find the full plan and related documents on our website at www.plymouth.gov.uk/planforlibraries. A full set of documents is also available in every library and at the 1st Stop Shop.

FAQS updated 9 February 2017**So you're closing libraries and putting everything online?**

No. We're proposing to invest in a smaller network of seven high-quality libraries that are welcoming and vibrant, where our customers can expect the same great experience and services we see at the popular Central Library.

But we're also planning to improve our outreach services – so instead of being constrained by buildings that aren't fit for purpose we can deliver the library services people want, when they want, in their local community.

And we also want to improve our online offer – providing a bigger and better selection of eBooks, audiobooks, digital magazines and subscription websites and working with partners to deliver digital skills training and job seeking support.

Our plan is to provide at least 12 PCs at every library but we will also be able to provide computer access and support out in communities using mobile technology.

What do you mean by ‘outreach’ and ‘pop-up libraries’?

Everyone will continue to be within two miles of a library building but we can also take these services out of the library to places within your local area, like children’s centres, community centres, health centres and so on, as well as local events.

Wherever there is demand and a suitable space we can be there – delivering Rhymetimes, storytimes, reading schemes, gadget help, ‘click and collect’ orders, job clubs, reading groups, dementia friends sessions and so on.

The service will be flexible and tailored to suit the needs of each community and sessions can be planned in at regular times each week or month, set times like school holidays or on a more ad hoc basis.

We plan to invest in a new web-based library system that will allow us to sign up new members and enable people to order, borrow and return books wherever we go.

Aren’t libraries just a place to borrow books?

Reading and literacy will always be at their heart but today’s library services aren’t just about books. They are about helping people to help themselves and improve their opportunities – providing information and guidance as well as bringing people together through activities and events. This will continue not just within our library buildings but through our community outreach services

Everyone will continue to have free access to books – at our library buildings, other local community venues, pop-up-libraries, events and through our Home Library Service, as well as in schools and online.

What about support for job seekers? They can’t afford to travel to the library.

Our job clubs are popular and we know that many jobseekers use our computers on a regular basis. We plan to offer at least 12 PCs in each library and increase the number of job clubs we run but we can also provide computer access out in communities using mobile technology.

We already work with Job Centre Plus, housing associations and local community groups to provide specialist help and support and we plan to build on this by offering sessions at their locations and in local communities through our outreach service.

Libraries can be a social lifeline. Is this not going to isolate people?

We want our libraries to be hubs of the community – welcoming places where people want to gather, meet other people and socialise. All of our buildings will be fully staffed and resourced, with flexible meeting spaces so we can cater for a full range of activities and groups.

People will also be able to access library services and socialise with other people through our outreach offer and at pop-up libraries, in places that may be more convenient or suitable for them.

We will also continue to support those who are housebound through our Home Library Service.

FAQs updated 17 February 2017

Why did you give all the measures equal weighting when you assessed each library?

We've been asked about this quite a lot during the consultation. The difficulty is that people have very different views on what is more important. We felt that using a wide range of indicators that were of equal priority was the fairest approach to take.

Why haven't you taken into account the effect this will have on vulnerable people – many of whom rely on libraries as places to stay warm, get help and advice or improve their lives?

We understand that libraries offer valuable support for vulnerable people and we can continue to provide this support, not just in our library buildings but through other venues and in partnership with other providers.

Many of the libraries we are proposing to close cannot offer the level of service and support that customers expect – because the buildings aren't fit-for-purpose and have limited scope for improvement.

By working more closely with other organisations to deliver a better range of services out in the local community, at places and times that are convenient, we hope to actually improve the quality of service we offer.

Have you considered the impact on people who will have to travel further to visit their nearest library?

Under the proposals, everyone will be within two miles of a library building but they will also be able to access library services at local venues like children's centres, community centres, health centres and so on, as well as at local events.

Our plan is to provide computer access, digital skills training and employment support out in communities but jobseekers who prefer to visit a library building and are registered with a welfare-to-work provider can get their travel costs refunded for work-related activity.

Older people can apply for a free bus pass when they reach the female state pension age (men and women) and people with certain disabilities can apply for a pass allowing free bus travel between 9.30am and 11pm.

We will continue to support those who are housebound through our Home Library Service.