

# Libraries

Your views matter

## Consultation on changes to **North Yorkshire's library services**



## Introduction

We are consulting on proposals to change how Library Services are run across North Yorkshire. By 2020, the County Council will have seen its library budget fall dramatically from around £7.8m in 2010 to an expected £4.2m for 2019-20. On top of savings of £2m already achieved, the library service has to save a further £1.6m. The reduction is part of a cut of some £167m to the council's overall spending. Given the money we will have, we have described below what we think we can do with it to preserve a library service. We want to know what you think about our proposals and how you think we can make them work, in order to help us make the best decisions.

## Background and previous consultation

We consulted you about cuts to the Library Service budget in December 2010 (finishing in February 2011). Local councillors and community groups set up meetings, which were attended by over 2,000 people, and 6,000 people filled in our questionnaire, emailed or wrote to us. You told us then about the important role libraries play in our communities and we changed our proposals as a result of the consultation. We cut the staffing and opening hours at all libraries, which meant only eight communities were asked to take on the day to day running of their local library.

## What has happened since the first consultation?

We now have 42 libraries, 33 run by the Council and nine run by community groups (including Grassington and Hawes); a Supermobile, delivering fortnightly services to the 21 largest communities at the furthest distance from static libraries; "outlets" and local collections run in pubs/village halls; a Home Library Service; and on-line via your computer at home.

In addition to the seven community groups who took on the day to day responsibility for their local libraries in May 2012, a further nine community groups recruited volunteers to cover the opening hours we could no longer staff.

We work in partnership with all of these groups and have continued to develop the service overall.

The success of community libraries in North Yorkshire has demonstrated that communities can run services in their local communities. Building on this, the Council is aiming to expand community ownership across a range of services including community transport and youth services as well as libraries and is encouraging and supporting this through its Stronger Communities programme.

## What do libraries do?

As well as providing a range of great books, libraries also;

- Support health and well-being by providing access to health information; providing a Home Library Service, providing work experience and volunteering opportunities; improving learning, literacy and skills; encouraging creativity and enterprise;
- Provide safe, accessible venues to support and create stronger communities by providing access to services, learning and skills development opportunities; sources of information and public consultations; enabling and encouraging children to become enthusiastic readers and learners; and promoting a sense of place through local and family history;
- Support economic growth and employment opportunities for communities and individuals by providing access to fast connections, including free wifi and acting as business hubs offering venues for meetings and training.

- Support communities and individuals to combat rural isolation/social exclusion by providing access to computers and events and activities for communities to come together; providing a safe, neutral space for study and projects;
- Encourage digital learning and inclusion by helping people to get on-line and self-serve, matching volunteer IT buddies with those who need support;
- Provide face to face access to council information as well as information on our partners' services.

### Consultation proposals

This set of proposals would build on the success of the current community libraries which have led to a number of significant benefits for communities, including maintaining the local library service. We are keen that all libraries remain open, however, we can't do it without your help. The current community managed libraries play an important role in their local community, providing a range of services and reducing social isolation by bringing people together through volunteering. They have become responsive to the needs of their communities, giving a sense of place and belonging.

Key points of the new proposals are:

- Three categories of library – **core**, **hybrid**, and **community managed**. All would be part of the North Yorkshire 'family' of libraries and all would need volunteer involvement.
- **Core libraries** - One main town in each of the seven districts of North Yorkshire retains a 'core' library. They would be in **Harrogate, Malton\***, **Northallerton**, **Richmond/Catterick**, **Scarborough**, **Selby and Skipton**. They would be staffed by a combination of paid county council library staff and volunteers. These core libraries would be the centre of excellence for their District. They would need volunteers to work alongside the paid library staff to be able to open for the current opening hours.

These core libraries would be the base for the professional expertise to support and advise the remaining libraries in their District. In effect they would become the 'engines' that drive the service, developing partnerships, providing training and the expertise to ensure the service continues to develop in line with changing needs.

- **Hybrid libraries** - large and busy libraries catering for significant day-time populations. The cost of the premises, and one member of staff, would be met by the County Council. They would depend on volunteers working alongside this member of staff, operating with support from the core library in their district. We propose five hybrid libraries – one in each of the following towns; **Filey, Knaresborough, Pickering, Ripon, and Whitby**.
- **Community managed libraries** - An additional 20 **community managed** libraries would receive regular and ongoing professional support from the core libraries, and would be at **Bedale, Bentham, Boroughbridge, Colburn, Catterick/Richmond, Crosshills, Easingwold, Eastfield, Helmsley, Ingleton, Kirkbymoorside, Leyburn, Pateley Bridge, Scalby, Settle, Sherburn, Starbeck, Stokesley, Tadcaster and Thirsk**. Community managed libraries in these locations will depend on communities and potential partners coming forward, and our aim would be to provide assistance (including some financial help) to maximise the provision of good quality services across the county.
- The council would continue to provide a Home Library Service for people who have difficulty reaching a library, and a Supermobile service.
- The library service would continue to support outlets and local collections in locations such as pubs and village halls.

\* In 2011 a decision was taken that there would be one library serving the communities of Malton and Norton.

## We need your help

The library service has a number of fixed costs – including book acquisition, ICT, support and the delivery network – which are essential. Although we will reduce these costs as far as possible, they would still amount to nearly £1.5m a year. The loss of more funding from our budget makes it impossible for the council to staff all libraries, even at a most basic level. Nevertheless, we share the view of many members of the public that as many libraries as possible should remain open. However, we cannot do it without your help. We need volunteers who will help to run them, local organisations willing to share premises or costs and local groups willing to take on the management of their libraries.

Further information and data on the background documents giving facts and figures about each library and details of their performance, an Equalities Impact Assessment, Frequently Asked Questions and details of our offer to community groups are available.

## Consultation

These proposals represent what we believe is the best way forward given the reduced budget available and we want to hear your views. **The consultation runs from 3 November 2014 to 8 February 2015.** Following the consultation, we will look at the responses and use them to produce a final report and recommendation to council members in **June 2015**, who will then make decisions on how best to proceed.

You can complete the survey online at **[www.northyorks.gov.uk/libraryconsultation](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/libraryconsultation)**

There are also other ways to tell us what you think. We will be running a drop-in session at each library for people to find out more information. These events are informal; you can just come along at any time and talk to a member of staff. Each library also has a copy of the survey, this document and other background documents for you to refer to.

If you would like an accessible version (such as large print, braille) please email or call us to request a copy;

**[library.secretaries@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:library.secretaries@northyorks.gov.uk)**

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We will also be carrying out a number of discussions with people who may have a particular interest in the proposals, such as voluntary organisations, partnership boards and forums, community groups and other partners (such as schools and other councils) and we are also happy to attend meetings of local groups to discuss how we can work together to preserve our valued library service.