

## Library Service Consultation Report, May 2015

### 1.0 Public Consultation

1.1 A 14 week public consultation ran from **3 November 2014 to 8 February 2015**. This included an extra 2 weeks due to the Christmas/New Year holiday period.

### 2.0 The proposals

2.1 The service consulted on proposals to save £1.6 million from its budget as part of the Council's overall savings of £167 million. The proposals consulted on were that there should be three categories of library – core, hybrid and community managed. There would be a **core** library in the main town of each of the seven districts staffed by a combination of paid county council staff and volunteers; five large and busy libraries would be **hybrid** libraries where the council would pay for the premises and a member of staff to work with volunteers to provide the service; and an additional 20 **community managed** libraries run by volunteers with on-going professional support from the core libraries. (See Annex 1)

### 3.0 Methodology/Approach

3.1 The main way the service sought views was through a questionnaire, made available in a number of formats and people also expressed their views at a variety of public events and via letter and email and by adding their name to petitions.

3.2 All responses have been taken into consideration in the production of this report.

3.3 The service endeavoured to make as much information available to the public as possible. A consultation document (Annex 1); draft Equalities Impact Assessment, Frequently Asked Questions (Annex 5); and Information Fact Sheets for each library (Annex 6) were made available on the Library Consultation webpage and were available to view in libraries. Library staff encouraged people to take part in the consultation and provided assistance to support people to fill in the questionnaire on line. Libraries also had paper copies of the questionnaire (Annex 2) available, and large print versions were available on request. An easy-read version of the consultation document (Annex 3) and the questionnaire (Annex 4) were also available either on request or via the consultation webpage.

3.4 Prior to the start of the public consultation, Members with proposed community managed libraries had individual meetings with the Assistant Chief Executive /Assistant Director with responsibility for libraries. Briefing sessions were held for library staff so they were fully informed of the proposals prior to them being made public.

3.5 Local MPs received an email briefing from the Chief Executive. District, City, Town and Parish Councils as well as an extensive range of stakeholders were

contacted and sent links to the relevant webpages at the start of the public consultation and encouraged to respond.

3.6 Early in the consultation period meetings were held with the existing community managed libraries and with the community library groups that extend the opening hours in libraries.

3.7 The library service, supported by the Stronger Communities team, held drop-in information sessions in the 33 libraries currently run by the Council to explain the proposals to the local community and answer questions. Local members were invited to attend. People who came were encouraged to complete the questionnaires to ensure their views were captured.

3.8 The service also ran “pop-up” information sessions in 40 other venues including supermarkets and leisure centres, which enabled staff to further raise awareness and reach non-members and infrequent library users.

3.9 The consultation and the various information sessions were publicised in the library and in the press. The library’s email database of users were all contacted about the consultation and encouraged to respond. This mail-out was repeated in the final month of the consultation. Extensive use of social media was also made to raise awareness and encourage participation, including targeted use of Facebook to reach young people.

3.10 The Assistant Director gave presentations at each of the 7 Area Committees and along with other senior managers for the library service attended 8 public meetings and 15 parish/town council meetings. A representative from Stronger Communities also attended these meetings to explain how the team could assist local communities. The service also gave presentations at the North Yorkshire Learning Disability and Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Boards, the North Yorkshire Forum for Older People and attended the Youth Voice Summit.

3.11 Regular updates on the progress of the consultation (ie number of responses, social media interest, website activity, press interest, and forthcoming consultation events) were sent to library staff and all Members.

#### **4.0 Participation in the consultation**

- Questionnaire response rates
  - On-line (web) 5892
  - Paper 2049
  - Large print 73
  - Easy read 145

- E-mails and letters 192
- 6 Petitions 8,782 signatures
- Face to face events 2,500+ attendees

## **5.0 Responses to the consultation**

### **Questionnaire**

5.1 This section gives a breakdown of the 8014 web based, paper and large print responses to the questionnaire. The overview analysis of the questionnaire, on which the following is based, can be viewed in Annex 8. The consultation responses by the library people said they used most can be seen in Annex 9.

5.2 The easy read questionnaires have been analysed separately as questions were worded differently. See paragraph 6.

5.3 The questionnaire was in 3 sections. Section 1 asked people about their use of libraries, Section 2 had questions related to the consultation proposals and Section 3 asked for relevant demographic information such as age, disability etc. This information tells us which sections of the population have responded.

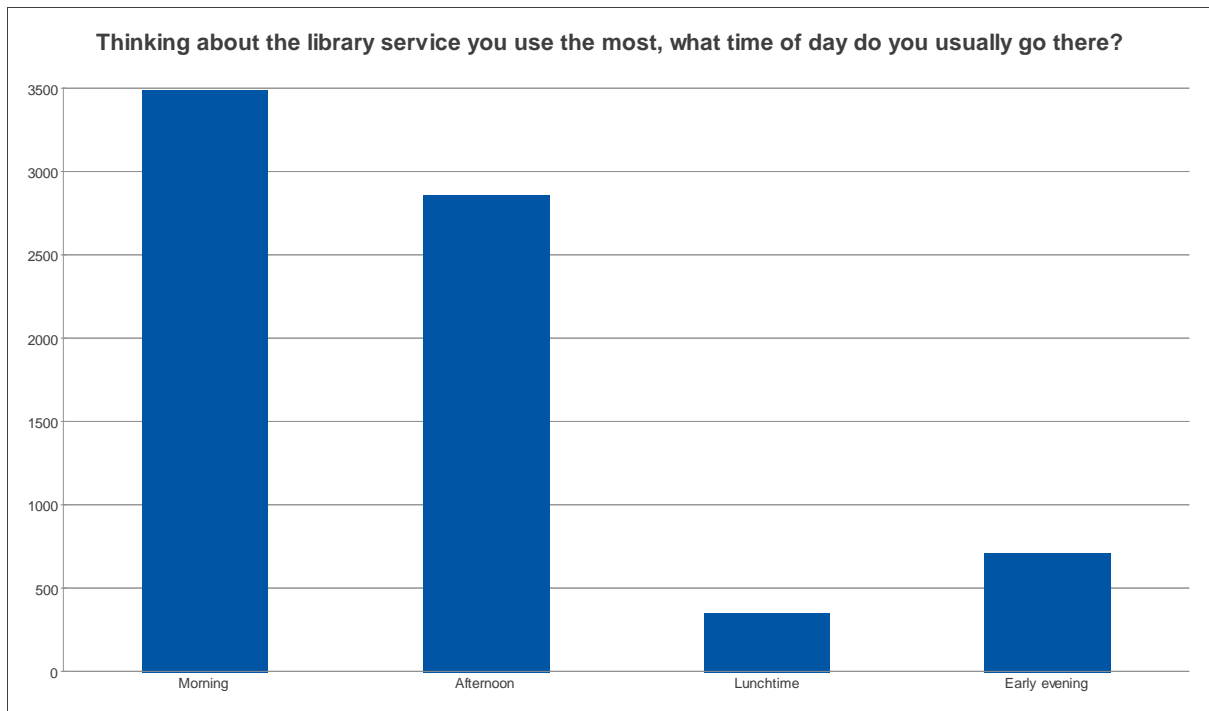
### **Section 1 - Use of libraries (Q1 – Q10)**

5.4 The majority of people responding said they were library users (95%). 312 responses were on behalf of community groups, organisations or clubs.

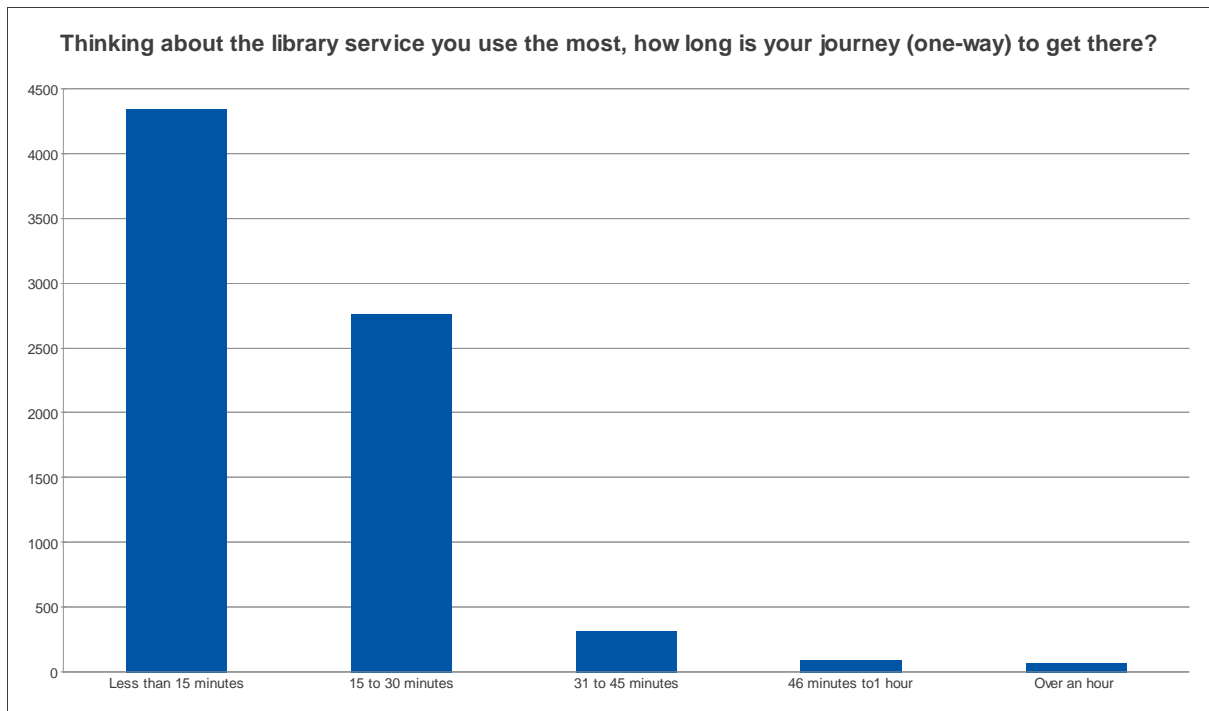
5.5 83% of respondents use libraries monthly or more frequently.

5.6 We asked several questions about the libraries people use – Which is your nearest library? Which libraries do you use? Which library do you use most? Responses suggest that a number of people use more than one library. (See Annex 8 for the detail)

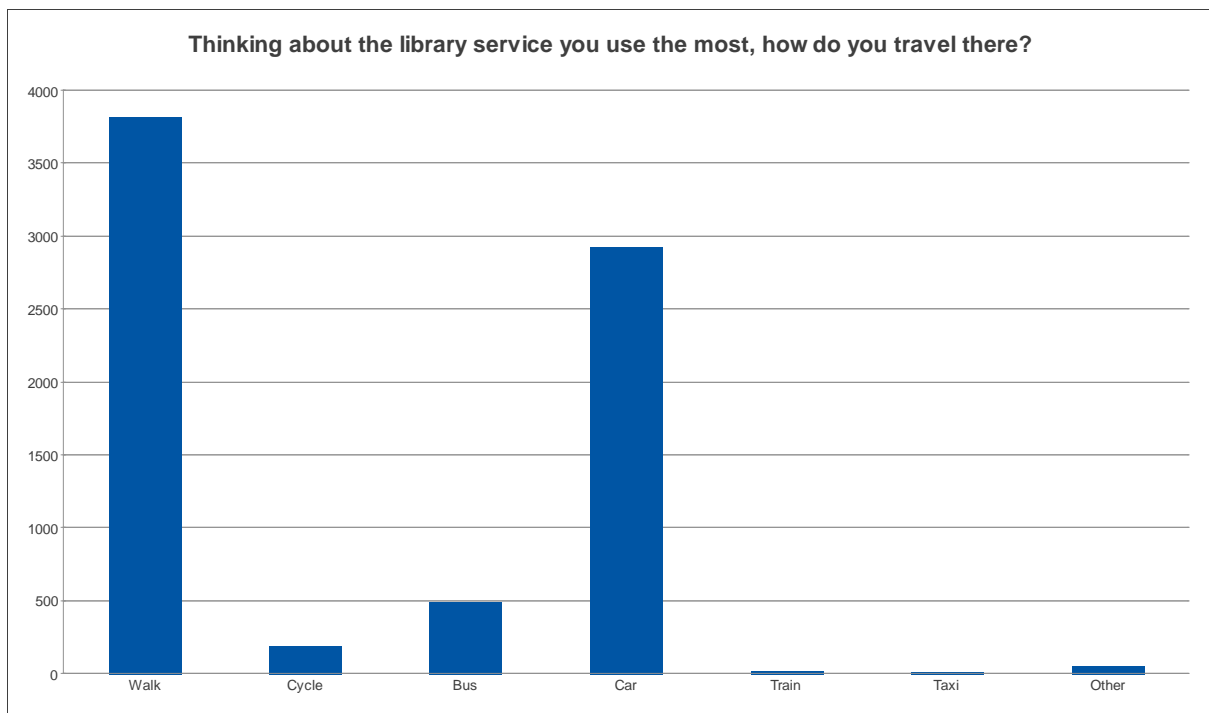
5.7 People were asked a range of questions about their use of libraries.



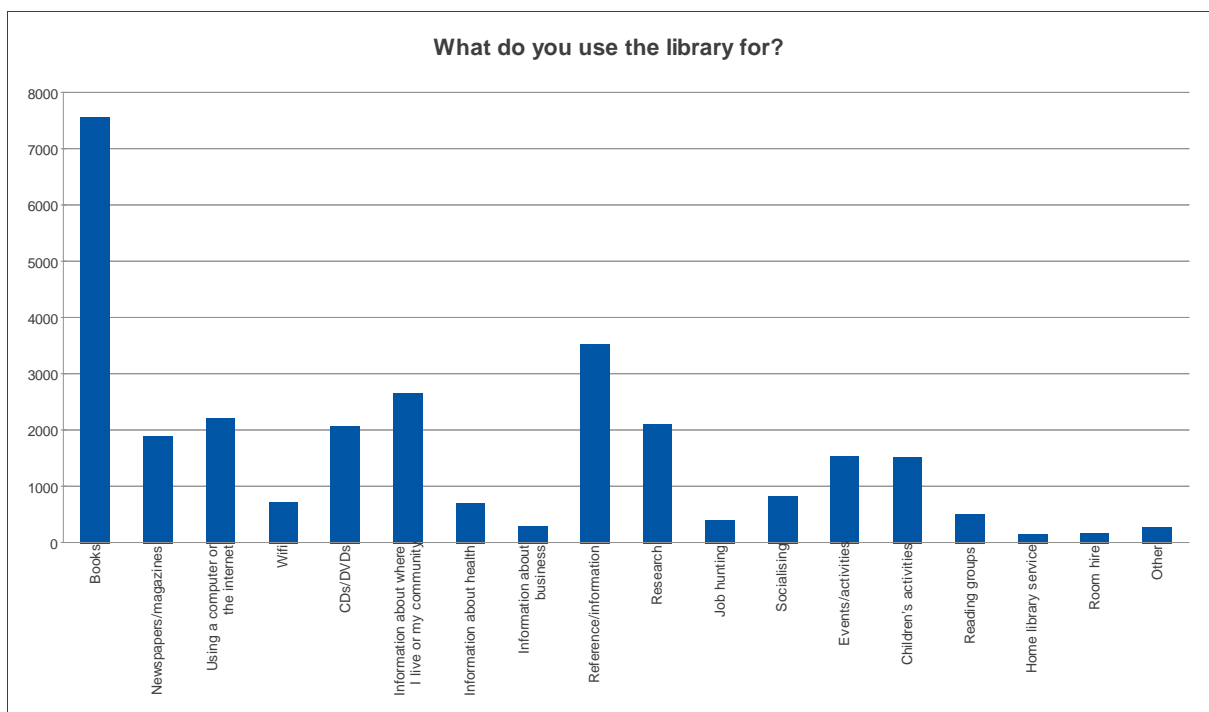
Respondents could only choose one option, but a number of people commented that they visit libraries at varying times of day.



57% of people can get to the library they use most in less than 15 minutes and 94% can get to the library within 30 minutes.



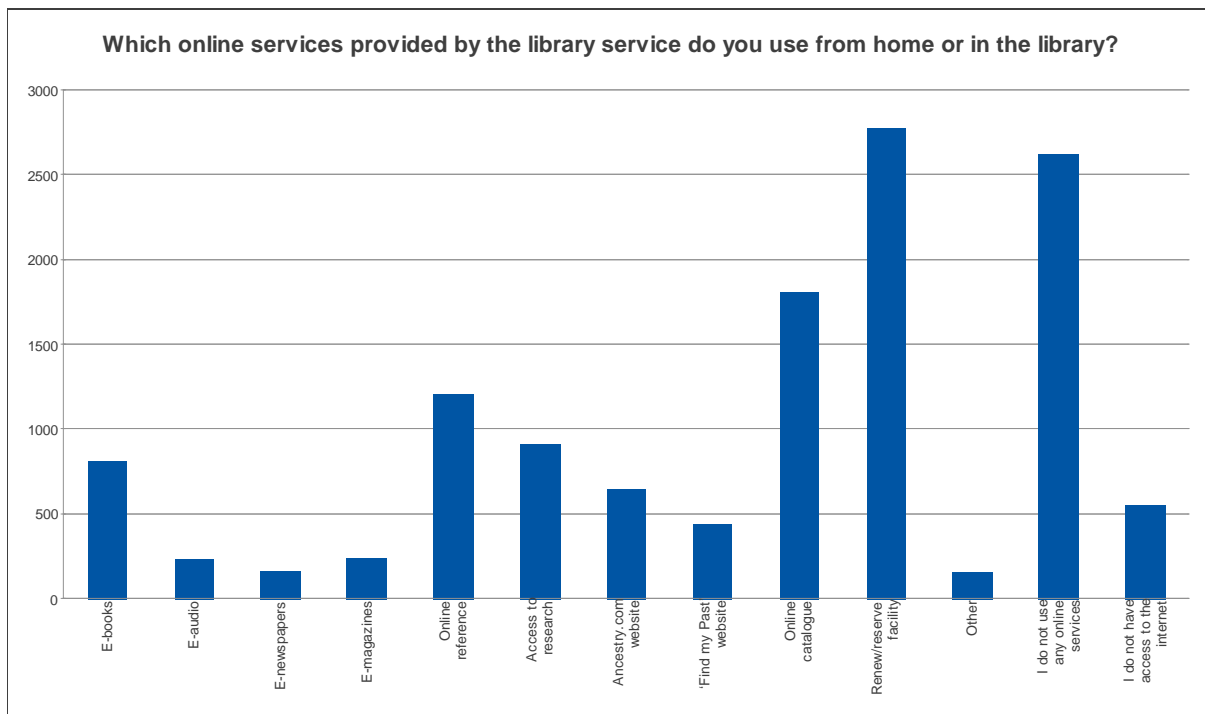
Walking is the most common way people get to their local library (51%) and 39% go by car. 6.5% currently go to the library by bus, though a higher percentage of disabled people travel there by bus (13%).



Books are the most popular (96%); 45% go for reference or information; 34% for information about where they live/their community; 28% for computers or the internet; 27% for research; 26% for CDs/DVDs; 20% for events/activities and 19%

for children’s activities. Socialising, wi-fi and information about health also bring in significant numbers of people. Job searching is also an important reason for using the library.

The most popular on-line services provided by the library are the renew/reserve facility (38%); the online catalogue (24%); online reference (16%); access to research (12%) and e-books (11%).



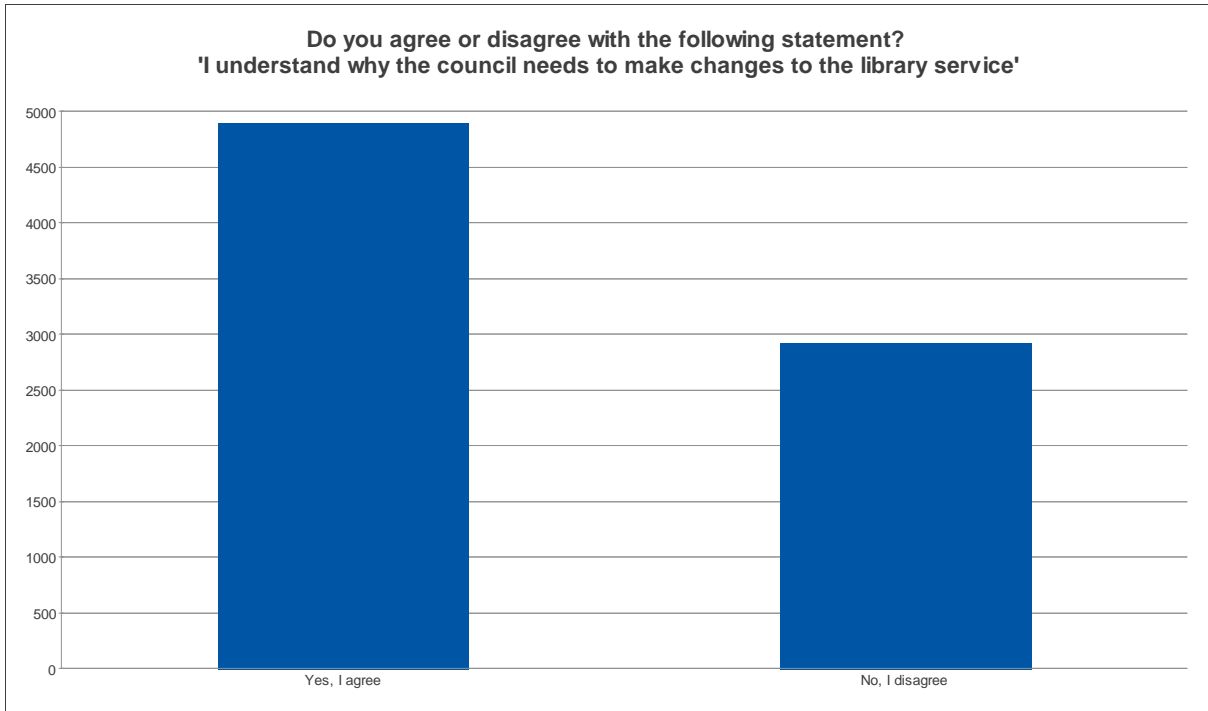
## Section 2 – Proposals for future library services (Q11 -20)

5.8 This section began with a brief explanation of the proposals as follows –

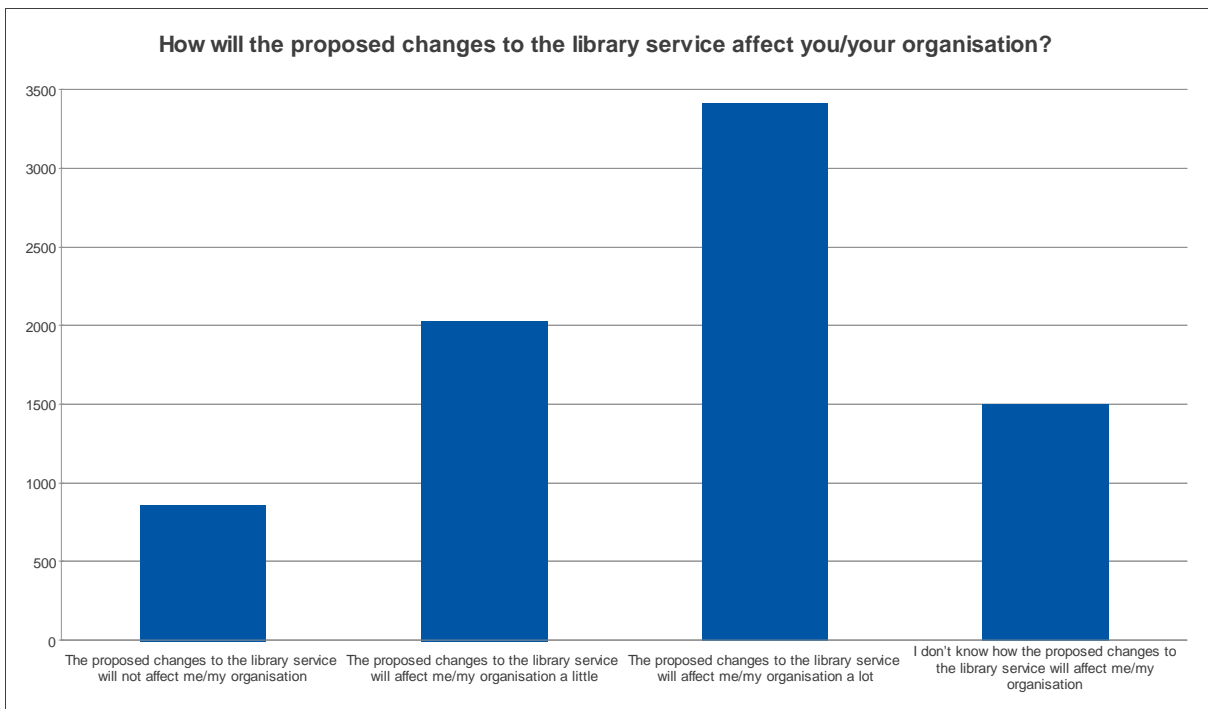
“The loss of funding makes it impossible for the council to staff all libraries, even at a most basic level. Nevertheless, we share the view of many members of the public that as many libraries as possible should remain open.

The library service is proposing to run a core library in each District Council area and provide a member of staff to work with volunteers in a further five of the busiest libraries (hybrid libraries). An additional 20 libraries would need to be community managed.”

5.9 When asked, 63% of responders said they understood why the council needs to make changes to the library service.

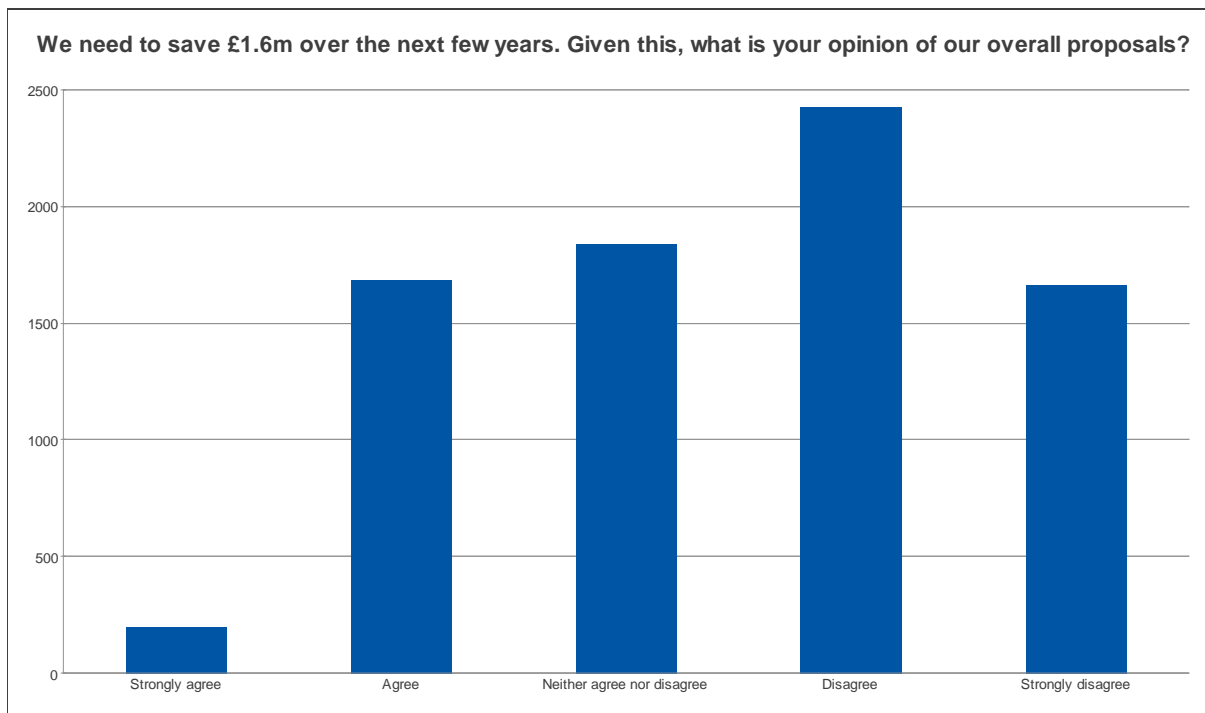


5.10 We also asked people how the proposed changes would affect them.



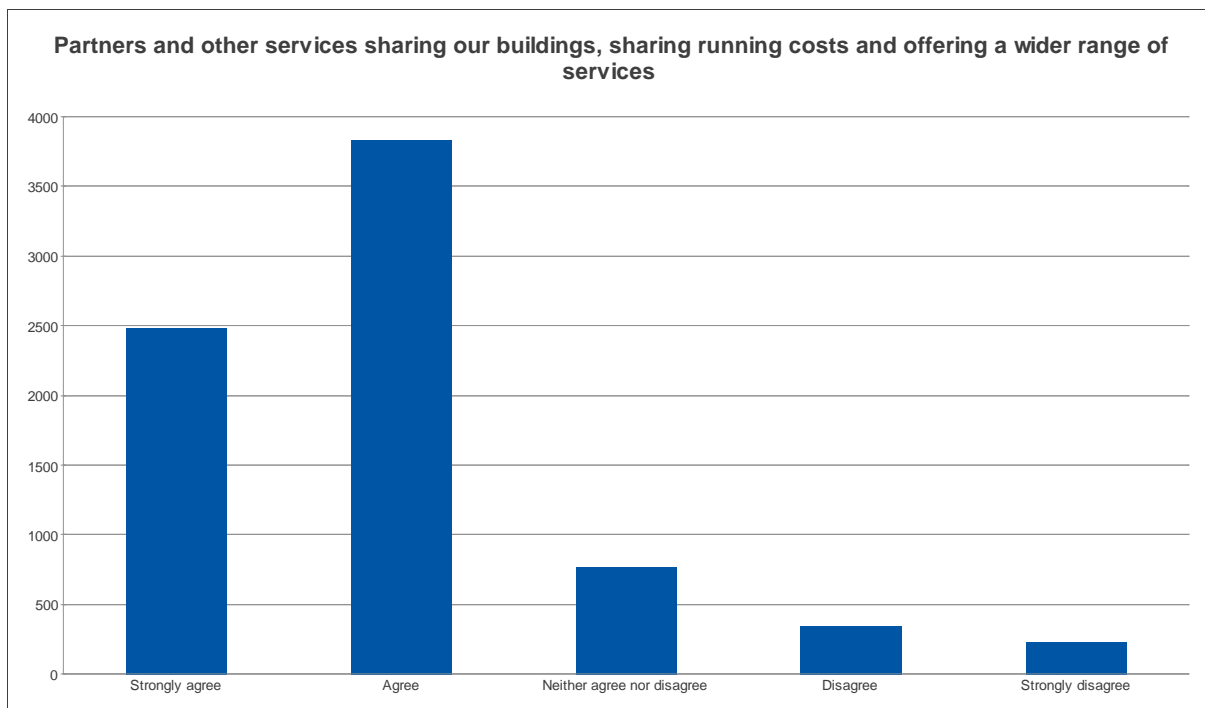
70% of people said they would be affected by the changes - 44% said the proposed changes would affect them a lot and 26% said they would affect them a little. 19% said they didn't know how it would affect them and just 11% said it would not affect them.

### 5.11 The next question asked what people thought of our overall proposals.



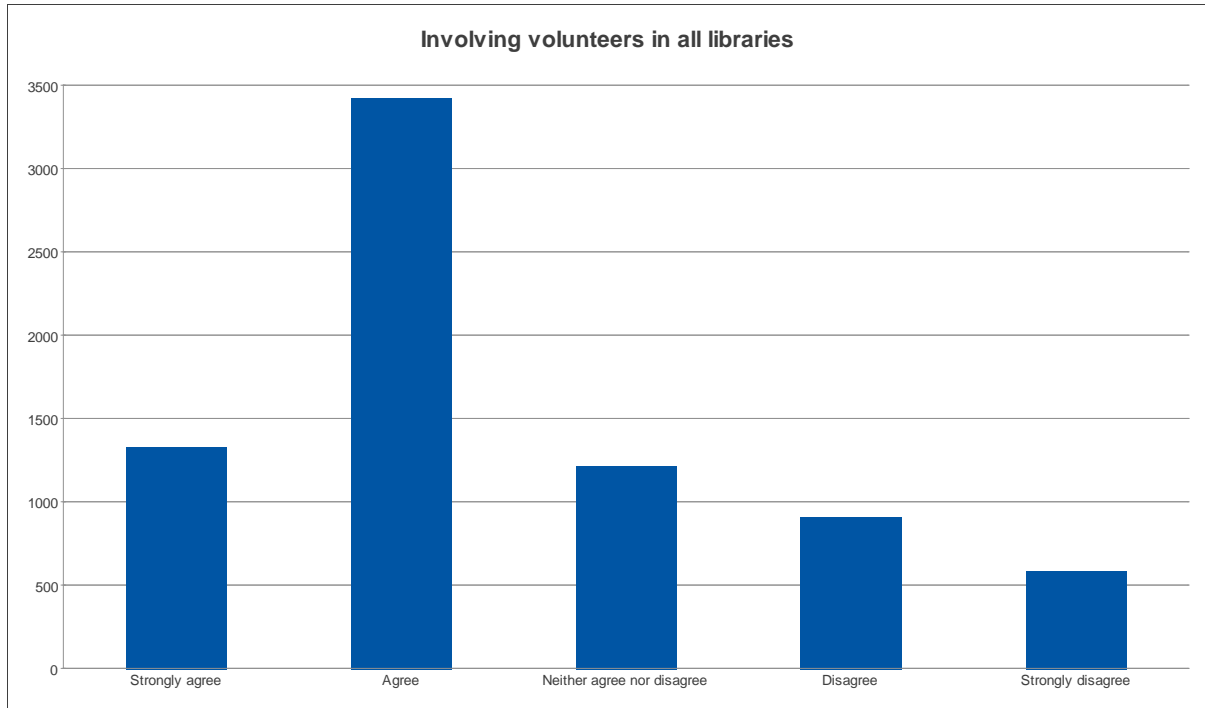
As can be seen above, more people disagreed (53%) with the overall proposals than agreed (24%). 24% neither agreed nor disagreed.

5.12 However, when different elements of the proposals were presented separately, as can be seen below, the responses differed from this overall disagreement with the proposals.

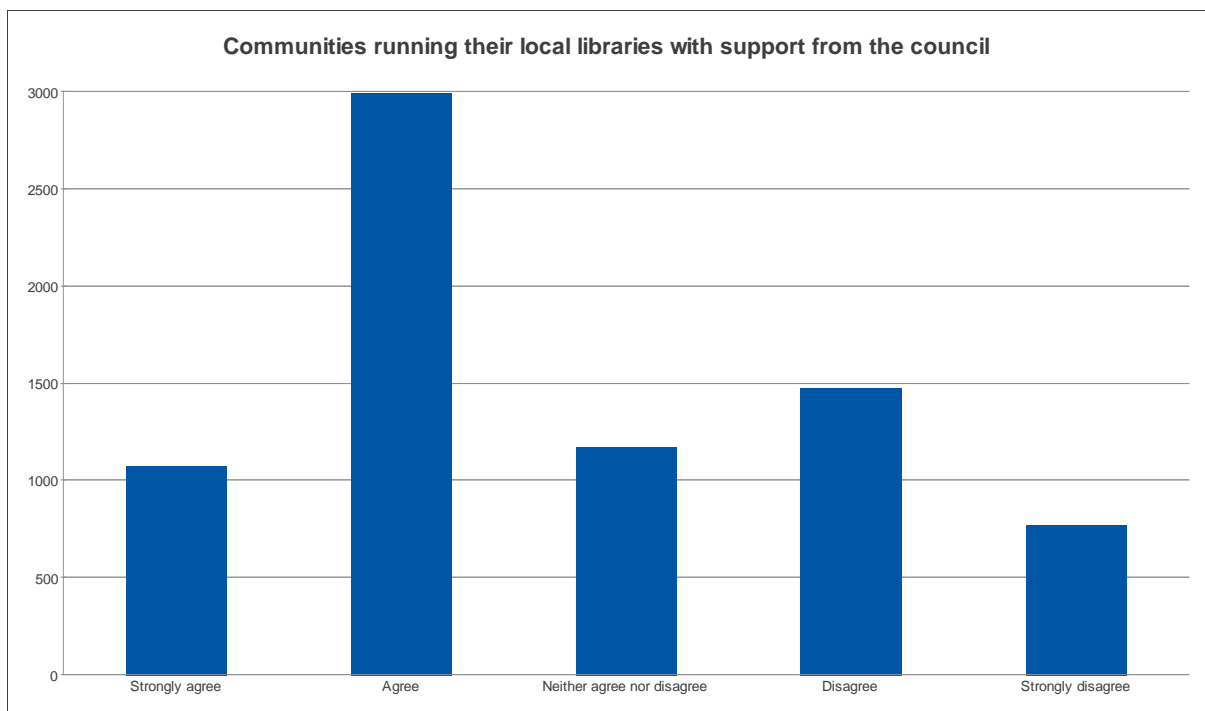




As the chart above shows, there was greatest support (83%) for partners and other services sharing our buildings, sharing running costs and offering a wider range of services, which gives weight to the proposal that libraries become hubs in their communities.



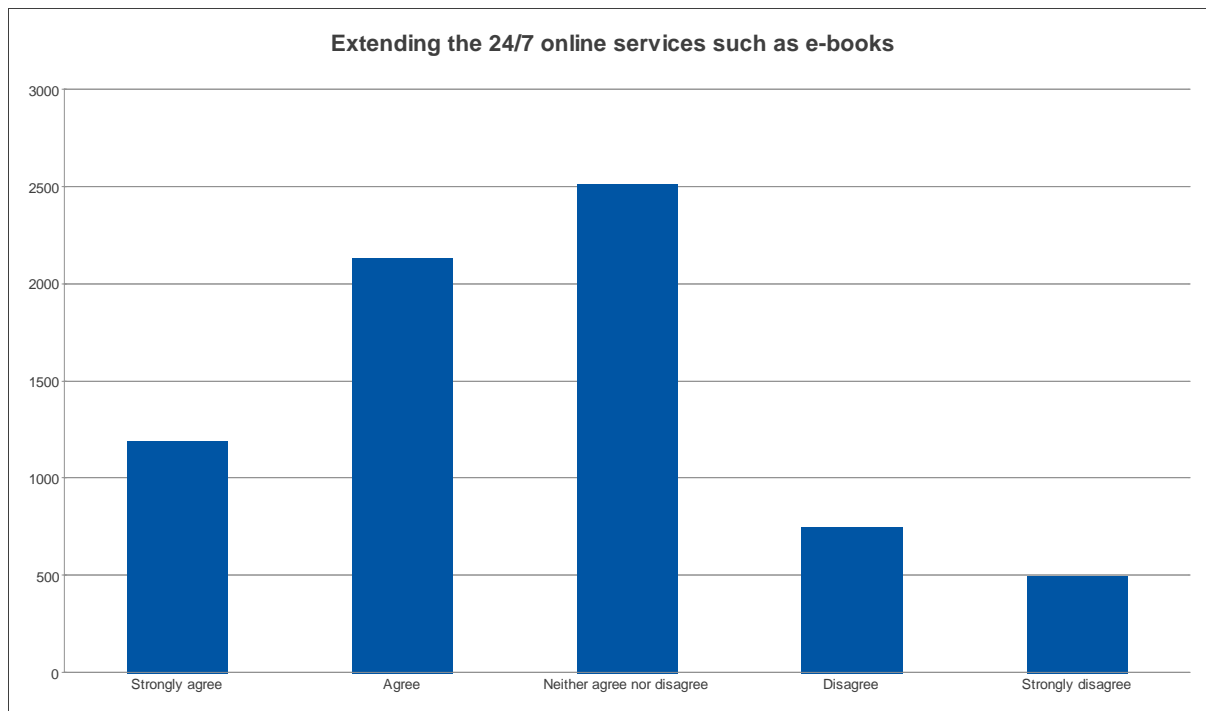
64% of respondents were in favour of involving volunteers in all libraries.



54% of respondents were in favour of communities running their local libraries with support from the council.

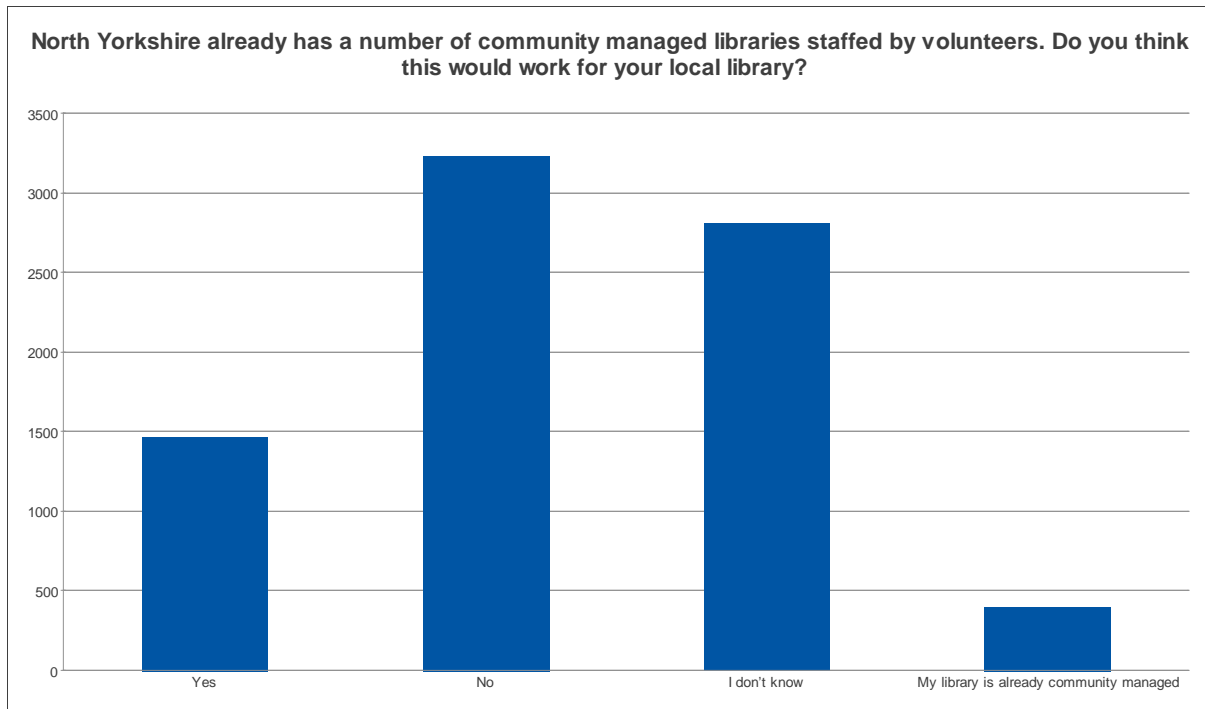
Unsurprisingly, the highest support for this proposal came from the current community libraries.

In all the proposed hybrid libraries fewer people were in favour of communities running their local libraries than were against or neutral.



47% agreed with extending the 24/7 online services such as e-books.

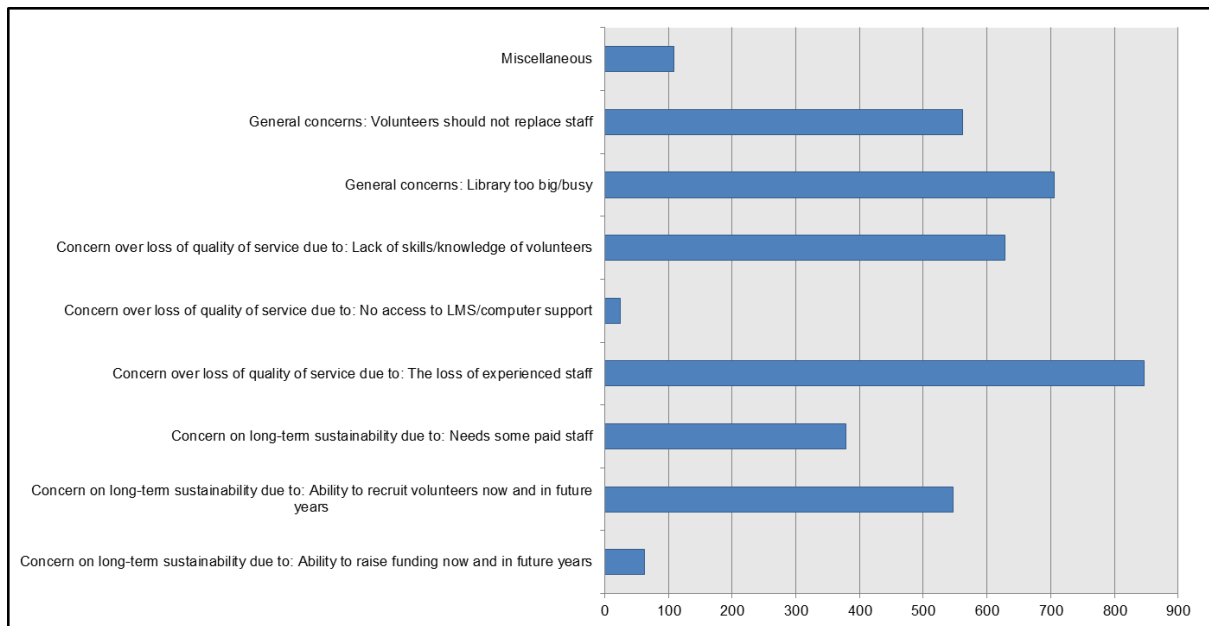
5.13 Question 15 asked if people thought a community managed library staffed by volunteers would work for their local library.



19% of respondents thought a community managed library staffed by volunteers would work for their local library. 41% thought it wouldn't and 36% said they didn't know. Looking at the results for individual libraries, generally there was a degree of uncertainty about whether a community managed library would work or not. A number of respondents thought their library was already community managed.

5.14 The questionnaire asked for reasons where respondents had answered "No" to this question. These responses fell into 3 main areas –

- General concerns, ie the library is too big/busy; and the view that volunteers should not replace staff.
- Concerns about the loss of quality of the service due to the loss of experienced staff; or lack of skills/knowledge of volunteers; or lack of access to the Library Management System.
- Concerns about long-term sustainability due to needing some paid staff; or the ability to recruit volunteers in future years; or the ability to raise funding now and in future years.

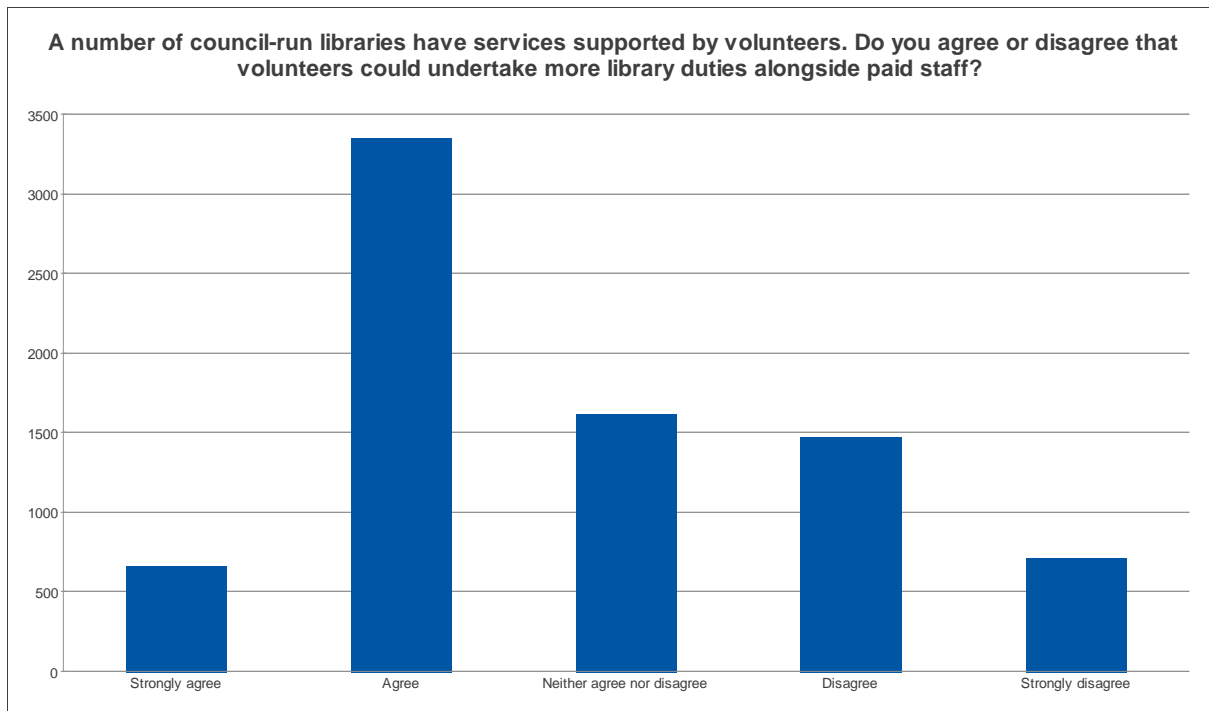


As can be seen from the above, the main reason given was because of the reduction in the quality of the service if there were no experienced staff. Respondents also commented that the service should be run by paid staff, not volunteers, as a matter of principle. There were also concerns about the sustainability of the service without paid staff.

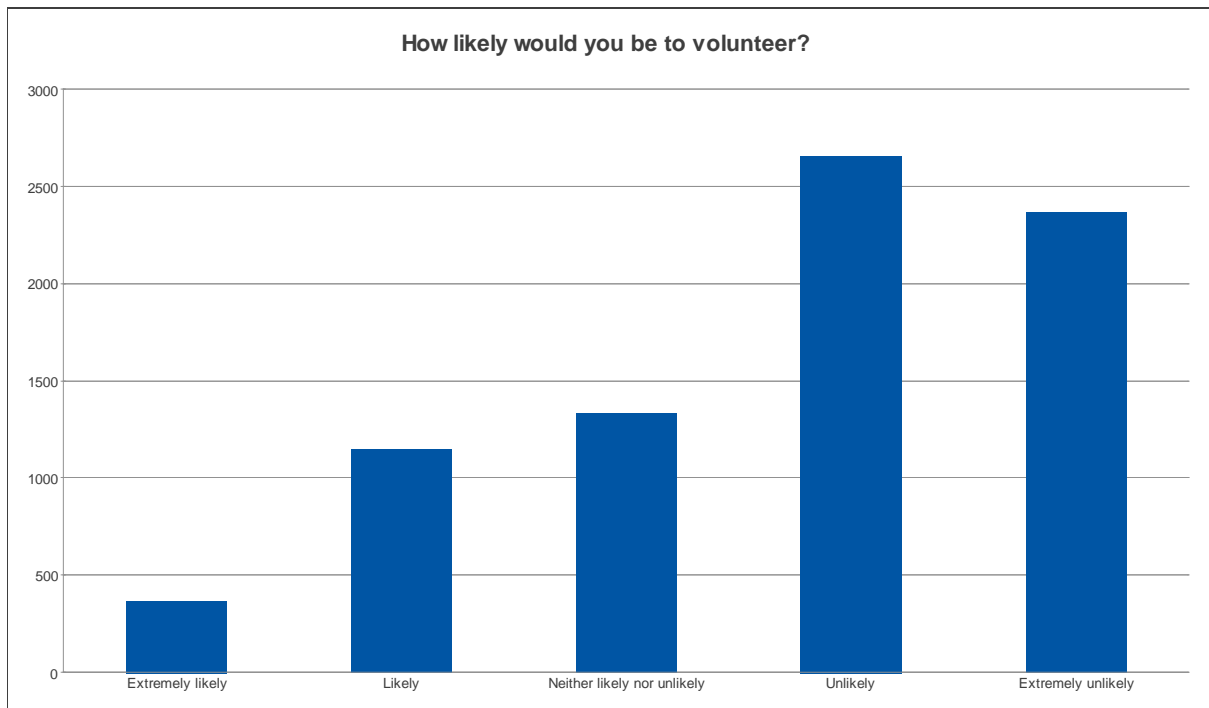
The second highest reason given was that the library was too big and too busy to be run by a community group and volunteers.

The next highest reasons given were again around the quality of a service run by volunteers who don't have the knowledge and experience of paid staff and also the sustainability of a service that relies on volunteers, including concerns that there was insufficient capacity in their local community.

5.15 The next three questions (Q16 – Q18) explored the theme of volunteers in more detail.



In contrast to the responses to question 15, there was more support for volunteers working alongside paid staff, with 51% of people agreeing that volunteers could undertake more library duties alongside paid staff. There was strong support for this in responses from people from all proposed community managed libraries. Proposed core library responses were around 51% in favour and proposed hybrid libraries were slightly lower.



18% of respondents said they would be likely or extremely likely to volunteer. (1,516)

Looking at individual libraries, in the majority of proposed community managed libraries, over 18% of people said they would be likely to volunteer.

12% would be interested in forming a friends or community management group or volunteering and over 800 people have given us their contact details.

We also asked what people would do if their local library closed.

49% would travel further to another library;

48% would use the online library service;

44% would use alternatives to libraries and

63% would stop using libraries

The responses to the above questions from disabled people showed they were less likely to travel further to another library (42%), use the online service (34%), or use alternatives to libraries (40%) and more likely to stop using libraries (69%).

5.16 The last questions in this section explored other options.

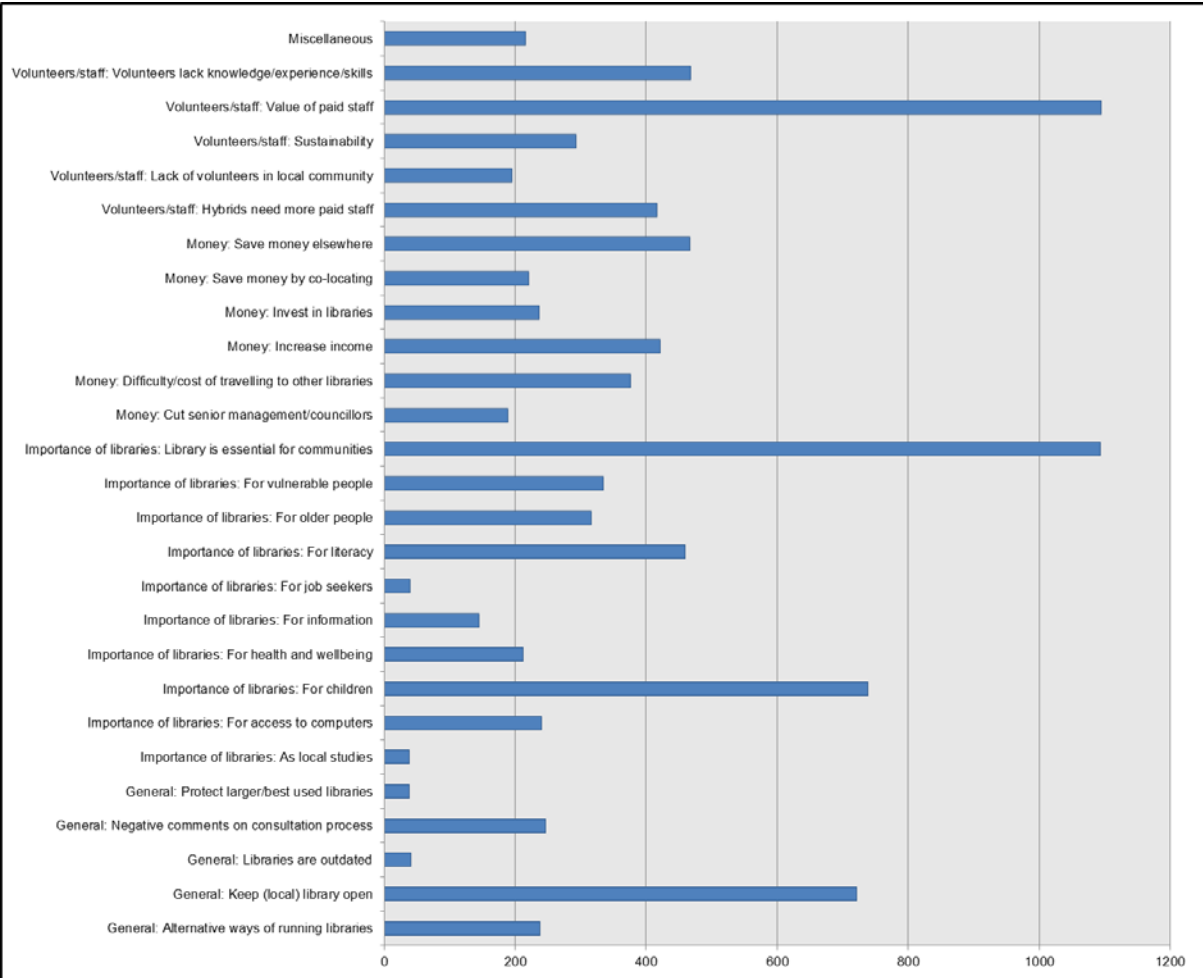
Groups or organisations were asked if they would be interested in having a library service occupying space in their premises and 79 said they would. 96 said they would be interested in moving their service or business into an existing library building.

5.17 The final question in this section gave people the opportunity to make comments or suggestions. The responses fell into 3 main areas (areas with highest numbers of comments in brackets):-

- **Comments related to money** including
  - Requests that the money is saved elsewhere rather than in libraries; (467 comments)
  - Suggestions of different ways libraries could make money or save money eg charging for books/membership, hiring out library space or equipment or sharing premises; (422 comments)
  - Suggestions that more money should be put into libraries by putting up council tax to increase opening hours and the range of services on offer
  - The cost or difficulty of travelling to another library including for rural communities
  
- **Comments about volunteers/staff** including
  - The value of paid staff and that they should not be replaced by volunteers (1,100 comments)
  - The need for staff in all libraries (417 comments)
  - The lack of volunteers in local communities
  - Volunteers lacking the knowledge, skills and experience that staff have and the need for training and support for volunteers (468 comments)

- The sustainability of libraries without paid staff and the costs for community groups
- **Comments about the importance of libraries** including
  - For different groups, eg children, older people, disabled people, or on low incomes/seeking work; (738 comments re children)
  - For health and wellbeing
  - For literacy (459 comments)
  - For information and face to face service
  - As local studies repositories
  - For access to computers and assistance with this
  - The library is essential for local communities as a community hub/community asset/safe place etc (1,100 comments)
- **General comments** including
  - Keep the local library open, once closed there is no going back (721 comments)
  - Negative comments on the consultation process, including that the consultation is flawed or unfair or the outcome has already been decided
  - Larger/best used libraries should be protected
  - Libraries are outdated or not needed as much as other services
  - Suggestions of different ways of running libraries including privatising or outsourcing, using more volunteers, using apprentices, staffing smaller libraries etc

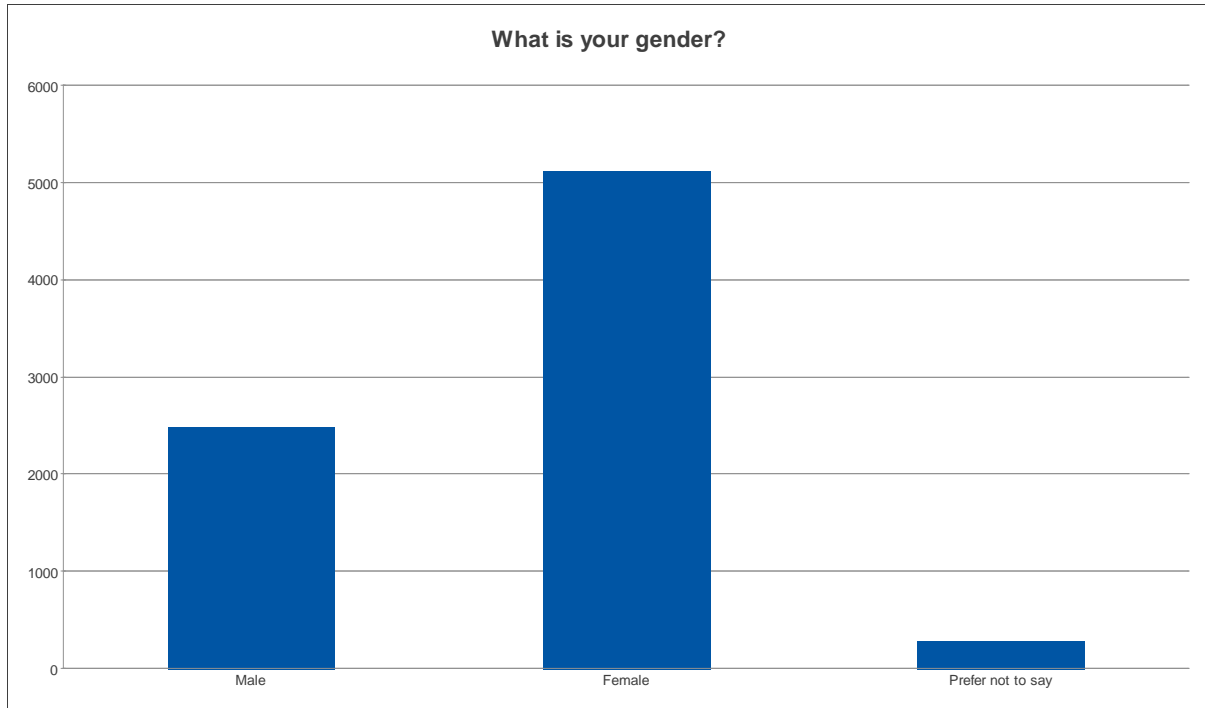
**The chart below illustrates the comments**



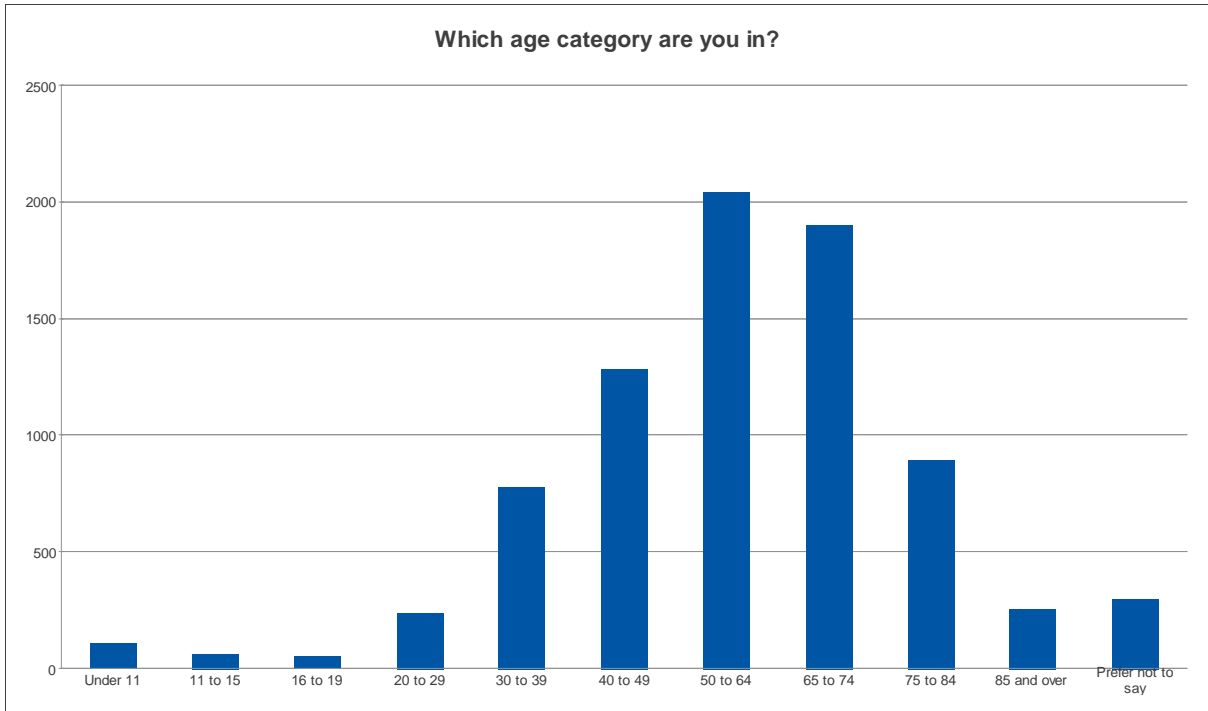


### Section 3 asked people to tell us about themselves

**5.18 Gender** - As can be seen from the chart below, more responses came from women (65%) than from men (31%). This reflects the usage of the library service.

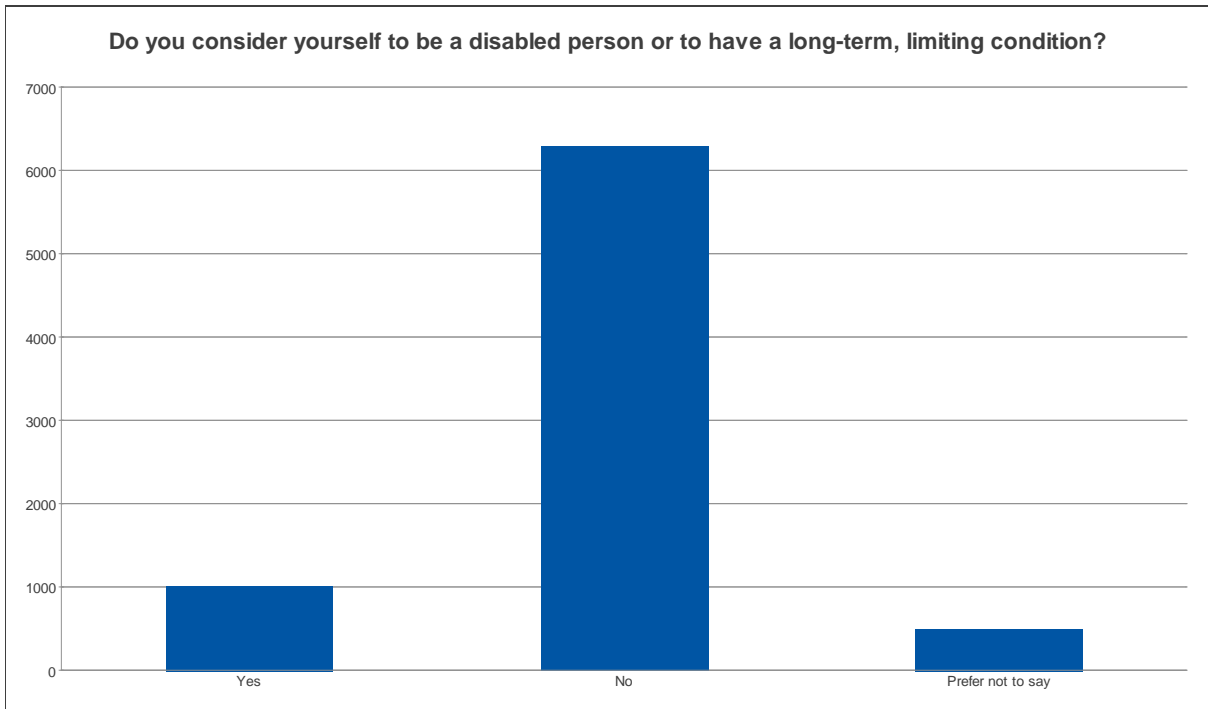


**Age** - The greatest number of responses came from the over 50s (68%). At a number of libraries children wrote letters or filled in slips to tell us why they like the library. The most frequent comments they made were about the library being a safe place to go, staff knowing them and being helpful with homework; the choice of books, and liking the Summer Reading Challenge and other children's activities that the library runs. Several also commented on the importance of libraries as somewhere for older people go.

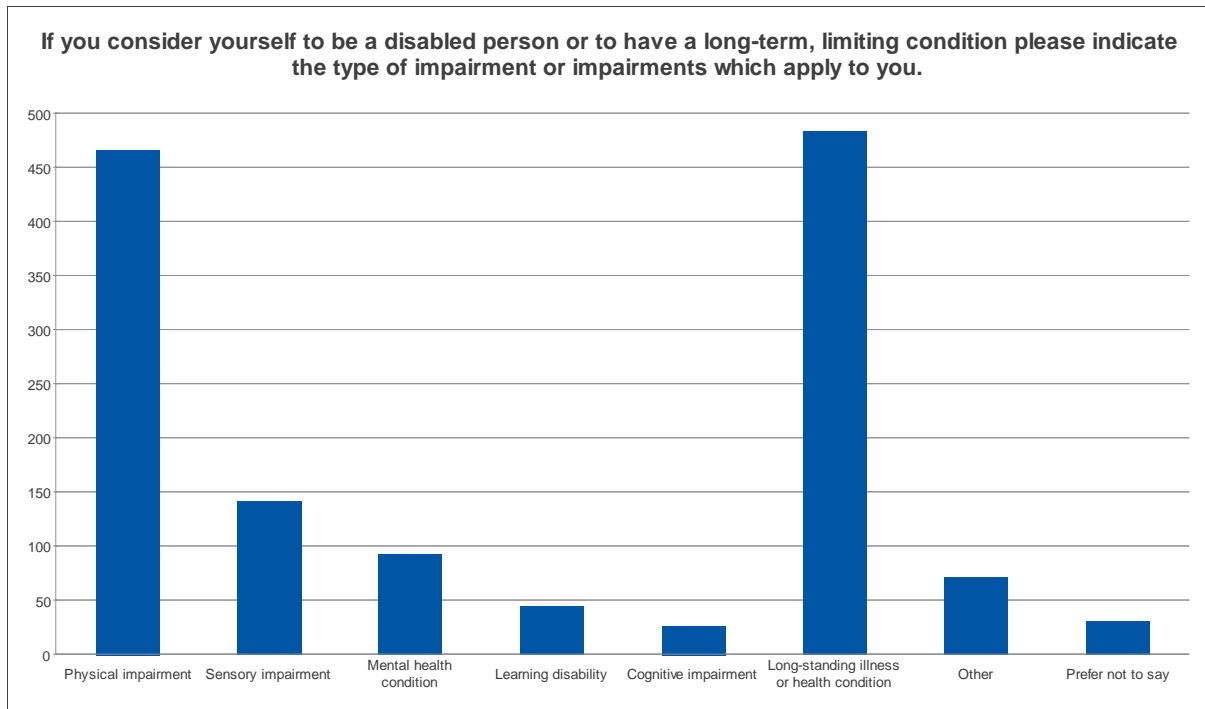


**Ethnicity** – 91% of people said they were white, 1.6% said they were from a different ethnic group and 7.3% preferred not to say.

**Disability** – 13% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled or to have a long-term, limiting condition. Eastfield, Filey and Selby had the highest proportions of people who considered themselves disabled.



Most of those who answered “Yes” to the disability question either said they had a physical impairment or long-standing illness or health condition.



## 6.0 Analysis of the Easy read questionnaires

145 people completed easy read questionnaires. (See Annex 10 for a breakdown of the responses)

74% were library users and 6% were home library users.

People were asked if they agreed that the Council needs to make changes to the library service. 48% said they disagreed and 31% agreed.

62% of respondents said the changes would affect them or affect them a lot.

There was a lot of uncertainty about whether our overall plan would save the £1.6million, with 59% saying they did not know.

73% agreed with sharing library buildings with other services.

58% agreed with asking communities to run libraries with our help.

62% agreed with asking volunteers to help at all our libraries.

41% agreed with us offering more internet services like e-books (32% disagreed)

25% thought libraries run by volunteers would work for their library (37% disagreed)

19% would volunteer.

If their local library closed, 49% said they would travel further to another library; 31% said they would use the online library service; 49% said they would use other things instead, and 36% said it wouldn't affect them if the library closed.

The majority of people walk (59%) or go by car (28%) to get to the library. 71% can get to the library in less than 15 minutes and 97% get there in less than 30 minutes.

The morning is the most popular time of day to go (53%), closely followed by the afternoon (39%).

92% of respondents use libraries monthly or more frequently.

80% of people said they used libraries for books; 32% go for information; 31% to meet friends; 28% for information about where they live; 28% for computers or the internet; 23% for CDs/DVDs; 24% for events and 24% for newspapers and magazines.

The most popular on-line services provided by the library are online reference (33%); access to research (29%); the renew/reserve facility (17%); e-books (15%); and the online catalogue (14%). 21% said they did not use any online services and 20% do not have access to the internet.

Gender - More women (64%) responded than men (36%).

Age – 77% were over 50.

Ethnicity - 93% of people said they were white, 3% said they were from a different ethnic group and 4% preferred not to say.

Disability – 36% of respondents to this easy read questionnaire considered themselves to be disabled or to have a long-term, limiting condition.

Overall, the responses to the easy read questionnaire were very similar to the responses to the questionnaire filled in by the majority of respondents.

## **7.0 Other responses to the consultation**

### **7.1 Petitions**

6 petitions ran during the consultation:-

- **Save North Yorkshire's Libraries**  
Signatories - 2,433
- **Calling for Stokesley Library to remain within County provision and not be a community library and instead be a hybrid model library**  
Signatories – 2,047

- **Against the changes/cut backs and proposed cut back of professional staff at Whitby Library**  
Signatories - 1,677
- **Save Knaresborough Library**  
Signatories – 2,035
- **Protest at the imminent dismissal of the Settle Library staff and request that the County Council retain the present staffing levels at the new library at Limestone View**  
Signatories - 146
- **Starbeck Library: I strongly object to Starbeck Library being downgraded to a library run only by volunteers with the local community having to raise running costs. I would like Starbeck Library to remain as a library funded by the County and retaining its experienced staff**  
Signatories - 444

7.2 The Stokesley, Whitby and Knaresborough petitions had sufficient signatures to trigger a debate at the relevant Area Committee. See attached Annex 12 for the draft minutes from these debates.

7.3 Settle and Stokesley petitions gave people the chance to add comments. The main themes of these were the importance of libraries for communities, and for different groups of people, especially children but also for older people and vulnerable people; the importance of libraries for literacy, information and access to computers; the value of paid staff and requests to keep the local library open. The Stokesley campaign also had pre-printed slips with sentences people could tick if they agreed with them. 509 people ticked 'It needs to have a secure future. An all-volunteer service puts the library at risk' and 490 people ticked 'It is unfair to treat different towns in different ways. We all contribute equally to the cost of the service'

7.4 Two further petitions (for Bedale and Eastfield, with 2,314 and 88 signatures respectively) were received nearly 3 months after the end of the consultation period. The Bedale petition triggered a debate at the Hambleton Area Committee.

## **8.0 Correspondence**

8.1 As well as the questionnaires, letters and emails were received from 192 people. Some letters came via their local MP. Similar comments were made to the ones made in the questionnaires, with a number of people taking the opportunity to expand on what they had said in the questionnaire and to ask specific questions. The main themes from correspondence were the importance of libraries for children, the value of paid staff, the importance of libraries for literacy, concerns that volunteers should not replace staff and the importance of libraries for local communities.

## **9.0 Meetings**

9.1 During the consultation there were a number of opportunities for the public to attend information drop in sessions and meetings across the county. (See Annex 7 for details of all the face to face events) Representatives of the Stronger Communities team attended all meetings and the majority of drop-in information sessions along with a senior member of the library team. It is estimated that overall these face to face events were attended by upwards of 2,500 people.

9.2 Presentations were made at each of the 7 Area Committees and at public meetings arranged by local Members or Parish/town councils in Bedale, Filey, Helmsley, Kirkbymoorside, Knaresborough, Norton, Sherburn and Stokesley. Presentations were also made to Bentham TC, Crosshills PC, Easingwold TC, Easingwold and Villages Forum, Filey TC, Helmsley TC, Norton TC, Pickering TC, Richmond TC, Skipton TC, Stokesley TC, Tadcaster Community Engagement Forum and to the North Yorkshire Forum for Older People, the Learning Disability, and Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Boards and representatives attended the Youth Voice Summit.

9.3 The comments made at meetings echoed many of the comments in the questionnaires, with key themes being the importance of the local library for the community, the value of paid staff and concern about the sustainability of a service run solely by volunteers. There were comments about the value of libraries as places to meet and the impact on vulnerable people in terms of social isolation, and inability to look for jobs if there were no access to computers locally. There were specific questions about the costs for community groups and both concerns about this, and ideas suggested of ways for groups to generate income by turning the library into a community hub hosting a range of services. Library staff and their expertise were praised and there were requests for more libraries to be hybrid libraries; for more staff in proposed hybrid libraries and for there to be staff in all libraries. Peripatetic staff covering several libraries were also suggested. Concern about the availability of volunteers and the need to expand the volunteer base beyond the retired population was stressed in a number of places and linking up with schools suggested.

## **Annexes**

<b>Annex 1</b>	Consultation document
<b>Annex 2</b>	Consultation questionnaire/response form
<b>Annex 3</b>	Easy read consultation document
<b>Annex 4</b>	Easy read questionnaire/response form
<b>Annex 5</b>	Frequently Asked Questions
<b>Annex 6</b>	Library Information Fact Sheets
<b>Annex 7</b>	List of Face to Face Events
<b>Annex 8</b>	Consultation Responses - Overview Report

- Annex 9** Consultation Responses - Individual Library Reports
- Annex 10** Consultation Responses – Easy Read Overview Report
- Annex 11** Petitions summary
- Annex 12** Extracts from minutes of Area Committees that considered petitions