

TITLE OF REPORT: Library Service Review – Public consultation findings

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation with residents and other stakeholders regarding the Library Service Review and to seek approval to commence a 90 day employee consultation period regarding the options presented to the public for consultation. .

Background – Library Service Review

2. Cabinet agreed a further strategic review of the library service in order to ensure that the library service is fit for the future. The purpose of the library service review is to ensure a sustainable and focussed service that will continue to respond to changing public demands and is informed by strategic needs in communities.
3. Public libraries remain a statutory service required by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. This legislation requires a comprehensive and efficient service to meet the needs of the local population. The requirements are broad and do not specify how the service should be delivered.
4. The statutory duty to provide a library service has not been diluted, but there has been recognition as part of judicial reviews that the level of service previously provided by Councils can be reduced as result of severe budgetary pressures. The key challenge is to ensure that service reductions are reasonable and do not disproportionately impact on a specific group of residents, especially those protected by equalities legislation.
5. DCMS has been advised of the review of the library service and the options that have been presented to the public for consultation.

Library service vision

6. In February 2015 Cabinet agreed the a strategic vision for the library service:

A network of Community and Council run libraries where residents can read, learn and innovate, investing in digital infrastructure, focusing on children and young people, improving well-being and supporting residents into employment

Four key objectives were also agreed by Cabinet, in line with the Council plan. These remain relevant and the focus of library service activities.

- ***Children's and young people's education and personal development***
Delivered through the provision of a range of inspiring reader development promotions that encourage the love of reading in children of all ages and engagement initiatives to allow children and young people to be fully involved with the future development of the service.
- ***Digital inclusion, adult education, skills and employability***
Delivered through a programme of lifelong learning events and activities and support for job seekers, through the provision of a supported public Internet service. The service will also offer a wide range of digital learning opportunities and access to cutting edge new technologies. The service will also, through a programme of creative digital technology events, link local people with local digital industries.
- ***Health and wellbeing***
Delivered through supporting targeted health improvement programmes, library specific health initiatives, such as Books on Prescription, and through the well-being benefit of the service in general.
- ***Community capacity building and inclusion***
Delivered through a range of services and activities that ensure local residents have access to services and support to address inequalities and prevent isolation. The library service will actively work to build capacity in communities; develop volunteers and develop strong communities.

Library service - Current access and structure

7. Libraries in Gateshead are currently very accessible. Analysis shows that 79% of residents in Gateshead live within one mile of a static library and 99.7% within two miles. When the provision provided by the volunteer managed libraries is included, 92% of the population live within one mile of a static library. This service is supplemented by Mobile Library, which visits a range of locations in the borough that are not close to a static library.
8. The current library service in Gateshead is:
 - a. **Gateshead Central Library**
 - b. **Area Libraries:** Blaydon, Birtley, Leam Lane and Wickham
 - c. **Local Libraries** – Chopwell, Crawcrook, Felling, Pelaw, Rowlands Gill, Wrekenton
 - d. **Readers at Home Service** – a borough wide service commissioned through RVS for Gateshead residents unable to access a local library.
 - e. **Mobile library** – provides basic access to the service in parts of the borough not close to a local library.
 - f. **Online services** – a range of online services including the lending of e-books.
9. The service is enhanced through the provision of volunteer managed libraries – Dunston, Low Fell, Ryton, Sunderland Road and Winlaton. There is also a community book collection at Lobley Hill.

Proposed options for change

10. Cabinet received a report on 12th July 2016 and established the Options to be considered by the review. The full options are listed in Appendix 1. The five options propose a Council statutory network varying between six and eight libraries and may result in the

following service reductions.

- **Whickham** – cease or become volunteer operated - Options 2, 3 and 4
- **Crawcrook** – cease or become volunteer operated – Options 1, 3 and 4
- **Pelaw** – cease or become volunteer operated – Options 1, 3 and 4
- **Felling** – cease or become volunteer operated – Option 1, 2 and 4
- **Rowlands Gill** – cease or become volunteer operated - Option 1, 2 and 3
- **Mobile Library** – discontinue operation or seek external funding - Option 1, 2 and 3

11. In addition to the four options identified by the Council for consultation, respondents were asked to identify potential alternative approaches, Option 5.

Library service performance and need

12. Libraries remain highly valued across Gateshead and have a high level of business compared to of library services in the region. Gateshead issues approximately 62% more books per resident than Newcastle. In Gateshead there are nearly 40,000 active library users. The use of public libraries is however falling locally, regionally and nationally.

13. Data on service performance, cost and social need was provided as part of the consultation. This data is provided in Appendices 2 and 3.

Consultation methodology

14. The public consultation ran from 26 July to 8 October 2016. A service review questionnaire was available in all libraries and a range of other community locations. The questionnaire was also available online. There were supporting face to face sessions to assist any resident wishing to respond to the consultation. Additionally there were focus groups held in libraries that were potentially 'at risk'.

15. In addition to consultation undertaken with residents, partners, including schools and existing volunteer operated libraries, councillors, employees and Trade Unions were consulted.

16. The focus of the consultation was to test the impact of the proposals, especially with local residents. The consultation also sought to test the viability of alternative service provision.

Petitions and other correspondence

17. The consultation process triggered the creation and submission of a number of petitions. These were; Keep Crawcrook Library (613 signatures online and 194 paper signatures), Save Whickham Library (450 signatures online, plus 510 signatures on a paper petition), Save Rowlands Gill library (68 signatures), Save Felling Library (252 signatures, plus 51 signatures from children at Falla Park School) and Save Pelaw Library (621 signatures). There was also an online petition against the establishment of new volunteer libraries, this received 83 signatures.

18. The total number of residents signing different petitions was 2842

19. A small number of letters were received from individual library users. Letters and individual submissions, from 163 children were also received in support of their local library.

Consultation – summary response and findings

20. There was a very strong public response to the consultation across the borough, but in particular from residents who use a library that was identified as ‘at risk’. In total there were 2558 responses to the online and paper questionnaire and a total of 42 residents attended focus groups. Appendix 4 details the number of responses for all libraries.

21. The outcome the consultation is detailed in Appendix 4. This appendix includes details of the number of responses from each library, the likelihood of respondents using an alternative library, views on the establishment of volunteer libraries and the demographic breakdown of respondents.

22. The level of support for each option presented below in Table 1:

Table 1 – Level of support for Options	% of respondents stating they either “strongly agreed” or “tended to agree” with this Option
Option 1 – Network of 7 Council libraries – retaining Whickham	32.6%
Option 2 – Network of 8 Council libraries – retaining Crawcrook and Pelaw.	28.7%
Option 3 – Network of 8 Council libraries – retaining Felling and Rowlands Gill	19.8%
Option 4 – Network of 6 Council libraries – Mobile Library retained	18.9%

23. Analysis of alternative approaches is also provided in Appendix 4. The most frequent suggestion from members of the public as an alternative approach was the reduction in opening hours to help prevent the loss of local provision.

Impact on residents

24. Many respondents have written eloquently and powerfully on the impact the potential loss of their local library would have. Appendix 5 provides a very small sample of statements for each of the ‘at risk’ libraries.

25. Library users were asked the question “What would the effect of closure of your local library be on you or your family?” Some respondents identified multiple impacts, some a single impact. Detailed analysis of all this extensive qualitative data shows a number of key emerging themes. The percentages given below show the frequency a specific ‘impact’ was mentioned.

- Sadness and distress at the loss of an important community facility 58%
- Loss of valued activities, for example rhymetimes, readers groups and local history groups 45%
- The challenge / difficulty travelling to an alternative library 43%
- The impact on children's education and reading for pleasure 22%
- Increased social isolation for more elderly residents 21%
- Loss of health and well-being benefits of reading 16%
- Challenges for job seekers 4%

26. Overall residents have expressed the community value of a local library. The benefits that customers gain from a local library are diverse, but the contribution to people's well-being and community cohesion has been emphasised. The majority of respondents, 61.6%, have said they are fairly or very unlikely to use an alternative library.

27. The focus groups held in each of the 'at risk' libraries reinforced the findings from the questionnaire. Appendix 6 provides example transcribed statements from each of the focus groups. The focus groups conveyed the community benefit of a local library and often expressed the view that the library was the only Council service left in a community.

Consultation response from schools and volunteer operated libraries

28. All schools in close proximity to a library 'at risk' were contacted for their views. Views were sought on the impact of the loss of a local library, the likelihood of using an alternative library and their interest in future out reach services.

29. Nine schools responded to the school specific consultation. Respondents expressed the value to local children of being able to use the library independently or with school. Schools have stated that they would not be able to access an alternative library, but showed interest in potential future outreach services to schools. Appendix 7 provides detail of this consultation.

30. One written response was received from a volunteer managed library. This response expressed the value of receiving professional support from the service and the need for this in the future. It also confirmed that that medium or longer term financial sustainability of volunteer operated libraries remains uncertain.

Consultation response from employees

31. Employees were consulted using a simple online questionnaire. Questions were posed on the potential alternative or additional efficiencies not presented in the options, the potential impact of the review on service customer and communities, and their views on the impact of the review on employees. Appendix 8 details this consultation.

32. Thirty five employees responded out of a workforce of ninety, representing a 39% response rate. Employees expressed consistent views regarding the impact of service reductions on residents. These reflected the views from library customers themselves.

33. Employees most frequently suggested achieving service budget reductions through opening hour reductions. Employees also mentioned the need to consider service changes at Gateshead Central Library, for example changes to the Sound Gallery, also taking a more commercial approach and charging more for events and activities.

Mitigation assessment and equalities issues

34. The library service consultation has focussed on gathering a detailed understanding of impact, but also an assessment of the potential effectiveness of mitigation. Analysis of the data in Appendix 4 shows that only a minority of customers, 38.4% overall are likely to use an alternative library. The exception to this is respondents at Felling Library where 60% stated that they were likely to use an alternative library.
35. Considering all protected groups identified by equalities legislation 'age' is the group that it is most relevant to consider in more detail. The consultation received a high percentage of returns from respondents over the age of 65. Analysis also in Appendix 4 shows that there is not a significant difference between respondents under 65 and those over 65 in respect of their likelihood to use an alternative library.

Appendix 4 also contains an analysis of the level of interest in alternative library services as mitigation. Across all respondents the most popular alternative service was libraries e-book service, with 35% of respondents expressing an interest in this service. Analysis in appendix 4 shows variation between 'at risk' libraries, with Mobile Library respondents expressing the highest level of interest in the Readers at Home service, 22.7%.

Recommendations

36. Cabinet is requested to:

- (i) Note the findings of the library service consultation
- (ii) Approve the options described in Appendix 1 as the basis for employee consultation. A further report will be presented to Cabinet on 23 February 2016, following the Council's formal consultation on its budget, for a decision on implementation.
- (iii) Approve continued work between services within the Council (Adult Social Care, Health and Children's Services) and other partner organisations and endorse the acceleration of work to consider opportunities to enhance and integrate the libraries offer as part of the early help model.

For the following reason:

To ensure that the Council provides a Library Service which meets its statutory duties and which is sustainable into the future.

Policy Context

1. The Library Service supports a range of priorities within the Council Plan and Vision 2030. These priorities include community engagement, digital inclusion, skills development and health improvement.

Background

2. Cabinet received a report on 18 March 2014 regarding the Library Service Review. This established key principles for the review in 2015-16. These principles are still relevant and have guided the approach for the current review as follows:
 - To adopt a commissioning approach for the library service. This will ensure that the service is designed to respond to Council priorities, whilst still meeting statutory requirements.
 - It is proposed that the review evaluates options for different service delivery models. These delivery models will include the use of new technology and alternative ways of procuring the service.
 - The review will consider value for money and effectiveness of the library network. This will include an assessment of the need for the mobile library.
 - The review will consider to what extent changes in technology, for example, the development of e-books, are part of a remodelled service.
3. The review will need to consider redefining the statutory service in Gateshead. Geographic access to the service will remain a key principle to be considered as will the service's potential to meet and respond to specific community needs which may arise from the review and changes to other Council services in communities
4. The review will look at options for library buildings, including any opportunities for co-location with other council services and the potential to declare buildings surplus to requirements. The review will also assess the need for capital investment in library buildings, especially those of strategic importance to the service.

Consultation

5. Consultation was undertaken between 26 July and 8 October 2016. Consultation was undertaken with residents, partners, councillors, employees and Trade Unions.
6. 2558 consultation questionnaires were completed. The focus of the consultation was to assess the impact of potential changes to the library service network and the viability of residents using an alternative library. Detailed consultation findings are presented in Appendix 2.

Overall consultees identified what the potential impact in communities might be from the proposals; how these might be mitigated and suggestions for alternative approaches.

7. All Cabinet members have been consulted regarding the proposals.

8. Consultation has taken place with all ward Councillors in advance of the start of the public consultation. Additionally all ward Councillors have been consulted during the period 5th October – 28th October. These consultations have allowed Councillors to receive feedback on preliminary consultation findings. Appendix 9 summarises issues raised by Councillors in these consultations.
9. The Trade Unions have been consulted on the options presented in this report. Appendix 10 provides a response from the Trade Union.

What was consulted on - Specific Library Proposals 2017/18

10. Budget reductions for 2016-18 approved by Council and Cabinet are £700,000. In order to achieve these savings four options have been identified that would be the basis of a three month consultation process:

Option 1 - A Council and Community network

The proposal for consultation is:

Council network

- Central Library
- Area libraries – Whickham, Blaydon, Birtley, Leam Lane
- Neighbourhood libraries – Chopwell and Wrekenton
- Outreach, children's service and the Readers at Home service
- Digital services – library resources delivered online.

Community network

- Volunteer operated libraries
- Community book collections

Option 2 - A Council and Community network

The proposal for consultation is:

Council network

- Central Library
- Area libraries – Blaydon, Birtley, Leam Lane
- Neighbourhood libraries – Pelaw, Crawcrook, Chopwell and Wrekenton
- Outreach, children's service and the Readers at Home service
- Digital services – library resources delivered online.

Community network

- Volunteer operated libraries
- Community book collections

Option 3 - A Council and Community network

The proposal for consultation is:

Council network

- Central Library
- Area libraries – Blaydon, Birtley, Leam Lane
- Neighbourhood libraries – Felling, Rowlands Gill, Chopwell and Wrekenton

- Outreach, children's service and the Readers at Home service
- Digital services – library resources delivered online.

Community network

- Volunteer operated libraries
- Community book collections

Option 4 - A Council and Community network

The proposal for consultation is:

Council network

- Central Library
- Area libraries – Blaydon, Birtley, Leam Lane
- Neighbourhood libraries – Chopwell and Wrekenton
- Mobile Library
- Outreach, children's service and the Readers at Home service
- Digital services – library resources delivered online.

Community network

- Volunteer operated libraries
- Community book collections

Option 5 – An alternative approach

The public consultation process allows for the identification of an option not specified by the Council. This might be a different network of Council libraries or a different approach completely. Analysis of this aspect of the consultation is included in Appendix 4.

Alternative options

11. The public consultation process allowed for the identification of an option not specified by the Council. This might be a different network of Council libraries or a different approach completely. The viability of alternative options would need to be tested.

Implications of Recommended proposal

12. Resources:

- Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that implementation of the options in this report would achieve the planned revenue savings of £450,000.
- Human Resources Implications** - Human Resources advise that for each Option consulted upon the following number of posts will be deleted: Option 1 13.3 FTE, Option 2 15.9 FTE, Option 3 14 FTE and Option 4 14.7 FTE. Voluntary redundancies are being sought.
- Property Implications** - There are no property implications resulting from the recommendations in this report. Property implications will be detailed in a subsequent report to Cabinet.

13.Risk Management Implication -

The public consultation process has identified that only a minority of customers who use an 'at risk' library state they are likely to be able to use an alternative library. More extensive service reductions may increase the number of residents needing to use an alternative library and the ability of the service to offer viable mitigation.

The Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance advises that any budget reduction options give rise to the risk that the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service might be compromised and challenges may ensue; there needs to be clarity around what minimum compliance with that duty involves.

The Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance also advises that the risk of a challenge relating to compliance with the statutory duty level of service provision will increase should the service be reduced beyond the Options considered in this report.

14.Equality and Diversity Implications -

There is evidence from the review that the library service is heavily used by specific protected groups, including women, older residents and residents with disabilities. Analysis of impacts on specific protected groups is ongoing and will be analysed within the associated Equality Impact Assessment.

15.Crime and Disorder Implications – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

16.Health Implications - The library service contributes to well-being and the provision and access to health information. This report seeks permission to conduct further consultation with health partners.

17.Sustainability Implications - There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

18.Human Rights Implications - There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

19.Area and Ward Implications - There are no ward implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Ward implications will be detailed in a subsequent report.

Background Information -

20.The Cabinet report of 12th July 2016 proposed a review of the library service and identified a number of options, which were the basis of the public consultation.

Appendix 2 – Council Operated Libraries – Performance data 2015/16

Library	Library users 14/15	Library users 15/16	% change	Opening hours	Book issues 14/15	Book issues 15/16	% change	ICT hrs 14/15	ICT hrs 15/16	% change	Budget (16/17): Buildings/ Employee/ Books	Cost per book issue
Gateshead Central Library	16711	16883	1.0	52	268,142	248,120	-7.5	45828	38618	-15.7	£500,216	£2.02
Birtley Library	2550	2412	-5.4	50	47,781	45,059	-5.7	4371	4063	-7.0	£121,539	£2.70
Blaydon Library	3368	3293	-2.2	50	61,136	63,053	3.1	6649	6174	-7.1	£142,785	£2.26
Chopwell Library	843	883	4.7	36	17,747	12,614	-28.9	2140	1410	-34.1	£45,005	£3.57
Crawcrook Library	2120	2146	1.2	39	38,767	33,884	-12.6	2995	1915	-36.1	£113,654	£3.35
Felling Library	1682	1564	-7.0	36	20,793	15,239	-26.7	3729	2408	-35.4	£72,787	£4.78
Leam Lane Library	2501	2406	-3.8	50	38,715	32,901	-15.0	7684	6722	-12.5	£158,225	£4.81
Mobile Library	440	421	-4.3	26	39,667	36,336	-8.4	0	0	0.0	£80,379	£2.21
Pelaw Library	1290	1200	-7.0	39	24,667	21,073	-14.6	4635	3995	-13.8	£83,682	£3.97
Rowlands Gill Library	1421	1351	-4.9	39	33,591	25,120	-25.2	2393	1262	-47.3	£54,883	£2.18
Whickham Library	3577	3495	-2.3	50	79,601	73,005	-8.3	3982	2986	-25.0	£155,204	£2.13
Wrekenton Library	923	854	-7.5	32	16,831	11,448	-32.0	2815	1947	-30.8	£8,660	£0.76
Total	37426	36908	-1.4		687,438	617,852	-10.1	87221	71500	-18.0	£1,537,019	£2.49

Library	Events attendance 14/15	Events attendance 15/16	% change	% of library service users in library catchment who "only used this library"	% of library service users in library catchment who use "this library and other libraries"	% of library service users in library catchment who "only used other libraries"
Gateshead Central Library	20,687	19,327	-6.6			
Birtley Library	3,902	6,846	75.4	74	12	14
Blaydon Library	2,968	3,332	12.3	69	12	19
Chopwell Library	1,327	983	-25.9	67	19	14
Crawcrook Library	3,328	2,552	-23.3	56	23	21
Felling Library	2,812	1,707	-39.3	18	12	70
Leam Lane Library	2,419	3,444	42.4	45	22	33
Mobile Library						
Pelaw Library	2,056	1,977	-3.8	53	16	31
Rowlands Gill Library	2,110	1,962	-7.0	46	24	30
Whickham Library	5,987	8,626	44.1	70	22	8
Wrekenton Library	2,092	975	-53.4	21	15	64
Total	49,688	51,731	4.1			

Wrekenton operational costs - employees to operate Wrekenton Library are employed by The Gateshead Housing Company. Costs provided cover library service employee input and the purchase of books.

Cost per book issue - this is a simple measure of value for money. It does not reflect the full delivery of any library, for example the provision of ICT facilities or the range of events and activities provided.

Events attendance - events include children's activities, author event, readers groups, local history activities and health promotion events.

Appendix 3 Gateshead Council libraries - Social need data for library catchments

Library	No of active users	Cost of library 2015/16	Population of library catchment area	% of catchment population in 30% most deprived (IMD 2015)	% households with no car	% households have never used the internet	% claimant unemployment (JSA/ Universal credit)	Library
Gateshead Central	16,711	£500,216	79,977	55	42	18	3.1	Gateshead Central
Birtley	2,412	£148,290	13,945	36	34	21	2.1	Birtley
Blaydon	3,293	£156,719	21,702	24	31	20	2.2	Blaydon
Chopwell	883	£39,260	3,609	100	37	19	4.0	Chopwell
Crawcrook	2,146	£112,966	17,330	0	23	18	1.6	Crawcrook
Felling	1,564	£62,787	9,055	64	51	22	3.7	Felling
Leam Lane	2,406	£165,534	17,503	60	38	23	2.6	Leam Lane
Pelaw	1,200	£83,090	8,703	46	36	20	1.9	Pelaw
Rowlands Gill	1,351	£54,601	7,672	37	25	20	1.7	Rowlands Gill
Whickham	3,495	£154,328	22,124	15	24	18	1.6	Whickham
Wrekenton	854	£10,067	5,039	67	49	23	3.3	Wrekenton

- 1) **Library catchments** - these have been defined through the mapping of library customers
- 2) **IMD - Index of Multiple Deprivation** - The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 is the official measure of relative deprivation for neighbourhoods in England. It combines information from seven different dimensions of deprivation to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.
- 3) **Mobile Library** - it is not possible to supply social need data in the same way for Mobile Library stops across the borough.
- 4) **No of active library users** - this is a standard recognised measure that library services use and is a count of customers who have borrowed a book in the previous year.
- 5) The cost of the Central Library identified, is the cost of the frontline lending library service. This allows comparison of cost per issue with other libraries.

Appendix 4 – Library Service Review – Consultation detailed analysis

1. Number of respondents to consultation for individual libraries

Table 1: Which library do you normally use?	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Central	517	20.4%
Birtley	123	4.9%
Blaydon	140	5.5%
Chopwell	34	1.3%
Crawcrook	371	14.7%
Felling	80	3.2%
Leam Lane	64	2.5%
Mobile Library	141	5.6%
Pelaw	166	6.6%
Rowlands Gill	173	6.8%
Whickham	623	24.6%
Wrekenton	9	.4%
None	90	3.6%

2. Likelihood of accessing of travelling to an alternative library

Table 2 below summarises customers views on the likelihood they would use an alternative library. The table shows the totals of 'very likely' and 'quite likely' to use an alternative Council library. In this respect Felling library stands out, with 60% of respondents stating that they are 'very likely' or 'quite likely' to use the Central Library.

46.6% of respondents from Crawcrook and 41.6% of Rowlands Gill respondents stated that they are 'very' or 'quite likely' to use Blaydon Library. The consultation permitted customers indicate that they might use more than one alternative library. Table 2 below shows the total percentage of customers, who indicated that they were at least 'quite' likely to use an alternative library.

Table 2: % of respondents at 'at risk' library who stated they were Quite or very likely to use another Council provided library

Library	
Crawcrook	46.6% (Blaydon)
Felling	60.0% (Gateshead Central)
Mobile Library	31.1% (various)
Pelaw	30.6% (various)
Rowlands Gill	41.6% (Blaydon)
Whickham	33.7% (Blaydon / Central)

3. Adjustments in travel behaviour for library customers

The consultation sought to find out how library service users currently travel to the library they normally use. In assessing the impact of possible changes the consultation has also gathered information on how customers would travel to an alternative library, the likelihood that they would use an alternative library and what that journey would cost in time and money.

Table 3 below shows the analysis of how customers travel to the library they most frequently use, with over 50% of customers walking to a local library. The table also shows how this pattern of travel would change for customers accessing an alternative library.

When considering accessing an alternative library, car usage stays approximately the same, with very few people anticipating walking, but with a significant shift to public transport. However, 30% of all library customers who use 'at risk' libraries have stated they "would not travel" to an alternative library.

Table 3: How customers currently travel to the library they use and how they would travel to an alternative.

Response	How customers currently travel	How customers would travel to an alternative library
Private transport e.g. car, motorbike	36.82%	38.1%
Public transport e.g. bus, metro	9.16%	25.7%
On foot	50.79%	4.5%
Bicycle	1.03%	0.9%
Other	2.4%	1.7%
Would not travel	N/A	29.1%

Table 4 below considers travel to an alternative library, but for each individual library that is ‘at risk’. Felling Library has the highest percentage of customers who have indicated that they would travel to an alternative library. The highest percentage of customers using an ‘at risk’ library that have indicated they would not travel are customers of the Mobile Library.

Table 4: How would customers expect travel to an alternative library?						
	Crawcrook	Whickham	Felling	Mobile Library	Pelaw	Rowlands Gill
Private transport e.g. car,	43.6%	42.3%	29.3%	22.5%	22.4%	47.3%
Public transport e.g. bus,	31.3%	20.2%	36.8%	26.1%	27.3%	21.9%
On foot	2.6%	1.4%	16.0%	5.1%	12.4%	2.4%
Bicycle	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%	1.9%	0.6%
Would not travel	21.1%	34.0%	14.2%	44.2%	31.1%	26.6%
Other	0.6%	1.4%	2.8%	1.5%	5.0%	1.2%

4. Time taken to travel to an alternative library

The Library Review included an analysis of travel times to alternative libraries. It was important to test these findings with the public.

Table 5 below shows the length of time that respondents estimate it would take to travel to an alternative library. Approximately 50% of all respondents estimate that a journey would take them over 20 minutes. A journey of this length will be a considerable barrier for some customers.

Table 5: Estimated length of journey to an alternative library						
	Crawcrook	Whickham	Felling	Mobile Library	Pelaw	Rowlands Gill
Under 10 minutes	8.6%	3.9%	13.7%	9.5%	3.5%	7.8%
10-20 minutes	39.5%	31.5%	31.4%	21.4%	26.4%	31.4%
over 20 minutes	45.3%	54.2%	41.2%	47.6%	55.6%	52.9%
Don't know / not sure	6.7%	10.5%	13.7%	21.4%	14.6%	7.8%

5. Cost of travel to an alternative library

The cost of travelling to an alternative library was also investigated. A significant percentage of respondents indicated they are eligible for free travel, but this needs to be combined with knowledge of the length of a potential journey to assess if a customer is likely to travel. For example the Mobile Library has the highest proportion of customers with a 'free travel pass', but over 50% of alternative journeys would be over 20 minutes.

Table 6: Estimated cost of journey to an alternative library						
	Crawcrook	Whickham	Felling	Mobile Library	Pelaw	Rowlands Gill
Free pass/ OAP	29.2%	29.6%	33.6%	49.6%	28.9%	22.6%
Up to £3	19.9%	21.8%	18.7%	8.4%	10.7%	23.2%
Up to £5	21.7%	17.7%	21.5%	13.7%	22.2%	19.4%
Up to £7	6.3%	3.5%	2.8%	3.1%	5.4%	7.7%
Over £7	3.6%	5.2%	3.7%	6.9%	7.4%	4.5%
Don't know	19.3%	22.3%	19.6%	18.3%	25.5%	22.6%

6. Support for additional volunteer libraries

The consultation has investigated the level of support for additional volunteer managed libraries. Public opinion is divided on this. Examination of public comments shows that many customers do see volunteer libraries as a possible solution and a way of sustaining a basic service. Other respondents are strongly against volunteer libraries and comment extensively on the importance of employee expertise.

Table 7 below shows the analysis of responses relating to volunteer libraries.

Table 7 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the establishment of new volunteer libraries.	
Response	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	11.9%
Tend to agree	28.3%
Tend to disagree	21.6%
Strongly disagree	26.6%
Don't know/Not sure	11.5%

Table 8 below shows the number of potential volunteers by 'at risk' library. This initial number of potential volunteers shows some viability at all libraries at this stage, with the exception of Felling. If volunteer libraries are progressed there would be a full recruitment process in all communities to build on this initial response as part of the consultation.

Table 8 – Number of respondents identifying an interest in volunteering	
"At risk" library	Number of Respondents
Crawcrook	24
Felling	2
Pelaw	14
Rowlands Gill	23
Whickham	39
Other	31

7. Demography of respondents

The demography of respondents is important to consider alongside the wider impact analysis, especially age. **Table 7** below shows that the respondents are disproportionately older. Adults between the age of 35 and 64 are represented as would be expected, but respondents over this age are twice as numerous as would be expected.

Age of respondent	% of all respondents	Gateshead population
16 - 24	1.3%	13.3%
25 - 34	7.6%	16.6%
35 - 49	19.6%	23.7%
50 - 64	26.0%	23.4%
65 - 74	25.2%	12.3%
75+	20.3%	10.8%

Analysis in Table 8 shows a comparison between respondents under and over 65 years old and their likelihood to travel to an alternative library. Further detailed analysis showed that older residents were however far more likely to need to use public transport for a journey to an alternative library.

‘At risk library’	% of 16-64 likely to travel to an alternative	% of 65+ likely to travel to an alternative library
Crawcrook	48.3%	42.2%
Felling	59.4%	60.8%
Pelaw	26.1%	32.6%
Rowlands Gill	38.0%	45.6%
Whickham	35.3%	29.9%
Mobile	35.2%	23.0%

8. Potential mitigation through alternative library service provision

Table 9 below shows the degree of interest in alternative library services across of the 'at risk' libraries. Although across all consultation respondents 35% were interested the library service e-books service, a lower level of interest is expressed by respondents from 'at risk' libraries.

Table 9a - Alternative library service : Free downloadable e-books.	
'At risk' library	% of respondents stating they are fairly or very likely to use this service.
Crawcrook	20.2
Felling	26.5
Pelaw	25.3
Rowlands Gill	24.8
Whickham	22.9
Mobile	4.9

The analysis below shows a relative low level of interest in community book collections. There is a slightly higher level of interest in library outreach services to deliver specific activities.

Table 9b - Alternative Library Service - Community book collections.	
'At risk' library	% of respondents stating they are fairly or very likely to use this service.
Crawcrook	11.3
Felling	16.3
Pelaw	14.5
Rowlands Gill	13.3
Whickham	14.0
Mobile	6.3

Table 9c - Alternative Library Service : Outreach activities.	
'At risk' library	% of respondents stating they are fairly or very likely to use this service.
Crawcrook	17.2
Felling	23.8
Pelaw	22.3
Rowlands Gill	17.9

Whickham	17.9
Mobile	0.7

Mobile library respondents have shown the highest level of interest in the Readers at Home Service. This reflects the elderly demographic of users of the Mobile Library.

Table 9d - Alternative Library Service: Readers at Home Service.	
'At risk' library	% of respondents stating they are fairly or very likely to use this service.
Crawcrook	4.6
Felling	11.2
Pelaw	9.0
Rowlands Gill	5.2
Whickham	5.5
Mobile	22.7

Appendix 5 – Library Service Review – Sample impact statements from ‘at risk’ libraries

This Appendix contains a sample of statements provided by respondents in response to the question, “What would be the impact of your local library closing on you or your family?” The statements have been selected to show the range of issues that have been raised.

Crawcrook Library – statements impact statements from 6 respondents

I use Crawcrook Library a lot. I have no family living near me and the fact that it is there helps me to feel less lonely. I use my mobility scooter to get around locally, it would not take me to Blaydon and it's quite a walk from the bus stop to the library there. Can I just say, apart from the fact that closing Crawcrook Library would impact greatly on me, I am sure it would be a huge miss to the mums and their little ones who use it every week.

Loss of Crawcrook Library would mean I would be deprived of human contact, independence, education, interaction with people I meet en route and physical exercise. Visiting the library gives me a purpose to come out of my home, it provides escapism through some books, stimulates my body and mind, so avoiding depression, lethargy, obesity etc. It would lead to social isolation, poorer health and well-being.

If Crawcrook Library were to close then I wouldn't get out of the house so much. My children wouldn't read or use the library as much. The next nearest library is a 15 minute bus ride away in Blaydon. We would no longer be able to walk to the library so an extra cost would be imposed on my family as the car or bus would have to be used. The most likely result would be the family would no longer use Gateshead Libraries at all. The community would suffer and a central hub of the community would be lost.

Closure of Crawcrook Library would mean having to travel to Blaydon or other libraries to obtain books. Currently, for health reasons, I am unable to drive so it would mean struggling to use public transport to get to a library. This is temporary for me, however, I am sure that this will always be the case for a large number of people. I am the only user of the library in my household, however, I can see the impact on young families who are struggling financially. Having access to free books to encourage young children to think, question and learn can only be a good thing and it is appalling that this service is being taken away from the community. This again discriminates against the poorer elements of society!!

My daughter would not be able to attend rhyme time as her grandparent who takes her does not drive. Therefore, she would miss out on singing, dancing and interacting with other children. She also loves to change her library book every week and would not be able to do this either. My grandmother is in a wheelchair and loves to be pushed along to the library to pick her own books and we are unable to get her to a different library by car.

The closure of Crawcrook library would mean I would have to travel to Blaydon on the bus. I have not got much money left after I pay the bills as I am not working, so I could not afford the bus fare to Blaydon. I use the library for my job searches, if I cannot do that at the library and cannot afford my bus fare to Blaydon, I cannot fill in my universal job match

for the Jobcentre, so will get my money stopped. This will mean that I won't be able to pay my bills or rent and end up on the street. This would be devastating to me and my family.

Felling Library – sample impact statements from 9 respondents

At the moment while I am still mobile and all my faculties are still intact I can go elsewhere, but other members of this library (Felling) can't. So, closing this place would cause great hardship to them as well inconvenience me. I use this library every day that it's open.

Loss of Felling Library would mean that I have to travel further. I need to use the library for books and using the internet for job searches is essential.

I would be devastated if Felling Library were to close. My life would not be the same. I am 85 years old but feel so strongly that I recently attended a council meeting to plead with councillors not to make cuts to my local library at Felling. Reading is my life. Don't ruin my life.

Closure of Felling Library would lead to increased social isolation for my parents and their friends.

Felling Library is an essential service for the community. A lot of elderly people can't travel far and they use the local library as it is easy for them to do so. The library is warm, welcoming and friendly. The staff members go above and beyond their duties to help every customer (they are brilliant).

I have the impression that the Council does not care about Felling. I have the impression that the Council thinks that books, libraries and public computers are not important to wellbeing, education, training and a healthy community. We recently moved to the area and the library is one of only a few facilities nearby, we value it as part of a community which has few public services.

I use Felling Library for information, ordering books from other libraries and as a meeting place. As a retired person, I can even get to the library in bad weather as it's not too far to travel.

The closure of Felling Library would be very inconvenient. I look forward to visiting the library. As I am disabled, I would not be able to carry books from another library and would be unable to go to another library in winter weather.

I have been going to Felling library ever since I was a baby. The caring staff taught me how to read and encouraged me to read lots of different types of books. I go to Felling library as often as I possibly can. When I am not at school I love to go and help out at the weekly rhymetime. Some of the books I have borrowed have taught me how to knit, crochet and sew....We think it will be a devastating blow to the local community if these changes go ahead. And what will all the children who visit with the schools do and what will happen to all the babies at rhymetime and the old people who meet there to make, and see their friends?

Mobile Library - statements impact statements from 7 respondents

Both my mam and I use the mobile library. This service is very important to us as it would be more difficult to go to other libraries to get books and carry them home on the bus. It would take 3 buses to get to Central library and the journey takes an hour!

I am very disabled. The only pleasure I have is reading. The Mobile Library is essential to me. It is the only access I have to the books I love.

I do not use the mobile, but my parents do. My dad is an avid reader - he would feel the loss of the Mobile Library tremendously. He is a carer for my ill mam and dislikes being away from her for any great length of time. He has to use public transport and finds walking any distance a big problem. If he had to go to another library to get his books he would feel under pressure, worrying about the time it was taking and would not necessarily pick up enough books to keep him going for a few weeks. Carrying them would also be an issue. He would have to use taxis more. The elderly and infirm in society are often a neglected group, yet usually, have paid into the system for their entire lives.

I'm aged 78, a widow living alone. The Mobile Library comes every fortnight. I love to read as it helps me with my lonely life. Please keep the library- it's a lifeline to a lot of people like me.

I would be devastated if there was no Mobile Library as I would not be able to get books. If I had to travel to another library, I would have to get buses (possibly 2 buses) and carry books on and off them. When the weather gets worse, it will not be possible to travel as I am 80.

If there was no Mobile Library, I wouldn't be able to use another library as they are all too far away. As I don't have transport and have difficulty walking, it would mean I would have to get taxis to and from the library and this would be expensive.

The Mobile Library is a godsend for older people. Travelling to another library would mean using buses and carrying books may be a problem.

Pelaw Library - statements impact statements from 7 respondents

Pelaw Library is close to my home, so if it were to close my library use would decrease dramatically. I wouldn't travel to Leam Lane but would reluctantly use Hebburn Library which is far closer and easier to access on public transport (1 bus rather than 2). I don't have a computer, so keeping in touch with my family would be harder. My elderly relatives use the library as a mid point between journeys as it's a safe place to stop and rest. It is warm and welcoming. They read the papers and chat to staff. My mother has taken up reading again after staff encouraged her to borrow large print books. Children use the library after school. They can test their independence and social standing in the community as staff treat them as book borrowers and customers rather than simply 'children'. Pelaw library is the hub of the community. There's no other council presence here. Do we have to continue our council tax payments if our services are being reduced?

I am an 82 year old widow. I use Pelaw Library every week and take at least 3 books at a time. It would not be possible to travel to other libraries. Pelaw library is a vital service to the community for all age groups. Please, please do not close Pelaw library. It would be a great loss to me. I live alone and depend on books to keep my mind stimulated.

I wouldn't be able to use the computer service at all. I have mobility problems so couldn't go elsewhere. It would totally cut me off from the community. In Pelaw Library, there are always people for me to talk to and to go to if I need any help. I wouldn't be able to get my hearing aid batteries and I wouldn't be able to get my books which I rely on.

Closing Pelaw Library will seriously affect my life. My benefits could stop as I wouldn't be able to access the internet to job hunt. I don't have the funds to use public transport to reach another library every day and I can't walk that far as I have arthritis.

Pelaw Library is my lifeline. It is where I go for my books and to see other people. There are always people there to talk to and to get any help or information I may need. The staff help me with everything. My family also uses the library. It is a safe place for children to go and to develop a love of books. I would feel isolated and a burden to my family without Pelaw Library.

The effect of closing Pelaw Library will be detrimental to and devastating for the local community. Many residents of the area rely on these facilities as a lifeline to prevent isolation and loneliness for vulnerable people.

I would be utterly devastated if Pelaw Library closed. I am elderly and need Pelaw Library for all my books as I can't travel anywhere else due to illness.

Rowlands Gill Library – sample statements impact statements from 7 respondents

It would be awful if Rowlands Gill Library closed. I go to the library when I get the bus to the shops. I couldn't afford to spend the bus fare to get to Chopwell Library.

I can't always afford to travel so my teenage children and I would have to do without a library service. My 15 year old has a great love of books and she would miss the library. It would be hard for me to manage without the internet and printing facilities.

I currently regularly attend rhymetime and have done so for the last 4 years. There are a very limited range of activities for children in our area and it would be terrible to lose the library. My children love walking to the library and choosing books and my older son has a passion for reading that thrives thanks to the library. He is already unable to go as often as he used to due to opening hours reductions. It would cost at least £3.00 to travel to another library - we are currently able to walk. We simply would not be able to access the services anywhere near as much due to the financial impact. I am a stay at home mum and have a limited budget, so the loss of a free facility would be tragic.

It is a vital service as it enables me to search for jobs when I am on a limited income, it prevents sanctions on my benefits, and I don't need to worry about having enough bus fare to reach other libraries. At present, I have to choose between heating, eating or bus fares. It helps my mental health as I suffer from depression/anxiety, and it allows me to have social contact within the community without having to deal with buses and crowds.

My children would grow up without a local library. They will read less, have access to fewer books, would miss out on rhymetime and socialising with their friends there. My home business would suffer without access to the libraries' printers, fax and computers. We would not visit the other libraries as they are too far away for us and would cost a fortune to reach on public transport. We couldn't even reach some of the libraries on public transport.

Our library is used by a lot of elderly people, as well as myself, who have difficulty travelling further afield, regardless of whether they have a bus pass or not. I don't have a pass, but would find it difficult to get to the next nearest library as buses do not allow me to use my mobility scooter.

The closure of Rowlands Gill Library would have a profound effect on me as I suffer from anxiety/depression. I found using the library had a huge and positive impact on me. It allowed me to socialise within my community. While unemployed, I found using the computers vital for applying and searching for jobs as I could not afford the internet at home. Most people are under threat of having their benefits sanctioned if they do not search daily for employment, also having library staff on hand to assist with minor I.T. problems is a big help when not all people are computer literate. I live on my own and find being able to go to my local library stops me from becoming isolated, which in turn would have a negative effect on my mental health.

Whickham Library – sample impact statements from 6 respondents

Due to long term ill health, using Whickham Library is important for my wellbeing. It is good to know that we have a library providing first class leisure and educational services. The library service has played a large part in my life. It is unthinkable that Whickham Library could suddenly vanish. It is an important part of our community and would be greatly missed by young and old. Please do not let this happen.

I probably would not visit Whickham. When I go to the library, I also spend money at the bakers, butchers, paper shop, greengrocers etc. Losing the library would have a negative impact on the other businesses. Whickham would become a run-down area. Having to change books regularly encourages me to go to the village and use the other facilities.

I use Whickham Library very regularly. Whickham Library is so convenient. I suffer with arthritis and would be unable to get to any other library, so there would be a great void in my life if Whickham Library closed. Closure of Whickham Library would be devastating to me as I love reading. It is one of the few pleasures left to me. Please do not close my library.

If Whickham Library closed, I would probably not take the children to another library to choose books or attend activity sessions as it would suddenly cost three return bus fares. I, myself, would go less frequently as I could not be certain of when I could fit in a trip to return the books. A couple of miles may seem a small distance but when travelling on public transport with the rest of your family the extra cost and time soon adds up.

It wouldn't be devastating as I'm lucky enough to have transport (car) but it would be a shame. My main concern would be for users who have limited money to travel (buses are very expensive in Gateshead you know!) are socially isolated, have mental health problems, and have mobility issues (therefore could not travel to another library easily). I'm a mental health worker. I spend time with clients helping them build meaningful activities into their week. We talk about the role of the local library and what it can offer and it facilitates health and wellbeing. Going to the library can often be something that they have not been introduced to as a child/adult and it can open up a whole new world of learning for them, as well as helping with their confidence and social skills.

The loss of Whickham Library would have a massive impact on my life. I use Whickham Library regularly to borrow books and get information from the extremely knowledgeable staff. I do not drive and I am too young to have a concessionary bus pass as I have taken early retirement through ill-health. I am on a strict budget which means I have to limit my bus journeys. I have a 4 month old grandson and I have been looking forward to bringing him to the library for books and events when my daughter's maternity leave ends.

Appendix 6 – Selected comments from focus groups held to discuss library review

This Appendix contains a sample of statements from a series of focus groups held at the five libraries 'at risk'. The statements have been selected to represent the range of views that residents attending these sessions expressed.

Crawcrook Library – sample transcript excerpts from 5 focus groups attendees

I used to bring my 2 children here – used it a lot when they were little, my mam (87 years old) uses the reading group to reduce her social isolation. She has mobility problems and wouldn't be able to get on a bus to go to another library. I would hate that other families with children would not be able to use the library and get the benefits of doing so. It's a great social space.

I am concerned about hidden impacts – men come in for 20 minutes to read the paper for example, this could be the only social interaction for them during their day. You need to think about social isolation, mental health problems and high suicide rates. People don't have computers in their own homes and don't have money to travel. These are some of the hidden impacts that might not come through from the survey. There aren't a lot of meeting places in Crawcrook. They could be building more houses in the future so how are you going to see what they think? Everything is impacting more on smaller/vulnerable groups of the population.

Social cohesion is very important – how do you measure this as it's very important to people? The whole point is that you can walk here, go to the park and then the café. Social isolation is a concern. The only other place for meeting people is the church but it's not for everyone.

Day to day, the impact is difficult to measure – if it closed then I would go to work as usual. It's the long term impact – we would just have an empty building. My mam would be more depressed with less social interaction. There will be a big effect on children/literacy. We want to feel worth it and valued to have this space. People who read can't always afford to buy books. We are moving in the direction of a two tier society – people who can do things and those who can't because they don't have a car or can't afford a bus pass or are less mobile. It's unfair. I have arthritis, so if I didn't have a car then I wouldn't be able to go to other libraries.

A lot of people who run volunteer libraries have their own agenda. Council run libraries are a lot more professional. I'm afraid to ask questions of volunteer staff, you can't rely on the information from volunteer staff. You don't get information about writers from volunteers. How can a librarian become qualified to do the job but then you just use volunteers who don't have the qualifications? Librarians are being devalued. We haven't seen volunteers keeping banks going because they wouldn't be qualified so why use volunteers for librarians? It would be good to hear about what the library staff think of volunteers.

Felling Library - sample transcript excerpts from 4 focus groups attendees

I use the library a lot for research purposes. I use the ancestry library and the new online newspaper package. My view is that the library is the only cultural centre in Felling. It's a very deprived area of Gateshead. I worry about the long term impact, particularly on young people and education. Surely education is linked to productivity, employment and so on? That is my worry. There are times when I can't get onto a computer in the library which is good really – it shows that people are using it. Mothers and young children come in to use the computers as they don't have them at home. It's a very valuable resource.

I use the library now purely for reading for leisure. When I was working it was invaluable to me for my professional career. Now young children have all sorts of devices to access information which I think is wonderful but at the same time I think the written word and a page can't be ignored. I see the little children coming in here and the children are enthralled by being read to. It's difficult for children not to stop and listen when a story is being told, it's irresistible. If this part of the service goes it will be a very sad day.

A young mother attended the group representing her 3 children and brought along a petition from her daughter's school. Her daughter helps with rhymetime, orders books and has dyslexia. All of the staff have helped her to read, she loves the social side of the library. We need people to come into the library and if we don't have that this can affect businesses in the area.

In Felling, you have a building to come to and sit and read a book. I can come here by myself but then I might meet two people that are here and have a conversation. You will lose this social interaction.

Whickham Library - sample transcript excerpts from 4 focus groups attendees

I was born in Whickham and worked in Whickham all of my life. I use the library at least twice a week for books and photocopying. We support the library in everything they do and come for coffee mornings and to events at Christmas time. We have always supported them and enjoyed them – the library is part of the social life of Whickham. My grand-daughter was devastated that it might close. It's not easy for old people to get to Blaydon or Gateshead. Blaydon – only one bus an hour and to get to Gateshead takes two buses. It's not feasible for old people to use other libraries.

I have been a member of the library for a long time and I am a passionate library user, especially for all of the newspapers and magazines. I wouldn't be able to afford them on my own. I have three children and I do believe that it is essential for younger and older children to use the library and encourage the enjoyment of books in the young. My grandchildren love the library. It's now one of their main treats – 'Nanny when can we go to the library?' – they prefer it to McDonalds. The children of Whickham need to be offered this opportunity. I am at a loss to think that this wonderful library could close.

I have worked closely with Whickham Library and the staff for many years. It's not just Whickham that would lose out. Other areas close by like Marley Hill would also lose out. I was a governor at Marley Hill School and we often spoke about how beneficial the library was to the children and the teachers. It seems inconceivable that we could lose this library. Following a bereavement, I have found it great coming here and seeing people. The staff always make time to chat to you. It is a great part of the community and the thought of losing it is tragic. I am appalled that a Labour council could even consider it.

The library helped me to learn how to use the computer and how to set up a website. There are still people who can't afford a computer and use it to contact relatives abroad by e-mail. To lose this would be a big blow to a lot of people. I have a computer at home but still like to come down here to use them.

Rowlands Gill Library - sample transcript excerpts from 6 focus groups attendees

I live in Rowlands Gill, I've got two young kids who are primary school age and they use the library quite a lot. I use the library quite a lot and I print things here - I don't have a printer at home so I find that really useful. I order books from Central Library to come here, and I download a lot of e-books through the library service. As a family we use the library a lot.

It's as much part of the community as the families out there.

I think for the over 65s, especially for those that are maybe widowed or living alone, it gives them a purpose to come out and get a book.

Commenting on a trip to Chopwell Library that took 3 hours by public transport - For me, I want to go to the library, I want enjoy it, I want to browse what's available and I want to go on the internet for half an hour or maybe an hour. I don't want to just rush on a bus and rush back. It's got to be pleasant, it's got to be enjoyable, and it took us 3 hours.

I've been a carer now for the last 10 years and it's just great to be able to get out to the library because being a carer can be very very isolating. It's wonderful to be able to meet people here, and just to have a completely normal conversation, especially when I can't do that at home.

One of the things that's come out of all these discussions is that the library is part of the community. The two or three people we get behind the desk here, as far as I'm concerned, are part of the community. You always get a great smile and they're always very friendly. I don't know where they come from but as far as I'm concerned, they come from Rowlands Gill. They're part of this community.

Pelaw Library - sample transcript excerpts from 5 focus groups attendees

If the library were to close and I wanted to use the computer service, which is my main use of the library service, I'd have to find somewhere else to go. The prospect of me using Gateshead Libraries is virtually nil. I'd go to Newcastle. The alternative, the closest one is Leam Lane. And I have no reason to go Leam Lane - there's nothing there for me.

I think I see libraries as being community hubs really. I think it is somewhere where people come together and meet and it's not necessarily somewhere you want to spend a whole day. You can go to Gateshead Central Library on the metro, but then it's a 10-15 minute walk at the other end, so Newcastle does become more attractive. It would be a shame to have to use a library in a different borough. The library should be somewhere you can just drop in and you know the librarians and you recognise people and you do speak to people in the library. The children gets books out and I think that's vital for them. My son has an unbelievable love of books and you can get so many coming here.

Some places have really big active sports centres or community centres or other places where people can just drop in all day, every day. But really in Pelaw it's the library. In a lot of communities, it's the library and you can't undervalue that social side and the cultural side of it as well.

Last year or the year before I worked on a project about the Pelaw Co-op and the Co-op in general and we used the library to contact former workers at the Co-op. We did oral history interviews. You could see how the library was so important to people of a certain age - coffee mornings and the local history clubs and society. The difficulty of the questionnaires is that it's a snapshot of where you are at the moment. At the moment, I'm mobile, I can afford to go to Waterstones, I can buy books. I look at where my parents were and the library was a great resource for them. And I'm moving; I'm not a snapshot, I'm something that's moving towards a long term future that I want to live in. When I'm in my 80s or 90s, I still want there to be a social club and a library and a church and local shops. I don't need them at the moment but I will do.

It's not just a library - it's a social centre. It's the hub of Pelaw. Everybody comes. It's a sanctuary for kids who come from school. If there's any trouble they know they can come here - it's a safe place. You can't replace it.

Appendix 7 – Employee consultation – methodology and feedback

Methodology

The following questions were sent to all library service employees using Survey Monkey. This allowed employees to respond anonymously.

- Q1.** Do you think there are ways that efficiencies could be made that have not been proposed?
- Q2.** Are there any views you would like to express on how you feel the proposed Options (in the public consultation) will impact on the public?
- Q3.** Are there any views that you would like to express on how the proposals will impact on you, or employees in general?

A total of 35 responses were received from employees out of a workforce of 90, representing a 39% response rate.

Findings

Alternative way of achieving efficiencies – Employees recognised the scale of the financial challenge and made a range of suggestions. The key themes emerging from an analysis of these comments were:

- 21. Reduce opening hours as a way of sustaining local provision
- 22. Consider changes to Gateshead central Library – including opening hours and the range of service provision
- 23. Adopt a more commercial approach, including charging more for events and activities. It was also suggested that the service should take a more commercial approach to working with schools and the hiring of space.

Impact on local communities of potential library closures

Employees views have reflect those expressed by the public through the consultation process. One employee wrote:

“Listening to the feed-back from customers, the people who will be most affected by the proposed closures are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable - the elderly, children, and the out-of-work. For instance, there is an elderly lady who parks her mobility scooter outside the library, totters in and collects a few talking books from the ones we keep for her, and totters back to her scooter. She keeps saying "I don't know what I'd do without this library" - there is no way she could catch a bus to the next nearest library because of her disability. Quite a few children call in after school, on the way home - again, they would not be able to get a bus to another library. As for the unemployed, who are required to log on to a computer 2 or 3 times a week and prove that they are looking for work, they can't afford to get the bus to the nearest library as it costs £4-£5 for each return trip and when you're on benefits that's impossible. Many customers have commented on how much a part of the community the libraries are, and how much they will be missed if they go. Unfortunately you can't put a monetary value on a library's worth.”.

Impact on employees

Employees clearly expressed the stress resulting from employment uncertainty and the impact resulting from the development of volunteer managed libraries.

Appendix 8 – School and nursery consultation – methodology and feedback

The following questions were sent to all head teachers of schools, and nursery managers, who are currently able to access libraries that are 'at risk':

- Q:** If this library were to close, what do you feel would be the impact on the school / children in the local community?
- Q:** Listed below are the Council operated libraries that may be a convenient alternative for your school to use. Please tell us how likely would it be that your school would access an alternative library, if your local library were to cease operation.
- Q:** Working with schools, families and children will remain a key priority for the library service. Which of the following services do you think your school would be interested in (if we were able to deliver it to your school)?

Service 1: Prepare your child for school. Awareness sessions for parents on the importance of sharing books and reading with their children

Service 2: Reading for Pleasure. Fun-filled sessions aimed at widening children's reading horizons

Service 3: Chatterbooks – children's reading groups. Relaxed group meetings to share and enjoy books

Service 4: Reading Hack – Event planning and promotion experience for young people

Nine schools / nurseries responded to this survey, representing approximately a 30% response rate.

School consultation findings

- **Impact of a potential library closure**

All respondents identified the negative impact of the loss of a local library or access to the Mobile Library. Two representative impact statements are provided below:

The children love to have staff from the library visit our Nursery with a range of books and props that are new and intriguing. They enjoy the presence of someone different reading to them. The Nursery children also visit the library regularly. We feel the library and the story tellers provide a vital role in the literacy development of the children, promoting an interest in reading and books, even at a very early age, which in turn expands on their vocabulary, creativity, listening and early reading skills

I feel that there would be a huge impact both to our school, and to our pupils' wider experiences of reading. The Library is a wonderful resource, one which is nigh-on impossible to recreate in a one-form entry primary school like ours. The stock is obviously important, but more than that it is the people who work in the Library, and the building itself, which would be the biggest loss. It is our job to engage children of

all ages - and the parents/carers - in reading, to encourage a life-long love of learning and books. Outside of school, the Library does a great deal to support and encourage readers of all ages, and is an invaluable community hub.

- **Viability of visiting an alternative library**

Only one school considered that there was an alternative library that would be viable for the school to access.

- **Interest in outreach services**

There was an exceptionally positive response to the range of outreach services, with all respondents stating that they were 'quite likely' or 'very likely' to use at least 3 of the 4 outreach services described.

Appendix 9 – Views expressed by Ward Councillors

A wide range of issues were expressed during a full round of ward consultations with Councillors. Issues and themes raised were:

24. The need to recognise and consider local geography, especially in the west of the borough, but also in the east where barriers such as a major road prevent an easy route to an alternative library, for example the journey from Pelaw to Leam Lane library
25. The need to consider social deprivation and social need as a priority, including the issue of smaller pockets of high social need, for example Highfield.
26. The need to consider if there will be a higher number of volunteers with a high level of skills in some parts of the borough compared to areas of higher social need
27. The frequent view of residents that the library is the last Council service left in a community, and that with the loss of a local library there will be the strong perception that the Council is effectively abandoning a community. This view from residents was particularly strong in communities in the west of the borough, where there is more geographic remoteness to central Gateshead.
28. Councillors also highlighted that some specific communities had seen a greater withdrawal of services, compared to other communities.
29. The importance of ICT access in libraries for job seekers, and the unaffordability of travelling to an alternative library for this group of residents. Councillors expressed the need to look for alternative solutions to try and sustain vital ICT access for jobseekers, for example in local schools or churches.
30. The importance of libraries for older people, especially in respect of combating social isolation. Councillors highlighted the risk that some residents could end up requiring much more expensive care services.
31. The value of local libraries in contributing to a sense of community and the contribution of libraries to social cohesion. Councillors expressed the view that libraries played an important role in the vibrancy of communities, including a role in sustaining trade to local shops and local centres.
32. Councillors commented on planned local housing developments in relation to the loss of a local library and queried how these people would be served in the future.
33. Councillors sought clarification regarding the definition of a statutory service and queried if the Council was likely to be in breach of this.
34. The problems associated with public transport, including unreliability, cost and distance need to be travelled, especially in the west of the borough. Councillors pointed out the difficulty of journeys, especially in winter months.
35. Some councillors expressed the value of the Mobile library as an existing service, or as a potential mitigation for the loss of a local library.
36. Councillors expressed views regarding the potential difficulties recruiting sufficient volunteers to establish new volunteer managed libraries, especially in communities where there was already a lot of demands put on volunteers.

37. Councillors comment very positively on the quality and expertise of local library employees.
38. Councillors commented on the value of local libraries to local school schools, especially local primary schools, who valued the ability to visit the library for a range of activities.

Appendix 10 - Trade Union Comment

Gateshead Council's Vision for Gateshead is – 'Local people realising their full potential, enjoying the best quality of life in a healthy, equal, safe, prosperous and sustainable Gateshead.'

Since the passing of the Public Libraries Act an effective, popular and admired public library network has been present in Gateshead from when Swinburne Street Library opened in 1885. Since then the service has been centre stage in Gateshead's impressive record of improving educational attainment, community cohesion and promoting independence.

The Trade Unions are concerned about the latest proposals to reduce the Library Service further as budgets have reduced significantly since 2008/09.

Decisions about the Library Service must be taken under the established strategic context. Following the closure, reduction or asset transfer of Sure Start Centres, Community Centres and a range of other council resources Libraries are now the last remaining free, safe and universally inclusive places in our communities - staffed by trained, professional and motivated employees. The feedback received from the 2,558 residents highlights the level of need for Libraries within communities and reducing the service will have a devastating and irreversible impact across our communities.