

# Helping to shape the future of Library Services – FAQs

## Background

North Somerset's library service is at the heart of communities. It brings people together, supports learning, provides access to information, and opens doors to opportunity. As the way people use libraries changes – and as councils across the country face tough financial times – North Somerset Council needs to make sure library services continue to thrive for years to come.

North Somerset's libraries are well-loved, but they also need to adapt in response to changes around them. With rising costs and reduced national funding, the council must save £44 million over the next three years – including £433,000 from the library service starting in 2026. North Somerset Council want to make these changes with communities, not to them.

A proposal to explore a new delivery model for libraries was discussed and approved by the Executive on Wednesday 5 February 2025 and approved/ratified by Full Council on 18 February 2025.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**\* Please note this is an active document and if questions are asked which are not answered below, we will continue to update**

### Do councils have to run libraries?

- Every council in England is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act.
- Councils must do this in a way which meets the needs of local library users, taking into account the resources available.
- Councils are able to design their library service based on their analysis and assessment of local needs.
- Any changes made to the way that North Somerset Library Service is delivered will continue to meet our statutory obligations.

### What is the current library service in North Somerset?



- Currently, services are delivered from ten local libraries, one community-run library in Congresbury, and a mobile library visiting 27 areas.
- The Council also offers a home delivery service for people who can't visit in person, services for care homes, and a 24/7 digital library where users can access eBooks, audiobooks, newspapers, and more.

### **How are you consulting with the local community?**

- We are running a 12-week public consultation from Thursday 31 July to noon, Friday 24 October 2025 so we can get everyone's views on our proposed 'options for change'.
- We won't make any decisions until this consultation is complete, and we've reviewed all responses and undertaken a full assessment of community needs.
- There is important supporting information for you to read before completing the consultation.
- We are also holding a range of in-person engagement events so you can come and speak to officers and councillors to find out more and share your feedback. We will also ensure that we link with equalities groups.
- Any changes made to our library service will be based on our understanding of equalities implications and analysis of need.

### **Why do you need to make savings?**

- The council is facing an unprecedented financial emergency. Demands for our services are going up, and the costs of providing those services also continue to rise – but our funding isn't increasing.
- We need to urgently find ways to secure savings so we can balance our budget.
- As part of this work, we're reviewing our library service so we can find ways to increase efficiency and value for money, while making sure we continue to meet our statutory obligations and provide a service that we know our community cares for deeply.

### **What savings do you need to make?**

- The libraries' savings target is £433k from the annual budget, which is around 19.3% of the 2025-26 library service budget. This was confirmed at Full Council on 18 February 2025. You can find out more in [Committee Report NSC](#).
- As a council, we need to deliver savings of over £44m over the next three years.
- We're trying to look at creative solutions to meet this savings target and reviewing all options available to us.

---

### **Are these savings politically driven?**

- The saving proposals aren't politically driven.
- The council as a whole has had to dig deep to explore and identify savings across various services, to fill our funding gap.
- Where library buildings may be at risk, we will explore with communities (such as Town and Parish Councils) whether there are any options for more locally driven models which can be identified to help deliver services.

### **Are libraries going to close?**

- No decisions have been made on how to make the £433k saving from the library service budget, which was approved by Council in February 2025.
- The consultation presents a range of options, including different delivery models to sustain library service provision in North Somerset and we are now seeking feedback and suggestions from the public and understand what people need from libraries and how they use them.
- Our options for change show we aim to keep as many library buildings as possible open, but they also highlight three library buildings (Worle, Pill and Winscombe) are potentially at risk if community support cannot be sought.
- The proposals have been developed based on understanding of local need, including an assessment of the equalities impacts of the proposals. These proposals include improving community outreach so more people can access services, adjusting opening hours to better match demand and exploring how to provide strong library services with fewer buildings.
- Careful consideration of feedback received through the consultation will be given before definitive decisions are made.

### **Will libraries reduce their opening hours?**

- No decisions have been made (see above answer) but the 'options for change' we're consulting on do set out potential changes to opening hours from next year. Please have your say and complete the consultation to tell us how this may impact you.

### **Will libraries continue to operate in self-service mode?**

- No decisions have been made. Until the consultation has ended and results analysed and approved, we can't say what our library service might look like going forwards.

---

**Will this mean it's harder for residents to speak to someone from the council face-to-face?**

- Residents who want to speak to someone from the council in-person can currently go into our libraries to be signposted to support. We recognise this is a valued service, especially for people who might struggle to access council services on the phone or online.
- All proposals will consider an assessment of the equality impact on all 'protected groups' as specified in the Equality Act 2010 and will demonstrate how steps have been taken to mitigate the impact.

**Libraries offer a range of other services, like access to free Wi-Fi and computer training. What will happen to this?**

- We know residents value the range of support that's available from our current library service.
- We're looking at our current library service and reviewing the options, but we want to stress that no decisions have been made. It's important you complete the consultation to tell us how our proposed 'options for change' will impact you.

**What impact will this have on outreach and the mobile library?**

- We currently provide an outreach service to 27 stops, currently with an interim mobile library service.
- We're investigating ways that the outreach service can be developed, so we can serve our local communities and meet our statutory obligations. Each of the options presented includes a sum to be invested in outreach to enable this to happen.
- Last year North Somerset Library Service was awarded a grant of £309,748 by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which funds the Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF) administered by Arts Council England. We're using this to purchase a new EV mobile library. We're hoping this will be on the road in late 2025.

**What do we mean by library outreach services?**

- 'Library outreach' describes a wide range of library activities, events and services which are delivered outside of library buildings, for example in community halls or other NSC sites.
- Activities may be delivered with partners and often by volunteers.

- Examples of existing library outreach activities include: [Home Delivery Service](#), [Care Homes Service](#), [Mobile Library Service](#), activities for pre-school aged children (story times and rhyme times) in community locations, delivery of the annual [Summer Reading Challenge](#) for primary school aged children, in community locations, group [reminiscence sessions](#) for older people and those living with Dementia, group shared reading sessions and digital skills sessions.

**Will the mobile route have to change if it needs to go to new locations?**

A new mobile route is being introduced from August 2025 following consultation with residents. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, if further changes are needed an additional consultation will follow on this specific topic.

**What will happen to specific activities, like Rhyme Time?**

- We're looking at our current library service and reviewing the options. We can't say at this stage what impact the savings may have on specific activities.
- No decisions have been made and we encourage you to complete the consultation to advise how our proposed 'options for change' may impact you.

**What will happen to library staff?**

- Savings will not be sought through library staff redundancies, but it is likely there will be some impact. We will know more once the consultation ends, and any recommendations approved.

**What does LibrariesWest provide and why does it cost almost £277,000 of the library budget?**

- North Somerset Libraries are part of the LibrariesWest consortium, a partnership of seven local authorities, which enables customers to use over 145 libraries across the southwest and borrow from over 2.5 million items. Somerset Council is the lead authority for LibrariesWest.

- Membership delivers efficiency savings because of the joint procurement and delivery of a shared Library Management System (LMS), including ongoing support costs and the support of a dedicated LMS IT technical team.
- It also provides access to a shared catalogue and the stock of all partner authorities. This includes inter-lending of all loanable materials, improving access for library members. The system has a single library card for all members, which in practice means members can borrow, return, renew and reserve items using any library in the consortium.
- Around £167k of the total £277k quoted in the paper includes spending on books and other resources, which are purchased through Somerset Council and a wider stock purchasing consortium. This results in significant savings to North Somerset Council.

**Where did the £443k savings figure come from?**

- The Library Service had a requirement to achieve £465k savings from its revenue budget, as included in the Council's MTFP in February 2025. £32k saving has already been made in 2024-25 leaving an outstanding balance of £433k. Of this balance, £217k is required in the financial year 2026-27 and a further £217k in the year 2027-28. The savings equate to approximately 20% of the Library Service 2024/25 budget.

**Has the planned development in North Somerset and the Local Plan been considered?**

- Data is being used to inform the proposals and will be considered alongside the consultation feedback.

**Are the Town and Parish Councils going to take on running libraries?**

- Where libraries are at risk of closure there will be an opportunity to empower communities to create their own solutions for libraries to ensure the best outcomes for residents and local communities.
- Local Town and Parish Councils will have the opportunity to discuss potential options with the council as part of the consultation process.
- Email [libraries.review@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:libraries.review@n-somerset.gov.uk) if you represent an organisation which might be interested in becoming involved.

**Can Libraries use any Community Infrastructure (CIL) or S106 money?**

- Libraries can't currently access new S106 agreements in North Somerset. There are some funds still available from old agreements, however, the use of it is limited to agreed purposes and it can only be used once (not every year).

- CIL funds need to be requested through the Council's central process and are considered alongside other requests for capital spending, which may take higher priority.

**How are you going to reach all the people you need to speak to through the consultation?**

- There's a section about our approach to consultation and engagement in the [Cabinet report](#) – refer to section 7.2.
- The consultation includes important supporting information we encourage everyone to read before they complete the consultation survey. The survey is available online or paper copies are available from your local library or by phoning 01934 888 888.
- There will be a number of drop in events across North Somerset during the consultation for the public to speak to officers and elected members.
- The consultation will be promoted via the media, social media, in libraries, via local organisations, and Town and Parish Councils, newsletters, and websites.
- There is a special consultation questionnaire for children and young people to complete.

**Will there be another public consultation once the fully developed proposal is published in February?**

- This will depend on the outcome of the Cabinet meeting in February 2026.

**Have any equality impact assessments been carried out?**

- We have undertaken initial equality impact assessments and they will be reviewed and updated throughout the process.
- Full equality impact assessments will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

**Will any staff be made redundant?**

- Savings will not be sought through library staff redundancies, but it is likely there will be some impact on staffing. We will know more once the consultation ends, and any recommendations approved.

**Can I speak to library management or councillors about the consultation?**



- Yes, a set of public drop-in sessions are being arranged across the district. Details are listed on the consultation page where you can register to attend. If you need any help registering on Eventbrite, please speak to a member of library staff. [Libraries consultation - North Somerset Council Consultations](#)

### **What impact might this have on Children's Centres?**

- There are several Children's Centres that share buildings with libraries, so we're working closely with Children's Services as service provision is reviewed.
- The council is moving towards Family Hubs, which is national policy and a government expectation. This would transform service delivery for children and bring together support from different agencies for families and young people aged 0-19 (or 0-25, for young people with special educational needs and disabilities) into one space. We'll share updates on Family Hubs through our official council channels.
- During the public consultation about the future of libraries, staff working on the development of Family Hubs will join libraries staff at Worle and Pill drop-in events to talk to residents about these shared sites.
- The Council is due to make a decision about the outcome of the libraries review in February 2026. After that, we will know how that might affect the delivery of children's services from any shared sites.
- If any major changes are suggested for shared locations, there will be further discussions - and possibly a formal consultation per site - with staff, local residents, and the wider community.
- Potential options explored could be delivering family hub services through community outreach, delivering activities from alternative sites and enhancing our digital offer.

### **What are Family Hubs?**

- The Family Hub model recognises that there will be different services needed in different communities and that providing services in rural areas will look different to those provided in towns.
- Following a change in national policy, in spring 2023 North Somerset Council made a decision to begin changing our offer of community-based help for families from Children's Centres into Family Hubs.



- Some local councils received money to do this, but unfortunately North Somerset Council wasn't one of them. However, the government has recently announced that they will be supporting all local areas to make this important change.
- Children's Centres were first set up to support families with children under the age of five by offering early years advice and support all in one place. Family Hubs build on the work of Children's Centres by offering support to families of children of all ages, not just those aged under 5 - offering a broader range of services to help families and children and young people.
- In North Somerset, our Family Hub offer will include a network of support for children, young people and families which will include:
  - Online offer of advice, information and support that families can trust
  - Family Hubs - larger buildings with lots of services under one roof. This might include health advice and support, youth services, early help, parenting support, housing advice
  - Family Hubs satellites - smaller buildings which will offer some services for families and connect them with other sources of support. These might be run by the council or by others where council staff can be based some of the time to offer help to families
  - Outreach - where people will go to offer help to families at agreed times- this might be in a village hall, a school playground, a community centre or a library and will be based on local needs
- You can find out more about Family Hubs here: [Family hubs: Local support and advice for children and their families – The Education Hub.](#)

#### **When will children centres become Family Hubs?**

- In North Somerset, this change is being introduced gradually with Oldmixon Family Centre in Weston Super-Mare, being the first to deliver Family Hub services with others coming in the next 12 months.

#### **What happens next, and when?**

- North Somerset's future library service will continue to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service to all those who live, work or study in the area and that meets the statutory requirements.
- It needs to meet the changing needs of local communities whilst achieving our agreed £433K savings target, which was approved at Full Council in February 2025.

- A public consultation detailing the 'options for change' is running for 12-weeks from Thursday 31 July to noon, Friday 24 October 2025
- After the consultation ends, the feedback will be reviewed. A report with recommendations will be taken to Cabinet and Full Council in February 2026 alongside an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure any changes are as fair as possible.
- By responding to the consultation, residents can inform the council of their needs and how best these needs can be met within the resources available
- Any changes to libraries will be made from late summer 2026 onwards

**Why are only Worle, Winscombe and Pill selected for community management or closure?**

The options presented in the consultation have been developed taking several factors into account including current levels of usage and library strategy.

**Why is Worle library listed for transfer or closure in all options?**

Worle Library may be at risk of closure under all the proposed options unless a community or partner led solution can be found. This is because the council cannot afford the significant costs required to repair and maintain the building. The full costs of the work required will be available following a condition survey which is due this summer.

**What will happen to the staff if any of the libraries close or transfer to community management?**

We are not seeking to make the savings through redundancies, although it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing. We will have more of an idea once the public consultation outcome is known.

**Media enquiries**

Please refer any media enquiries or requests to film in North Somerset venues to the communications team ([communications@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:communications@n-somerset.gov.uk)). We are not allowing filming inside any North Somerset libraries or at the Campus unless without prior permission from the communications team.