

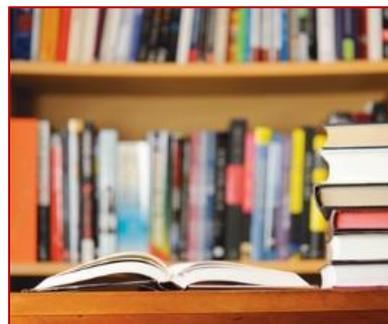
Consultation Paper

The Future of Library Provision in Powys

The current situation

Powys County Council is facing unprecedented budgetary pressures and needs to reduce its budget by £14m during the next financial year (April 2019 – March 2020).

It is then in a position of needing to find at least a further £20m over the next three years.



Why is Powys in this position?

1. Powys has been in the unfortunate position of receiving one of the lowest settlements for nine out of the past ten years. To set a balanced budget the council has been working hard to drive out inefficiencies, rationalise the number of properties it owns, reduce staffing levels and continue to deliver key services to residents.
2. Alongside this the council has also faced an increased demand for key statutory services like social care and education whilst also seeing an increase in costs for things like petrol.

The Library Service

There are six core libraries, ten smaller branches and two mobile services operating in the county.

Two additional branches – Crickhowell and Montgomery – are not run by the council. Crickhowell is run by the high school and Montgomery is run solely by volunteers.

To contribute towards the overall savings target of £14m, the service has been set an initial savings target of £200k for 2019/20 with a further £163k to be found going forward and possibly more again.

To meet this target, the service is undertaking a full review of all branches.

In 2016 the service was in a similar position with a target figure of £125k to save. The service worked with town and community councils and other partners to halve the running costs of the then, 11 smaller branch libraries. Alternative sources of funding and relocation into shared buildings helped to cut costs alongside having to reduce some opening times. The result then was that all branches remained open.

Current Review

This review is initially considering if it's feasible and how best to sustain the smaller 10 branch libraries that are based in some of our communities. It is also covering the two mobile library services that visit smaller and more rural communities across the county.

It may be that some are forced to close if no solutions are forthcoming.

Residents, businesses, partner organisations and town and community councils are again being asked to contribute their thoughts and ideas on funding streams, income generation and other savings that the service could make to meet the overall savings target.



Co-location has helped to significantly reduce the running costs of a number of branches and where feasible any further co-location opportunities will be considered but the focus now is more on how to sustain the current set up.

Views Sought

The council is inviting views and comments and ideas from all interested parties and has set up some initial drop in sessions at the following ten branches to start the conversation.

A table providing all the costings is available on this page.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rachel Powell will be attending to hear from residents alongside the Principal Librarian.

A survey and a feedback form can also be completed.

The consultation runs from Monday 4 February until Sunday 28 April 2019.

Conversations and discussions will also be taking place with staff, volunteers and partners like town and community councils who currently support and help to run the service.

Sponsorship deals, patronage and other options are also on the table.

All views given will be considered as part of the review.

Six Bigger Branch Libraries

The six bigger branch libraries in Welshpool, Newtown, Llandrindod, Brecon, Ystradgynlais and Machynlleth are not exempt from savings but these branches have formed the cornerstone of the library service and discussions are taking place already around how best to sustain these and who could contribute towards their upkeep.

Phase II of the review will focus more on these six branches but residents' views on funding streams and income generation ideas for the whole service too are also welcome.

What will happen after 28 April?

Once the consultation has closed, the feedback will be analysed and considered and a feedback report produced.

The portfolio holder, Principal Librarian and other service staff will discuss the options with any key or potential partners involved in the running of a branch with a view to having a clear way forward by the summer of this year.

Plans will then be put in place to progress with said decision and these will be shared with residents and library users.

