



APPENDIX 1

Mobile Library Consultation Report

August 2018



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the consultation on proposals to improve the quality and range of services provided by the Mobile Library Service to a standard comparable with that of static libraries whilst ensuring that the Library service remains accessible to communities throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The consultation ran for 8 weeks, from the 8th May to 3rd July 2018. The approach taken included a webpage with information on the proposals, including an FAQ booklet and an online survey for members of the public and service users to take part in. 389 questionnaires were returned. There were 3 engagement events and an email/letter was sent to all mobile library service users.
- 93.2% of respondents to the questionnaire were users of the mobile service, with 88.6% of the users using a short stop. 96.9% of respondents stated that they use the service fortnightly. 19.2% of respondents also said they also use a branch library
- 72% of respondents disagreed with the **proposal to reduce the vehicles from 3 to 2** (42.9% strongly disagreeing).
- 78.8% of respondents disagreed with the **proposal to reduce the number of stops** (49.4% strongly disagreeing).
- 44.6% of respondents disagreed with the **proposal to introduce I-pads and free wi-fi** on the mobile buses, 16.2% agreed and 39.1% neither agreed or disagreed or didn't know.
- Service users were asked what they would use wi-fi for, if it was introduced. 28.9% of people who answered this question said they would use it for email and research, with 27.6% stating that they would use it to check their online library account, reserve items and renew loans.
- 86.1% of respondents agreed with the **proposal to continue to offer books/e-books** and other printed materials on the mobile buses.
- 37.7% of respondents agreed with the proposal that the Council should **use the mobile vehicles as outreach hubs**, with 34.5% disagreeing.
- Respondents were asked what services they would like to see on any vehicle used as an outreach hub. 52.8% said they would like to see health and well-being information. A number of comments were concerned about potential privacy issues on the vehicle, if discussions were of a sensitive nature.

- 43.1% of respondents agreed that the **proposed vehicles should park in accessible central locations**, however 42.6% disagreed, many of which disagreed on the basis that they don't know where the proposed central locations would be.
- Respondents were asked to provide further comments on the proposals and the following are a selection of the themes that emerged;
 - Keep Existing Service
 - Would no longer use if proposals go ahead
 - Accessibility issues (linked to Age/Disability)
 - Housebound comments
 - Wi-fi not needed
 - In agreement/positive
 - Depends on where the stops are

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the consultation on proposals to improve the quality and range of services provided by the Mobile Library Service to a standard comparable with that of static libraries whilst ensuring that the Library service remains accessible to communities throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 presents the results from the questionnaire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The way people use libraries and interact with the Library Service is changing. Static libraries in Rhondda Cynon Taf have been transformed to better meet customer needs and make the best possible use of public money. Visitor numbers to static libraries are now improving and customers can access a wider range of services and support at libraries particularly those that are co-located with other Council services.
- 2.2 Mobile library provision has remained relatively unchanged since its inception. It currently focuses on providing access to a range of books and reading materials in various formats for people who do not live near a static library, as well as providing some information and recycling bags. Customers can choose books on the vehicle itself or order books online or by phone and pick them up when the mobile library visits their area.
- 2.3 There are 3 mobile library vehicles that travel across the county, stopping in 393 locations every 2 weeks. The stops consist of:
 - 353 street stops that last for 10-15 minutes
 - 28 stops at sheltered housing units, alcohol/mental health units, and residential homes for 20-40 minutes
 - 12 evening and Saturday stops for 3 hours at locations where static libraries have previously been closed.
- 2.4 Although the geographical coverage is good, what is on offer is limited, in part due to the restrictive time slots. This situation has been exacerbated recently due to the fragile state of the mobile vehicles that has resulted in an inconsistent and unreliable service. 100 days of service were lost in 2016 due to vehicle breakdowns. 64 days were

lost due to vehicle breakdowns between April and September 2017. In addition the cost of maintenance has escalated.

- 2.5 The Council's Fleet Management Service has concluded that the vehicles are at the end of their economic and operational life and need to be replaced if a mobile library service is to continue.
- 2.6 The numbers of users that access the service remain low, despite all the efforts made to promote the service. There are currently 1,693 mobile library members in the county (compared to 39,272 static library members). The percentage of over 60s using the mobile library service is consistent across each geographical area of Rhondda Cynon Taf at between 67% and 73%.
- 2.7 Combined book issues for 2016/17 on all mobile library vehicles was 39,900 which is less than the annual book issues for some of the individual branch libraries (e.g. Church Village library issued 45,846 books in the same period).
- 2.8 The impact of technology with access to e-books and materials online provides a different way for people who live further from a static library, to access reading materials. Over time, the percentage of people who will choose to download books is expected to increase, so mobile libraries will need to offer something extra if they are to be sustainable and of benefit to customers over the longer term.
- 2.9 The current model of mainly short stops does not make it practical to facilitate access to Wi-Fi or allow customers to use public access computers that are now available on new library vehicles. There is no requirement under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, or the Welsh Public Libraries Standards to deliver a mobile library service. However, if a library authority provides this service it is important that the mobile vehicle can offer free and reliable access to Wi-Fi. Short stops do not allow for this and the current fleet of vehicles do not have this facility.
- 2.10 Many local authorities across England and Wales that continue to maintain a mobile library service have remodelled their service to ensure it better replicates the services provided by a static library, and as a result, the mobile libraries in those communities are better utilised by the residents.
- 2.11 The mobile library service currently costs the Council £134,114. The average cost of a visit to a static library in 2016/17 was £2.29. The average cost of a visit to a mobile library in 2016/17 was £8.50 or £4.70 if we exclude the recent down-time and the cost of vehicle repairs. We need to ensure we maximise resident take-up of the Mobile Library Service, particularly in an economic climate where all public services are being challenged in terms of whether they offer value for money.

- 2.12 In reviewing the future of the Service, we need to consider how we can continue to widen access to library services across the County Borough but also improve the range and quality of services provided.

PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 2.13 The Library Service Management Team has reviewed the Service and there are opportunities to remodel the operational delivery of the Service, expanding the services available on mobile libraries to attract more customers and make it a service that is fit for the 21st Century.
- 2.14 The proposal is to:
- Purchase 2 new purpose built library vehicles with access to Wi-Fi and easy to set up awnings/canopies.
 - Reduce the number of mobile stops to 48 long stops of 2.5 hours each every three weeks focussed on communities where there are no static libraries.
 - Continue to offer access to books, e-books and other printed material. Introduce access to I-pads and free Wi-Fi so that customers can access the internet and the Service will offer training from a volunteer or tutor on how to use digital equipment etc.
 - Use the mobile vehicles as outreach hubs that can facilitate the delivery of advice and guidance to customers by other Council services and partner agencies on a rota basis, e.g. One4All customer service staff; the Council's Consultation team; MacMillan Cancer; and
 - Park at central locations e.g. close to schools, supermarkets or GP surgeries to encourage more visits.
- 2.15 It is also proposed to expand the eligibility criteria for the Housebound Service in order to mitigate any adverse effect of reducing the number of stops and centralising the locations of the Mobile library Service, to include:
- People who suffer from mobility problems.
 - People who suffer from long-term illness.
 - People who live in excess of 2 miles from a library service point (static or mobile).
 - Full-time carers.
- 2.16 In addition, it is proposed to rebrand the Housebound Service as the @HomeLibraryService to reflect these changes (The Housebound Service is currently only available for individuals who, through ill-health or disability, cannot leave their homes. It delivers books to an individual's home on a monthly basis). It is anticipated that this can be done within existing resources, although it is uncertain how many additional applications for this service we will receive.

- 2.17 The success of this service model will be dependent on the location of the new library stops. It is proposed that communities and all relevant stakeholders, including the Public Services Delivery, Community and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and Elected Members would be canvassed via a consultation in order to identify the most suitable location with a list of possible sites given to encourage discussion. As part of the proposal it is suggested that no stops are placed within a one mile radius of a static library.

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3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The consultation ran for 8 weeks, from the 8th May to 3rd July 2018.
- 3.2 The aim of the consultation was to gather the views of library service users on the proposals to improve the quality and range of services provided by the Mobile Library Service to a standard comparable with that of static libraries whilst ensuring that the Library service remains accessible to communities throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 3.3 The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;
- A paper questionnaire distributed on the mobile libraries.
 - An email/letter to all mobile library service users (1693)
 - 3 Drop in Engagement events;
 - Aberdare library (6th June)
 - Treorchy Library (8th June)
 - Pontypridd library (15th June)
 - A dedicated email address (consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk) and freepost address if needed.
 - Online survey and FAQ sheet.
 - Poster in all libraries.
 - Older Persons Advisory Group.
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf Disability Forum.
 - The Public Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.4 389 questionnaires were returned.

4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 93.2% of respondents to the questionnaire were users of the mobile service, with 88.6% of the users using a short stop. 96.9% of respondents stated that they use the service fortnightly.
- 4.2 19.2% of respondents also said they also use a branch library, as follows;

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
Base	75 100.0%
Q5. If yes, which one?	
Abercynon Library	5 6.7%
Aberdare Library	21 28.0%
Church Village Library	2 2.7%
Ferndale Library	3 4.0%
Hirwaun Library	6 8.0%
Llantrisant Library	1 1.3%
Mountain Ash Library	5 6.7%
Pontyclun Library	3 4.0%
Pontypridd Library	5 6.7%
Porth Library	3 4.0%
Rhydyfelin Library	2 2.7%
Tonypanydy Library	6 8.0%
Treorchy Library	13 17.3%

Table 1 – Branch Libraries

4.3 72% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to reduce the vehicles from 3 to 2 (42.9% strongly disagreeing).

Counts Analysis %	
	Base 354 100.0%
Reduce vehicles from 3 to 2, investing in 2 new vehicles, with onboard Wi-Fi	
Strongly agree	13 3.7%
Agree	29 8.2%
Neither agree or disagree	44 12.4%
Disagree	103 29.1%
Strongly Disagree	152 42.9%
Don't know	13 3.7%

Table 2 – Views on reducing mobile library vehicles

4.4 78.8% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to reduce the number of stops (49.4% strongly disagreeing).

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
	Base 354 100.0%
Reduce the number of stops to 48 long stops of 2.5 hours each every three weeks, focusing on communities where there are no static libraries	
Strongly agree	10 2.8%
Agree	27 7.6%
Neither agree or disagree	25 7.1%
Disagree	104 29.4%
Strongly Disagree	175 49.4%
Don't know	13 3.7%

Table 3 – Views on reducing the number of stops

4.5 44.6% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to introduce I-pads and free wi-fi on the mobile buses, 16.2% agreed and 39.1% neither agreed or disagreed or didn't know.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
Base	327 100.0%
Introduce access to i-pads and free Wi-Fi	
Strongly agree	10 3.1%
Agree	43 13.1%
Neither agree or disagree	92 28.1%
Disagree	74 22.6%
Strongly Disagree	72 22.0%
Don't know	36 11.0%

Table 4 – Views on Wi-fi

4.6 Service users were asked what they would use wi-fi for, if it was introduced. 28.9% of people who answered this question said they would use it for email and research, with 27.6% stating that they would use it to check their online library account, reserve items and renew loans.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
Base	76 100.0%
If we introduced Wi-Fi on the vehicles, what would you use it for?	
Email	22 28.9%
Internet shopping	5 6.6%
Research (including family/local history research etc)	22 28.9%
Jobsearching	10 13.2%
Universal Credit	4 5.3%
Social media platforms such as Facebook....	12 15.8%

Check online library account, reserve items, renew loans	21 27.6%
Download free e-books, e-magazines or e-audio books from the libraries online subscriptions	17 22.4%
Other	26 34.2%

Table 5 – Wi-fi usage

There were 167 other comments. The majority of the comments were based on respondents saying they would not use the wi-fi (none/nothing/would not use). The following are a selection of views received;

(note: this differs from the figure in the table above (26), as many respondents did not tick the other box, as they wanted to state opposition to the wi-fi proposal)

- *Have it at home*
- *Not suitable for short stops*
- *I have no use for wi-fi on vehicles*
- *I am not computer literate*
- *Would not use it*

4.7 86.1% of respondents agreed with the proposal to continue to offer books/e-books and other printed materials on the mobile buses.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
Base	338 100.0%
Continue to offer books/e-books and other printed material	
Strongly agree	176 52.1%
Agree	115 34.0%
Neither agree or disagree	14 4.1%
Disagree	9 2.7%
Strongly Disagree	15 4.4%
Don't know	9 2.7%

Table 6 – Views on books and printed materials

- 4.8 37.7% of respondents agreed that the Council should use the mobile vehicles as outreach hubs, with 34.5% disagreeing.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
	Base 342 100.0%
Use the mobile vehicles as outreach hubs, that offer advice and guidance to customers	
Strongly agree	63 18.4%
Agree	66 19.3%
Neither agree or disagree	61 17.8%
Disagree	65 19.0%
Strongly Disagree	53 15.5%
Don't know	34 9.9%

Table 7 – Views on outreach hubs

- 4.9 Respondents were asked what services they would like to see on any vehicle used as an outreach hub. 52.8% said they would like to see health and well-being information, the full list is shown below.

Counts Analysis %	
	Base 108
Q10. If we use the vehicles as outreach hubs, what advice...	
Money and budgeting advice	26 24.1%
Advice on welfare benefits	51 47.2%
Health and well-being information	57 52.8%
Short training sessions e.g. improving digital skills	37 34.3%
Resident engagement (having your say on Council Services)	42 38.9%
Advice on other council services (possible One4all outreach?)	47 43.5%

Other	18 16.7%
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Table 8 – Views on services for outreach hub

Almost all of the 108 other comments stated none/not interested/would not use. The following services were suggested;

(note: this differs from the figure in the table above (18) as many respondents did not tick the other box, as they wanted to state opposition to the proposal for outreach hubs generally)

- *Children and adults sections, arts/crafts etc.*
- *Community projects – volunteering*
- *Information on services available at other libraries or centres in the community*
- *Local transport details*
- *Universal Credit*

A number of comments were concerned about potential privacy issues on the vehicle, if discussions were of a sensitive nature.

4.10 43.1% of respondents agreed that the proposed vehicles should park in accessible central locations, however 42.6% disagreed.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
	Base 343 100.0%
Park at accessible central locations	
Strongly agree	82 23.9%
Agree	66 19.2%
Neither agree or disagree	34 9.9%
Disagree	60 17.5%
Strongly Disagree	86 25.1%
Don't know	15 4.4%

Table 9 – Views on accessible locations

4.11 Respondents were asked to provide further comments on the proposals and the following are a selection of the themes and comments that emerged;

- Keep Existing Service

“As a long time user of the mobile service I would not want to see it change for the sake of change.”

“change is unavoidable but I would like things to stay the same”

“I think the mobile library is one of the best services provided to the public. I would be very sorry to lose it”

- Would no longer use if proposals go ahead

“I use the mobile library because it stops nearby and is convenient. If I had to go any distance to use it I probably wouldn't. If I were to use the at home service I wouldn't be able to choose books or to request any...”

“I would not use Library if have to walk to a long stop.”

- Accessibility issues (linked to Age/Disability)

“As an elderly person of 87, having the library service call to my street is a vital service to myself as I am unable to visit a branch library as my local one (Pontypridd) is too far to walk to.”

“.....I am disabled, can't drive, and would be unable to get to these accessible central locations. The mobile library stops just outside my house, so haven't got far to walk...”

“Because of illness and disability I rely on the mobile library as I'm unable to travel to branch library”

- Housebound

“All very well to park up but what about house bound people like my husband. If I am not at home when library make calls he knows my husband can't walk so he brings him books he knows he's interested in.”

“I would be affected because of age and disability. A door to door service is given to those who are housebound. How would this be adopted with the service decreased?”

“I am housebound, and enjoy my services. Once fortnightly with the mobile library if this service stops it will affect my life severely. I spend time reading every day.”

- Wi-fi not needed

“As I am 77 years young living on my own, I know nothing about WiFi computers or any other new fangdangled things. I am quite happy with the mobile library and it's very helpful driver thank you.”

“Free wifi is not needed in most locations as customers are usually elderly.”

- In agreement/positive

“Provided they are not too far away and people using buses don't have too far to walk”

“Reducing service to 3 weekly is logical. The Central locations need to have plenty of parking, which my nearest branch library (Ferndale) does not. Thank you.”

“I am 76 years old I am not a user of computers but I love reading books. I like the mobile library. But I am the only one to use it at this stop so I would miss it, but I realise it might be expensive for 1 person”

- Depends on where the stops are

“Depends where the stops are, as being elderly don't want to walk far carrying books good service with recycling bags”

“Depends where the bus parks / stops”

“Until locations have been identified I will not know how it will affect me.”

- 4.12 Respondents were asked to provide any further suggestions or alternative proposals. The responses often mirrored the themes in section 4.11 these above. The following are a selection of additional comments/suggestions;

“... the book allowance would need to be increased if the service was reduced”

“how can the person driving the van be qualified to deliver these services”

“I would like to see a better turn over on books, ie. audio books”

“If there was a suitable venue in the village (eg. community centre, YRP office) offer to supply and stock a bookshelf with books...”

“It would be more suitable to have 1 or 2 vans to complement the library service separately, not all together, most people would like a

separate service. All subjects which would need advice private and personal.”

“no privacy on van – plenty of advice in central i.e. Aberdare Library”

“refresh stock more frequently”

“renew vehicles anyway and keep service to fortnightly. Routes could be rearranged to, as some areas still have an actual library....”

“The outreach hub is a laudable idea, but will there be enough (suitably qualified) staff to provide the wide range of services...”

“To include all of these you would need a very large bus and a private room to discuss things”

“When choosing books it would be very disconcerting for one when all this proposed business going on around you, especially in a confined space....”

Respondent Profile

4.13 86% of the respondents were over 65 and 34.6% stated that they were disabled.

Age

Counts	Analysis %
Base	364 100.0%
Q14. Age;	
Under 16	2 0.5%
16-24	2 0.5%
25-34	5 1.4%
35-44	4 1.1%
45-54	5 1.4%
55-64	33 9.1%
65-74	128 35.2%
75+	185 50.8%

Table 10 – Age of Respondents

Disability

Counts	
Analysis %	
Base	350 100.0%
Q15. Disability The definition of disability in the Equal...	
Yes	121 34.6%
No	189 54.0%
Prefer not to say	40 11.4%

Table 11 - Disability

- 4.14 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents felt the proposal would affect them because of age and disability characteristics, the following are a small selection of the comments received;

Age

"I would not be able to carry my books"

"too old now to go to static library"

"older people would stop using the service..."

"for older people, who probably don't see anybody, a chat in the library with other people is probably the highlight of the day"

Disability

"89 year old housebound, I rely on the current service a great deal"

"disabled residents unable to access the service. This is the only contact some residents have, even if for only 15 minutes a fortnight"

Gender/Relationship status

"single parent would be unable to pay the bus fare when weather is bad"

"These proposals would mean less room for books because of the outreach hub. This might affect the availability of women's books".

- 4.15 Under the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on the Welsh Language. The following are a selection of the comments received.

“As long as you offer Welsh language books as well that’s fine”

“As welsh books can be obtained from this service, welsh readers who are housebound would be left with no welsh reading material”

“I cannot see how it would have any effect on the Welsh language”

“I do not feel that our Welsh language is less favourably dealt with and although I have not taken advantage of it, I am sure any special request will be dealt with as do my requests in English”

“If access is restricted to locality then getting hold of welsh reading material would be reduced”

“The impact of the proposals on the Welsh Language would seem to depend on the general policy of the Council”

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